

The Effectiveness of Authentic Assessment on Improving Students' Arabic Language Skills at KH. Abdurrahman Wahid State Islamic University Pekalongan

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Abstract

Authentic assessment is an evaluation approach that emphasizes measuring students' abilities in real and applicable contexts. In Arabic language learning, this model is important because it is able to represent real language skills, both receptive and productive aspects. This study aims to determine the effectiveness of authentic assessment in improving Arabic language skills of second semester students at the KH. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan State Islamic University. The results of the study indicate that authentic assessment makes a positive contribution to improving students' Arabic language skills, especially in productive aspects such as kalam and kitabah. Contextual, meaningful tasks, and active student involvement are determining factors for success. Therefore, the integration of authentic assessment in Arabic language learning at the early level of college is highly recommended as an effective evaluation strategy.

Keywords: authentic assessment, arabic language skills, second semester students, learning evaluation.

Introduction

Globalization and the demands of the workplace demand Arabic language competency that is not only theoretical but also practical and applicable. Unfortunately, assessment implementation in higher education is still dominated by conventional models such as multiple-choice or short-answer tests, which tend to measure partial cognitive mastery and do not reflect complete language ability. However, in the context of Arabic language learning, authentic assessment is crucial because it assesses skills that reflect real-life situations, such as speaking, writing, and listening in natural language contexts.

According to Wiggins (1990), authentic assessment emphasizes realistic and relevant tasks, requiring students to demonstrate creative and effective performance, similar to that of adults in professional contexts (Winaryati, 2022). In Islamic higher education, particularly in Arabic language learning, this approach is relevant for developing productive (kalam, kitabah) and receptive (istima', qira'ah) language skills. A 2024 study by Mahyudin Ritonga showed that online evaluation platforms such as E-Campus are effective in supporting Arabic language assessment, but are still unable to comprehensively assess speaking skills in journals (Ritonga, Mahyudin, 2024). Furthermore, performance-based assessment has been shown to improve student fluency, coherence, accuracy, and motivation.

At KH. Abdurrahman Wahid State Islamic University in Pekalongan, Arabic language learning in the second semester serves as an important foundation for developing subsequent language skills. However, challenges remain in integrating authentic assessment as a systematic part of the curriculum. This study aims to measure the effectiveness of authentic assessment in improving students' Arabic language skills through a quasi-experimental design. The results are expected to provide an empirical contribution to the development of authentic and contextual performance-based Arabic language evaluation.

The urgency of authentic assessment in Arabic language learning is increasing along with the need to develop students' productive and receptive skills. *Istima'*, *kalam*, *qira'ah*, and *kitabah* skills must be assessed comprehensively so that students not only memorize material but also are able to use Arabic effectively in various situations. Authentic assessment provides an innovative and contextual solution to achieve this goal by requiring students to perform authentic and meaningful tasks (Indriana, 2018).

Furthermore, technological developments and digitalization have opened up new opportunities for implementing authentic assessment. The use of digital media allows teachers to design more varied and interactive assessments, such as digital presentations, video production, or online projects that require student collaboration and creativity. This makes authentic assessment increasingly relevant and adaptive to current developments and the needs of Arabic language learning.

Overall, authentic assessment in Arabic language learning is a crucial approach to ensuring that students not only master theory but also apply Arabic in real-life contexts. This assessment model supports holistic, creative, and contextual learning, significantly improving student motivation and learning outcomes.

Methods

This study employed a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental design, aiming to determine the effectiveness of authentic assessment in improving students' Arabic language skills. This design was chosen because it allowed researchers to compare two groups given different treatments under relatively similar learning conditions, but without random sampling. This approach allows for objective measurement of changes in students' language skills by comparing pre- and post-treatment results (pre-test and post-test), which were then statistically analyzed to draw conclusions.

The sample in this study were second-semester students in the Arabic Language Education Study Program at KH. Abdurrahman Wahid State Islamic University, Pekalongan. The sample was divided into two groups: an experimental group that received treatment in the form of authentic assessment, and a control group that continued using the conventional assessment system. The instruments used for data collection were a pre-test and a post-test, covering four language skills

(maharah lughawiyah): maharah istima', kalam, qira'ah, and kitabah. Assessment was conducted based on performance indicators tailored to the characteristics of authentic tasks that are contextual and representative of real-life Arabic communication skills.

Results and Discussion

1. Understanding Authentic Assessment

Authentic assessment is an evaluation method in education that emphasizes students' ability to apply their knowledge and skills to real-world or contextual situations (Anshori, 2023). This assessment not only measures what students know theoretically but also assesses the extent to which students can use that knowledge in activities relevant to everyday life or the real world.

Furthermore, authentic assessment is a form of evaluation designed to measure the extent to which students are able to apply knowledge and skills in real-world situations that reflect the real world or professional field. Jonathan Müller (2008) states that assessment is the embodiment of what has been taught by asking students to solve real-life and applicable problems. In this context, assessment focuses not only on theoretical mastery of concepts but also on the ability to complete tasks that require in-depth understanding and application in concrete situations. Therefore, authentic assessment integrates students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor competencies in the learning process (Shoimatun Febriyani & Febri isnawati, 2022).

In line with this view, Grant Wiggins (1993) emphasized that authentic assessment involves assignments that challenge students to apply their knowledge contextually in the form of questions or challenges with real meaning (Mueller & Nast, 2016). These assignments can take the form of simulations, projects, or problems that replicate real-world challenges faced by adults in various professions. This type of assessment provides space for students to demonstrate their abilities creatively, critically, and responsibly, while also reflecting their readiness to apply their knowledge outside the classroom. Thus, authentic assessment plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between education and the real world.

Effective authentic assessment in Arabic language learning, particularly in developing listening skills (maharah istima'), reading skills (maharah qira'ah), speaking skills (maharah kalam), and writing skills (maharah kitabah), requires students to perform realistic and meaningful tasks that mimic real-world situations. Wiggins emphasized that these assignments should enable students to perform effectively and creatively, rather than simply memorizing or repeating pre-existing answers.

In the context of maharah istima' (Islamic teaching), authentic assessment can take the form of listening to dialogues or lectures in Arabic, after which students are asked to respond or summarize the content orally or in writing. For maharah

qira'ah (Islamic teaching), students can be assessed through reading Arabic texts relevant to everyday life and critically analyzing their meaning. In maharah kalam (Islamic teaching), authentic assessment requires students to engage in conversations, presentations, or debates that simulate real-life communication situations. Meanwhile, in maharah kitabah (Islamic teaching), students are given assignments to write letters, essays, or reports that are applicable and relevant to real-life contexts.

In Arabic language learning, the effective implementation of authentic assessment, as Wiggins views it, helps students not only master linguistic aspects but also develop real-world, contextual communication skills. This is crucial for equipping students to interact effectively in various situations using Arabic, both orally and in writing (Winaryati, 2022).

2. Implementing Authentic Assessment in Arabic Language Learning

The implementation of authentic assessment in Arabic language learning is an innovative strategy that meets the needs of the times. This assessment aims to measure students' language skills comprehensively, from both receptive (istima', qira'ah) and productive (kalam, kitabah) aspects. With a contextual and activity-based approach, students are encouraged to not only understand theory but also apply their language skills in more practical ways (Resi Agustien, 2020).

The forms of authentic assessment implemented include Arabic language projects, portfolio assignments, participant observation, and performance-based assessments such as presentations and video conversations. This assessment encourages students to be more creative and active in producing Arabic, both orally and in writing. Through assignments such as writing activity reports in Arabic or engaging in dialogue within a thematic context, students become more engaged in a meaningful learning process (Nurgiantoro, 2015).

Observations showed that students in the experimental group who received authentic assessment demonstrated higher participation and a more consistent enthusiasm for learning. They were more motivated because they knew their work was being assessed based on actual performance, not simply multiple-choice questions. Their engagement also increased, as evidenced by their enthusiasm in group discussions and their confidence during presentations.

Furthermore, authentic assessment indirectly develops students' soft skills, such as independent learning, teamwork, and critical and reflective thinking. When students are faced with authentic tasks, they are required to design solutions, organize information, and express their ideas in original ways. Activities such as thematic presentations and project creation based on real-life contexts provide students with the opportunity to express their potential more broadly. This positively impacts self-confidence and a sense of ownership in the learning process (Widodo, 2022).

Furthermore, this approach also creates a more active and interactive classroom atmosphere. Interactions between lecturers and students become more open due to the two-way dialogue established during the assessment process. Not only do lecturers assess, but students are also involved in self- and peer-assessment. This activity provides a reflective experience that encourages students to objectively and constructively evaluate their own and others' performance, thus making the learning process more collaborative and meaningful (Syarifuddin et al., 2021).

Meanwhile, the control group, which received conventional assessment, tended to show limitations in the practical application of Arabic language skills. Although they were able to complete the questions well, they often lacked confidence in practicing speaking or writing in Arabic. This suggests that conventional assessments tend to only partially measure cognitive aspects and neglect the affective and psychomotor domains. Pre-test and post-test results showed a significant increase in scores in the experimental group compared to the control group. This indicates that authentic assessment not only helps students learn more actively but also has a direct impact on improving their language competency, particularly in speaking (*kalam*) and writing (*kitabah*) (Azwir, 2015). More functional language proficiency is evident in students' ability to respond to the authentic tasks given.

However, authentic assessment also has drawbacks. One of these is the time and readiness of teaching staff. Lecturers need more time to design authentic assignments, observe the process, and provide personalized feedback. Furthermore, not all lecturers have sufficient understanding and skills to design valid and reliable authentic assessment instruments. This assessment also requires a conducive learning environment, which is often not readily available.

On the other hand, the advantage of authentic assessment lies in its holistic and meaningful approach. This assessment assesses not only what students know but also what they can do with that knowledge. In addition to encouraging independent learning, this assessment also fosters a sense of responsibility, creativity, and the ability to collaborate. Therefore, the application of authentic assessment in Arabic language learning is highly recommended, especially to develop graduates who are communicative, reflective, and ready to face real-world challenges.

3. Self- and Peer-Assessment Reflection through Evaluation Forms

Self- and peer-assessment reflection is a logical continuation and practical response to the implementation of authentic assessment in Arabic language learning, as previously explained. Authentic assessment, which emphasizes students' real involvement in language practice, cannot be measured solely through their products or performance. Therefore, a measurement tool is needed that can

capture the learning process itself, both personally and interpersonally, through self- and peer-reflection. Students are given the space to consciously assess their contributions to speaking, discussing, and collaborating in Arabic contexts, as well as how they interpret these learning experiences (Lestari, Dewi, 2021).

The implementation of this reflection form reinforces the contextual and participatory approach promoted by authentic assessment. Through this form, students become not only objects of assessment but also active subjects in the evaluation process. This aligns with the spirit of 21st-century learning, which emphasizes the development of higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), such as critical, evaluative, and reflective thinking. By assessing themselves and their peers, students are encouraged to recognize their strengths and weaknesses in their actual use of Arabic, while simultaneously increasing their metacognitive awareness of their own learning process. This means that this reflection is not merely an administrative addition, but rather a core pedagogical element of a comprehensive, self-development-oriented authentic assessment system.

Furthermore, peer assessment helps create a more collaborative and democratic learning environment. Students learn to provide constructive feedback to their peers and accept criticism with openness. This practice is highly effective in improving students' interpersonal skills and reflective attitudes. Furthermore, peer assessment can also strengthen socio-linguistic competence, namely the ability to use Arabic politely and effectively in social interactions (Ritonga, Mahyudin, 2024).

In this study, the implementation of self- and peer-assessment forms was proven to have a positive impact on improving students' learning motivation and productive skills, particularly in maharah kalam (speaking). Students involved in the reflective process gained a better understanding of their own learning process and became more aware of the communication strategies they used. This supported the post-test results of the experimental group, which showed significant improvement compared to the control group. Thus, this reflective component strengthens the effectiveness of authentic assessment in Arabic language learning.

From these results, it can be concluded that self- and peer-reflection through evaluation forms is not only an assessment tool but also a pedagogical approach that strengthens the cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of language learning. Therefore, the integration of this reflective form is recommended as a routine part of the evaluation process for Arabic language learning at the tertiary level, particularly to promote student-centered learning and authentic learning.

Table 1 Self Assessment Form

Aspects Assessed	Score (1-5)	Comments/Reflection
I speak confidently in Arabic		
I am able to use appropriate vocabulary and language structures		
I actively contribute to group discussions		
I help group members understand the material		
I use communication strategies when I have difficulty conveying ideas		

Table 2 Self- And Peer-Assessment Form

Assessed Aspects	Score (1-5)	Short Comments/Reflection
My friend speaks fluently and confidently		
He uses Arabic well and appropriately in context		
He actively participates in group work		
He respects opinions and listens to others		
He helps direct discussions toward the right goals		

In the context of Arabic language learning, which demands communicative interaction, the use of this form helps deepen students' understanding of the pragmatic and socio-cultural dimensions of language. When students assess themselves and their peers, they are developing meta-linguistic awareness, which is crucial for foreign language acquisition. Therefore, this assessment form is not merely technical, but strategic and transformative in creating reflective and meaningful learning.

Conclusion

Authentic assessment has proven to be an effective evaluation approach in improving students' Arabic language skills, particularly in productive aspects such as kalam and kitabah. Unlike conventional assessments, which tend to only measure theoretical cognitive abilities, authentic assessment requires students to demonstrate real competency through contextual, meaningful tasks that resemble everyday life situations. This aligns with 21st-century learning principles that emphasize critical, collaborative, and reflective thinking.

Using a quasi-experimental approach, this study demonstrated that the group of students receiving authentic assessment experienced significant improvements in language skills compared to the control group. Assessment methods such as projects, portfolios, presentations, and conversation simulations encouraged students to engage actively and creatively. These activities not only developed linguistic skills but also increased self-confidence, responsibility, and the ability to work in a team.

The self-reflection and peer-assessment components integrated into authentic assessments also strengthened the affective and social dimensions of learning. Through evaluation forms, students were trained to objectively and constructively assess their own and their peers' performance. This practice not only deepened metacognitive awareness but also fostered a collaborative, democratic, and respectful academic culture. Thus, authentic assessment serves not only as a measure of academic achievement but also as a means of character development and social competence.

Although implementing authentic assessment requires preparation from lecturers, time, and facilities, the benefits are far greater in supporting meaningful and sustainable learning. Therefore, the author recommends that authentic assessment be systematically integrated into Arabic language curricula in universities. This is crucial for producing graduates who are not only theoretically proficient but also able to use Arabic effectively in real-life and professional settings.

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