

Perceptions of Non-Native Arabic Dialects Among Indonesian Students: A Sociolinguistic

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ABSTRACT

Background: Arabic, as a global language, is learned by students across Indonesia who bring diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. These differences influence pronunciation, identity expression, and interaction dynamics, particularly when non-native dialects emerge in academic communication.

Purpose: This study analyzes Indonesian graduate students' perceptions of non-native Arabic dialects, focusing on linguistic variation, social interaction, cultural identity, and academic social norms.

Method: This qualitative case study involved five graduate students from Aceh, Java, Bone, Maluku, and Madura. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted over two weeks. Thematic analysis following Braun & Clarke's (2006) six-phase model was used, supported by member checking to ensure credibility.

Result and Discussion: Students viewed dialect variation as a natural reflection of cultural diversity. Some reported challenges in understanding pronunciation differences, while others perceived interactions across dialects as enriching and supportive of linguistic tolerance. Academic norms still prioritize fushah Arabic, yet students' regional identities remain evident in their speech..

Conclusions and Implications: This study findings highlight the importance of integrating sociolinguistic awareness into Arabic curricula to improve cross-dialect communication competence, cultural sensitivity, and inclusive learning practices

Keywords:

Arabic Dialect; Sociolinguistics; Student Perception; Cultural Identity; Social Norms

ABSTRAK

Latar Belakang: Bahasa Arab sebagai bahasa global dipelajari oleh mahasiswa di seluruh Indonesia dengan latar belakang linguistik dan budaya yang beragam. Perbedaan ini memengaruhi pengucapan, ekspresi identitas, dan dinamika interaksi, terutama ketika muncul variasi dialek non-native dalam komunikasi akademik

Tujuan: Penelitian ini menganalisis persepsi mahasiswa pascasarjana Indonesia terhadap dialek Arab non-native, dengan fokus pada variasi bahasa, interaksi sosial, identitas budaya, dan norma sosial akademik.

Metode: Studi kasus kualitatif ini melibatkan lima mahasiswa dari Aceh, Jawa, Bone, Maluku, dan Madura. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur selama

dua minggu. Analisis tematik mengikuti enam tahap Braun & Clarke (2006), dan keabsahan data diperkuat melalui member checking.

Hasil dan Pembahasan: Mahasiswa memandang variasi dialek sebagai cerminan alami keragaman budaya. Sebagian mengalami kesulitan memahami perbedaan pelafalan, sementara yang lain menilai interaksi lintas dialek sebagai pengalaman yang memperkaya dan menumbuhkan toleransi linguistik. Norma akademik tetap menekankan penggunaan bahasa Arab fushah, namun identitas regional mahasiswa tetap terlihat dalam tuturan mereka.

Kesimpulan dan Implikasi: Temuan penelitian ini menegaskan pentingnya integrasi kesadaran sosiolinguistik dalam kurikulum bahasa Arab untuk meningkatkan kompetensi komunikasi lintas dialek, sensitivitas budaya, dan praktik pembelajaran yang inklusif.

Kata Kunci

Dialek Arab; Sosiolinguistik; Persepsi Mahasiswa; Identitas Budaya; Norma Sosial



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INTRODUCTION

Language and culture are two things that synergize with each other. Dell Hymes said that language "as the symbolic guide to culture" (1970:164).^[1] Language is often used as an indication of the existence of a culture. Many countries in the world use language as an identity, such as as a social and cultural identity.^[2] The social review of language and language will not be separated from the aspect of geographical differences both demographically and culturally as mentioned above. This is due to the heterogeneity of mankind which is basically created with their own characteristics.^[3] These differences have been the background of differences in the language used in the social interactions of each community of society.^[4] Even differences also occur in one language family so that they form a kind of language variants that are different from one another. These language variants are called dialects. Dialect in a language is a form of dylosis of a language.^[5] When viewed from a sociolinguistic point of view, this is a variation of language that exists in a certain region and is often a characteristic of the speaker's origin.^[6] Social class can also result in different dialects. In a nutshell, geographical and social factors affect the dialect.^[7] Dialects are usually accumulative, not individual. Suppose a community in a certain area has the same dialect.^[8] One aspect that is also realized is the nature of the use of language as a phenomenon that is constantly changing.^[9] Language is not the way of speaking that everyone uses in the same way. On the other hand, the use of language varies depending on various social factors.^[10] The relationship between language symptoms and social factors is studied in depth in sociolinguistic disciplines.^[11] Language in this discipline is not approached as a purely formal structure as in the study of theoretical linguistics, but rather as a means of interaction within society.^[12] Sociolinguistics encompasses a wide field of study, not only concerning the formal form of language and language variation but also the use of language in society.^[13] The use of language is themed by various factors, both linguistic and non-linguistic factors, such as the relationship between speakers and speech partners. The implication is that each community group has a specificity in socio-cultural values of the use of language in social interaction.^[14]

There is an important assumption in sociolinguistics that language has never been monolithic in existence. Language always has varieties or variations. This assumption contains the understanding that sociolinguistics views the society it studies as a diverse society, at least in terms of language use.^[15] The phenomenon of using language variations in speech society is controlled by social, cultural, and situational factors.^[16] In the world of academia, students' interest in learning Arabic from various regions is relatively high, so that various dialects have emerged, one of which

is influenced by the student's home region. Therefore, each student has their own views and understandings about the Dialect/dialect where the understanding and perception is usually influenced by one of the cultural identities and social interactions of their region from which they come.

This study aims to bridge the understanding and comparison between the three previous studies that are relevant to the context of Arabic language learning. In the first study, namely The Improvement of Arabic Language Learning Program in Realizing The World Class University by Syaiful Mustofa, et al.^[17] Its main focus is to improve Arabic language learning programs to achieve world-class university status. They investigated strategies and improvements that could be applied to achieve these goals, then research from Wildana Wargadinata, et al.^[18] entitled Accent Variations and Lexemes of Arabic Dialects (Sociodialectological Studies in Eastern and Western Libyan Dials) explores Arabic dialect variations, particularly in the Eastern and Western Libyan regions. They examine the differences in accents and lexemes in these dialects, provide in-depth insights into the diversity of Arabic languages, and Arabic Dialects Dialectological Review by Alif Cahya Setiadi^[19] is dialectological in nature and explores Arabic dialects in general. The focus is more on the linguistic aspects of the Arabic dialect. This research has a difference in focus, with an emphasis on the sociolinguistic analysis of students' perceptions of Arabic Dialect for non-native speakers. This study was conducted in the MPBA-G UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang class, which is inhabited by students who receive the Indonesia Bangkit Scholarship from various regions and tribes in Indonesia. This context provides a unique framework for seeing how students with diverse backgrounds encounter and interpret variations of the Arabic dialect.

Empirical studies on how Indonesian students perceive and navigate non-native Arabic variations within multicultural classrooms remain scarce. This research fills that gap by offering a sociolinguistic perspective on dialect attitudes, identity negotiation, and classroom dynamics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Sociolinguistics and Language Variation

Sociolinguistics views language not only as a neutral sign system, but as a social phenomenon that is closely related to identity, power, and relationships between individuals. Wardhaugh & Fuller (2021) affirm that language is always present in the form of variation, both geographically, socially, and situationally. This means that no language is completely uniform, as each speaker brings a different socio-cultural background in their language practice.^[20] In the context of Arabic, this variation is evident through the various dialects (Dialect) that develop in the Arab region as well as among non-native speakers.

Holmes & Wilson (2022) added that language variation is often influenced by factors such as social class, age, gender, ethnicity, and even communication media.^[21] In Arabic studies, dialects reflect the relationship between local languages and cultures, for example the difference in the pronunciation of hijaiyah letters between Javanese, Acehnese, or Madurese who learn Arabic. This variation forms a unique "linguistic identity", so that language is seen not only as a means of communication, but also as a cultural symbol.

Contemporary studies show that in a multilingual society, language variations often raise the problem of language attitude. Sariyah et al. (2022) found that the positive attitude of speakers towards certain language variations can encourage acceptance and fluency in communication, while negative attitudes have the potential to cause linguistic discrimination.^[22] Therefore, understanding the variations of non-native Arabic is important so that the learning process is not stuck to a single standard (fushah) alone, but also considers the sociolinguistic reality of students from different regions.

Sociolinguistics examines how language varies according to social, cultural, and regional factors. Wardhaugh & Fuller (2021) emphasize that no language community is linguistically uniform; each speaker carries sociocultural characteristics that shape linguistic expression. In the context of Arabic, these variations emerge strongly in the form of regional dialects, phonological differences, and speech styles among both native and non-native speakers. Holmes & Wilson (2022) further assert that variation is influenced by identity markers such as age, gender, ethnicity, and social class.

2.2 Student Perceptions of Non-Native Arabic Dialects

Students' perceptions of non-native Arabs are an important focus in this study. According to Fasold (1984), language attitudes and speakers' perceptions of linguistic variations can influence how they accept or reject certain forms of language.[\[15\]](#) In the context of Indonesian students learning Arabic, their perceptions are not only limited to linguistic aspects, but are also influenced by social experiences, cultural backgrounds, and interactions with fellow speakers.

Some students consider non-native Dialect to be a challenge that makes communication difficult, especially when the pronunciation of Arabic letters is far from standard. For example, Javanese students who tend to emphasize the pronunciation of ڇ or ڦ may be considered less fluent by speakers from other regions. However, some students see this as an opportunity to expand their linguistic horizons, practice language tolerance, and understand the cultural diversity reflected in the Arabic dialect. This is in line with the research of Tamaji (2020) which emphasizes the importance of treating differences as part of the natural development of language.[\[23\]](#) In other words, a positive perception of language variations will help students be more confident in communicating, even with a typical accent of their region. On the other hand, negative perceptions can hinder the learning process and give rise to a sense of linguistic inferiority. Therefore, the study of student perception is important to understand the dynamics of language attitudes in the academic environment.

Perception and language attitude are central to understanding how speakers evaluate linguistic differences. Fasold (1984) and Baker (1992) argue that attitudes toward dialects determine whether linguistic diversity is perceived as acceptable, prestigious, or problematic. In multilingual Indonesian classrooms, student perceptions are shaped by exposure to varied Arabic pronunciations stemming from their peers' regional language backgrounds. Research by Sariyah et al. (2022) demonstrates that positive linguistic attitudes encourage effective communication, while negative attitudes risk fostering linguistic discrimination.

2.3 Cultural Identity and Arabic Dialects

Language and cultural identity are closely linked. Al Yamin (2023) refers to Arabic as an Islamic cultural identity that is able to unite ethnic diversity.[\[2\]](#) In the context of non-native students, the use of Arabic dialects often reflects their home cultural identity. This cultural identity cannot be separated from the practice of language because language is a means of internalizing social values.

Rachma (2020) explained that linguistic identity not only functions as an individual marker, but also a means to maintain connection with the community of origin.[\[14\]](#) This means that even though students try to master standard Arabic, their cultural identity still emerges through accents or distinctive speech styles. This phenomenon is in accordance with the findings of Fishman (2012) that language has always been part of the collective identity symbol of a group.[\[11\]](#)

However, cultural identity also poses challenges in learning Arabic. Students need to conform to academic linguistic norms (fushah), without completely stripping away their cultural identity. This raises a dilemma between maintaining the authenticity of identity and meeting the demands of academic communication standards. Therefore, it is important to understand non-native Arabic

dialects not as linguistic "aberrations", but rather as representations of cultural diversity that enrich academic interactions.

Language functions as a medium for expressing cultural identity. Fishman (2012) asserts that linguistic practices reflect cultural belonging and community values. Among Indonesian learners of Arabic, regional identity often manifests in their Arabic pronunciation and intonation. Al Yamin (2023) highlights Arabic's symbolic role as part of Islamic cultural identity, yet non-native speakers frequently adapt their Arabic speech according to their first-language patterns.

2.4 The Role of Social Norms in Language Perception

Social norms play a big role in shaping students' perception of the use of non-native Arabic. According to Wardhaugh (2021), language is always used in certain social contexts, so understanding communication norms is the key to successful interaction.[\[20\]](#) The use of certain Dialect is acceptable as long as it is in accordance with situational norms. For example, in academic forums, the use of fushah Arabic is preferred because it is considered more formal and neutral. In addition, social norms also serve as a "filter" to assess language fluency. Students who often use Arabic in their daily interactions are considered more fluent and authoritative than those who rarely practice. In this context, social norms not only regulate the use of the language, but also form a hierarchy of linguistic competence.

However, social norms are often flexible. Some people argue that non-native Dialect is not a problem as long as the communication message is conveyed well. This opinion is in line with Hanani's (2020) research which shows that communicative-sociolinguistic approaches are more effective in learning Arabic than approaches that only emphasize grammatical rules.[\[24\]](#) Thus, the role of social norms in student perception is dynamic, depending on the context of interaction, communication goals, and expectations of the academic community.

Social norms within academic communities influence expectations around linguistic behavior, including which dialects are deemed appropriate. Wenger's (1998) Communities of Practice framework explains how linguistic norms develop through shared participation. In Arabic learning environments, fushah is generally associated with formality, while dialect variations may be tolerated depending on context. Hanani (2020) argues that communicative-sociolinguistic approaches encourage flexibility

2.5 Research Gap and Theoretical Positioning

Previous research in Indonesia has focused on structural variation (Wargadinata et al., 2021), dialectology (Setiadi, 2011), or program development (Mustofa et al., 2021). However, studies exploring students' perceptions of non-native Arabic dialects within multicultural academic settings remain scarce. This study addresses this gap using sociolinguistic perspectives relating to variation, perception, identity, and norms.

This literature review provides important implications for the development of Arabic language learning strategies. First, the variety of non-native Dialect needs to be seen as a pedagogical asset, not an obstacle. By exposing students to a variety of accents and dialects, they will become familiar with the reality of the heterogeneous use of Arabic. This is in line with the experiential learning approach that emphasizes learning through real experience.[\[25\]](#) Second, the integration of sociolinguistic aspects in the Arabic curriculum can increase students' awareness of the relationship between language, culture, and identity. For example, teachers can provide comparative exercises from different regions to foster language tolerance. This has been proven to be effective in improving cross-cultural communication competencies.[\[26\]](#) Third, learning strategies need to accommodate the social norms that apply in the academic community. This means that students need to be trained to use fushah in formal situations, but still be given space

to express cultural identity through non-native Dialect in informal conversations. Thus, learning Arabic becomes more inclusive, realistic, and relevant to real-world communication needs.

METHOD

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore how Indonesian graduate students perceive non-native Arabic dialects. A qualitative approach was chosen to enable an in-depth understanding of students' subjective interpretations, communicative experiences, and sociolinguistic attitudes within a real academic environment.

Theoretical and methodological research approaches are used in this study. The theoretical approach in question is the sociolinguistic approach, which is an interdisciplinary science that combines sociology and linguistics[27] Sociolinguistic approaches are used to understand how social changes, cultural identities, and social norms affect students' perceptions of non-native Arabic speakers. The methodological approach in question is a qualitative approach with case study research methods. Qualitative research is research that aims to gain a deep understanding of phenomena, behaviors, perceptions, motivations, actions, experienced by research subjects. This research is carried out holistically and explains the phenomenon using words and language, focusing on the specific context that is natural.[28]

3.2 Participants

Case study research focuses in-depth on one specific object investigated as a case[29], The research subject is a source of data that can provide information related to the problem being researched. The research subject or participants selection technique uses the purposive sampling method, which is the selection of subjects is carried out with certain considerations and objectives[30], The criteria that have been set by the researcher to determine the research subject involve individuals who are directly involved in the activities that are the focus of the research. Research subjects were selected based on their ability to know and understand information related to the research topic. Based on these considerations, the research subjects in this study were selected five students from the Arabic Language Education graduate program at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang participated in the study. They originated from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, namely Aceh, Java, Bone, Maluku, and Madura. All participants actively used Arabic in academic contexts and exhibited identifiable non-native dialectal features.

3.3 Data Collection

Data were gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted over a two-week period. Each interview lasted between 30–45 minutes and was conducted in a private academic setting to ensure participant comfort. The interview protocol included questions on dialect perception, social interaction, cultural identity, and experiences engaging with non-native Arabic speakers. The interview first asks a series of structured questions, then one by one deepens by seeking further information.[31] Interview questions focused on perceptions of non-native speakers' use of Arabic, personal experiences, and responses to non-native Arabic interactions. Qualitative data obtained from informants were analyzed using thematic analysis methods. The thematic analysis process is carried out through four stages, namely (1) Data understanding. (2) Initial code generation. (3) Formation of themes. (4) Conclusion[29], this data analysis technique is very appropriate to do if a study aims to explore a phenomenon that actually occurs[32], this study explores students' views, experiences, and attitudes towards variations of Arabic spoken by non-native speakers in academic settings.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were integral to every stage of the research process to ensure that all procedures aligned with established academic and institutional standards. Prior to data collection, the researcher prepared an ethics protocol detailing the study's objectives, methodological steps, data management procedures, and anticipated risks or benefits for participants. This protocol was reviewed to ensure that the study posed minimal risk and that all aspects of participant involvement adhered to principles of respect, fairness, and non-maleficence.

Participants were approached with clear and comprehensible information about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their involvement, and their rights—including the right to decline participation or withdraw at any point without any negative consequences. A participant information sheet outlined these aspects explicitly, and informed consent was obtained in writing to document their agreement. Additionally, the researcher emphasized that participation would not influence any institutional or social relationship between participants and the researcher. Confidentiality was carefully maintained by assigning pseudonyms to all participants, and specific identifying details were removed or masked from transcripts and reports. Audio recordings, transcripts, and field notes were stored securely in password-protected folders accessible only to the researcher. Data were handled according to ethical guidelines ensuring that participants' privacy and dignity were protected throughout the study. When reporting findings, any potentially identifying contextual information was modified to ensure anonymity remained fully preserved.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework, which provides a structured yet flexible approach to interpreting qualitative data. The first phase, data familiarization, involved repeated reading of transcripts and listening to recordings to develop an initial sense of the dataset. This phase helped the researcher immerse deeply in the nuances of participants' linguistic practices and contextual experiences, laying the foundation for rigorous analysis. During the coding phase, meaningful segments were identified and labeled manually to ensure close engagement with the data. Codes were then reviewed and organized into broader categories that reflected emerging patterns. In generating themes, these codes were clustered to capture the underlying ideas and recurring concepts that characterized participants' sociolinguistic behaviors. Throughout this process, analytic memos were written to document early interpretations and reflexive insights.

The refinement of themes involved reviewing their coherence in relation to both the coded extracts and the entire dataset. Once finalized, themes were clearly defined and named to capture their conceptual essence. Member checking was conducted by sharing key interpretations with selected participants to validate the accuracy of the researcher's understanding. Additionally, peer debriefing sessions with fellow researchers contributed to improving analytical credibility by offering external perspectives and reducing potential biases.

3.6 Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure credibility, multiple strategies were employed to strengthen the integrity of the findings. Member checking served as a crucial technique for confirming that interpretations accurately reflected participants' intended meanings. Triangulation of interpretations—using different sources of insights, including field notes and informal observations—helped validate the internal consistency of the themes and minimize misinterpretation. Transferability was supported through the provision of rich and detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, and linguistic phenomena under investigation. These thick descriptions allow readers to understand the specific setting of the study and evaluate whether the findings may be applicable to similar

sociolinguistic contexts. By articulating the social, cultural, and environmental characteristics of the research site, the study enhances its relevance for broader scholarly discourse.

Dependability and confirmability were addressed through systematic documentation of the research process, including methodological decisions, coding procedures, and interpretive reflections. An audit trail was maintained to provide transparency and allow external reviewers to assess the consistency of the research steps. Efforts to minimize research bias included ongoing reflexive journaling and consultation with peers, ensuring that interpretations were grounded in the data rather than personal assumptions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Result

4.1.1 Variations of Arabic *Dialect*

Students' understanding of the variety of Arabic languages of non-native speakers, namely the variety of dialects or ways of pronunciation of speakers that vary depending on the socio-cultural context of individuals born from the language that is cultured in a certain area. In this study, we focused on 5 speakers of the MPBA-G UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang class who came from different regions. Which speakers come from Aceh, Java, Bone, Maluku, and Madura.

Table 1. Findings on Variations of Arabic *Dialect*

No	Region	Articulation of Letters	Dialect and Fluency
1	Aceh	The letter ك is pronounced with greater thickness and emphasis; خ and ر are articulated distinctly (<i>kha</i> and <i>ra</i>)	Fluent, but still retains Acehnese dialect.
2	Jawa	The pronunciation of ق , ه , غ tends to be heavily stressed.	Fluent, though still influenced by Javanese dialect.
3	Bone	Correct articulation	Fluent
4	Maluku	Correct articulation	Fluent, resembling native-like dialect
5	Madura	Correct articulation	Fluent

From the table above, it can be seen that the five people are fluent in Arabic. But still with Dialect from their respective regions. What is interesting is that speakers from Moluccan have a Dialect that is almost similar to native speakers compared to others, because in intensity he is the one who most often uses Arabic in classes accompanied by his Arabic culture. While others may still be at the standard level. Then speakers from Aceh when speaking the letter **ك** sounds thicker and suppressed, the pronunciation of the letter **خ** is also still read (Kha, and Ra) exactly like the original Dialect, namely Aceh.

The authenticity of the Javanese Dialect is felt to be clearer than the other Dialect seen from each pronunciation of the hijaiyah letters, and the use is quite smooth, but the Javanese accent is still thick. Madura Dialect is also clear but not as clear as Javanese Dialect, perhaps because it is influenced by the original language, but its fluency in Arabic is felt to be quite fluent in interacting

or delivering material in class. Then the Sulawesi Dialect is also the same as the Madura Dialect in the context of authenticity and fluent in the use of Arabic.

4.1.2 Social Interaction in the Context of Arabic *Dialect*

Student perceptions of social interaction between non-native and native speakers of Arabic highlighted five key aspects influencing their learning experiences:

Table 2. Findings on Social Interaction in Arabic *Dialect* Contexts

No	Theme	Content
1	Communication Skills	Provided positive opportunities for communication development, though some students found it challenging.
2	Social Interaction	Social interaction has an important influence on class dynamics. Considerations include the ability of non-native speakers to communicate with native speakers, the level of involvement in classroom activities, and whether those interactions create a supportive learning environment for students.
3	Learning Comfort	The comfort of student learning has several opinions. Most students feel comfortable and motivated and some students also feel uncomfortable
4	Pronunciation	The difference in the pronunciation of Arabic by non-native speakers has an influence on student communication and understanding in the context of Arabic learning.
5	Speaking Style	Speaking styles include intonation, rhythm, and verbal expressions that can change depending on the first-language background and the level of Arabic proficiency of non-native speakers.

From the table, some students see these interactions as valuable opportunities to improve their language skills, provide a diverse learning environment, and stimulate cultural exchange. Students who feel positive about this kind of interaction may see it as a means to develop a deep understanding of the Arabic language and culture in a practical way. However, some students also have different perceptions. They observed challenges in communication, such as differences in language proficiency levels or difficulty in conveying thoughts clearly. Some students also notice potential social discomfort or barriers to forming deep relationships with native and non-native Arabic speakers.

Positive social interaction between non-native speakers and native Arabic speakers in the context of learning Arabic can have an important influence on classroom dynamics. Students assess the extent to which social interaction between non-native speakers and native Arabic speakers is positive based on their personal experiences in the context of learning Arabic. Considerations in

this evaluation may include the ability of non-native speakers to communicate with native speakers, the level of involvement in classroom activities, and whether those interactions create a supportive learning environment for students. Students also pay attention to the aspects of mutual understanding, cooperation, and comfort in the interaction between non-native speakers and native speakers, which can affect the effectiveness of the learning process.

Regarding the comfort of learning students when engaging in interaction with non-native speakers and native Arabic speakers, there are several opinions. Most students feel comfortable and motivated because these interactions can increase their confidence in using Arabic, provide opportunities for hands-on practice, and broaden their understanding of language variations. In contrast to some students, they also feel uncomfortable because they are seen as too challenging.

In addition, the influence of variations in non-native speakers' Arabic language on students' communication and comprehension includes differences in pronunciation and speaking styles that arise due to the non-native speakers' first-language background. Students experience various impacts of the variety of Arabic languages of non-native speakers such as facing difficulties in understanding or communicating with non-native speakers who use different variations of Arabic. Or even consider the variety of Arabic languages of non-native speakers as an opportunity to expand their understanding of various forms of Arabic language, increase linguistic tolerance, and enrich cross-cultural communication skills.

Differences in the pronunciation of Arabic by non-native speakers have an influence on student communication and understanding in the context of Arabic language learning. Different pronunciations include variations in pronunciation, intonation, and accent, which affect students' perception and understanding of Arabic. The difference in pronunciation of non-native Arabic speakers affects students' understanding of the meaning of Arabic words and sentences that are pronounced with very unfamiliar Dialect. So that it makes students feel difficult to identify and interpret the words or phrases spoken. Pronunciation differences also hinder students' communication skills with non-native speakers because they have difficulty understanding variations of the language that they are not familiar with.

Speaking styles include intonation, rhythm, and verbal expressions that can change depending on the first-language background and the level of Arabic proficiency of non-native speakers. Most students experience the positive impact of the variation in speaking styles of non-native speakers in Arabic, seeing it as an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the linguistic variety commonly used in social interactions. This experience can be considered a progressive step in expanding students' linguistic skills, improving their communicative resilience, and enriching their understanding of the sociolinguistic context of the Arabic language. Some students face challenges in understanding and interacting with non-native speakers with unfamiliar speaking styles, considering it a communicative and interpretive difficulty. These constraints may arise from differences in intonation, rhythm, and other verbal characteristics that involve students adjusting to linguistic variations that may not be in harmony with the conventions they previously mastered.

4.1.3 Cultural Identity and Arabic *Dialect*

Students revealed that Arabic plays an important role in shaping their cultural identity. The table below summarizes key findings regarding cultural identity and the use of Arabic by non-native student speakers, highlighting the role of Arabic in shaping the identity and ways in which non-native speakers communicate.

Table 3. Findings on Cultural Identity and Arabic Dialect

No	Theme	Content
1	Role of Arabic	Arabic plays an important role in shaping the cultural identity of non-native speaking students, helping them improve their way of speaking, and understanding Arabic cultural values.
2	Use of Dialects	Cultural identity is reflected in the use of Dialect or Arabic dialects by non-native speakers, influenced by their cultural background. The selection of Dialect varies according to preferences and adjustments.
3	Identity-Dialect Link	There is a relationship between the language and cultural identity of non-native speakers and the use of Arabic language, suggesting a close relationship between identity and way of speaking..
4	Adjustment	Although cultural identity is accepted, adjustments to the use and needs of the Arabic language need to be made in order to use the language correctly, maintaining linguistic accuracy and correctness.
5	Impact of Identity	Students' cultural identity influences the selection of Arabic dialects, for example, Javanese students who use the Medok dialect. Adjustments are important so that the use of Arabic is correct and precise.
6	Community Link	The cultural identity of non-native speakers includes close relationships with Arabic-speaking communities, understanding cultural values and norms, and efforts to preserve and respect the language traditions of those communities.
7	Challenges	The cultural identity of non-native speakers can be challenging, but it also provides richness and uniqueness in the use of Arabic. Adjustments are required to harness this richness in communication.
8	Mastery of Dialects	The cultural identity of non-native speakers plays an important role in mastery of Arabic, including a deep understanding of cultural values and norms reflected in the use of the language.

The cultural identity of non-native speakers is reflected in the use of Dialect or dialects in Arabic, which is influenced by their cultural background. Adjustment to the use and needs of the Arabic language is necessary to use the language correctly. There is a difference between the cultural identity of non-native speakers and Arabic culture, especially in the pronunciation of certain letters. The selection of Arabic Dialect by non-native speakers varies, with some attempting to equate their Dialect with native speakers and others choosing Dialect that is easier or appropriate to their cultural background. The language and cultural identity of non-native speakers influences the use of Arabic Dialect, and there is a link between language and cultural identity and the use of Dialect in certain contexts. Overall, Arabic has a significant role in shaping the cultural identity of non-

native speakers. Through this language, they can improve their speaking skills, internalize culture, and adapt their use of Dialect to Arabic language norms. Arabic becomes a way that enriches their experience and helps them understand and appreciate the culture associated with it.

Based on research interview data, the cultural identity of students as non-native speakers who use Arabic greatly affects the dialect they use in speaking Arabic. For example, students from Javanese tribes/cultures often use the Medok dialect when speaking in Arabic. They brought their own cultural identity into the use of the Arabic language and this is reflected in the Dialect or dialect they speak. In this context, the cultural identity of students as non-native speakers who use Arabic is not a problem if there are adjustments made so that the use of Arabic is really appropriate. Cultural identity is a natural and acceptable aspect, especially for students who are non-native speakers. However, in order to use Arabic correctly, adjustments to the use and needs of Arabic need to be made.

In the process of mastering Arabic, the cultural identity of non-native speaking students plays an important role. This cultural identity can include close ties to Arabic-speaking communities, a deep understanding of cultural values and norms, and efforts to preserve and respect the language traditions within the community. The cultural identity of non-native speakers can be a challenge in itself, but it also provides richness and uniqueness in the use of Arabic. Overall, the cultural identity of non-native speakers who speak Arabic influences the use of their Arabic dialects and brings their own cultural richness into communication. It is important for them to make adjustments to the use and needs of the Arabic language in order to use the language correctly. Their cultural identity is an integral part of the use of the Arabic language and can be a source of pride and uniqueness in their communication.

4.1.4. The Role of Social Norms in Student Perceptions

Social norms in the use of Arabic by non-native speaking students have a significant influence on the assessment of the use of Arabic language and basic Arabic language skills. The table below summarizes the results of research on the influence of social norms on the use of Arabic by non-native students, discussing key aspects that influence their perception and assessment of Arabic.

Table 4. Findings on The Role of Social Norms in Student Perceptions

No	Theme	Content
1	Influence	Social norms have a significant influence on the use of Arabic by non-native speaking students, including assessments of the use of the language and basic skills.
2	Norms	Social norms include aspects of the use of Dialect that are appropriate to the context of communication in various situations in Arabic.
3	Environment	The social environment influences social norms, where interaction with individuals of the same social background can facilitate understanding in Arabic.
4	Native Interaction	Social norms can require non-native speakers to explain or repeat if the dialect used is not understood by native speakers.
5	Communication Style	Social norms are also related to the way of communication between non-native speakers, where

communication norms are adapted to the same social environment.		
6	Formal Arabic (<i>Fushah</i>)	Social norms affect the focus of official Arabic use (<i>fushah</i>), especially in academic contexts, where norms relate to Arabic usage standards.
7	Expectations	There is a variation of opinion in the assessment of the use of the Arabic language, with some informants seeing social expectations as a clear standard, while others see them as more flexible.
8	Basic Proficiency	The assessment of basic Arabic language skills is also influenced by social norms, where the activity of using Arabic contributes to the strength of the dialect formed.
9	Importance	Understanding and following social norms in the use of Arabic is important for building good relationships and achieving effective communication with fellow non-native speakers.
10	Flexibility	There are varying views on the extent to which social standards and expectations should be met, with some seeing them as flexible depending on specific social and cultural contexts.

Social norms in the use of Arabic by non-native student students include several important aspects that need to be considered in communicating in Arabic. One aspect of social norms is the use of Dialect that is appropriate to the context of communication. Arabic has a variety of dialects or Dialect that are used in various situations. Non-native speakers are expected to adjust the use of dialects according to the communication context at hand.

The social environment also influences social norms in the use of the Arabic language. If non-native speakers interact with people who share the same social background, they are more likely to understand each other and understand what is being said in Arabic. However, if the dialect used is not well understood by the interlocutor, social norms may require individuals to repeat or reinterpret what they are saying. In addition, social norms are also related to the way of communication between non-native Arabic speakers. Respondents in the study stated that social norms in the use of Arabic are also related to how to communicate with fellow non-native speakers. In the same social environment, individuals tend to follow agreed norms in non-native Arabic-speaking communities.

The assessment of the use of Arabic by non-native speaking students is influenced by social norms. The use of dialects that conform to the norms in their social environment is considered important. For example, non-native speakers who are interested in academics tend to focus on the use of official Arabic (*fushah*). Social norms also affect the assessment of an individual's basic Arabic language skills. The more actively a person uses Arabic, the stronger the dialect or Dialect formed. However, the basic Arabic language skills that are the background of the individual also still affect the form and use of the dialect. In assessing the use of Arabic by non-native speaking students, there is a variation of opinion on the extent to which social standards and expectations must be met. Some informants stated that there are clear expectations and standards that must be met, while others consider that social expectations may be more flexible depending on specific social and cultural contexts.

Overall, social norms in the use of Arabic by non-native speakers play an important role in the assessment of Arabic dialect use and basic Arabic language proficiency. Understanding and

following these social norms is important in building good relationships in the use of Arabic and in achieving effective communication with fellow non-native speakers.

4.2. Discussion

4.2.1. Interpretation of Result

The results reveal that the non-native Arabic dialects spoken by Indonesian students are deeply influenced by their regional linguistic backgrounds. Variations such as Acehnese emphatic consonants or the Javanese medok intonation illustrate how phonological systems from students' first languages continue to shape their production of Arabic sounds. This outcome adds empirical support to the sociolinguistic recognition that linguistic variation is both natural and socially constructed, as emphasized by Wardhaugh and Fuller (2021). Moreover, the influence of local phonological features suggests that second-language pronunciation is not merely the product of formal instruction but is intertwined with the linguistic repertoires that learners bring into the classroom. The continued presence of these features reinforces Fishman's (2012) argument that language is a marker of cultural identity, indicating that students' dialectal traits serve as symbolic reflections of their regional backgrounds even when speaking Arabic.

The result also highlight the dynamic nature of language acquisition in multilingual settings. Rather than perceiving non-native features as errors, the study suggests viewing them as part of a complex process of identity negotiation and linguistic adaptation. These insights contribute to broader discussions on the role of L1 phonology in shaping L2 performance and underscore the importance of understanding learners' linguistic diversity in Arabic language pedagogy.

4.2.2. Language Attitudes and Perception

The study shows that students hold a mixture of positive and negative attitudes toward non-native Arabic dialects. Positive attitudes emerged among students who value linguistic diversity and view accent variation as a natural part of multilingual communication. Their openness aligns with Baker's (1992) Attitude Change Theory, which suggests that exposure to varied linguistic experiences can reshape language perceptions over time. Negative attitudes, on the other hand, surfaced when dialectal features hindered mutual comprehensibility. Students reported frustration when strong regional accents obscured intended meanings, underscoring the centrality of intelligibility in shaping language attitudes. These reactions demonstrate that while diversity is appreciated, practical communication needs remain a major factor influencing evaluative judgments.

Overall, the findings suggest that students' perceptions of dialectal variation are context-dependent and influenced by both social experiences and communicative demands. Understanding these attitudes is crucial because they can affect classroom interaction, peer collaboration, and learners' confidence in speaking Arabic. The nuanced balance between tolerance and communicative clarity underscores the complex emotions surrounding non-native dialect use.

4.2.3. Cultural Identity and Identity Negotiation

The findings indicate that students' use of non-native Arabic dialects is closely intertwined with their cultural identity. Participants acknowledged that their regional accents were naturally embedded in their speech patterns, reflecting the linguistic heritage they carry. They did not perceive these accents as shortcomings but as authentic expressions of who they are linguistically and culturally. This positive self-positioning resonates with Wenger's (1998) Communities of Practice framework, which posits that identity is constructed through active participation in social groups. In this context, students negotiate their identities by navigating between their regional linguistic norms and the expectations of Arabic language learning environments. Their dialectal features thus serve as markers of belonging to multiple linguistic communities.

Furthermore, the process of identity negotiation appeared dynamic, with students adjusting their speech depending on context, audience, and communicative purpose. This adaptability highlights the flexible nature of identity in multilingual settings and underscores the role of language as a medium through which cultural affiliation and self-representation are continuously shaped.

4.2.4. Social Norms and Academic Expectations

The findings highlight that academic institutions place strong emphasis on the use of *fushah* Arabic, shaping how students regulate their pronunciation in formal contexts. This institutional expectation influences their linguistic behavior, pushing them to adjust or suppress dialectal features when engaging in academic communication. Such practices align with Hanani's (2020) observations regarding the dominance of standardized Arabic in educational settings. Students also demonstrated awareness of the social norms guiding language use in different contexts. While they adhered to *fushah* norms in academic settings, they reported feeling more comfortable using dialectal features during informal conversations with peers. This flexibility reflects their nuanced understanding of the boundaries between formal and informal linguistic domains. The dual linguistic strategies applied by students underscore their ability to navigate multiple norms simultaneously. Their linguistic choices reveal not only sensitivity to social expectations but also agency in managing their dialectal identities. This dynamic illustrates how learners balance academic demands with personal linguistic expression.

4.2.5. Implications for Arabic Language Teaching

The presence of non-native dialect variation in Arabic classrooms suggests the need for more inclusive and sociolinguistically informed teaching practices. Recognizing the legitimacy of dialect differences can help reduce stigma and encourage students to engage confidently in oral communication. This perspective positions dialectal diversity as an asset rather than an obstacle. Pedagogical approaches should incorporate activities that raise students' awareness of cross-dialect communication. Strategies such as dialect comparison exercises, phonological awareness training, and exposure to a variety of spoken Arabic forms can enhance listening comprehension. These activities also foster tolerance for linguistic diversity, aligning with communicative competence frameworks. For curriculum designers, integrating culturally responsive speaking tasks and authentic listening materials may better prepare students for real-world communication. By acknowledging dialect variation as part of the Arabic learning experience, educators can support students in navigating diverse linguistic contexts more effectively and confidently.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The study concludes that non-native Arabic dialects used by Indonesian graduate students are significantly shaped by their regional linguistic backgrounds, cultural identities, and the social expectations of academic environments. Dialectal variation among students emerges not only as a natural linguistic occurrence but also as a meaningful marker of identity that reflects their linguistic heritage. Although differences in pronunciation sometimes lead to challenges in comprehension, these variations simultaneously enrich the learning atmosphere by promoting linguistic tolerance and cross-cultural understanding. The findings highlight the importance of acknowledging sociolinguistic factors within Arabic language learning, particularly in diverse academic settings.

In terms of pedagogical implications, the study emphasizes the need for Arabic curricula in Indonesia to incorporate sociolinguistic elements that strengthen students' awareness of dialectal diversity. Teachers are encouraged to design learning activities that expose learners to a range of Arabic dialects in order to enhance their listening comprehension and communicative flexibility. Additionally, academic institutions are advised to uphold inclusive practices that validate students' cultural identities while still promoting proficiency in *fushah* Arabic for formal communication.

Despite its contributions, the study acknowledges several limitations. The small sample size—consisting of only five participants from a single university—limits the broader applicability of the findings. The exclusive reliance on interviews may also restrict the depth of insight into real-life linguistic behavior, as it does not fully capture how students use dialects in natural or spontaneous contexts. Furthermore, the absence of a comparative analysis across different proficiency levels reduces the scope of understanding regarding potential variation in perceptions.

Given these limitations, future research is encouraged to involve larger and more diverse participant groups across multiple institutions to identify broader patterns of dialect perception. Employing mixed-method approaches—such as classroom observations, phonological analyses, and surveys—could offer richer and more comprehensive data on dialect use. Comparative studies between native and non-native Arabic-speaking contexts may also provide deeper insights into how dialectal variation intersects with identity negotiation, communicative competence, and language attitudes.

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