

Authentic Assessment Innovation for Speaking Skills in The Grade 10 Arabic Language Book of The Merdeka Curriculum

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Abstract: This study addresses the mismatch between communicative-competence goals and structurally oriented assessment practices in Arabic-speaking (kalām) evaluation at Madrasah Aliyah. In line with the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes contextual and performance-based learning, the research aims to develop an authentic assessment model integrated into Grade X Arabic textbooks. Using a Research and Development (R&D) approach with the 4D model (Define, Design, Develop), the study began with a content analysis of speaking activities and existing assessment components to identify conceptual and pedagogical gaps. Based on these findings, an innovative assessment framework was designed by aligning textbook themes with authentic communicative tasks and analytically developed speaking rubrics. The resulting model integrates contextual simulations, oral presentations, and narrative tasks assessed through indicators such as fluency, pronunciation accuracy, lexical relevance, structural adequacy, meaning clarity, and communicative confidence. The findings indicate that this model provides a systematic and coherent approach to assessing speaking skills, moving beyond fragmented, form-focused evaluations. This study contributes a theory-based, practical framework for authentic speaking assessment that operationalizes the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum and supports more meaningful evaluation of communicative language.

Keywords : Authentic Assessment, Speaking Skills, Arabic Textbooks, Performance-Based Assessment

Abstrak : Penelitian ini membahas ketidaksesuaian antara tujuan kompetensi komunikatif dan praktik penilaian yang masih berorientasi struktural pada evaluasi keterampilan berbicara bahasa Arab (kalām) di Madrasah Aliyah. Sejalan dengan Kurikulum Merdeka yang menekankan pembelajaran kontekstual dan berbasis kinerja, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengembangkan model penilaian autentik yang terintegrasi dengan buku teks Bahasa Arab kelas X. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan Research and Development (R&D) melalui model 4D, yaitu Define, Design, dan Develop, penelitian ini diawali dengan analisis isi terhadap aktivitas berbicara dan komponen penilaian yang tersedia untuk mengidentifikasi kesenjangan konseptual dan pedagogis. Berdasarkan temuan tersebut, kerangka penilaian inovatif dirancang dengan menyelaraskan tema buku teks, tugas komunikatif autentik, dan rubrik berbicara yang dikembangkan secara analitis. Model yang dihasilkan mengintegrasikan simulasi kontekstual, presentasi lisan,

dan tugas naratif yang dinilai melalui beberapa indikator, seperti kelancaran berbicara, ketepatan pelafalan, relevansi kosakata, ketepatan struktur bahasa, kejelasan makna, dan kepercayaan diri komunikatif. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa model ini menyediakan pendekatan yang sistematis dan koheren untuk menilai keterampilan berbicara, serta bergerak melampaui evaluasi yang terfragmentasi dan hanya berfokus pada bentuk bahasa. Penelitian ini berkontribusi dalam menyediakan kerangka praktis berbasis teori untuk penilaian autentik keterampilan berbicara yang mengoperasionalkan prinsip Kurikulum Merdeka dan mendukung evaluasi bahasa komunikatif yang lebih bermakna.

Kata Kunci: Penilaian Autentik, Keterampilan Berbicara, Buku Teks Bahasa Arab, Penilaian Berbasis Kinerja.

INTRODUCTION

Arabic language learning in madrasahs holds a strategic position not only as a means of mastering a foreign language but also as a medium for understanding Islamic values and for global communication (Mufti & Mudrofin, 2021). In the context of Madrasah Aliyah (MA), the Arabic language is directed at building language competencies that include listening (*istimāʿ*), speaking (*kalām*), reading (*qirāʾah*), and writing (*kitābah*) skills in an integrated manner (Wiratmoko et al., 2023). Among these four skills, speaking skills are important because they reflect students' communicative ability to use Arabic actively and contextually in everyday life (Raswan et al., 2022). Along with the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, the paradigm of Arabic language learning has shifted from an approach oriented solely towards rule mastery to one focused on developing communicative competence and the Pancasila learner profile (Mustafa, 2024). The Merdeka Curriculum requires learner-centered, contextual learning that emphasizes the connection between the learning process and assessment. Within this framework, assessment is no longer understood solely as a tool for measuring learning outcomes but as an integral part of the learning process that encourages engagement, reflection, and the continuous development of learners' competencies (Fadlillah & Kusaeri, 2024).

However, the implementation of assessment in Arabic language learning, particularly for speaking skills, continues to face various pedagogical, methodological, and technical challenges. These challenges include the limitations of assessment instruments in fully capturing students' communicative competence, the subjectivity of assessors when evaluating aspects such as fluency, structural accuracy, and appropriateness of meaning, and the low consistency in applying assessment rubrics in the classroom (Sarbaini & Rahmi, 2024). The dominant assessment practices in madrasahs tend to be cognitive and written, such as multiple-choice tests, short-answer questions, and text comprehension questions (Elbarbary & Lima, 2024). While the performative and communicative aspects have not received sufficient attention. This situation means that students' speaking skills are often not measured authentically and do not reflect their actual Arabic communication skills (Saher et al., 2022).

This issue is also reflected in the Grade 10 Arabic textbook of the Merdeka Curriculum. It was found that the presentation of exercises and learning evaluations is still dominated by cognitive and structural exercises, such as vocabulary mastery, reading comprehension, and the application of linguistic rules, presented separately through fill-in-the-blank, multiple-choice, and written exercises (Alandejani & Sayed, 2024). Meanwhile, the speaking skills training provided tends to be limited to structured dialogues and imitation activities, making it more mechanical and repetitive, without providing adequate space for students to express their ideas orally in authentic communication contexts (Aulia & Mahliatussikah, 2025). This book also lacks systematic instruments for assessing speaking skills, such as performance rubrics with indicators of fluency, pronunciation accuracy, meaning accuracy, and contextual appropriateness; as a result, speech

assessment can be subjective and does not fully reflect students' communicative competence. This condition indicates that although the book has facilitated speaking practice to a limited extent, there remain significant shortcomings in authentic practice and in the assessment of oral performance, which should be the main requirements for implementing the Merdeka Curriculum (Sofa et al., 2023).

Therefore, authentic assessment is considered a relevant approach to address this issue. Authentic assessment emphasizes measuring students' abilities through tasks that reflect real-life situations, assessing both the process and the product, and integrating cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects (Al-Khadra et al., 2022). In the context of Arabic-speaking skills, authentic assessment allows learners to be evaluated on their contextual, objective, and meaningful abilities (Wiggins, 1990). Several previous studies have examined the use of authentic assessment in speaking skills, particularly in foreign language learning. These findings show that performance-based assessments, such as role-play, discussions, oral interviews, and portfolios, more realistically represent students' speaking abilities, although their implementation has not been fully optimized due to various pedagogical constraints (Maysuroh et al., 2023). In the context of Arabic language learning, despite the availability of a systematic performance rubric, speaking skills have not been assessed comprehensively (Sofa et al., 2023). In addition, most studies still focus on general assessment practices, and few have developed authentic assessment innovations integrated with official textbooks, especially in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum at the Madrasah Aliyah level (Mulyani et al., 2025).

These studies generally confirm that authentic assessment can provide more meaningful representations of students' communicative competence. However, most previous research has focused primarily on general assessment practices or classroom implementation without systematically integrating authentic assessment into official learning materials and curriculum structures. In the context of Arabic language learning at Madrasah Aliyah, studies specifically addressing the integration of authentic speaking assessment with the thematic organization of the Merdeka Curriculum textbook remain very limited. Furthermore, existing studies rarely connect communicative speaking tasks, textbook themes, learning outcomes, and analytical speaking rubrics within a coherent assessment framework. As a result, authentic assessment practices in Arabic-speaking instruction often remain fragmented, teacher-dependent, and insufficiently aligned with curriculum-based communicative competencies.

Therefore, this study attempts to fill this gap by developing an authentic speaking-skills assessment model integrated directly with the thematic structure of the Grade X Arabic textbook of the Merdeka Curriculum. The model combines contextual communicative tasks with analytical performance rubrics aligned with Phase E learning outcomes to support more objective, contextual, and communicative Arabic-speaking assessment practices. The novelty of this study lies in the development of a textbook-integrated authentic assessment framework specifically designed for Arabic-speaking instruction in Madrasah Aliyah within the context of the Merdeka Curriculum. Unlike previous studies that discuss authentic assessment in general language-learning contexts, this study systematically integrates textbook themes, communicative speaking tasks, Phase E learning outcomes, and analytical performance rubrics into a coherent and contextual assessment model. This integration provides both a theoretical contribution to communicative Arabic assessment and a practical framework that can be directly implemented in classroom instruction.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a Research and Development (R&D) approach using a 4D model (Define, Design, Develop, Disseminate) to develop an authentic speaking-skills assessment model and rubric integrated with the MA Arabic textbook for Grade X of the Merdeka Curriculum. The 4D model was chosen because it provides systematic stages of development relevant to the research objectives (Slamet, 2022). However, this study was limited to the Develop stage; the Disseminate stage was not implemented because the study focused on the design, development, and validation of the assessment product. The Define stage was carried out through a content analysis of the Grade X Arabic textbook used in Madrasah Aliyah under the Merdeka Curriculum. The analysis focused on

identifying the characteristics of speaking-skill activities (*kalām*), the orientation of existing assessments, and the alignment between textbook exercises and communicative competency demands in Phase E learning outcomes. The findings revealed that most speaking activities remained structurally oriented and lacked authentic oral-performance assessment instruments. Based on these findings, the Design stage focused on developing an authentic assessment framework comprising contextual communicative tasks and analytical speaking rubrics aligned with textbook themes.

The Develop stage was conducted through expert validation to evaluate the content validity, construct relevance, clarity of indicators, and practicality of the developed assessment model and rubric. The validation process involved three experts consisting of an Arabic language education specialist, an educational assessment expert, and an experienced Madrasah Aliyah Arabic teacher. The experts assessed the developed product using a validation sheet based on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not appropriate) to 4 (highly appropriate). The validation results showed that the developed assessment model obtained an average validity score of 3.72, categorized as “very valid,” while the speaking assessment rubric obtained an average score of 3.68, indicating high relevance and appropriateness for communicative Arabic assessment.

Revisions were then made based on experts’ suggestions regarding the clarity of rubric descriptors, contextual suitability of communicative tasks, and consistency of assessment indicators. To ensure the reliability of the developed instrument, inter-rater agreement among validators was also examined using percentage agreement analysis. The results demonstrated a reliability coefficient of 0.87, indicating a high level of consistency among expert judgments. Data analysis in this study employed qualitative content analysis and descriptive analysis of expert validation results. The findings from both analyses were used to refine the authentic assessment framework and ensure that the final product was theoretically grounded, contextually relevant, and pedagogically applicable for Arabic-speaking assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are presented and discussed systematically to illustrate how the developed authentic assessment model addresses the identified gaps and aligns with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum in evaluating Arabic speaking skills.

Analysis of Authentic Assessment Needs for Speaking Skills in the Grade X Arabic Textbook of the Merdeka Curriculum

Based on content analysis of the Arabic Language MA Class X Merdeka Curriculum book, speaking skills (*kalām*) are directed at achieving simple contextual oral communication competencies, as reflected in Phase E learning outcomes that emphasize the ability to express meaning, ideas, and information orally in accordance with social contexts that are close to the lives of students. This competency is substantively equivalent to the KI/KD skills (KI-4) requirement in the previous curriculum: the ability to present ideas orally in simple, meaningful Arabic.

In the analyzed book, these competencies are addressed through core themes that resonate with students’ experiences, such as *التعارف* (introduction), *الحياة المدرسية* (school life), *الأسرة* (family), and *الأنشطة اليومية* (daily activities). These themes are well-suited to authentic speaking-skills assessment because they allow students to practice oral communication in real-world situations, such as introducing themselves, recounting daily activities, or conducting simple dialogues in a school environment. However, the analysis shows that the speaking exercises in the book remain limited to structured dialogues and imitation activities, so the development of speaking competence is not yet fully oriented toward complete communicative performance (Muslimah *et al.*, 2025).

Regarding assessment, the book does not provide evaluation instruments aligned with these learning outcomes. There is no rubric for assessing speaking skills that measures indicators of oral performance, such as fluency, pronunciation accuracy, vocabulary relevance to the theme, and the appropriateness of speech to the communication context. In fact, based on the learning objectives and themes presented in the book, authentic assessment of speaking skills can be effectively implemented through communicative tasks, such as role-plays, school-life dialogues, or simple oral presentations on daily activities (Shawish, 2022). Therefore, this analysis confirms the need to

develop an authentic speaking-skills assessment aligned with the learning outcomes for Grade X and directly integrated with the themes of the MA Kurikulum Merdeka Arabic textbook. The following summarizes the analysis of the need for authentic assessment of speaking skills, presented in tabular form.

Table 1. Analysis of Authentic Assessment Needs for Speaking Skills

Themes in the Book	Learning Outcomes/Speaking Competency	Forms of Speaking Practice in Books	Available Assessments
والتعارف والتحيات	Practicing oral texts independently	Imitated introductory dialogue and greetings	No rubric or criteria for oral assessment available
الأسرة والبيت	Practicing oral texts independently	Practice saying family vocabulary and sentence patterns	Assessment is unstructured and dependent on teachers
المدرسة	Conveying information about school activities and environment verbally	Structured dialogue and brief Q&A	There are no indicators for assessing speaking skills
الحياة اليومية	Practicing speech acts in simple conversations	Answering oral questions based on examples	No speaking assessment indicators
الهواية	Expressing interests and hobbies verbally using simple expressions	Practice conversations according to the examples provided	The assessment has not measured communication performance
الطعام والشراب	Verbal disclosure of food and beverages and eating habits	Conversation about food and drinks	No authentic assessment of speaking skills available

Designing an Authentic Speaking Skills Assessment Model

Based on the results of the needs analysis, this study developed an authentic speaking skills assessment model that measures students' ability to use Arabic in real, contextual, and meaningful ways. This model situates speaking skills (*kalām*) as oral communication performance rather than merely as the mastery of language structures. Therefore, the assessment is designed around an authentic performance assessment that reflects everyday communication situations and is aligned with the themes in the Arabic Language MA Class X Merdeka Curriculum book (Fauzi & Rahmawati, 2025).

Speaking exercises in this model are designed as authentic communicative tasks in which students speak orally in real time. In the theme *التعارف والتحيات* (introductions and greetings), for example, students simulate introducing themselves and greeting others in simple social situations. In the theme *الأسرة والبيت* (family and home), students give oral presentations describing their families and home environments. The theme of *المدرسة* is developed through contextual dialogues about school activities, while the theme of *الحياة اليومية* is realized through tasks of recounting daily activities orally and coherently. Meanwhile, in the *هواية* theme, students express their hobbies and personal interests, and in the *الطعام والشراب* theme, they simulate conversations about ordering food and drinks. These forms of practice require the active, spontaneous, and contextually appropriate use of Arabic, thus reflecting the principle of authentic assessment (Al Usman et al., 2023).

This authentic assessment model places assessment as an integral part of the learning process (assessment as learning). Students are assessed not only on the final product but also on the speaking performance process they demonstrate. Teachers act as facilitators and assessors,

observing students' oral performance against clear, measurable criteria, such as fluency, pronunciation accuracy, use of relevant vocabulary and structures, clarity of meaning, and appropriateness of speech to the communicative context (Albantani et al., 2025). With this approach, assessment serves not only as a tool to measure learning outcomes but also as a means of feedback that encourages continuous improvement in Arabic-speaking skills in line with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum (Mufid et al., 2023).

Development of Authentic Speaking Skills Assessment Rubrics

As an integral component of the authentic assessment model, this study developed an analytical and contextual rubric for assessing oral performance in Arabic. This rubric was developed to address the need for an objective, measurable, and transparent assessment instrument, given that the book's analysis shows that there is no systematic rubric for assessing speaking skills. With this rubric, teachers have a clear reference for assessing students' oral performance, while students understand the criteria for successful speaking skills (Kumar V et al., 2023). The authentic assessment rubric to be developed includes several key indicators that represent basic oral communication competencies aligned with the learning outcomes.

Table 2. Authentic Assessment Indicators for Speaking Skills

Assessment Aspects	Indicator	Description of Oral Performance Indicators
Fluency in Speaking	Fluency in speech	Students are able to speak continuously without long pauses that interrupt the meaning
Accuracy of Pronunciation	Clarity of pronunciation and sound of letters	The pronunciation of Hijaiyah letters and words is quite accurate and understandable
Vocabulary Usage	Vocabulary according to theme and situation	The vocabulary used is relevant to the theme and situation of the simulated communication
Simple Language Structure	Accuracy of basic sentence patterns	Speech using simple sentence structures that can be understood even if there are minor errors
Clarity and Accuracy of Meaning	Verbal messages can be understood by conversation partners	The conversation partner can understand the meaning without much clarification
Self-Confidence	Courage to speak up	Students actively speak without excessive hesitation

After determining the indicators, develop an authentic assessment rubric for speaking skills that aligns with the book's learning outcomes and themes. This rubric uses a graded assessment scale that allows teachers to assess students' speaking abilities more accurately. Each level of achievement describes students' oral performance descriptively rather than numerically, thereby making the assessment nonsubjective. This rubric can be applied to various forms of authentic speaking tasks, such as contextual dialogues, conversation simulations, simple oral presentations, and storytelling about daily activities. Thus, the authentic assessment rubric functions not only as an evaluation tool but also as a means of feedback to improve the quality of learning and Arabic-speaking skills in accordance with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum (Salih & Jabor, 2024).

To ensure the feasibility and quality of the developed authentic assessment model, expert validation was conducted during the Development phase. The validation process involved three validators: an expert in Arabic language learning, an expert in educational assessment, and an experienced Arabic language teacher at a Madrasah Aliyah. The validators evaluated the developed assessment framework and speaking rubric based on several aspects, including content relevance, clarity of indicators, communicative appropriateness, contextual appropriateness, practicality, and alignment with the principles of authentic assessment and the Merdeka Curriculum. The validation process used a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not appropriate) to 4 (very appropriate).

The results showed that the authentic assessment model received an average score of 3.72, placing it in the “highly valid” category. Meanwhile, the analytical speaking assessment rubric received an average score of 3.68, indicating that the rubric is highly relevant and suitable for assessing communicative Arabic speaking skills at the Madrasah Aliyah level.

Table 3. Results of Expert Validation

Validation Aspects	Average Score	Category
Relevance to Learning Outcomes	3.80	Very Valid
Clarity of Assessment Indicators	3.70	Very Valid
Contextual Communicative Tasks	3.75	Very Valid
Practicality of Rubric Use	3.60	Very Valid
Alignment with Authentic Assessment Principles	3.75	Very Valid
Average Score	3.72	Very Valid

In addition to validity testing, inter-rater agreement analysis was conducted to examine the consistency of expert judgments. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.87, indicating a high level of agreement among validators. This result demonstrates that the developed rubric and assessment framework possess good reliability and can consistently measure students’ communicative speaking performance. Several revisions were made based on experts’ suggestions, particularly the refinement of rubric descriptors, the simplification of assessment terminology, and the improvement of contextual speaking-task instructions. These revisions were intended to improve the clarity, usability, and pedagogical relevance of the assessment model before implementation in classroom settings. The following is an updated format for the authentic assessment of speaking skills.

Table 1. Implementation Results of the Authentic Speaking-Skills Assessment Rubric

Aspects Assessed	4	3	2	1
Fluency in Speaking		☑		
Accuracy of Pronunciation	☑			
Use of Vocabulary		☑		
Language Structure		☑		
Clarity of Meaning	☑			
Self-Confidence		☑		

The results of this pilot implementation indicate that the developed rubric can facilitate a more systematic, transparent, and communicative approach to speaking assessment. Furthermore, the analytical assessment format allows teachers to identify students’ strengths and weaknesses in specific aspects of oral performance, thereby supporting more meaningful feedback and continuous improvement in Arabic language proficiency in accordance with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum. The findings of this study demonstrate that the developed authentic assessment model supports the shift from structural-oriented language assessment toward communicative and performance-based assessment in Arabic language learning. By integrating contextual speaking tasks with textbook themes and Phase E learning outcomes, assessment becomes more closely aligned with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes meaningful learning and communicative competence. This finding is consistent with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) theory, which views language as a tool for social interaction rather than merely a system of grammatical rules. Therefore, speaking assessment should evaluate students’ ability to use language contextually and meaningfully in authentic communication situations (Kamal, 2025; Richards, 2006; Savignon, 1991).

The integration of communicative tasks, analytical rubrics, and textbook-based learning activities also reflects the concept of authentic assessment proposed by Wiggins, which emphasizes the importance of evaluating students through real-world performance tasks (Wiggins, 1990). In

this study, students were assessed through oral dialogues, simulations, and presentations directly related to themes found in the Arabic textbook, such as introductions, school life, and daily activities (Maysuroh *et al.*, 2023). This contextual integration makes assessment more relevant to students' experiences and encourages active participation in the learning process. As a result, assessment functions not only as a measurement tool but also as a learning process that facilitates reflection, feedback, and continuous improvement of speaking competence (AlHroob & Al-khresheh, 2026).

In addition, the development of analytical speaking rubrics contributes to improving the objectivity and transparency of Arabic-speaking assessment practices. Previous assessment practices in madrasahs were often dominated by subjective teacher judgments without clear assessment criteria. Through the developed rubric, teachers can systematically assess various dimensions of oral performance, including fluency, pronunciation accuracy, vocabulary use, language structure, clarity of meaning, and self-confidence (Almelhes & Alsaiani, 2024). This finding supports Bachman's perspective that language assessment should measure communicative language ability comprehensively rather than focusing solely on isolated linguistic knowledge. Consequently, the rubric provides a more measurable and pedagogically meaningful framework for assessing students' speaking performance (Liu & Yu, 2022).

Despite these contributions, this study still has several limitations. The research was limited to the development and expert validation stages without large-scale classroom implementation or experimental testing. Therefore, the effectiveness and practicality of the developed assessment model in diverse madrasah contexts have not yet been empirically examined. Future studies are recommended to conduct field implementation and experimental research to evaluate the model's impact on students' communicative speaking competence. In addition, further development that integrates digital assessment platforms and technology-based speaking evaluation may enhance the practicality and sustainability of authentic Arabic language assessment in the future.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study concludes that the authentic speaking-skills assessment model developed in this research effectively addresses the need for a more contextual, objective, and performance-based assessment framework in Arabic language learning under the Merdeka Curriculum. By integrating textbook themes with multidimensional analytical rubrics, the model strengthens the alignment between speaking assessment practices and communicative competency demands. The development process shows that authentic assessment can provide clearer performance indicators, more systematic scoring procedures, and more meaningful evaluation of students' oral communication skills. Therefore, the model contributes to improving the quality of Arabic speaking assessment by shifting the focus from structural language accuracy alone to broader communicative performance, including fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary use, language structure, clarity of meaning, and self-confidence.

Future research should examine the effectiveness, practicality, and impact of this model through classroom-based implementation, experimental studies, or broader field testing across different madrasah contexts. Arabic language teachers are encouraged to adapt this model as a practical assessment guide for evaluating students' speaking performance in a more transparent and competency-oriented manner. At the policy level, curriculum developers and educational institutions should consider incorporating authentic speaking assessment frameworks into Arabic language learning guidelines, teacher training programs, and assessment standardization systems. Further development may also integrate digital learning platforms to support more efficient scoring, feedback, documentation, and long-term sustainability of authentic assessment practices.

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