



## RECONSTRUCTING KAHOOT FOR MAHĀRAH ISTIMĀ' EVALUATION IN ARABIC LANGUAGE LEARNING: A CRITICAL REVIEW

Ainun Nikmah <sup>1\*</sup>, Aufa Rahma <sup>2</sup>, Muhammad Jafar Shodiq <sup>3</sup>  
<sup>1,2,3</sup> Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Indonesia

### Abstract

The use of Kahoot in Arabic language learning is increasingly widespread, particularly in the *Maharah Istimā'* evaluation activities. However, its implementation has not fully reflected the complexity of listening skill assessment because it remains largely oriented toward speed and accuracy in answering questions. This study aims to reconstruct the use of Kahoot so that it aligns with the authentic, contextual, and meaning-oriented principles of *Maharah Istimā'*'s evaluation. This research employed a qualitative approach with a library research design through conceptual analysis of language evaluation theories and the characteristics of Kahoot as a digital learning medium. The literature was collected from scholarly indices in Google Scholar, ERIC, and Scopus-related databases published between 2019-2026. The findings indicate that the use of Kahoot in listening evaluation tends to reduce the listening process into answer-selection activities characterized by surface-level and non-contextual questions, thereby limiting the assessment of discourse comprehension and meaning interpretation. The study also found a mismatch between Kahoot-based evaluation practices and the principles of Arabic language evaluation, particularly in terms of authenticity, contextuality, and cognitive depth. Therefore, this study proposes a reconstruction through a shift toward meaning-oriented assessment, the application of contextual and cognitively engaging evaluation principles, and the repositioning of Kahoot as a pedagogical support tool rather than the primary orientation of evaluation. This study offers a conceptual framework for aligning gamified assessment tools with authentic listening evaluation principles in Arabic language pedagogy. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of more pedagogical and meaningful digital-based listening evaluation practices.

**Keywords:** Gamification in Education; Listening Skills Assessment; Arabic Language Pedagogy; Digital Assessment Tools; Meaning-Oriented Evaluation

* Correspondence Address:	ainun.durenan@gmail.com			
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## INTRODUCTION

## مقدمة

Evaluation is a very important component in the language learning process, including in mastering Arabic, because it functions as an instrument to assess competency achievement as well as a basis for determining the effectiveness of the learning process that has been implemented (Fitriani & Herdah, 2025). In the context of Arabic language learning, evaluation is not only focused on cognitive aspects, but also includes communicative language skills, such as *Maharah Istimā'* or listening skills. This skill is complex because it involves understanding language sounds, grasping lexical meaning, and interpreting messages within specific communication contexts. Therefore, the *Maharah Istimā'* evaluation must be designed comprehensively to represent students' listening abilities fully (Mubasyiroh et al., 2025).

However, the practice of evaluating *Maharah Istimā'* in the field still shows several significant shortcomings. Evaluations are often conducted using simplistic and contextual approaches, such as using multiple-choice questions without authentic audio support or without considering the overall context of the discourse (Abdullah et al., 2026). This situation tends to cause evaluations only to measure the ability to partially recognize information, rather than the ability to deeply understand its meaning. Consequently, there is a diminishment of the essence of *Maharah Istimā'*, which should encompass an integrative process of understanding sound, meaning, and context (Fitria, 2025). Furthermore, limitations in the use of evaluation media also exacerbate these issues. *Maharah Istimā'*'s evaluation is often conducted traditionally without maximizing digital technology. This results in low levels of interactivity and a lack of meaningful evaluation experiences for students. In the context of 21st-century learning, this condition is certainly a challenge in itself, considering that the integration of technology in learning and evaluation is a need that cannot be ignored (Inayati, 2023).

Amidst the advancement of digital technology, various gamification-based learning platforms are starting to be used as alternative evaluation media, one of which is the Kahoot application. Kahoot offers an interactive, competitive, and game-based evaluation system, thereby increasing student engagement in the learning process (Rasdin et al., 2024). Several studies have shown that using Kahoot can increase students' motivation to learn, active participation, and cognitive engagement in language learning. In fact, in the context of Arabic language learning, Kahoot has also been reported to support the development of critical thinking skills in listening (Hikmawati et al., 2025). However, the use of Kahoot in the evaluation of *Maharah Istimā'* is not free from several conceptual issues that require further examination. In practice, Kahoot is often used solely as an entertainment or fun-oriented quiz, without being accompanied by an evaluation design based on listening skills principles (Sholihah et al., 2023). The questions presented tend to be shallow, non-contextual, and emphasize speed of response over depth of understanding. Therefore, the use of Kahoot is potentially inconsistent with the *Maharah Istimā'* evaluation principle, which demands a comprehensive and contextual understanding of meaning (Azim et al., 2025).

In classroom practice, the use of Kahoot in *Maharah Istimā'* evaluation is commonly carried out by playing Arabic audio or short conversations, followed by multiple-choice questions that must be answered by students within a limited time (Hikmawati et al., 2025). This model is considered practical and capable of creating interactive and competitive learning situations. However, in many cases, the evaluation process tends to emphasize speed and accuracy in answering rather than encouraging students to construct meaning and understand discourse comprehensively (Suharsono et al., 2023).

On the other hand, previous research on Kahoot in Arabic language learning has generally focused on the effectiveness of using this medium in improving learning outcomes or student motivation. Meanwhile, research specifically addressing the issues surrounding Kahoot's use in the evaluation of *Maharah Istimā'* and offering conceptual reconstructions of its use remains relatively limited (Haddad & Abidin, 2025). This indicates a gap between the increasingly widespread practice of using Kahoot and the development of in-depth theoretical studies regarding its suitability with the principles of language learning evaluation.

Based on the explanation above, this study aims to critically examine the problems surrounding the use of Kahoot in the evaluation of *Maharah Istimā'* and to formulate a conceptual reconstruction that is more aligned with the characteristics of listening skills. Accordingly, this study focuses on three main questions: 1) how is the conceptual nature of *Maharah Istimā'*

evaluation in Arabic language learning, 2) what are the main problems in utilizing Kahoot for the evaluation of *Maharah Istimā'*, and 3) how can the utilization of Kahoot be reconstructed to align with the principles of authentic and contextual evaluation. Thus, this research is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of digital technology-based Arabic language learning evaluation, while also serving as a practical reference for educators in utilizing Kahoot in a more pedagogical and meaningful manner.

## METHOD

## منهج

This study employs a qualitative library research approach. This approach was chosen because it focuses on a conceptual review and in-depth analysis of the use of Kahoot media in the evaluation of *Maharah Istimā'*, without involving direct data collection in the field (Zed, 2008). This literature research provides researchers with the opportunity to explore various existing concepts, theories, and real-world findings to build a comprehensive understanding and create relevant conceptual reconstructions.

Literature was searched through several academic databases and open-access platforms, including Google Scholar, ERIC, and Scopus-indexed journals, using keywords such as “*Kahoot in Arabic Learning*”, “*Maharah Istimā' evaluation*”, “*Arabic listening assessment*”, and “*digital gamification in language learning*”. The literature search focused on publications from 2019-2026 to ensure the relevance and novelty of the reviewed studies (Snyder, 2019). The selected literature consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, and scholarly books related to Arabic language evaluation and digital learning technologies (Xiao & Watson, 2019).

The approach used in this study is descriptive-analytical with a focus on critical analysis. The descriptive approach is used to describe the nature of *Maharah Istimā'*'s evaluation and the application of Kahoot in Arabic language teaching, while the analytical-critical approach is used to identify gaps between these practices and ideal language learning evaluation principles (Sidiq et al., 2019). With this approach, the research goes beyond description but also attempts to provide interpretation and conceptual assessment of the phenomena studied.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data consists of relevant scientific articles from the past five years discussing the use of Kahoot, particularly in the context of Arabic language learning and listening skill evaluation. Meanwhile, secondary data includes books on Arabic language teaching methodology, learning evaluation theories, and literature related to technology-based learning and gamification. Data sources were selected purposively, considering relevance, novelty, and academic credibility.

The data collection process is carried out through documentation studies by researching, identifying, and inventorying various library sources that are in accordance with the research focus (Abubakar, 2021). This activity included in-depth reading, noting key points, and organizing the data based on themes relevant to the evaluation of *Maharah Istimā'* and the use of Kahoot.

Data analysis in this study uses content analysis techniques, which is a method for systematically examining text content to obtain meaning that is relevant to the research objectives (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The analysis process was carried out through several steps. The first was data reduction by selecting relevant information. The second was thematic categorization, which involved grouping data into themes such as characteristics of *Maharah Istimā'*, Kahoot features, and usage issues. The third step was critical analysis, examining the gaps between Kahoot usage and ideal evaluation principles. The fourth step was drawing conclusions

in the form of a conceptual reconstruction of Kahoot's use in evaluating *Maharah Istimā'* (Safitri et al., 2022).

The validity and trustworthiness of the analysis were ensured through theoretical triangulation and conceptual cross-checking among various scholarly sources discussing language evaluation, listening assessment, and digital learning media (Mayring, 2014). In addition, repeated reading and comparative interpretation were conducted to maintain analytical consistency and minimize subjective bias. The researcher also employed conceptual member checking by comparing the analytical findings with established theoretical frameworks in Arabic language evaluation studies (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

## RESULT | نتائج

### The Essence of *Maharah Istimā'* Evaluation

Based on the literature study conducted, listening ability or *Maharah Istimā'* is a receptive skill in mastering Arabic, which is aimed at understanding spoken language in its entirety (Tambunan & Yahfidzam, 2025). This skill is not solely related to listening activities, but also includes a series of cognitive processes that enable learners to convert sound information into meaningful understanding (Hikmatuddiniah et al., 2025). Thus, listening skills encompass phonological, semantic, and contextual dimensions that are interconnected in the process of speech comprehension.

The research results show that in the implementation of language learning, the listening process occurs through several interrelated phases. The initial phase is sound recognition, which includes the ability to differentiate and identify Arabic sounds, including letters, words, and intonation patterns. The next phase is meaning processing, namely the ability to connect the sounds heard with lexical meaning and grammatical structure. The final phase is interpretation, which is the ability to understand the original intent of an utterance within a specific communication context (Rohmawati, 2025). This series of phases demonstrates that listening is not a simple matter, but rather involves a multi-layered and integrated process of understanding.

Furthermore, the analysis also revealed listening ability indicators that can be used as a reference in evaluations. These indicators include: 1) The ability to understand sounds accurately, including sensitivity to differences in phonemes and intonation. 2) The ability to capture the meaning of speech at the word, phrase, and sentence level. 3) The ability to understand context, namely, understanding the relationship between speech and the communication situation that underlies it. These three indicators show that the evaluation of listening skills does not only cover linguistic aspects, but also aspects of contextual understanding (Taufik et al., 2024).

In addition to these indicators, the results of this study also confirm that the evaluation of listening skills is based on several principles that form the basis for its design. First, the principle of authenticity, namely the use of stimuli that reflect the use of language in real contexts, such as everyday dialogue or conversation. Second, the principle of contextuality, namely delivering material in the form of complete text, so that students can understand the relationship between parts of the speech. Third, the principle of understanding, namely, the emphasis on the ability to understand the meaning as a whole, not just recognizing the elements of language separately (Saepudin, 2012). Thus, this analysis shows that evaluating listening skills is a complex process and requires measuring tools that can accommodate various aspects of spoken language comprehension comprehensively.

### Characteristics of Kahoot as an Evaluation Media

The research results show that Kahoot is a digital education platform that adopts gamification and is widely used in learning evaluation processes. Kahoot is designed as an interactive medium that provides opportunities for students to engage directly through digital devices, both individually and in groups (Fadilatullaila et al., 2025). Analysis shows that Kahoot has key characteristics that distinguish it from traditional assessment tools. First, its real-time, interactive quiz system allows students to answer questions live and receive instant feedback. This characteristic creates a fast and responsive evaluation dynamic. Second, the use of multiple-choice questions with time limits requires students to provide answers within a specified time. This mechanism provides a clear framework for evaluation and encourages active student participation (Kurniawati et al., 2025)

In addition to these unique characteristics, research also reveals several advantages of Kahoot as an evaluation tool. Integrated gamification elements such as points, rankings, and engaging graphics contribute to increased student motivation and participation. Furthermore, the live feedback system allows students to immediately see the results of their answers, making the evaluation process more transparent and interactive (Fitrianingrum & Kholis, 2025).

However, the analysis also identified several challenges in using Kahoot. The predominantly multiple-choice format of the questions results in limited evaluation options. Furthermore, the use of audio as a stimulus in Kahoot also has limitations, both in terms of duration and the complexity of the material presented. This shows that although Kahoot excels in terms of interactivity, there are certain limitations in its use as an evaluation tool, especially in the context of listening skills. Based on the results found, it can be seen that the evaluation character of *Maharah Istimā'* and the characteristics of Kahoot as an evaluation tool show differences in conceptual and technical aspects. This finding serves as a basis for further analyzing the problem of Kahoot utilization and formulating a reconstruction of its use in the evaluation of *Maharah Istimā'* in the discussion section.

### **Thematic Finding on Kahoot-Based *Maharah Istimā'* Evaluation**

The findings indicate that use of Kahoot in the evaluation of *Maharah Istimā'* presents several pedagogical and technological challenges. From a pedagogical perspective, the evaluation of listening skills ideally emphasizes the process of meaning construction, contextual interpretation, and comprehensive discourse understanding. However, the operational mechanism of Kahoot tends to prioritize rapid responses through time-limited multiple-choice questions. This condition potentially shifts the orientation of evaluation from deep comprehension toward answer recognition and speed performance. As a result, the listening evaluation process becomes more focused on obtaining correct answers quickly rather than exploring students' understanding of meaning and communication context.

From a technological perspective, the interactivity and efficiency offered by Kahoot do not always correspond with the complexity of listening evaluation. The platform interface encourages concise responses and simplified question structures, whereas listening comprehension frequently requires reflective interpretation and contextual analysis. In addition, the limited duration of audio presentation and the dominance of objective question formats reduce opportunities for students to analyze discourse comprehensively. Consequently, several aspects of discourse comprehension become difficult to measure optimally through standard Kahoot mechanism.

These Findings also indicate a conceptual mismatch between the characteristics of Kahoot and the principles of *Maharah Istimā'* evaluation. This mismatch can be observed in the table.

**Table 1.** Kahoot and the principles of Maharah Istimā' evaluation

No	Kahoot Features	Principles of <i>Maharah Istimā'</i> Evaluation	Potential Mismatch
1	Time-limited responses	Deep meaning comprehension	Students focus on speed rather than interpretation
2	Multiple-choice format	Contextual and authentic understanding	Evaluation tends to measure recognition instead of comprehension
3	Short audio stimulus	Comprehensive discourse interpretation	Limited opportunity to analyze full communication context
4	Gamification orientation	Reflective listening process	Competition may reduce reflective understanding
5	Instant scoring system	Gradual cognitive processing	Listening process becomes result-oriented

In addition, the analysis also demonstrates that the quality of Kahoot-based listening evaluation largely depends on the construction of evaluation items. Several findings reveal that some evaluation items still emphasize surface-level recognition, while reconstructed items tend to encourage contextual interpretation and communicative understanding. The following examples illustrate these differences.

### Example 1: Recognition-Based Item

Audio:

"الطالب يذهب إلى المدرسة صباحًا"

Question:

"Where does the student go?"

This type of question only measures literal information recognition and does not encourage contextual interpretation.

### Example 2: Contextual Interpretation Item

Audio:

"تأخر أحمد عن الحضور إلى الفصل لأنه استيقظ متأخرًا بسبب انقطاع الكهرباء ليلاً"

Question:

"What can be inferred about the reason behind Ahmad's lateness?"

This type of question encourages students to connect information, identify causal relationships, and interpret contextual meaning rather than merely recognizing isolated vocabulary.

### Example 3: Communicative Understanding Item

Audio:

"قال المعلم للطلاب: غدًا سيكون الامتحان النهائي، لذلك يجب عليكم مراجعة الدروس جيدًا"

Question:

"What is the speaker's communicative intention in the dialogue?"

This form of question emphasizes contextual comprehension and interpretation of communicative purpose within authentic discourse situations.

The findings further indicate that the reconstruction of Kahoot utilization in *Maharah Istimā'*'s evaluation should not focus merely on technological adaptation, but also on pedagogical redesign. This reconstruction involves shifting evaluation orientation from rapid-answer

assessment toward contextual meaning comprehension. Therefore, Kahoot should be positioned as a supporting medium for authentic listening evaluation rather than as the central determinant of evaluation quality.

Based on the findings above, it can be seen that the evaluation characteristics of *Maharah Istimā'* and the operational characteristics of Kahoot demonstrate differences in both conceptual and technical aspects. These findings provide the basis for further discussion regarding the problem of Kahoot utilization and the reconstruction of its use in the evaluation of *Maharah Istimā'*.

## DISCUSSION

## مناقشة

### Problems of Using Kahoot in the Evaluation of *Maharah Istimā'*

The findings in the results section indicate that the assessment of *Maharah Istimā'* is a highly complex process, involving a combination of sound recognition, understanding of meaning, and interpretation of the communication context. This complexity requires an evaluation tool that can support a gradual and comprehensive understanding process. However, Kahoot's characteristics as an evaluation tool tend not to fully align with these needs, creating various challenges in its practical use.

The first problem is the simplification of the meaning of *Maharah Istimā'* in evaluation practice. Conceptually, *istimā'* is not merely an act of listening, but rather a process of creating meaning that involves hierarchical information processing (Fitrianingrum & Kholis, 2025). However, in Kahoot-based applications, this skill is often simplified into a simple activity of listening to stimuli and selecting the answer that is considered correct. This simplification shifts the focus of evaluation from comprehension to rapid response. As a result, important dimensions of *istimā'*, such as the ability to connect information, understand the speaker's intent, and interpret meaning in context, are not fully addressed.

The second problem is related to the characteristics of questions which tend to be shallow and non-contextual. Research results show that *istimā'* evaluation is ideally based on complete discourse, allowing students to understand the relationships between parts of a speech (Taufik et al., 2024). However, in Kahoot practice, questions are often presented as separate short questions. This condition results in students only focusing on certain pieces of information without understanding the entire context of the communication. Furthermore, multiple-choice questions with limited options tend to encourage answering strategies based on recognition rather than understanding. This suggests that the cognitive depth desired in the *istimā'* evaluation has not been optimally achieved (Harjanto et al., 2022).

The third problem is the limitation in assessing the understanding of discourse and the interpretation of meaning. Based on research results, the main indicators of *istimā'* include the ability to comprehensively understand the content of a discourse and interpret its meaning, including implicit meanings and the speaker's communicative purpose (Ratnawati, 2020). However, the Kahoot-based evaluation format, which relies on rapid responses within a time limit, tends to not provide enough space for students to engage in in-depth interpretation. The thinking process which should be reflective is reduced to an instant response, so that interpretive ability is not measured properly.

The fourth problem is the discrepancy between evaluation practices and the *Maharah Istimā'* evaluation principle. Research results show that *istimā'* evaluation should be based on

the principles of authenticity, contextuality, and understanding (Subqi & Husen, 2024). However, in practice, these three principles have not been fully implemented. The stimuli used do not always reflect real-life communication situations, the presentation of questions is not based on complete discourse, and the evaluation orientation is still dominated by speed and accuracy of answers. This discrepancy indicates a gap between the ideal concept of evaluation and actual practice.

Overall, these challenges show that the use of Kahoot in the Maharah Istimā' assessment is still at the surface-level assessment level. The evaluation has not been able to fully explore the depth of the process of understanding spoken language, so adjustment efforts are needed so that this media can be used more optimally in the context of Arabic language learning.

### **Reconstruction of the Use of Kahoot in the Evaluation of *Maharah Istimā'***

Referring to the problems that have been identified, the reconstruction of the use of Kahoot is an important step to bridge the gap between the characteristics of the media and the demands of the *Maharah Istimā'* assessment. This reconstruction is not limited to replacing media but rather to restructuring the orientation, principles, and position of Kahoot in the learning assessment process.

The first reconstruction is a shift in assessment orientation. In general practice, Kahoot-based assessments often focus on speed and accuracy in answering questions. This orientation makes students into parties who react quickly to stimuli, not as subjects who build understanding. In the context of this reconstruction, assessment is directed at a meaning-oriented assessment approach, where the main focus lies on students' ability to digest and interpret speech (Suparman, 2016). Thus, assessment not only evaluates the final outcome but also reflects the cognitive processes that occur during listening activities.

The second reconstruction is the application of assessment principles that are in line with the nature of *istimā'*. The principle of meaningfulness requires that each test item be designed to measure comprehensive understanding (Nugrahawati et al., 2025). The principle of contextuality requires the use of complete discourse as the basis for constructing questions, so that students can understand the relationships between parts of the utterance. Meanwhile, the principle of cognitive depth emphasizes the importance of varying levels of thinking in assessment, from basic understanding to interpretation and drawing conclusions (Setiawati et al., 2019). The application of these principles allows for a more representative assessment of the complexity of listening skills.

The third reconstruction is the repositioning of Kahoot as a pedagogical tool. In many practices, Kahoot is often positioned as the center of assessment activities, so assessment designs tend to follow the limitations of its existing features. In the context of this reconstruction, Kahoot is positioned as an aid used to implement assessment instruments that have been designed based on pedagogical principles (Azim et al., 2025). Thus, the quality of the assessment is not determined by the media, but rather by the design of the instrument used.

This repositioning also emphasizes that educators have primary responsibility for guiding the use of Kahoot. Educators need to determine the type of discourse, the difficulty level of the questions, and the assessment mechanisms that align with the learning objectives. Kahoot simply serves as a means to deliver these instruments interactively and efficiently. With this approach, Kahoot's advantages in increasing student motivation and participation can still be utilized, without neglecting the quality of the assessment carried out.

Through this reconstruction, the use of Kahoot has undergone a transformation from a rapid response-based assessment medium to an assessment instrument based on understanding meaning. This transformation enables integration between the aspects of interactivity and depth of assessment, so that Kahoot can be used more optimally in measuring complex and contextual *istimā'* abilities.

## CONCLUSSION

## خاتمة

This study demonstrates that the use of Kahoot in the evaluation of *Maharah Istimā'* still tends to emphasize speed, answer recognition, and surface-level comprehension rather than contextual interpretation and comprehensive meaning construction. As a result, there is a conceptual mismatch between Kahoot-based evaluation practices and the fundamental principles of listening evaluation in Arabic language learning, particularly in terms of authenticity, contextuality, and depth of understanding.

The findings further indicate that the reconstruction of Kahoot utilization should be directed toward a more pedagogical and meaning-oriented evaluation model. This reconstruction can be implemented through the development of contextual listening tasks, discourse-based audio materials, and evaluation items that encourage interpretation, inference, and communicative understanding. In this framework, Kahoot should be positioned as a supporting technological medium rather than the central orientation of the evaluation process itself.

This study also offers a unique contribution by proposing a conceptual framework for aligning gamified assessment tools with authentic listening evaluation principles in Arabic language pedagogy. Through this framework, the use of digital evaluation media is not merely viewed from the perspective of technological attractiveness, but also from its pedagogical relevance to the characteristics of *Maharah Istimā'*.

Future research should employ design-based research approaches to develop, implement, and test reconstructed Kahoot-based listening evaluation models in authentic Arabic language classroom settings. Such studies are important to examine the practical effectiveness of contextual and meaning-oriented evaluation designs in improving students' listening comprehension skills.

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