Conference Paper

Challenges in Applying Higher Order Thinking Skills Assessment in the Teaching of Arabic in Indonesia

Moh. Ainin

Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia

ORCID:
Moh. Ainin: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4683-2622

Abstract

One of the teachers' responsibilities in teaching and learning process is to conduct assessment. The main purpose of assessment is to understand students' learning outcomes. Based on the outcomes, teachers can give feedback to improve the planning and the implementation of teaching process, and to determine the quality of the assessment instrument. The Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)-based assessment is urgently needed in schools to produce competitive graduates who have critical thinking, communicative, collaborative, and creative skills. However, there are some challenges in the implementation of HOTS-based assessment, such as students' low motivation and Arabic competence, ambiguous definitions of basic competences in the curriculum, and lack of HOTS materials in textbooks. These challenges can be solved by making an aquisition-based learning of Arabic, reconstructing the descriptions of basic competence, and adapting HOTS-based assessment which is in line with the students' ability.

Keywords: challenges, HOTS, Arabic teaching, solutions

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1. Introduction

As a decision maker in a classroom, Cooper (1977) argues that teachers' main responsibilities are planning, implementing, and conducting assessment of their teaching and learning practices. These responsibilities cannot be separated from teachers' roles as professionals inside and outside the class. Besides, these responsibilities are an interrelated unit in the learning system. Planning is the initial step before the process of teaching and learning begins. During this stage, teachers conduct a need analysis of the students, identify the goals of teaching and learning, and prepare the strategy, media, as well as the instruments for assessment.

Then, teachers implement them in the process of teaching and learning. In this stage, teachers should have been equipped with such competences as professional competence. An example of this competence is the ability to conduct innovative teaching and learning practice (Mahsunah et al., 2012). In addition, it is important for teachers to have social competence, as it helps them create interactive, fun, interesting, cooperative, and communicative teaching and learning process.

The third responsibility of a teacher is to conduct assessment. In this stage, teachers evaluate the extent to which the learning goals are achieved, be the process or the learning outcomes. This assessent is also meant to provide feedback for improving the planning and implementation of teaching and learning process. Al-Khuli (2000) and Sahtut and Ja'far (2014) argue that assessment has several purposes such as (a) to identify the learning outcomes, (b) to measure the quality of the teaching and learning practice, (c) to categorize students, (d) to diagnose challenges in the process of teaching and learning. Assessment is also useful in giving empirical evidence for the quality of teaching practice. Thus, when an assessment is not done correctly, it will affect the accuracy of the information about the quality of the teaching practice. Regarding this issue, Gronlund and Linn (1985) emphasize that assessment needs to be conducted appropriately and accurately.

The implementation of the assessment must be in line with the curriculum. The 2013 curriculum emphasizes that the learning process should focus on the students' active participation in the learning process so that they can achieve higher order thinking skills. The purpose in encouraging students' participation is to meet the goals of 21st century learning (21, *Partnership for 21st Century* skills) which include critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity (Erdogan, 2019; Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2019).

Related to the aforementioned issues, the Indonesian Ministry of Education designs HOTS-based assessment. HOTS can be defined as a way of reasoning which involves critical, analytical, logic, creative, and metacognitive thinking. Bookhart (2010) defines HOTS as the process of reasoning which involves analytical skill, evaluation, and creativity. Previous studies (e.g. Chinedu & Kamis, 2015) suggest that students who are trained to think critically have better performance in learning compared to those who have lower order thinking skills (LOTS).

HOTS-based assessment encourages students to develop their thinking ability at the metacognitive level. Hence, it measures more than just the ability at the level of remembering and understanding. In more detail, Anderson and Krathwohl, (2001) describe the sub-categories of metacognitive knowledge into (a) knowledge of strategies, (b)

knowledge of cognitive tasks, including knowledge about contexts and conditions such as understanding the test types given by teachers, and (c) self-knowledge, which includes knowledge of strengths and weaknesses, as well as the awareness of the level of knowledge.

Dalam konteks pembelajaran bahasa Arab di sekolah di Indoensia, guru menghadapi permasalahan penerapan penilaian yang berbasis pada kemampuan berpikir tingkat tinggi atau HOTS. Mereka beranggapan bahwa penerapan penilaian berbasis HOTS dalam pembelajaran bahasa Arab di sekolah kurang realistis dan belum kondusif untuk diterapkan secara total. Terkait dengan masalah ini, makalah ini mencoba mengidenti-fikasi permasalahan yang ada dan sekaligus mengemukakan gagasan konseptual untuk memecahkan permasalahan tersebut.

In the context of teaching and learning Arabic at schools in Indonesia, most teach-ers often face some challenges in applying HOTS-based assessment. HOTS-based assessment is often considered as not being practical and not conducive to be fully implemented in the process of teaching and learning Arabic at schools. Related to this problem, the present paper attempts to identify the existing challenges in the implementation of HOTS-based assessment, and at the same time proposes conceptual ideas to solve these challenges.

1.1. Challenges In Implementing Hots-Based Assessment

HOTS-based assessment is relatively new for Arabic teachers in Indonesia. In fact, majority of Arabic teachers usually assess the students' Arabic competence at low order thinking skills such as the extent to which the students are able to memorize and understand. The new curriculum, however, emphasizes the importance of conducting HOTS-based assessment. Thus, there are several challenges that most Arabic teachers often have.

1.1.1. Students' lack of motivation

Motivation is the force that guides people to achieve something. It is motivation that drives people to perform an activity. Salvin (2009) argues that motivation is something that causes a person to walk, that keeps them going, and something that determines where someone tries to walk. Santrock (2010) defines motivation as a process that provides encouragement, direction and persistence. However, the reality shows that

Indonesian students' motivation to learn Arabic is generally not as high as their motivation to learn English. The results of a survey conducted by Ainin (2011) at various Islamic schools in Malang showed that the most favoured foreign languages to learn were English (79%), Arabic (20%), and Japanese (1 %). The application of HOTS-based assessments in the situations where the learners are low-motvated inevitably will psychologically make them less enthusiastic about learning Arabic.

1.1.2. Students' low Arabic competence

Arabic teachers often complain about the students' low initial Arabic skills and competence. Most students studying Arabic at schools in Indonesia lack of sufficient basic Arabic skills. Hence, this will affect the implementation of HOTS-based assessments at schools. If this assessment model is imposed on students, the level of frustration in learning Arabic will be higher, because the competencies measured exceed their Arabic language skills. Based on Krashen's input hypothesis, a person can progress in their knowledge of the language when they comprehend language input that is slightly above the initial ability possessed, or "i+1", where "i" is the learner's interlanguage and "+1" is the next stage of language acquisition (Gass and Selinker, 2008). On the other hand, if the input is i + 2 or + 3, the input that is exposed cannot be understood and may cause language learners to give up learning Arabic. If the HOTS-based assessment measures the abilities which are far above the initial abilities of these students, it is possible that their level of frustration will increase.

1.1.3. Ambiguous defintions of basic competencies in the curriculum

The preparation of assessment instruments (tests) must refer to the basic competencies contained in the curriculum. The basic competencies that are used as the reference for the development of assessment instruments must be clearly formulated and straightforward. However, the basic competence of Arabic which is used as the reference for the preparation of Arabic language tests often time are ambiguous, be the domains and the substance. The ambiguity makes it difficult for teachers to develop HOTS-based Arabic language tests. Following are some examples of ambiguous defintions of basic competencies quoted from the Arabic curriculum for Madarasah (Islamic School), based on the Decree of the Minister of Religion No. 189 of 2019.

Basic competence for skills (B)	Basic competence for knowledge (A)
Present the result of analysis of the main ideas of the Arabic texts which are related to the theme *at-tasawwuq* (*fi Asuqi at-taqlidy*, *fis* Supermarket), by observing the form, meaning, and functions of grammatical pattern *adad alf wa milyun wa milyar wa bilyun* in both oral and written forms. (page 396	Analyze the main ideas of Arabic texts which are related to the theme *at-tasawwuq* (*fi Asuqi at-taqlidy*, *fis* Supermarket), by observing the form, meaning, and functions of grammatical pattern *adad alf wa milyun wa milyar wa bilyun*". (page 396)

1.1.4. Levels of comprehensions in textbooks

The problem related to textbooks in the application of Arabic language proficiency assessment in HOTS-based schools is the problem of Arabic textbooks. The contents of Arabic textbooks, especially those used in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (SD) and MTs (SMP) are still at a simple level according to the ability level of students. The simplicity of textbooks, both qualitatively and quantitatively, is difficult to develop into the HOTS-based Arabic language test. Competencies that can be measured from the textbook tend to be low or medium level competencies, not HOTS-based competencies.

The last challenge in the implementation of HOTS-based assessment is related to the textbooks that are widely used in the Arabic teaching in Indonesia. The contents of the Arabic textbooks, especially those commonly used in elementary schools and junior high schools, are still at lower level of thinking skills. Consequently, it is difficult for teachers rto develop the content into ones that relfect HOTS. The competencies assessed by the textbooks are those of LOTS, and not based on HOTS.

2. Some Possible Solutions

Based on the aforementioned challenges in implementing HOTS-based assessment in the teaching and learning of Arabic in Indonesia, I propose some conceptual ideas to solve the challenges.

2.1. Carrying out acquisition-based learning

Basically, HOTS-based assessment can be implemented in a group of students that is highly motivated and has sufficient basic Arabic comeptence. This form of assessment is less appropriate to be used for assessing students with low basic Arabic competence. Therefore, the first attempt should focus on improving students' Arabic competence, and this can be done by acquisition-based teaching and learning Arabic, which are based on students' level of acquisition. By doing so, the students' Arabic competence

can be developed and eventually their abilities can be assessed by using HOTS-based assessment.

2.2. Reconstructing the definitions of basic competencies

As has been argued in the previous sections, the descriptions of basic competence contained in the curriculum are somewhat ambiguous, making it difficult for teachers to design an appropriate instrument for HOTS-based assessment. Therefore, to solve this issue, the descriptions should be revised so that it will be easier for the teachers to design the instrument. The following tables present some revisions of the definitions of basic competencies.

Basic competence for knowledge	Basic competence for knowledge (revised)
Analyze the main ideas of Arabic texts which are related to the theme *at-tasawwuq* (*fi Asuqi at-taqlidy*, *fis* Supermarket), by observing the form, meaning, and functions of grammatical pattern *adad alf wa milyun wa milyar wa bilyun*".	Understand the uses of words, phrases, and sentence structures which are related to the theme *at-tasawwuq* (*fi Asuqi at-taqlidy*, *fis* Supermarket) while also observing the form, meaning, and functions of the grammatical pattern *adad alf wa milyun wa milyar wa bilyun*".
Basic competence for skills	Basic competence for skills (revised)
Present the result of analysis of the main ideas of the Arabic texts which are related to the theme *at-tasawwuq* (*fi Asuqi at-taqlidy*, *fis* Supermarket), by observing the form, meaning, and functions of grammatical pattern *adad alf wa milyun wa milyar wa bilyun* in both oral and written forms.	1. Explain orally some information about *at-tasawwuq* (*fi Asuqi at-taqlidy*, *fis* Supermarket) by paying attention to the form, meaning, and functions of grammatical form *adad alf wa milyun wa milyar*. 2. Explain in written form some information about *at-tasawwuq* (*fi Asuqi at-taqlidy*, *fis* Supermarket) by paying attention to the form, meaning, and functions of grammatical form *adad alf wa milyun wa milyar*.

2.3. Adapting HOTS-based Arabic tests

In this digital era of 21st century, HOTS-based assessment is one of the pedagogical demands to improve the quality of education. One of the responsibilites of Arabic teachers is to conduct HOTS-based assessment. However, this type of assessment has not been well implemented. As an attempt to solve this issue, Arabic teachers need to develop instruments to conduct HOTS-based assessment. This can be done by developing adaptive instrument, that is, developing HOTS-based instrument which is appropriate to the students' competence. For instance, to measure the cognitive ability of students in the 6th level, teachers can develop tests which ask the students to describe a picture in written form. In the context of Arabic teaching and learning in

elementary schools, the test can assess students' HOTS by giving them stimuli in the form of pictures.

3. Conclusions

The Arabic curriculum of year 2013 has maintained that the process of teaching and learning should encourgae students' active participation in the class. This is to produce graduates who are able to achieve high order thinking skills. This demand is a response to the need of the 21st century, where critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity are of top priority. The demand is also reflected in the form of assessment, which also needs to measure students' high order thinking skills.

There are some challenges in the implementation of HOTS-based assessment at some schools in Indonesia. First, most students lack of motivation to learn Arabic, which also lead to the lack of sufficient basic Arabic competence. Second, the descriptions of basic competence contained in the curriculum are to some degree ambiguous and thus, need further revisions. Third, the materials contained in most Arabic textbooks used in schools are categorized as low order thinking skills. This paper offers some solutions to those problems. First, the teaching of Arabic should be done gradually, by following students' level of acquisition. Second, the ambiguous descriptions of basic competence as stated in the curriculum should be revised. Third, teachers need to begin developing HOTS-based tests which are in line with the students' competence.

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