

Student speaking skill assessment: Techniques and results

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the learning techniques of Arabic subjects and the results of the evaluation of students' Arabic speaking skills. This study involved 51 Arabic language teachers and 395 State Madrasah Aliyah students in Jambi Province, Indonesia. This study obtained quantitative and qualitative data. The research instrument used a questionnaire, checklist, and oral test. The data were analyzed descriptively (frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation), and qualitatively. The results showed that the technique of speaking skills from students' perceptions was at a sufficient level. Likewise, the speaking skill assessment technique from the teacher's perception is at a sufficient level. The results of observations on speaking skills assessment techniques showed that teachers use techniques that do not require prior preparation. The students' Arabic speaking skills are at a sufficient level. Further research needs to explore other techniques in Arabic speaking skills.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Arabic is one of the official languages of the United Nations (UN). In Indonesia, Arabic is one of the foreign language subjects in the formal education system, especially in the Ministry of Religion such as Islamic boarding schools, schools' level from Madrasah Ibtidaiyah to Madrasah Aliyah levels, and universities. Based on the Regulation of Republic of Indonesia Ministry of religious Affairs Number 000912 of 2013, Arabic subjects (MPBA) are compulsory subjects that must be studied, one of which is to develop the ability to communicate in Arabic, both orally and in writing [1].

In Arabic, there are two functions, namely communication or speaking and writing which aim to facilitate the process of thinking and expression [2]. Arabic speaking skills (*maharah al-kalam*) can express thoughts, ideas, or opinions orally. Proficient in one's speaking skills can relate to sound, articulation, and *makharij al-huruf* [3].

Skills in Arabic subjects (MPBA) are considered to be an important issue that needs to be studied because the Arabic curriculum makes speaking skills the second goal in MPBA learning after listening skills. MPBA needs to be taught in combination so that students can master language skills simultaneously in each learning session. Mastery of these skills is an important aspect that determines the success of the teaching and learning process of a second or foreign language [4], [5] also characterizes speaking proficiency as a sign of a successful level of language proficiency. When someone speaks, the listener will give a specific response to the personality and attitude [6].

The achievement of students' speaking skills in Arabic is still relatively low [7]–[9], including among universities [10]–[12]. This is because the speaking skills of non-Arabic Arabic learners are faced with various problems, especially in linguistic and non-linguistic aspects. Linguistic aspects include errors in *makhraj* and *tajwid*, as well as discrepancies between messages and intonation in speaking [13]. Students have difficulty pronouncing the letters that are adjacent to their *makhraj* (the place from which the sound of a letter originates) or commonly called *muhadatsah* (conversation) [14], *mufradat* (word mastery) [15]. Previous study found that there are problems related to Arabic being taught among non-Arabs, namely sound system, vocabulary, and sentence structure [16].

Arabic speaking skills of non-Arabic learners are also faced with problems of nonlinguistic aspects including students' interest and motivation towards Arabic itself [17], [18], learning methods or learning strategies [19]. Arabic teacher learning methods tend to be monotonous and boring, teachers only use lecture, translation, and memorization methods [20]–[23]. Many studies related to Arabic have been carried out, but only a few have made Arabic speaking skills the main focus of research. Research has not focused much on students' ability to master Arabic language skills for communication [23], [24]. Assessment methods are the main component that cannot be separated in a teaching and learning process. Assessment is also useful for determining the success of an objective in a learning topic before starting a new topic, assessment also functions to identify the problems faced by students in a topic, identify the stages of student achievement, and so on.

One way to measure and assess Arabic speaking proficiency is to use self-assessment (SA). Self-assessment will encourage students to participate more actively in speaking activities in class, encourage class participation by promoting independent learning and personal goal setting, and by increasing students' awareness of their learning [25]–[29]. The suitability of perceptions between teachers and students can affect the success or failure of learning. Self-assessment, as a formative assessment tool, can be considered as a way to minimize such discrepancies [30]–[32]. The purpose of this paper is to describe the technique of assessing Arabic speaking skills from the perspective of the teacher and student self-assessment to describe the results of the evaluation of students' Arabic speaking skills.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a two-step mixed methods approach. In the first step, we use a quantitative approach to obtain quantitative data. In the second step, we use a qualitative approach to obtain qualitative data. This research was involved 51 Arabic language teachers in 26 state madrasah/madrasah aliyah negeri (MAN) in eight districts and cities in Jambi Province, Indonesia excluding Kerinci District and Sungai Full City due to the time and logistical limitations of this research. Therefore, all Arabic language teachers were involved as participants in this study. This is by following the opinion [33], if the population is less than 100, then the way that can be taken is to use the entire population. Meanwhile, the number of participating students involved in this study was 395 students. The researchers also studied eight teachers to gain qualitative data.

The research instrument was a questionnaire distributed to teachers and students. The questionnaire has three main strengths, the first can involve a large number of respondents, the second allows researchers to study the relationship and comparison with the results of the study to a larger population and the third can produce facts and information that can be cross-tabulated using statistical analysis [34]. The scale used in the questionnaire and speech test was the five-point Likert Scale as the respondents' answers to the statements and the level of ability of the students in each of the speaking sub-skills. This scale is appropriately used to measure the feedback given by respondents in situations that Cohen, Manion, and Morrison [35] described as persistent about a particular practice, perception, and attitude. This scale was also used with the researcher's perception that respondents were accustomed to answering other questionnaires using the five-point Likert Scale. The questionnaire used by the researcher in this study is a modified instrument from the instrument used by Ismail [36] who also studied the evaluation of the implementation of the Arabic speaking skills curriculum, but the study location is different. Modification of the instrument is found in several items on the elements of context and input, the researcher adapts to the context and input found in the Indonesian curriculum. Then we conducted an in-depth study using observational guidelines in the form of a checklist. The purpose of this interview was to obtain supporting data from the questionnaire.

The collected data was then analyzed using descriptive statistics namely frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. To facilitate data analysis, we used SPSS Version 23 software. To describe this descriptive analysis, the researchers used the mean interpretation table that was formulated by Nunnally and Bernstein [37]. This table has also been used by Othman [38] in their research and several other studies [36], [39]. The interpretation of the mean can be seen in Table 1. While the qualitative data from the observations were analyzed descriptively qualitatively. So that the data from the analysis of observations can convince researchers of the results of quantitative data.

Table 1. Mean interpretation

Mean score		Interpretation
4.23	5.00	Very high
3.42	4.22	High
2.61	3.41	Moderate
1.81	2.60	Low
1.00	1.80	Very low

3. RESULTS

3.1. Techniques for assessing speaking skills from teacher's perception

Table 2 shows the frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation and interpretation of the mean for each item of speaking skills assessment techniques carried out by teachers in the process of assessing speaking skills in Arabic subjects. The table shows that three items get the mean interpretation at a high level, namely speech (mean=3.76, SD=1.12), powerful reading gets a mean of 3.58 and a standard deviation of 0.98, and submissions from student records (mean=3.47, SD=1.42). The other six items received an average interpretation at a moderate level, namely acting (mean 3.41, SD=1.34), memorizing (mean 3.35, SD=0.97), small group discussion (mean=3.11, SD=0.76), debate (mean=3.29, SD=1.33), interview (mean=3.17, SD=1.10), and various situations (mean=2.88, SD=1.19). While the other items get the mean interpretation at a low level, namely seminars (mean=2.58, SD=1.38) in the process of assessing Arabic speaking skills. In the teacher's perception, speech assessment techniques in Arabic speaking skills are most often carried out by teachers. While the seminar assessment technique is rarely done.

Table 2. Techniques for assessment of speaking skills from teacher perception

Assessment techniques	N	R	S	O	A	Mean	SD
Powerful reading	3 (5.9%)	6 (11.8%)	3 (5.9%)	36 (70.6%)	3 (5.9%)	3.58	0.98
Send from recording	6 (11.8%)	6 (11.8%)	12 (23.5%)	12 (23.5%)	15 (29.4%)	3.47	1.34
Various situation	12 (23.5%)	3 (5.9%)	15 (29.4%)	21 (41.2%)	0 (0%)	2.88	1.19
Interview	6 (11.8%)	6 (11.8%)	15 (29.4%)	21 (41.2%)	3 (5.9%)	3.17	1.10
Small group discussion	0 (0%)	9 (17.6%)	30 (58.8%)	9 (17.6%)	100 (25.3%)	3.11	0.76
Memorization	3 (5.9%)	6 (11.8%)	15 (29.4%)	24 (47.1%)	3 (5.9%)	3.35	0.97
Chorus speech	3 (5.9%)	6 (11.8%)	3 (5.9%)	27 (52.9%)	12 (23.5%)	3.76	1.12
Debate	6 (11.8%)	9 (17.6%)	12 (23.5%)	12 (23.5%)	12 (23.5%)	3.29	1.33
Acting	9 (17.6%)	3 (5.9%)	6 (11.8%)	24 (47.1%)	9 (17.6%)	3.41	1.34
Seminar	12 (23.5%)	18 (35.3%)	9 (17.6%)	3 (5.9%)	9 (17.6%)	2.58	1.38

N=Never, R=Rarely, S=Sometimes, O=Often, A=Always, SD=Standard deviation

3.2. Techniques for assessing speaking skills from students' perceptions

The average of all items in the speaking skill assessment technique from students' perceptions is 2.66 and the standard deviation is 0.74 with the mean interpretation being at a moderate level. There is only one item that has a high mean of interpretation, namely speech with a mean of 3.15 and a standard deviation of 1.34 with 54.4% of student respondents stating that teachers often and very often apply this assessment technique in the process of learning speaking skills. Table 3 shows that there are four items that get an average interpretation at a moderate level, namely strong reading items (mean=3.15, SD=1.45), memorization (mean=3.07, SD=1.28), small group discussion (mean=2.68, SD=1.22) and debate or debate (mean=2.65, SD=1.38).

Table 3. Techniques for assessment of speaking skills from students' perceptions

Assessment techniques	N	R	S	O	A	Mean	SD
Powerful reading	85 (21.5%)	45 (11.4%)	80 (20.3%)	95 (24.1%)	90 (22.8%)	3.15	1.45
Send from recording	165 (41.8%)	65 (16.5%)	40 (10.1%)	105 (26.6%)	20 (5.1%)	2.36	1.38
Various situation	165 (41.8%)	40 (10.1%)	80 (20.3%)	100 (25.3%)	10 (2.5%)	2.36	1.31
Interview	175 (44.3%)	55 (13.9%)	55 (13.9%)	100 (24.3%)	10 (2.5%)	2.27	1.32
Small group discussion	100 (25.3%)	65 (16.5%)	105 (26.6%)	110 (27.8%)	15 (3.8%)	2.68	1.22
Memorization	65 (16.5%)	60 (15.2%)	100 (25.3%)	115 (29.1%)	55 (13.9%)	3.08	1.22
Chorus speech	50 (12.7%)	40 (10.1%)	90 (22.8%)	100 (25.3%)	115 (29.1%)	3.48	1.34
Debate	125 (31.6%)	55 (13.9%)	85 (21.5%)	90 (22.8%)	40 (10.1%)	2.65	1.38
Acting	185 (56.8%)	35 (8.9%)	55 (13.9%)	110 (27.8%)	10 (2.5%)	2.30	1.36
Seminar	180 (45.6%)	45 (11.4%)	70 (17.7%)	5 (3.3%)	0 (0%)	2.22	1.26

N=Never, R=Rarely, S=Sometimes, O=Often, A=Always, SD=Standard deviation

Hence, Table 3 reveals that the powerful reading item is the highest item to obtain an average interpretation at this moderate level with 46.9% of student respondents stating that teachers often and very often use this technique in assessing speaking skills. While the other five items obtained mean interpretations at a low level, namely submissions from cassette tapes (mean=2.36, SD=1.38), various situations (mean=2.36, SD=1.31), acting (mean=2.30, SD=1.26), interviews (mean=2.27, SD=1.32) and seminars (mean=2.22, SD=1.26). The seminar is the material with the lowest mean interpretation with only 100 student respondents stating that teachers often apply this assessment technique.

3.3. Comparison of teacher and student perceptions of speaking skills assessment techniques

Table 4 shows the comparison of perceptions of teachers' and students' speaking skills assessment techniques. Based on the table, it shows that there are differences in perceptions between teachers and students in speaking skills assessment techniques. There is an extreme difference in perception between teachers and students on the assessment technique send from the recording (mean teacher=3.57, mean student=2.36), this means that there is a difference in perception, the teacher states that the teacher uses the technique in this assessment while the students state that this assessment technique is rarely or never even done.

Table 4. Comparison of teacher's and students' perceptions

Assessment techniques	Teacher's perception		Student's perception	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Powerful reading	3.58	0.98	3.15	1.45
Send from recording	3.47	1.34	2.36	1.38
Various situation	2.88	1.19	2.36	1.31
Interview	3.17	1.10	2.27	1.32
Small group discussion	3.11	0.76	2.68	1.22
Memorization	3.35	0.97	3.08	1.22
Chorus speech	3.76	1.12	3.48	1.34
Debate	3.29	1.33	2.65	1.38
Acting	3.41	1.34	2.30	1.36
Seminar	2.58	1.38	2.22	1.26

Another difference in perception is in the assessment technique of strong reading, various situations, interviews, and acting. Meanwhile, in the aspect of assessment, small group discussions, memorization, choir speeches, and debates have similarities between teacher and student perceptions. Based on Table 4, on average it shows that teachers' perceptions are always above in all aspects of speaking skills assessment techniques compared to students' perceptions. To see the significance of the difference in perception, the following t-test analysis that show in Table 5.

Table 5. T-test independent sample

Levene's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means		
F	Sig.	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference
0.903	0.355	3.424	0.003	0.605

The results of the t-test in Table 5 show that there was a significant difference in perceptions between teachers and students ($t=3.424$, $p<0.05$). Teachers' perceptions of speaking skills assessment techniques were higher (mean=3.260, SD=0.344) than students' perceptions (mean=2.655, SD=0.440). This shows that there is a gap in the perception of assessment, meaning that the perception of the teacher's perception of the assessment technique is not the same as the student's perception. Therefore, the authors follow up on these differences in perceptions by making observations.

3.4. Observations on speaking skills assessment techniques

Observation findings on speaking skills assessment techniques in learning the Arabic language indicate that teachers use assessment techniques that do not require prior preparation. This can be seen from assessment techniques that are often found in observations made. Also, teachers' only use assessment, namely direct assessment without any prior preparation. Table 6 presents the speaking skill assessment techniques in observation.

Table 6. Speaking skill assessment techniques in observation

Techniques of assessment	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
Strong reading	√		√			√	√	
Send from recording								
Various situation								
Interview								
Small group discussion			√					
Memorization		√		√				
Chorus speech	√	√		√	√	√		√
Debate								
Acting			√			√		
Seminar								

*P1=Learning process 1, P2=Learning process 2, P3=Learning process 3

Assessment is often done by the teacher at the end of the lesson, but for acting techniques, the teacher does it at the beginning of the lesson and the teacher combines it with rote assessment. The following example of observation shows the teacher using two assessment techniques, namely memorizing and acting. In this example, the teacher asks students to memorize the dialogue in groups in the previous meeting and practice it at the meeting held in that session.

“The teacher asks students to move to the front of the class in groups to practice the conversations that have been assigned to be memorized in the previous lesson.” (PM3)

“After the teacher gives the induction device, then the teacher asks the students to memorize the words that have been memorized directly with the students next to them.” (PM4)

Choir speeches are also carried out by teachers in their teaching, as in the following example of observation:

“The teacher writes a question on the blackboard, then asks students to answer the question correctly, after getting the correct answer, then the teacher asks students to read the answer aloud.” (PM1)

3.5. Evaluation of Arabic speaking skills outcomes of MAN Jambi students

The results of students' achievement in Arabic speaking skills. A speech test was conducted to obtain data on outcome components by involving 150 MAN students at the research location who had completed student questionnaires. The results of the assessment can provide a clear picture of the actual abilities of those who have followed the Arabic curriculum at MAN Jambi City.

This speech test has seven main items. Each item represents each major aspect of speaking skills. Key aspects of this speaking test include fluency, pronunciation, stress, intonation, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension. Table 7 shows the mean, standard deviation, percentage, frequency, and means interpretation of the speech tests that have been performed. The overall average of speaking skills of MAN students covering seven items found in the speaking skill aspect was 3.09 and the standard deviation was 0.64 on the mean interpretation.

In detail, Table 7 shows that none of the items on the speech test obtained a mean at a high or very high level, all items received an average interpretation at a moderate level (2.61-3.41). The highest average obtained was the aspect of clear pronunciation (mean=3.22, SD=0.68) with a good and very good percentage of 45.4% and the number of good and very good students as many as 53 student respondents. While the lowest average achievement was recorded in the grammatical aspect (mean=2.87, SD=0.61) with only 36% of student respondents getting a good score.

The intonation aspect also shows an average of 3.23 and a standard deviation of 0.64 with 75 or 50% of students at a good level, 46 students at a moderate level, 29 students at a weak level, and no students at a very weak level. The fluency aspect shows an average of 3.16 and a standard deviation of 0.57 with the percentage of students being very good and good 9.4%, moderate 57.3% and weak 33.3%, and there are no students who are at the very weak and very good level. From the stress aspect, it was noted that 50% of students were at a good level, 30.7% were moderate, 19.3% were weak and no students at a very weak level.

The aspect of understanding recorded student achievement at a good level of 46%, moderate 38.7%, weak 15.3%, and none at a very good and very weak level. Meanwhile, from the vocabulary aspect, 46 students were at a good level, 66 students at a weak level, 30 students at a weak level, 8 students at a very weak level and no students at a very good level. This finding shows that students who take Arabic subject class X (ten) have poor Arabic speaking skills and have not reached the level outlined in the Arabic curriculum. The evaluation of these results, it shows that the students' speaking ability is at a critical level and has a very significant weakness. Students have not been able to master speaking skills as referred to in

the aims and objectives of the Arabic Language (*mata pelajaran Bahasa Arab/MPBA*). A very significant weakness in terms of grammar and vocabulary, these two aspects were found to have the lowest min results compared to the other five aspects even though the other five aspects were also at a moderate level and none of the aspects were at a high and very high level.

Table 7. Student speaking skill achievement

Aspects of speaking skill	VW	W	M	G	E	Mean	SD
Smoothness	0 (0%)	50 (33.3%)	86 (57.3%)	7 (4.7%)	7 (4.7%)	3.16	0.57
Clear designation	0 (0%)	31 (20.7%)	66 (44%)	46 (30.7%)	7 (4.7%)	3.22	0.68
Pressure	0 (0%)	23 (15.3%)	96 (64%)	31 (20.7%)	0 (0%)	3.01	0.54
Intonation	0 (0%)	29 (19.3%)	46 (30.7%)	75 (50%)	0 (0%)	3.23	0.64
Grammar	8 (5.3%)	30 (20%)	58 (38.7%)	54 (36%)	0 (0%)	2.87	0.61
Vocabulary	8 (5.3%)	30 (20%)	66 (44%)	46 (30.7%)	0 (0%)	3.05	0.79
Understanding	0 (0%)	23 (15.3%)	58 (38.7%)	69 (46%)	0 (0%)	3.12	0.66

*VW=Very weak, W=Weak, M=Moderate, G=Good, E=Excellent/Very good

4. DISCUSSION

Assessment techniques are a key component that cannot be separated in a teaching-learning process. Assessment is also useful to determine the success of a goal in a learning topic before starting a new topic. Assessment also serves to determine the problems faced by students in a topic, to determine the level of student achievement.

The results of the questionnaire from two teachers and students showed that the assessment techniques applied in the learning of speaking skills are at a sufficient level. While the results of research through observation of teachers often conduct speech assessment simultaneously in groups compared to other techniques. Assessments that focus more on direct responses such as debates or discussions and seminars have never been used by teachers when observations are made to assess students' speaking ability. However, in these findings, we found that there were significant differences in perceptions between teachers and students about Arabic speaking skills assessment techniques. This indicates that there is a discrepancy between what teachers do and what students feel [12], [15], [40]. These findings also indicate that teachers use only the most easily applied assessment techniques [36], [41], [42]. While assessment techniques that are more concerned with direct response are less applied by teachers. It is necessary to review whether the techniques applied by teachers are by following the objectives of the curriculum implemented. Teachers also need to enrich the assessment techniques they use so that students' Arabic language skills can be improved and in line with curriculum objectives [43].

Assessing the result is assessing an achievement obtained by students after following a program or learning process in the curriculum. Outcome evaluation is used to determine the extent to which the educational program or curriculum achieves the stated goals. Achievement obtained by students is a benchmark that can determine the success and effectiveness of a program or curriculum.

The outcome assessment in this study was to assess the achievement and Arabic language skills of MAN students in Jambi Province after they took Arabic language subjects. Attainment of speaking skills Arabic learners are at a modest stage. This is based on the overall average score for the tests that have been carried out at a moderate level.

This situation shows that students' Arabic learning outcomes need more attention because students' abilities have not met the standards set by the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia. If detailed further into the aspects contained in speaking skills, the findings show that there are no aspects that are at a high or very high level. All aspects are at a moderate level and a very critical aspect is the grammatical. This aspect shows that students have not been able to use proper grammar in the speech test. The results showed that the aspects of pronunciation, fluency, and understanding were better than other aspects even though the interpretation of the mean was still at a moderate level. The pronunciation aspect recorded the highest average score. This is in line with the findings of interviews and document analysis which found that teachers in their teaching focused more on aspects of clear pronunciation. Critical aspects in speaking skills are aspects of grammar and vocabulary. These two aspects need more attention. Hence, the improvements made will have an impact on the successful implementation of learning speaking skills in Arabic subjects.

This situation shows that the results of students' Arabic speeches need more attention because students' abilities do not meet the standards set by the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia. One of the factors according to him is an embarrassment as a form of inhibition of the use of Arabic in students' oral language [44]. In addition, the positive attitude of students when speaking in Arabic is a factor that needs to be addressed in students [45].

5. CONCLUSION

The technique of assessing speaking skills from the perception of students is at a sufficient level. Similarly, the technique of assessing speaking skills from the teacher's perception is at a sufficient level. The results of observations on speaking skills assessment techniques show that teachers use techniques that do not require prior preparation. Students' Arabic speaking skills are at an alarming level with none of the aspects of the skills showing results being at an excellent level, all aspects of assessment in skills are at a moderate level. This study has limitations on seven aspects of speaking skills. Therefore, further research needs to develop other assessment techniques on Arabic speaking skills as well as the need for in-depth related factors that differentiate teachers' and students' perceptions of speaking skills techniques.

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