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Assessing Arabic Speaking Skills: A Critical Study for Implementation of Final Examination in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Assessment is one of the basic processes in the educational process after determining goals and teaching students. The national school final examination, in Indonesia called UAMBN, is one of the programs for conducting Arabic language tests, and focuses on assessing four skills of students. In fact, speaking skills test is not in the program. The purpose of this research is to criticize the lack of implementation of speaking skills assessment at UAMBN. Researcher used a critical methodology to analyze the data by configuration of four analytically distinguished but intertwined dimensions: (1) critical understanding and in-depth examination, (2) critical explanation and comparative generalization, (3) open discourse and transformative redefinition or action, and (4) reflexive-dialectic argumentation. The results of the study are the absence of an Arabic speaking skill test in the national madrasah final exam/UAMBN cannot be tolerated. Distributing the assessment process in national school final exams/USBN is not the right solution. UAMBN should still hold Arabic speaking skills tests in special sessions. The solution in the form of an assessment implementation design is available in this study. Further research related to the application of this design is highly recommended to improve the quality of learning Arabic speaking skills.

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Keyword

Assessment; Arabic Speaking Skills; National School Final Examination/UAMBN

مستخلص البحث

التقييم هو أحد العمليات الأساسية في العملية التعليمية بعد تحديد الأهداف وتعليم الطلاب. يعد الاختبار النهائي للمدرسة الوطنية، في إندونيسيا، المسى UAMBN، أحد برامج إجراء اختبارات اللغة العربية، ويركز على تقييم المهارات الأربع للطلاب. في الواقع، اختبار مهارات التحدث ليس في البرنامج. الغرض من هذا البحث هو انتقاد عدم تنفيذ تقييم مهارات التحدث في UAMBN. استخدم الباحث منهجية نقدية لتحليل البيانات من خلال تكوين أربعة أبعاد تحليلية متميزة ولكنها متشابكة: (1) الفهم النقدي والفحص المتعمق، (2) التفسير النقدي والتعميم المقارن، (3) الخطاب المفتوح وإعادة التعريف أو الإجراء التحويلي، و (4) الجدل الانعكاسي الجدلي. نتائج الدراسة هي عدم وجود اختبار مهارة التحدث باللغة العربية في الاختبار النهائي للمدرسة الوطنية / لا يمكن التماس مع UAMBN. توزيع عملية التقييم في الامتحانات النهائية للمدرسة الوطنية / USBN ليس هو الحل الصحيح. لا يزال يتعين على UAMBN إجراء اختبارات مهارات التحدث باللغة العربية في جلسات خاصة. الحل في شكل تصميم تنفيذ التقييم متاح في هذه الدراسة. يوصى بشدة بإجراء مزيد من البحث المتعلق بتطبيق هذا التصميم لتحسين جودة تعلم مهارات التحدث باللغة العربية.

تقييم : مهارات الكلام : الامتحان النهائي الوطنية للمدرسة الإسلامية

كلمات أساسية

INTRODUCTION

Evaluation is a scientific process that seeks to issue an objective judgment on a phenomenon in the light of a set of criteria or criterion desired to be achieved in the behavior of the learners, and here the main role of the evaluation process emerges, as it helps in developing the education process in general, and the curricula in particular from developing goals. It also contributes to the development of management systems, the development of the performance of all employees in the educational system, and also contributes to the development of educational supervision and guidance systems.

Wikipedia said that the scientific process is a continuous process, and it is necessary for an expert in any field to present the first operation before any one performs the next. Lack success in scientific activities perhaps due to failure of continuous process. This limit is taken by Wikipedia from Understanding and Using the Scientific Method. The same applies to the education process, according to Djiwandono (2011), there are three basic elements in education process called Anchor-Point; *First*, the educational goal, which is the set of standards that the teacher and the learner wanted to achieve. *Second*, the process of education, which is a group of applied educational procedures. *Third*, evaluation, which is the process of knowing the extent of the success of the application of the education process in relation to the goal set before (Bari, 2010).

Further research related to the application of this design is highly recommended Researchers have concluded the concept of evaluation based on knowledge of the previous self-evaluation, and after, researchers adopted the idea of evaluation according to experts such as Miller et al., (2013) and Djiwandono, (2011). Researchers reveal that evaluation is one of the fundamental processes of the educational process. The evaluation aims to determine educational attainment with specific standards or indicators. The evaluation function establishes an academic plan/Teaching Plan per future educational goals.

Teachers of the Arabic language should pay attention to the role of assessment in teaching the four skills, as it is part of the elements of education. Alam (2004) said the importance of evaluation is evident in its accurate description of the performance indicators that we want to verify the students' possession of these or those indicators. Evaluation is realistic and diverse tasks that measure a wide range Therefore, correcting answers or evaluating performance is not based on a correction key as is the case in multiple-choice vocabulary, but rather requires some subjective judgments regarding the quality of the student's work, and of course these judgments are affected by multiple sources of bias, which calls for preparing a set of rules or Rubrics that can guide

performance evaluation, reduce sources of bias, and make judgments more fair and honest.

In the field of assessment, there are four types in terms of their usefulness in the educational process: summative assessment, formative assessment, pre-test, and post-test, each of which must be present in the educational process because they are like tools. To find out the extent of students' success in language teaching, especially in teaching the four skills, as well as comments to determine further educational goals (Djiwandono, 2011).

Djiwandono (2011) divided linguistic assessment into two types, namely linguistic tests related to the test approach, and linguistic tests related to the test object. The first includes discrete, integrative, pragmatic, and communicative tests. The second includes tests for four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and language elements (pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar).

This study explores a lot of summative evaluations in order to test the speaking ability of junior high school students, because when the researcher made preliminary observations, there was a phenomenon that was not in accordance with the previous theory, namely the lack of speaking skills testing. in the national school final examination program (UAMBN).

The statement above is reinforced by a study on item analysis for the Arabic final exam at one of the Islamic Madrasah Aliyah in Indonesia. Qodri (2019) revealed that in the items do not contain items of phonics questions in speaking. Although it is highly recommended to display.

The assumption that every assessment carried out by a particular institution is good is wrong. Some institutions are believed to be able to handle tests, but in reality, they are not. Ali Saad Al-Yaari et al. (2013) has revealed the same thing in his research. In fact, in comparison with instructors of the College of Education, instructors of the College of Arts are better at administering tests.

The preliminary study in the research field used the observation method, namely the National School Final Examination (UAMBN), then the researcher confirmed the research using the interview method, to several students took the exam. in the 2018-2019 school year, each of them said that the oral test was not in it.

The absence of assessing Arabic speaking skills in announcement was caused by a discrepancy between the knowledge of the exam supervisor assigned to the subjects tested. This subject focused on the Arabic language exam (Fathoni, 2020). And the next strong reason, based on the researcher's interview with the UAMBN implementer, is the difficulty of allocating time for implementing the Arabic speaking skill assessment.

In addition, it is very unfortunate if UAMBN does not carry out an assessment of Arabic speaking skills amidst the euphoria of foreign language

academics emphasizing the speaking test as in the ACTFL OPIc® (Cubbellotti, n.d.).

Several studies have revealed the importance of assessment speaking skills in foreign language acquisition. Like Fan & Yan (2020), he has mapped the concept of evaluation which has been discussed in several studies related to assessment of speaking skills. In addition to mapping concepts, he also reveals topics often used to assess speaking skills and methods often used. At the end of his research, he revealed the implications of his research on the assessment of speaking skills. These implications lead to the importance of evaluating speaking skills and the necessity to implement them.

Because of the importance of assessment in speaking skills, Kishon-rabin & Rosenhouse (2000) developed a concept to assess Arabic speaking skills for children with hearing loss while speaking Arabic in Israel. So it is only natural that the researcher raises the question in this study 'If you see the importance of Arabic speaking skill assessment motivating Kishon-rabin & Rosenhouse (2000) to conceptualize a test for children with hearing loss, is it reasonable that Arabic speaking skill assessment cannot be carried out at UAMBN due to technical reasons?.'

The literature that discusses the implementation of assessment on Arabic speaking skills has been done by many previous researchers such as Gebril & Taha-Thomure (2013), Wahab (2020) and (Bachman (2013). At the same time, research that criticizes the absence of the evaluation of one of the language skills will be discussed in this study to explain the gap in the literature.

Based on the gap above, the researcher criticizes the absence of assessment of Arabic speaking skills at UAMBN as aims of this research. Criticism is based on strong arguments and evidence. As an academic activity, researchers do not only criticize it. In this study, an Arabic-speaking skills assessment model that can be carried out at UAMBN is also shown as a solution to the problem.

The model recommended in this study was designed because researchers are motivated to develop Arabic learning in Indonesia, especially learning speaking skills. The meaning and advantage of this work are to offer a model for assessing the Arabic speaking skills of UAMBN organizers. Researchers will not force this model to be implemented in UAMBN. However, the implementation of a speaking skills assessment is a must.

The efforts that have been made by the researcher in designing the plan for assessing Arabic speaking skills in this research are by adopting several designs that have been successfully applied previously in the assessment of speaking skills, such as Rammuny's (1992) format. To understand the configuration, please check [Table 4](#). Next, the researcher entered the criteria to be assessed, adopting the criteria standards from Ta'imat (n.d.). To understand

these criteria, please check [Table 1](#). Researchers have also recommended methods that assessors can use to conduct assessments. Implementation details accompany these methods. This explanation shows the differences between previous studies and this research regarding the design and implementation of skills estimates.

To clarify the focus of this research, the researcher limits the study to criticizing the absence of assessment of language speaking skills in UAMBN. The next limitation is the design developed by the researcher so that the evaluation can be carried out. The invention is limited to assessment criteria, methods that assessors can use, recommended materials, and time allocation for implementation.

METHOD

This study used a critical methodology. According to Cecez-Kecmanovic (2014), framework for a critical research methodology that includes a configuration of four analytically distinguished but intertwined dimensions: (1) critical understanding and in-depth examination, (2) critical explanation and comparative generalization, (3) open discourse and transformative redefinition or action, and (4) reflexive–dialectic argumentation.

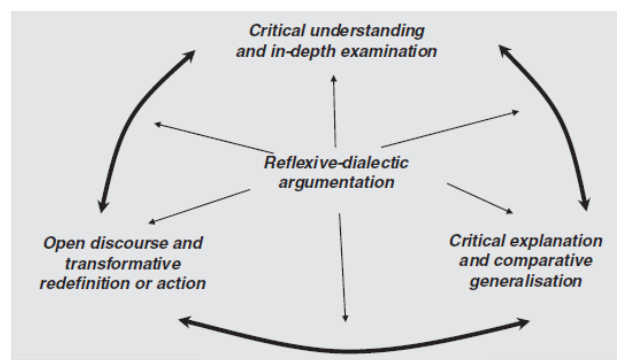


Figure 1. Intertwined dimensions of critical methodology on research

The application of [Figure 1](#) in this study is as follows: *First*, the researcher understands the concept of assessment in learning Arabic in depth about the assessment of speaking skills. So that the reader will not find the concept of assessing other skills (listening, reading and writing skills) in this study. Another form of critical understanding is that researchers avoid the concept of Arabic speaking skills assessment which is biased and rarely used by academics.

Second, the activity of explaining critically and comparing in general in this study seems very clear when the researcher has explained the concept of assessment in Arabic speaking skills at UAMBN which tends to dare to reveal its weaknesses in assessing students. Furthermore, the researcher has shown several comparisons between the zero application of assessment in speaking skills at UAMBN and assessment outside it. Not only limited to Arabic speaking skills, even to English speaking skills, both of which are subjects that have received attention from academics in Indonesia.

Third, researchers have redefined the concept of assessment in Arabic speaking skills as a process that cannot be absent from UAMBN and cannot be separated from it.

Fourth, the researcher has argued by containing strong references related to assessment in Arabic speaking skills that must be carried out at UAMBN. Arguments have been followed up by providing solutions.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Speaking Skill Test

(Ainin et al., 2006) said on how to perform the appropriate speech test is oral. The theory above confirmed after the researchers reviewed scientific research for (Ounis, 2017) the results of the research; *First*, the teacher himself designed the concept to test the students' speaking ability. *Second*, despite the difficulties in conducting speaking skill tests, the teacher followed up his performance with valid, structure and wise to improve students' speaking skills. According to (Mutholib, 2013) he did the research related to UAMBN, focusing on analyzing the question items, and no one did a search for the UAMBN exam in order to focus on the subject of the test.

Test in learning is one of the concepts of implementing learning evaluation. According to (Ainin et al., 2006) Evaluation is a systematic process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting information to determine the extent to which pupils are achieving instructional objectives. Evaluation answers the question 'how good?'

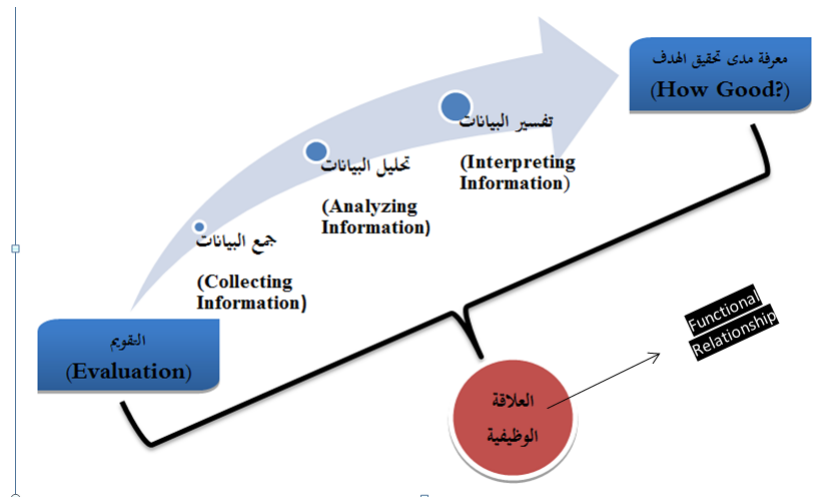


Figure 2. The process and function of evaluation in learning

Figure 2 indicates that in the test it is necessary to; *First*, collecting data related to points the evaluator wanted to know, which is to answer the question, for example, "How is the students' speaking skill?". *Second*, analyzing the data obtained when performing the first operation, the evaluator chooses the data by looking at the criteria in the opinions of linguists, which is to answer the question, for example "How Speaking skill for intermediate level students in relation to speaking skill standard?". *Third*, the interpretation of the data, which is the process of answering the questions, for example, "Does this data fit the first criterion for the speaking skill or does it contradict?" The result of the interpretation is the answer from the question "How are the intermediate level students' efficiency in speaking skill according?".

The test is different with test, although there are equals between them in the application. (Iskandarwassid & Sunendar, 2016) said that the exercise is a process of teaching to obtain results, that is, the work that is trained on pedagogical. The difference in their goal, for example, the speaking skill test is to know the extent to which the goal of teaching the speaking skill and the test have been achieved to help in obtaining a skill upgrade.

Speech, the origin of language, is the expression and disclosure of what is in the mind of a person of thoughts and feelings in terms of what others understand (Daylmi, 2003). In another opinion, the origin of the language is the useful sounds, and for the speakers of the self-contained meaning that is expressed in words (Fu'ad, 1992). As for the definition of speech, it is that uttered speech that the speaker expresses about his obsession, or his thoughts, and what goes through his mind of feelings and sensations, and what his mind abounds with of opinion or thought, what he wants to provide to others with information,

or so, in fluency and flow, with correctness In expression and safety in performance (Fu'ad, 1992). In other words, it is the art of transferring beliefs, feelings, feelings, information, knowledge, experiences, thoughts and opinions from one person to another, a transfer that occurs from the listener, receiver, or addressee, the site of acceptance, understanding, interaction and response (Budi, 2003). (Djiwandono, 2011) said speech is the expression of ideas orally, by which people understand what the speaker has expressed, he speaks the complete elements of speech so that people understand it, and the elements of speech are the information (Message) and the heads of speech (Topic), then there are the conditions of the listener when the message arrived It is her understanding (Response).

With regard to the previous limits on the test, skill and speech, the definition of the speech skill test is the process of collecting data related to the mastery of people/students/the learner in expressing their opinions and ideas to others orally in fluency and flow with correctness in expression and safety in performance, then analyzing and interpreting them.

The test aims in general at ten objectives or functions, then the researcher suspended it directly between them and teaches speaking skill among middle school students in Indonesia, which is to measure students' achievement in teaching speaking skill, and the teacher's evaluation of his success in teaching speaking skill, and experimentation to find out which teaching methods are most appropriate and best for teaching speaking skill, and arranging Students from one class to another regarding their ability to speak, informing parents of their children's level of speaking Arabic, diagnosing students' weaknesses in speaking Arabic, grouping students into homogeneous groups when teaching speaking skill, motivating students to study speaking skill, and predicting students' level To proceed in the speaking skill study program, and sort students into acceptable or unacceptable to join the Arabic language (Khuli, 1989).

The appropriate test for speaking skill is orally, the oral test methods are divided into three sections (Ainin et al., 2006), which is *first*, Reading Aloud, the teacher asks students to read the specific text aloud in this area. *Second*, Audio Repetition/Audio Lingual, the teacher asks the students to listen to his words and repeat them. And *third*, the speech, the teacher brings up a specific topic and asks the students to talk about it freely. According to (Hamid, 2013), there are five methods for testing speaking skill: Describe the Picture, Recounting Experiences, Interview, Free Story Telling, and Discussion. And in internet based-test/iBT it is called speaking (*Muhadatsah*) test (Abdurrahman et al., 2021).

To test speaking skill a point (Djiwandono, 2011) that the teacher, school, and government (in the field of education) wanted to know from middle school students, that point is competence or the ability to speak the Arabic language. In

order to know this point, the informant must use the appropriate speech skill criterion for the students' level. One of the common criteria for speaking skill for beginners is the criteria by (Ta'imat, n.d.).

Table 1. Assessment criterias in speaking skill test for beginners by Ta'imat (n.d.)

		Criterias/ Student Scores					
No	Name	Realizing the type of emotion that prevails in speech and responding to it within the limits of what student know	Use signs, gestures, and movements expressively of what student want to communicate	Distinguishing phonetically between the phenomena of <i>Mad</i> and <i>Syiddah</i> , and differentiating between them, whether when speaking them or listening to them	Distinguish when pronouncing between long vowels and short vowels	Distinguish when pronouncing between similar sounds	Pronunciation of Arabic sounds correctly
1	Student 1						
2	Student 2						

The assessment criteria in [Table 1](#) are the most commonly used by teachers in assessing speaking ability. even though there are many more recommended criteria, the researcher chose this criterion because of the completeness aspect contained in it. Other very simple patterns, such as (Clark, 2010) reveal that the student is able to communicate basic information through lists of words and some memorized patterns. And furthermore, according to (Rakhlin et al., 2021) the aspects that must be assessed in spoken language are as shown in the [Figure 3](#).

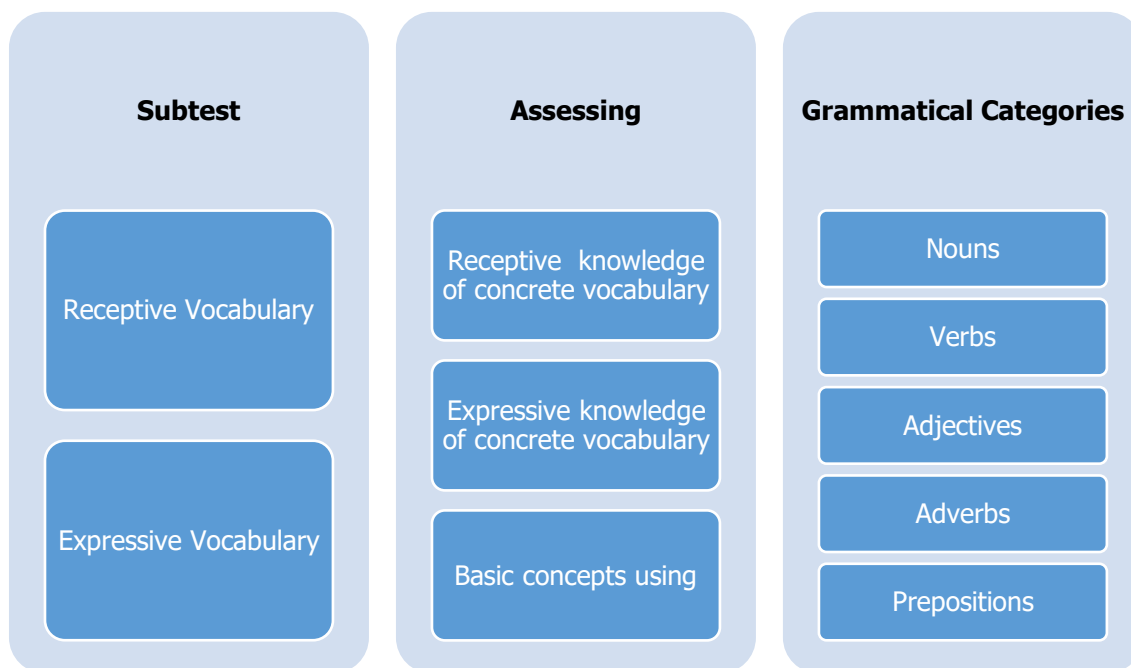


Figure 3. Assessment criterias in speaking skill test for beginners by Rakhlin et al. (2021)

Of the three models of assessment criteria in Figure 3, the researcher only displays them as information related to the assessment of speaking skills. And the researcher only chose the proprietary assessment criteria by (Ta'imat, n.d.) as the standard used to assess students' speaking ability.

Arabic Speaking Skill Test on the Islamic High School Final Examination (UAMBN)

The national school final exam is a process of standardizing and evaluating student success in teaching Islamic religious education and Arabic among junior high and high school students nationally. The exam consists of two processes, the first is a computer-based exam (CAT/Computer Assisted Test) and the second is a test using a notebook and pen (PPAT/Paper and Pencil Assisted Test). The committee that regulates and organizes the implementation of this exam comes from the Department of Standard Operations / POS UAMBN on the Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia (POS USBN/Standard Operating Procedures for Implementing National Standard School Exams, 2018).

Based on the researcher's understanding regarding the reason for not carrying out the speaking skill test in Arabic is because the limited time. From the beginning of the national school final exam until now, UAMBN organizers have not collected data on students' ability in speaking skills, as well as analyzing and interpreting it. This is due to the lack of time during the test process. The

available time is limited in one time starting from the Arabic language test process to the remaining speaking skills test and writing skills test. If the test administrator conducted a speaking skill test using the speech method, for example, one examiner and twenty students would take 190 minutes/3.10 hours, and this would be possible than not doing the test.

Table 2. Detailing the time distribution for the speaking skill test in Arabic

Total Students	Subject	Assessment	Number of Questions	Time Allocation	Time Required			
20 Students	Arabic	- Listening skills	50 Questions	1.8 Mins/Question	90 Mins			
		- Reading Skills						
		- Speaking Skills				20 Questions (1 Question/Student)	3 Mins /Students (6 Standarts × 0.5 Mins)	60 Mins
		- Reading Skills				×	×	×
Total	Three Skills	70 Questions	4.8 Mins /3 Questions	150 Mins				

The speaking skills in the [Table 2](#) is part of the focus of this research. From the [Table 2](#), it becomes clear why the speaking skill test was not conducted, and was limited in time. This is because the test of listening, reading, and speaking skills without writing takes 150 minutes, which is a long time in conducting the test and will greatly affect the effectiveness of the test. The implementation of the test within 150 minutes is possible, but it is different from the government's decision which has set a time limit for one test, and it is well known that the government's decision was taken after studying several fields.

The distribution of test time above can certainly be tolerated and accepted compared to the division of time according to (Knight, 1992) with the following specifications:

List of assessment criteria (10-15 mins)

The researcher then hands out copies of the list of assessment criteria (see Figure below). This list is fairly comprehensive in its broad categories, though within those there could be many more detailed criteria.

Table 3. Detailing the time distribution for English speaking skill test according to Knight (1992)

Part	Assessment Criteria	Time Required
1. Viewing and Reflection	None	10 Mins
2. Discussion	None	15 Mins
3. List of assessment criteria	1. Grammar (range and accuracy). 2. Vocabulary (range and accuracy). 3. Pronunciation (individual sounds, stress-rhythm, intonation and linking/elision/assimilation). 4. Fluency (speed of talking, hesitation while speaking and hesitation before speaking). 5. Conversational skill (topic development, initiative, cohesion, conversation maintenance, clarification, repair, checking, pause fillers, etc). 6. Sociolinguistic skill (distinguishing register, style and use of cultural references). 7. Non-verbal (eye-contact and body posture, gestures and facial expressions). 8. Content (coherence of arguments and relevance).	10-15 mins
4. Viewing and comment	None	10-15 mins
Total	22 Criterias	55 mins

Table 3 shows the time division that assessors can use as a guide in assessing skills. The division of time is predicted to cover the activities of the assessor in determining the criteria that the assessor must evaluate in the assessment.

Table 3 is also an example of assessing speaking skills with criteria and time allocation. The researcher observed, analyzed and concluded that the above procedure was not suitable to be applied to assessing Arabic speaking skills in UAMBN even though it looked ideal.

From the explanation of the designs of the speaking skills test above, it illustrates that the Arabic speaking skill test must be carried out in the midst of the Arabic final exam/ UAMBN held by the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia.

As a solution, the distribution of the speaking skills test in Arabic can be carried out by considering the criteria and time allocation listed in the following table:

Table 4. The design of Arabic speaking skills assessment

Aim	Method & Material	Time Allocation (48 Mins overall)
Please check 'Tabel Assessment criteria in speaking skill test for beginners by (Ta'imat, n.d.)'	Personal Conversation	Students will have between 5 and 25 seconds to respond, depending on the information requested.
	Picture-Based Questions	For each question in Parts 2 - 4, you will have 15 to 30 seconds to prepare your answer and between one minute to one minute and 45 seconds to respond, depending on the complexity of each question.
	Topic Questions	Students will have 15 seconds to prepare the answer and one minute 15 seconds to answer.
	Situation Questions	Students will have 20 seconds to prepare the answer and one minute 20 seconds to answer.

The details of activities for each method in Table 4 are: *First* is Personal conversation method. In this part, the students will have a conversation with a native speaker of Arabic if available, or with teacher. This person/teacher would like to find out some things about students' background, activities, and interests. For each question asked by the Arabic speaker/teacher, listen carefully and answer during the pause immediately following the question. Remember to say as much as you can in response to each question. The sample question below, enclosed in a box, does not appear in print.

Second is Picture-based questions method. The examinee looks at a picture or series of pictures in the test booklet and speaks in response to spoken/written instructions. The tasks include such undertakings as giving directions, describing a place or activities in a familiar setting, or telling a story. In some cases, the picture guides the response; in others it serves as a source of ideas for the examinee.

Third is Topic questions method. In this part, you will be instructed to talk about five different topics. You will hear the topics on the tape, in English, and they will also be written in the test booklet. The topics require the examinee to organize information. The examinee is placed in a situation in which he/she has to describe personal preferences, explain a process step by step, state

advantages and disadvantages, hypothesize on a formal topic or speak to persuade, and support an opinion.

Fourth is Situation questions method. In the last part, five descriptions of real-life situations are identified. In each case, students are asked to imagine that they are actually in that situation and to respond in a linguistically and socially appropriate manner. The situations include making polite conversation, offering an apology, giving advice, making a formal introduction, and making simple requests.

Table 4 also shows the ideal design for the implementation of assessment in Arabic speaking skills. Researchers have attempted to design it by using two designs, namely (Ta'imat, n.d.) to determine the assessment criteria and (Rammuny, 1992) to determine the methods and time allocation.

This design is not a product researcher force the assessor to use in assessing Arabic speaking skills. However, this design is a consideration for Arabic language scholars to assess Arabic speaking skills at UAMBN. If the lack of assessment is motivated by a lack of time, then understanding this article is one way to find solutions to these problems.

CONCLUSIONS

The absence of an Arabic speaking skill test in the national madrasah final exam/UAMBN cannot be tolerated. The difficulty of allocating time to assess Arabic speaking skills is a problem that academicians can solve. Distributing the assessment process in national school final exams/USBN is not the right solution. Criticism of the absence of tests is a must for the progress of learning Arabic. The criticism that is displayed must also show a solution. The solution recommended by the researcher in this critical study is an implementation design for assessing Arabic speaking skills. The aspects contained in this design are assessment criteria, methods that assessors can use, recommended materials, and time allocation for implementation. By this solution, UAMBN should still hold Arabic speaking skills tests in special sessions. Further research to see the effectiveness of this design is recommended by researchers for themselves, UAMBN organizers, or others.

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