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Impact of Linguistic Problems on Learning Arabic Speaking Skills among Non-Native Arabic-Speaking Students

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of linguistic problems on the acquisition of speaking skills among non-native Arabic-speaking students at the International Islamic School in Gombak, Malaysia. It identifies key problems such as pronunciation difficulties, limited vocabulary, and grammar errors that hinder students' ability to communicate effectively in Arabic. A quantitative approach was used, employing descriptive analysis to explore these problems and their effects. Results indicate that students struggle particularly with linguistic problems such as pronunciation of specific Arabic sounds (e.g., 'ع' and 'غ') and understanding grammatical rules. The study emphasizes the importance of targeted training and supportive learning environments to address these problems. Recommendations include focused interventions on pronunciation, vocabulary-building activities, and the use of error analysis to guide teaching strategies, aimed at enhancing students' confidence and proficiency in speaking Arabic. Insights from this research can inform curriculum development and teaching methodologies, improving the learning outcomes for non-native speakers in similar educational contexts.

Keywords: Linguistic, Impact, Problems, Learning Arabic, Speaking Skills, Non-Native Arabic Speakers

Introduction

Fluent speaking in a second language like Arabic is frequently hindered by various linguistic problems faced by non-native speakers, such as pronunciation difficulties, limited vocabulary,

and syntax errors (Krashen, 1982). These problems can undermine their confidence and reduce their willingness to engage in spoken communication (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Studies indicate that such linguistic obstacles can slow the development of speaking skills and affect overall language proficiency (Schumann, 1975). Non-native Arabic-speaking students often encounter these issues, which can hinder their progress in achieving fluency in spoken Arabic (Al-Seghayer, 2014). Addressing these linguistic challenges is vital for effective language instruction (Ellis, 1994). Therefore, understanding the nature and impact of these problems is key to enhancing language teaching methods.

Some prior studies have focused on specific aspects of learning Arabic, such as Al-Najjar (2019) on difficulties faced by non-native speakers, Humaidi (2019) on learning environment problems, Abdurrohman & Taufikurrahman (2019) on pronunciation issues, and Al-Faransha (2017) on error analysis. However, no study appears to address the linguistic problems specific to learning Arabic at the International Islamic School Malaysia. This gap may be due to a prevalent research focus on university-level or adult learners, as well as broader geographical contexts outside the school setting. Most studies tend to concentrate on areas where Arabic is not the native language, such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Nigeria, etc. (e.g., Maromar et al. 2020; Attaufiqi, 2021; Mufidah et al. 2018), potentially overlooking the unique environment of the International Islamic School Malaysia, which has its own distinct student demographics, teaching methods, and linguistic challenges.

This study aims to investigate how linguistic problems impact the development of speaking skills among non-native Arabic-speaking students at the International Islamic School in Gombak, Malaysia. By examining issues such as pronunciation difficulties, limited vocabulary, and syntax errors, educators can design targeted interventions (Krashen, 1982). For example, addressing specific pronunciation problems like the Arabic sounds ‘ع’ or ‘غ’ can boost students’ confidence in speaking (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Insights from this study may contribute to enhanced teaching methods better suited to student needs (Ellis, 1994). For instance, if syntax errors are found to be common, educators can incorporate more sentence construction exercises to improve spoken Arabic skills (Al-Seghayer, 2014). Furthermore, language learners often feel anxious about speaking due to the fear of making mistakes; by identifying and addressing core problems such as pronunciation or grammar, educators can help reduce this anxiety (Horwitz, 2001). Students who feel more competent in their pronunciation, for example, are more likely to actively participate in classroom discussions (Young, 1991). Findings from this research could also inform school policy, directing resources toward the most urgent linguistic needs (Gass & Selinker, 2008). For instance, if vocabulary acquisition emerges as a key problem, schools might increase funding for vocabulary-building activities and immersive language programs.

This study employed quantitative methods for data collection and used descriptive analysis for data interpretation. The article is organized into sections covering the abstract, introduction, methods, results, discussion, and references.

Methodology

The study used a quantitative approach, which involves gathering, analyzing, and statistically processing numerical data, along with a descriptive analytical approach. This latter approach involves identifying the characteristics of a phenomenon, describing its nature, examining the

relationships between variables, and exploring causes, trends, and other relevant aspects related to a particular problem or phenomenon. The primary aim is to understand the present situation to inform future decisions (Abidat, 1999; Alyan, 2001). Abidat (1984) and Al-Mashoukhi (2002) suggest that the descriptive analytical approach examines a phenomenon as it exists in reality, focusing on accurate description expressed either qualitatively or quantitatively. Qualitative expression highlights the characteristics of the phenomenon, while quantitative expression, as used in this study, provides a numerical description to convey the phenomenon's extent, size, or correlation with other phenomena.

By using the descriptive analytical approach, we gain a precise depiction of the phenomenon under study (linguistic problems and their impact on learning speaking skills) as it occurs in reality, and we establish relationships between its various elements. This approach goes beyond merely collecting data related to the phenomenon; it involves analyzing the data, revealing connections, and presenting results in interpretable, quantitative forms. Additionally, this approach helps generate insights that can contribute to enhancing and improving existing conditions (Arefej, 1999; Al-Mahmoudi, 2019).

Study Population and Sample

The International Islamic School in Gombak, founded in 1997, specializes in Arabic and religious studies, aiming to nurture well-rounded, independent students. Its mission is to integrate Islamic philosophy, rooted in the Qur'an and Sunnah, with a comprehensive curriculum covering both primary and secondary levels. By doing so, the school seeks to develop successful, lifelong learners who contribute positively to society. To achieve this mission, it adopts the British Cambridge International Curriculum, enriched with various Islamic programs, such as Qur'anic studies, Islamic history, and Arabic language instruction.
The student population at the International Islamic School Malaysia (IISM) consists of approximately 700 students of different nationalities. This diversity made the school an ideal choice for the sample of this study, as it provides a rich environment for exploring linguistic problems in teaching speaking skills to non-native Arabic speakers.

Selection of the Study Sample

The study sample comprises approximately 256 secondary students, both male and female, who are non-native Arabic speakers at the International Islamic School Gombak. These students vary in age and come from a wide range of national.

A purposive sampling method was used in this study, allowing the researcher to intentionally select participants who best align with the study's objectives, rather than choosing a sample representative of the entire population. This method involves selecting a subset of individuals from the broader statistical community who effectively reflect the key characteristics of the population. By focusing on the most relevant participants, this approach makes data collection more manageable while supporting findings that can be generalized to the larger population (Al-Mahmoudi, 2019).

Study Tools

Various tools are used to collect data, tailored to the nature, objectives, variables, and hypotheses of the study, as well as the chosen methodology and sample. Al-Mukhtar (2005) defines these tools as the methods used to gather both quantitative and qualitative data

about the phenomenon or social reality under investigation. These tools aid in understanding and interpreting the data when presented and analyzed, allowing researchers to assess the validity of the hypotheses and the relationships between variables that contribute to the occurrence of the phenomenon or situation being studied.

Therefore, the study utilized a questionnaire as its primary data collection tool. A questionnaire is defined as a set of carefully crafted questions presented in a form for respondents to complete, as described by HajiMaming et al. (2017). In this research, the questionnaire was designed to gather information about the linguistic problems faced by non-Arabic-speaking students in acquiring speaking skills at the International Islamic School. It consisted of two sections: the first gathered personal information, while the second focused on two key areas—linguistic problems and speaking skills.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Data of Participants

The study sample consisted of (207) students from the International Islamic School in Malaysia, ranging in age from (12) to (16) during the 2022/2023 academic year. The sample included (107) male and (100) female participants, representing the Malay community and other nationalities. Pseudonyms were used to ensure complete confidentiality and adhere to research ethics.

Table (1)

Sex Distribution

Types	Frequency	Percentage
Male	107	51.7%
Female	100	48.3%
Total	207	100%

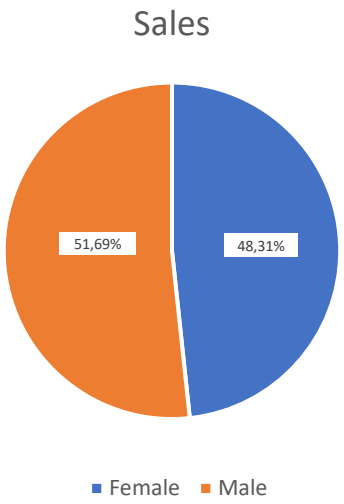

Figure (1): Demographic data of participants according to the gender variable

Table (2)
Age Distribution

Age	Frequency	Percentage
12	30	14.5%
13	52	25.1%
14	39	18.8%
15	44	21.3%
16	42	20.3
Total	207	100

Figure (2): Demographic data of participants (age variable)

Table (3)
Native Language Distribution

Native language	Frequency	percentage
Malay language	77	37%
Other languages	130	62.8%
Total	**207**	**100%**

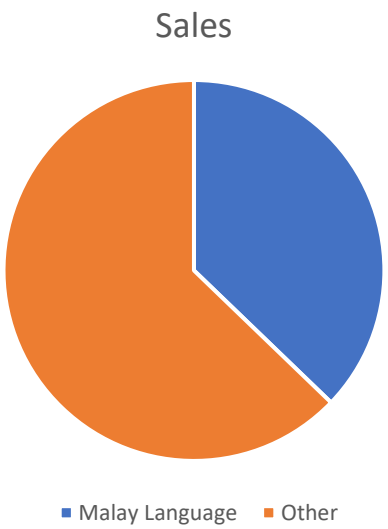

Figure (3): Demographic data of participants (mother tongue variable)

Table (4)
Normality Test Using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test for All Variables

Components	Statistics	p-value
Linguistic problems	0.063	0.244
Speaking sills	0.096	0.105

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is a statistical method used to assess how well a data set conforms to a normal (standard) distribution. It compares the actual distribution of the data to an assumed normal distribution. The test produces a p-value, which indicates the extent to which the data matches a normal distribution. If the p-value is less than the specified significance level (typically 0.05), we reject the hypothesis that the data follows a normal distribution, concluding that the data is not normally distributed.
The following table presents the results of the study:

Table (5)
Means Average of the Sample's Opinion on Learning Arabic Sounds

No.	Components	Average mean	Standard Deviation	Level of approval
1	أستطيع نطق الصوتين الحلقيين (العين، والحاء) في اللغة العربية. I can pronounce the two guttural sounds (ayn and ha) in the Arabic language.	2.03	1.21	Low
2	أستطيع نطق الأصوات المتشابهة جيدًا مثل: (الدال والضاد / الذال والظاء/ الحاء والهاء/ السين والصاد) في اللغة العربية. I can pronounce similar sounds well, such as: (dal and dad / dhal and tha / ha and ha / seen and sad) in the Arabic language.	1.11	1.10	Low
3	أستطيع نطق الأصوات الحنجرية مثل: (الهاء والهمزة) في اللغة العربية. I can pronounce the laryngeal sounds such as: (ha and hamza) in the Arabic language.	1.03	1.16	Low
4	أستطيع نطق الأصوات اللهوية مثل: (الخاء والغين) في اللغة العربية. I can pronounce phonological sounds such as: (kha and ghayn) in the Arabic language.	1.18	1.12	Low
5	أستطيع التميز بين الحركات الطويلة والحركات القصيرة في اللغة العربية. I can distinguish between long and short vowels in the Arabic language.	3.42	1.24	Average
	Overall means			**1.75**

Table (5) shows the mean scores for participants' self-assessed ability to pronounce various Arabic sounds, measured on a 1 to 5 scale. This data provides insights into students' perceived proficiency in articulating different sounds in Arabic.

The mean scores vary across statements, with the lowest score being 1.03. The statement "I can pronounce the laryngeal sounds such as (ha and hamza) in Arabic" had the lowest mean score of 1.03 with a standard deviation of 1.16, indicating that participants found this aspect of pronunciation particularly challenging. Next, the statement "I can pronounce similar sounds well such as (dal and dad / dhal and dha / ha "ح" and ha "هـ" / seen and sad)" recorded a mean of 1.11 with a standard deviation of 1.10, also reflecting a low proficiency level.

Another challenging area, according to participants, was reflected in the statement "I can pronounce phonological sounds such as (kha and ghayn) in Arabic," which scored a mean of 1.18 and a standard deviation of 1.12.

The statement "I can pronounce the two guttural sounds (ayn and ha) in Arabic" had an average score of 2.03 with a standard deviation of 2.21, also indicating low proficiency. The statement "I can distinguish between long and short vowels in Arabic" had a mean of 3.42 and a standard deviation of 1.24, suggesting a moderate proficiency level. Overall, the participants' average score for their opinions on Arabic sound pronunciation was 1.75, highlighting that students generally face significant problems in mastering Arabic pronunciation.

These findings align with Al-Anati's (2003) research, which observed that non-native Arabic speakers experience considerable difficulty with Arabic sounds, often resulting in articulation errors. The results also echo Abdurrohman & Taufikurrahman's (2019) study on phonetic difficulties encountered by Javanese Arabic learners, who reported problems with sounds such as Th, H, Kh, Dh, S, and A. Similar conclusions were drawn by Fudhaili (2020) in his research on Arabic phonetic teaching strategies at the University of Naqaya for Islamic Sciences and the University of Al-Amin for Islamic Studies in Madura, identifying common phonetic problems faced by learners.

Al-Usayli (1423 AH) noted that Arabic language learners often struggle with certain sounds absent or slightly different in their native languages, leading them to substitute Arabic sounds with similar sounds from their own languages. The researcher recommends addressing these problems through targeted training on Arabic phonetic characteristics, employing effective teaching methods, and leveraging technology, such as interactive whiteboards and specialized resources, to enhance Arabic pronunciation instruction.

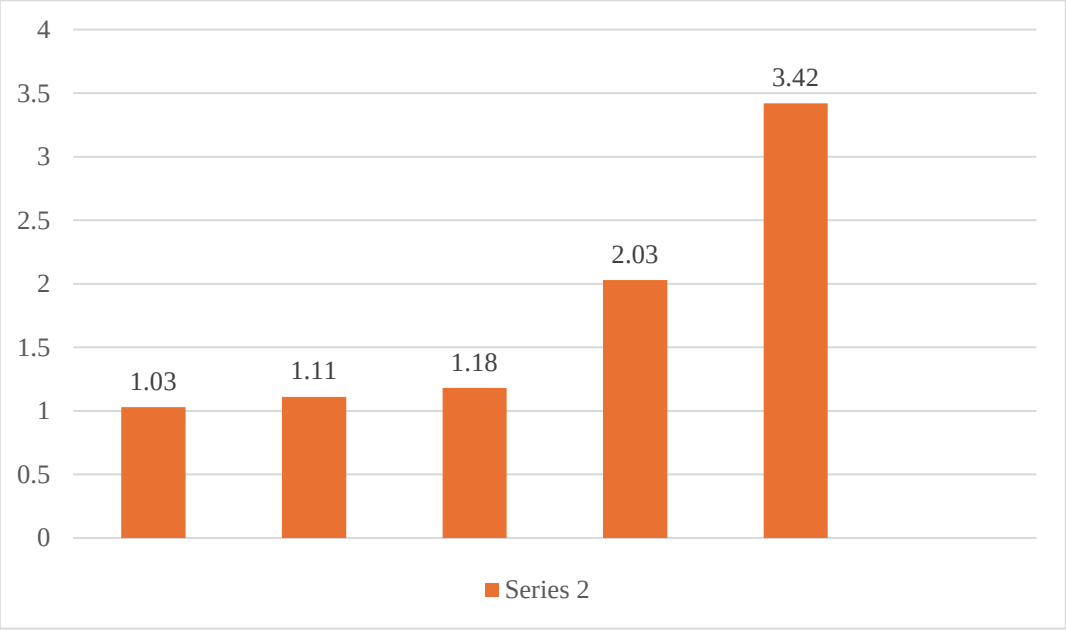

Figure (4): Sample opinions about learning Arabic sounds

Table (6)
Means Average of the Sample's Opinion on Learning Arabic Morphology

No.	Components	Means	Standard Deviation	Level of approval
1	أستخدم صيغ الجمع والمثنى عند التحدث بالعربية. I use both plural and dual forms when speaking Arabic.	1.48	1.22	Low
2	أفهم الميزان الصرفي وبنية الكلمات في اللغة العربية. I understand the morphological scale and word structure of the Arabic language.	1.43	1.21	Low
3	أستطيع أن أميز بين المصادر والأفعال في الميزان الصرفي في اللغة العربية. I can distinguish between sources and verbs in the morphological scale of the Arabic language.	2.38	1.23	Low
4	أستطيع أن أميز بين المعرب والمبني في اللغة العربية. I can distinguish between the inflected and the uninflected in the Arabic language.	2.00	1.24	Low
5	لدي معرفة باشتقاق الكلمة في اللغة العربية. I have knowledge of the derivation of the word in Arabic.	1.44	1.27	Low
	Means average			**1.71**

Table (6) illustrates the mean averages of participants' responses about their ability to learn Arabic morphology, with scores ranging from 1.34 to 2.38. The lowest score was for the statement, "I understand the morphological balance and word structure in the Arabic language," which had a mean of 1.43 and a standard deviation of 1.21, indicating low agreement. Similarly, "I have knowledge of word derivation in Arabic" received a mean of 1.44 with a standard deviation of 1.27, also reflecting a low level of understanding. The third-lowest score, "I use plural and dual forms when speaking Arabic," had an average of 1.48 and a standard deviation of 1.22, showing a continued low agreement among participants.

Ranking fourth, the statement "I can distinguish between inflected and uninflected words in Arabic" had a mean of 2.00 and a standard deviation of 1.24, still indicating low proficiency. The final statement, "I can distinguish between sources and verbs on the morphological scale in Arabic," scored an average of 2.38 with a standard deviation of 1.23, suggesting a moderate

level of understanding. Overall, the average score across all statements was 1.71, suggesting that participants generally struggled with Arabic morphology.

While the ability to distinguish between sources and verbs showed some moderate understanding, most responses indicated low comprehension, highlighting significant difficulties for students, particularly those in international Islamic school, in mastering Arabic morphology. This aligns with Firdaus and Fatin's (2021) research at the Foreign Language Promotion Center, which identified that non-native students face problems in understanding Arabic morphology as part of their reading skills.

Shadi (2016) attributes these problems to Arabic's complex morphological structure, which lacks equivalents in many other languages, making it especially challenging for non-native learners. The low score for understanding the morphological scale and word structure may also be due to the extensive and intricate nature of Arabic morphological rules. This observation is consistent with Fatima Al-Zahra's (2020) findings in her study of *I'lal Rules* for second-grade students at Miftah Al-Huda, where the comprehensive morphology content presented a challenge.

To address these problems, the researcher suggests increased focus on fundamental morphological concepts through targeted training. Saleh & Al-Nahi (2019) propose that complex morphological definitions often hinder non-native learners' progress. They recommend a structured approach involving analysis of common learner errors, targeted training on essential morphological rules, and practical exercises in writing and speaking. Additionally, contrastive analysis could aid in identifying key differences and similarities between the learners' native language and Arabic, helping educators to better anticipate and address problems.

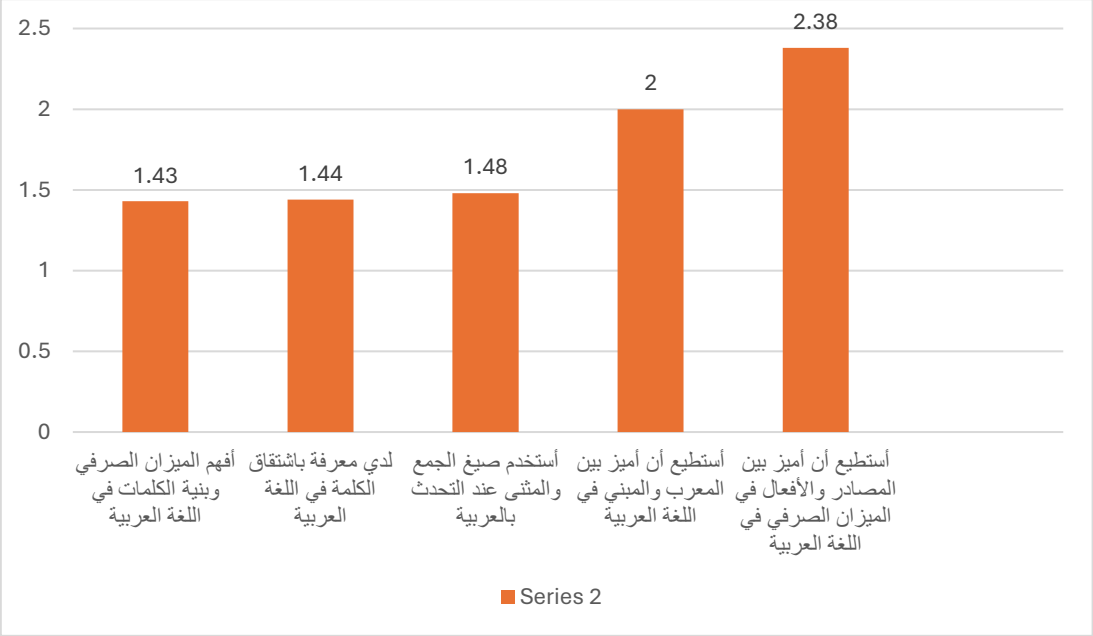

Figure (5): Sample Opinions about Learning Morphology

Table (7)
Means Average of the Sample's Opinion on Learning Grammar

No	Components	Means	Standard deviation	Level of approval
1	أستطيع أن أفهم معاني حروف الجر في اللغة العربية. I can understand the meanings of prepositions in Arabic.	2.21	1.33	Low
2	أستطيع أن أفرق بين ظرفي المكان والزمان في اللغة العربية. I can differentiate between the adverbs of place and time in the Arabic language.	2.51	1.23	Average
3	أستطيع أن أميز بين الضمائر المختلفة في اللغة العربية. I can distinguish between different pronouns in the Arabic language.	2.11	1.33	Low
4	أستطيع معرفة الصفة في الجملة العربية. I can identify the adjective in an Arabic sentence.	2.71	1.30	Low
5	أستطيع أن أميز بين الجملة الاسمية والجملة الفعلية. I can distinguish between a nominal sentence and a verbal sentence.	1.12	1.32	Low
	Overall means			**2.13**

Table (7) details the average responses regarding students' ability to learn Arabic grammar, with means ranging from 1.11 to 2.71. The statement with the lowest score, "I can distinguish between a nominal sentence and a verbal sentence," had a mean of 1.12 and a standard deviation of 1.32, indicating a significant problem for students. The second-lowest score was for "I can distinguish between the different pronouns in the Arabic language," with a mean of 2.11 and a standard deviation of 1.33. The third statement, "I can understand the meanings of prepositions in Arabic," recorded a mean of 2.21 and a standard deviation of 1.33. In fourth place, "I can differentiate between the circumstances of place and time in Arabic" had a mean of 2.51 and a standard deviation of 1.23. The highest score was for "I can identify the adjective in an Arabic sentence," with a mean of 2.71 and a standard deviation of 1.30.

The overall mean for responses on Arabic grammar learning was 2.13, suggesting that students generally struggle with Arabic grammar. Specifically, they face problems with distinguishing between nominal and verbal sentences, different pronouns, prepositions, and circumstances of place and time, as well as identifying adjectives. This low proficiency level highlights a need for further practice and targeted training to support mastery in grammar, which is essential for fluent speaking.

These findings align with the study of Ismail et al. (2023), which identified problems in Arabic grammar learning among students at Princess Naradiwas University's Academy of Islamic and Arabic Studies in Thailand, where unsuitable teaching methods played a significant role. Similarly, Baharom et al. (2017) found frequent grammatical and lexical errors among students at the Islamic Science University of Malaysia's Faculty of Language Studies. Al-Usayli (1423 AH) observed that non-native speakers struggle with Arabic's flexible word order, correct sentence structure, and parsing rules.

Ta'imah (1986) stressed the importance of grammar for producing meaningful expressions, especially for foreign learners of Arabic. Grammar aids learners in constructing sentences when their vocabulary is limited (Lewis, 2000). Addressing these grammatical problems involves techniques such as error analysis, daily practice, and interaction with native speakers. Understanding the causes of common grammatical errors through modern language teaching theories allows educators to devise targeted strategies for overcoming these obstacles, thus improving grammatical proficiency among learners of Arabic.

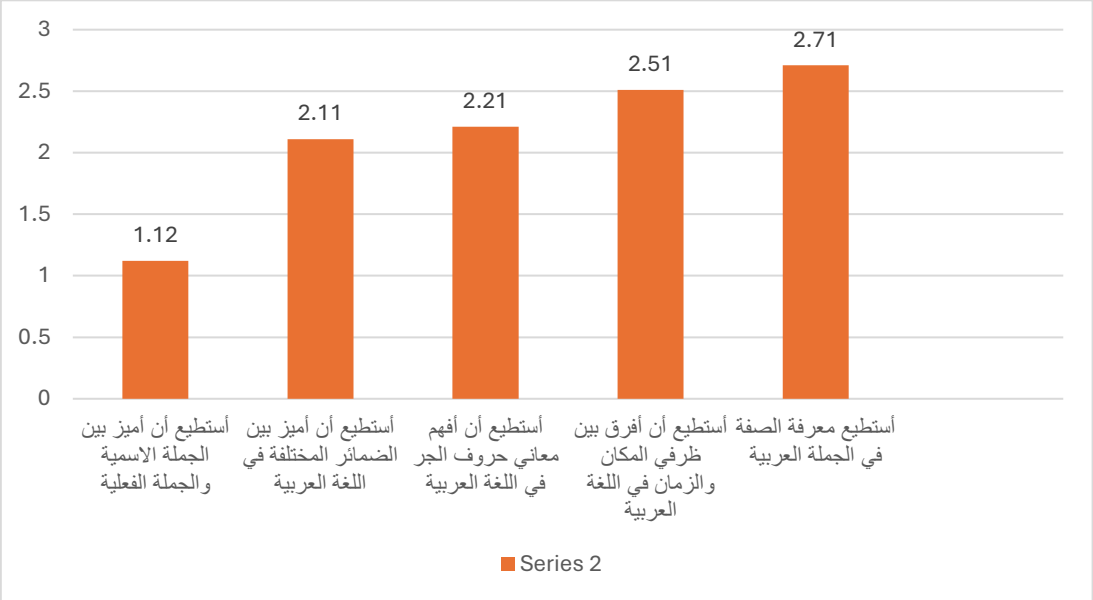

Figure (6): Sample opinions about learning grammar

Table (8)
Means Average of the Sample's Opinion on Semantic Learning

No.	Components	Means	Standard Deviation	Level of approval
1	تتشابه بعض معاني الكلمات في اللغة العربية مع لغتي الأم. Some words in Arabic have similar meanings to my native language.	2.42	1.32`	Average
2	أستطيع أن أميز معاني الكلمات واستعمالها بشكل جيد في اللغة العربية. I can distinguish the meanings of words and use them well in the Arabic language.	2.03	1.11	Low
3	أفهم المعنى المقصود من النص المقروء في اللغة العربية. I understand the intended meaning of the text being read in Arabic.	1.88	1.30	Low
4	أحفظ مفردات كثيرة باللغة العربية. I memorize a lot of vocabulary in Arabic.	2.92	1.28	Average
5	أعرف كيفية البحث عن معاني المفردات في المعاجم أو القواميس العربية. I know how to look up the meanings of words in Arabic dictionaries or glossaries.	2.20	1.36	Low
	Overall means			**2.29**

The mean scores for participants' responses ranged from 1.88 to 2.29, indicating a generally low level of agreement regarding their ability to understand and use Arabic semantics effectively. The statement "I understand the intended meaning of text read in Arabic" received the lowest score, with a mean of 1.88 and a standard deviation of 1.30. This was followed by "I can distinguish the meanings of words and use them well in Arabic," which had a mean of 2.03 and a standard deviation of 1.11. The statement "I know how to search for the meanings of words in Arabic dictionaries" had a mean of 2.20 and a standard deviation of 1.3. The statement "Some meanings of words in Arabic are similar to my mother tongue" ranked fourth, with a mean of 2.42 and a standard deviation of 1.32. Finally, "I memorize many vocabulary words in the Arabic language" had a mean of 2.92 and a standard deviation of 1.28.

Table (8) also shows that the overall weighted average for participants' views on learning Arabic semantics is 2.29, underscoring a low level of agreement with statements related to semantic understanding. These results suggest that participants face problems in grasping the

meanings and usage of Arabic words and in comprehending texts in Arabic. Additionally, the data highlights vocabulary limitations, which hinder participants' ability to search for word meanings in dictionaries effectively.

These findings align with Al-Najjar's (2019) study, which revealed that non-native Arabic learners at the Islamic University in Madinah struggle to understand traditional texts due to limited vocabulary. Similarly, Humaidi's (2019) study at the Islamic University of Sheikhna Muhammad Khalil identified vocabulary deficiencies among learners, paralleling the current study's findings.

Additionally, participants' struggles to differentiate word meanings and use them appropriately support findings by Firdaus and Fatin (2021), who highlighted problems in reading comprehension and vocabulary usage at the Foreign Language Promotion Center. Suhail and Muadhin (2022) similarly noted that limited vocabulary is a significant barrier to effective communication in Arabic, preventing students from expressing ideas clearly and constructing sentences that align with linguistic norms.

To address vocabulary-related problems among Arabic learners, targeted error analysis can be employed to pinpoint common linguistic difficulties. Recognizing frequent errors in students' spoken language can guide focused training to correct these issues. Moreover, fostering an environment that supports Arabic learning, offering real-life usage opportunities, and encouraging interaction with native speakers are essential strategies for overcoming these problems. Additionally, classifying and analyzing common errors through modern language teaching theories can yield effective solutions to improve semantic understanding and overall language proficiency.

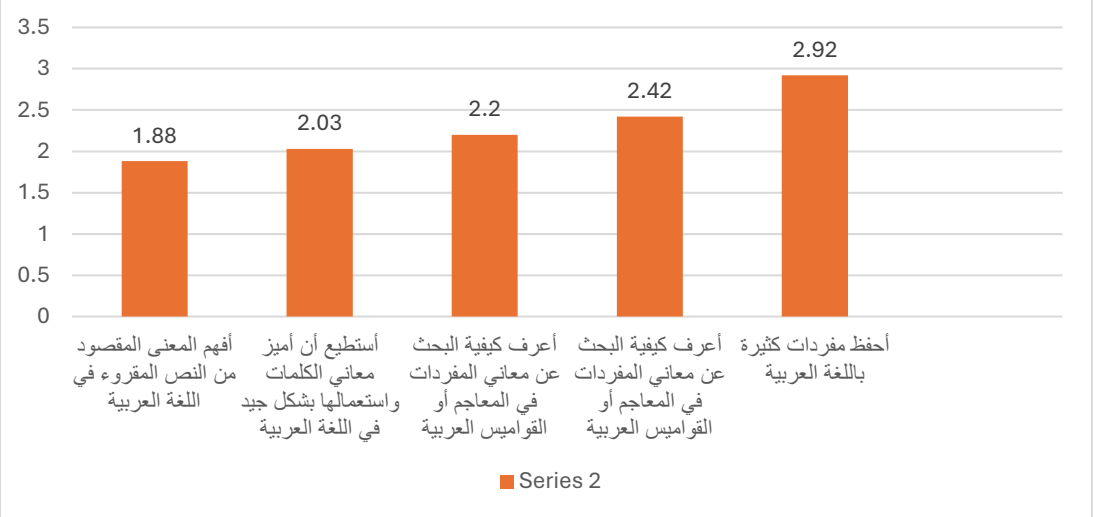

Figure (7): Sample opinions about learning semantics

Conclusion

The study highlights notable linguistic problems encountered by non-native Arabic-speaking students at the International Islamic School in Malaysia, especially in acquiring speaking skills. Results show that participants struggle in multiple areas—pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar—with statement averages ranging between 1.88 and 2.29. These findings indicate

difficulty in understanding word meanings, using vocabulary accurately, and pronouncing Arabic sounds effectively.

Low scores in statements such as "I understand the intended meaning of the text read in Arabic" and "I can distinguish between different pronouns in Arabic" underscore students' problems in grasping semantic and grammatical concepts. This aligns with earlier studies by Al-Najjar (2019) and Humaidi (2019), which found that limited vocabulary and less effective teaching methods contribute to similar struggles for non-native Arabic learners.

Additionally, the study reveals how these linguistic difficulties affect students' confidence and ability to communicate effectively in Arabic. For example, pronunciation problems with sounds like "ha" and "hamza" can impact students' speaking confidence, while limited understanding of complex morphological rules slows language learning. This supports findings by Suhail & Muadhin (2022) and Shadi (2016), who observed that a lack of vocabulary and knowledge of Arabic's unique structures can hinder clear self-expression.

To address these problems, the study suggests a comprehensive approach that includes targeted training on difficult sounds, focused vocabulary acquisition, and an emphasis on understanding grammatical structures. By fostering a supportive learning environment, providing more practical opportunities for Arabic use, and employing error analysis to identify and correct common mistakes, educators can help students overcome linguistic problems. Such strategies can significantly aid non-native learners in achieving greater proficiency in spoken Arabic.

The study on "Impact of Linguistic Problems on Learning Arabic Speaking Skills Among Non-Native Arabic-Speaking Students" provides significant contributions to Arabic language acquisition by identifying key linguistic challenges such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar difficulties that hinder effective communication. It focuses on a specific context, the International Islamic School in Gombak, Malaysia, offering insights into underexplored linguistic barriers in a diverse educational environment. Employing descriptive statistical analysis, the study provides a data-driven understanding of these issues and their impact on speaking proficiency. It proposes practical interventions like targeted training in pronunciation and morphology, error analysis, and vocabulary-building strategies to enhance learning outcomes. Furthermore, the research integrates theoretical frameworks, such as Krashen's and Schumann's theories, with actionable teaching methodologies, making it a valuable resource for curriculum development and improving Arabic instruction for non-native speakers globally.

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