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THE INFLUENCE OF THE BENGKULU LOCAL LANGUAGE INTERFERENCE ON ARABIC SPEAKING SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of Bengkulu local language interference on the speaking skills of students learning Arabic at MAN Islam Cendekia Bengkulu. While language interference in second language acquisition is well-documented, there is limited research on the influence of regional languages like Bengkulu in the Southeast Asian educational context. Using a qualitative approach, this study involved interviews and classroom observations of 30 students to identify patterns of interference in Arabic pronunciation, sentence structure, and vocabulary. The findings revealed significant phonetic similarities between Bengkulu and Arabic, with local language phonetics contributing to noticeable speech errors, particularly in consonant articulation and sentence construction. These errors were linked to specific characteristics of the Bengkulu language, which affect the students' ability to accurately produce Arabic sounds and structures. The study emphasizes the need for targeted strategies to address language interference in Arabic language teaching. It recommends adjustments in curriculum design and teaching methods to help mitigate the impact of local language interference, ultimately improving students' Arabic proficiency. The implications of this research extend to teacher training and materials development, urging educators to incorporate contrastive linguistic analysis and oral drills that directly target problematic phonetic and syntactic areas. Future studies are encouraged to examine interference effects across other local Indonesian languages and explore longitudinal changes in student performance following targeted instructional interventions.

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INTRODUCTION

Language learning is a multifaceted process that extends beyond memorizing vocabulary and grammar rules (Mirzayev, 2024). It also includes the acquisition of phonetic, syntactic, and pragmatic structures that are unique to each language. One of the most critical factors that influence second language acquisition (SLA) is language interference. In this phenomenon, a learner's first language (L1) affects the production or understanding of a second language (L2) (Gass et al., 2021). This form of cross-linguistic influence often manifests in areas such as pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary usage—especially in speaking skills, where accurate articulation and sentence formation are crucial (Ingram & Babatsouli, 2024).

In Southeast Asia, where multilingualism is the norm rather than the exception, language interference is even more prevalent (Lee et al., 2023). Local languages often influence the learning of foreign languages, adding a layer of complexity to the already demanding task of mastering a new linguistic system (Alamsyah, 2018). In Indonesia, a country with over 700 regional languages, this challenge is particularly acute (Kirkpatrick & Liddicoat, 2019). Learners often bring features from their native languages into the classroom, unconsciously transferring structures, sounds, or expressions into their Arabic or English usage.

While much research has been conducted on the influence of dominant local languages such as Javanese, Sundanese, and Batak on English learning, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding lesser-known languages. The Bengkulu language, spoken predominantly in Bengkulu Province, is under-researched (Rustinar, 2018). With its own distinct phonological and syntactic features, it may pose unique challenges for students learning Arabic—especially at institutions such as MAN Islam Cendekia Bengkulu, where Arabic is taught as part of the religious education curriculum (Asadi, 2019).

The present study seeks to address this gap by exploring the specific ways in which the Bengkulu language interferes with students' Arabic speaking skills. While general studies on language interference in SLA are abundant, detailed investigations into how local languages like Bengkulu affect Arabic language acquisition are rare (Ardiansyah et al., 2024). This study uses qualitative methods—including student interviews and classroom observations—to identify patterns of phonetic, syntactic, and lexical interference in learners' spoken Arabic and suggest practical strategies for educators to mitigate these effects (Abourehab & Azaz, 2023; Muna et al., 2024).

The theoretical foundation of this research lies in the concept of language transfer. According to this theory, L1 structures are often imposed onto L2 output, either positively (when similar structures exist) or negatively (when structural differences cause errors) (Maryani et al., 2024). In speaking skills, phonological interference is usually the most obvious: students may mispronounce Arabic words by applying native-language phonemes, leading to incorrect articulation and reduced intelligibility (Wahyudin et al., 2024). For example, Arabic emphatic consonants or guttural sounds often present difficulties for learners whose L1 lacks these features.

Syntactic interference involves the transfer of sentence patterns from L1 to L2. This may include word order errors, improper use of grammatical particles, or confusion between singular and plural structures (Dumawa, 2025; Fahri et al., 2024). The typical SVO (subject-verb-object) structure in Bengkulu may cause problems for learners adapting to Arabic's

VSO (verb-subject-object) syntax. Similarly, lexical interference occurs when learners use words from their L1 inappropriately or directly translate expressions, leading to meaning distortion (Klaus et al., 2018).

Arabic language learning is especially significant in Indonesia due to the country's Muslim-majority population. Arabic serves as the liturgical language of Islam and is essential for understanding religious texts. Institutions such as MAN Islam Cendekia Bengkulu integrate Arabic instruction into their broader religious and academic curricula. However, Arabic's complex root-based morphology, unique script, and distinct phonetic inventory make it particularly challenging for learners whose L1 is structurally and phonetically different (Barrett et al., 2018; Rohmah et al., 2024).

Furthermore, Arabic contains phonemes that are absent in most Southeast Asian languages, including Bengkulu. These differences often result in the substitution of unfamiliar sounds with familiar ones from L1, leading to mispronunciation. Additionally, Arabic sentence structures are unfamiliar to many learners, making it difficult for them to form grammatically correct sentences without explicit instruction (Alshammari, 2023). Such challenges highlight the need for pedagogical approaches that directly address L1 interference.

Despite its importance, little research has been done to explore the role of the Bengkulu language in shaping students' Arabic speaking skills. Most existing studies focus on more dominant regional languages, such as English rather than Arabic. As a result, educators may lack the necessary information to tailor their teaching methods to students' linguistic backgrounds (Hilmi et al., 2024). The need for context-specific solutions is especially pressing in regions where students' daily communication is heavily influenced by their local language.

This study, therefore, aims to investigate how local language interference, particularly from the Bengkulu language, affects Arabic speaking skills at MAN Islam Cendekia Bengkulu. It identifies specific patterns of interference and proposes pedagogical strategies to overcome them. In doing so, the research contributes to the growing body of SLA literature that seeks to contextualize language learning within multilingual environments (Desmottes et al., 2017; Nana Gassa Gonga et al., 2024). Ultimately, it is hoped that the findings will inform more effective teaching practices and help improve Arabic proficiency among learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

METHOD

The methodology for this study is designed to explore the impact of Bengkulu local language interference on the speaking skills of students learning Arabic at MAN Islam Cendekia Bengkulu. The research adopts a qualitative approach to allow an in-depth examination of language interference during Arabic language acquisition. This design is appropriate for exploring subjective and objective linguistic interference aspects. Data are collected through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations, which are particularly suited for capturing personal perceptions and observable speech production errors in natural learning settings (Twis et al., 2020; Wilson & Kim, 2021; Yussof & Sun, 2020).

The participants are 30 students aged 16 to 18 from the Arabic language department, selected through purposive sampling. All are native speakers of the Bengkulu language and

are actively engaged in Arabic language learning. Their level of proficiency ranges from beginner to intermediate. The inclusion criteria focus on students primarily exposed to the Bengkulu language, while Indonesian is spoken as a second language. This ensures that the study captures the specific interference caused by the local language in acquiring Arabic.

A case study approach is used to examine the unique context at MAN Islam Cendekia Bengkulu, allowing for a detailed exploration of how Bengkulu language structures influence Arabic learning (Robbani & Zaini, 2022). Data collection includes interviews with students and Arabic language teachers to explore challenges such as pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary transfer from the local language to Arabic (Twis et al., 2020). Classroom observations focus on live speaking activities, highlighting patterns such as phonological substitutions or syntactic errors that are rooted in L1 interference (Yussof & Sun, 2020). These sessions are carefully documented with field notes and audio recordings for triangulation and accuracy (Xiong, 2025).

The data are analyzed using thematic analysis, which involves transcription, coding, theme development, and interpretation. Codes are derived from repeated patterns in student speech and teacher feedback, such as "phonetic interference" or "syntactic transfer." Themes are developed to categorize and describe common forms of interference (Gmelin & Kunnen, 2021). Ethical considerations are strictly observed, including informed consent, anonymity, and minimal classroom disruption (Goncalves et al., 2024; Jadue Roa, 2017). The findings of this study are expected to reveal important pedagogical insights for improving Arabic instruction in contexts affected by local language interference (Syafei et al., 2020).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Language interference is a common phenomenon in second language (L2) learning, where the structure of the first language (L1) influences the learner's use of the target language. In the context of Arabic language learning in Indonesia, local languages such as Bengkulu may influence students' speaking skills. This issue is significant because interference can hinder the achievement of optimal Arabic language proficiency. This study involved 30 students from MAN Islam Cendekia Bengkulu, all native speakers of the Bengkulu language currently studying Arabic. Data were collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with students and teachers.

Interference can occur across various linguistic aspects, including phonology, morphology, and syntax. For instance, Sholihah found that students at a Tahfidz boarding school in Kudus experienced morphological and syntactic interference from Indonesians when speaking Arabic (Sholihah, 2020). Similarly, Zulharby et al. identified significant morphological interference affecting the speaking skills of Arabic language learners at the university level (Zulharby et al., 2022). However, limited research specifically examines the effects of Bengkulu language interference on Arabic learning, particularly in speaking skills. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap. The findings are consistent with earlier studies indicating that L1 interference affects L2 learning in phonological, morphological, and syntactic domains.

Theoretically, this can be explained using the theory of language transfer, where structures from the native language influence second language production (McManus, 2021). Several factors contribute to this interference, including phonological similarities between

Bengkulu and Arabic, insufficient understanding of Arabic grammar, and a habitual tendency to translate directly from L1 to L2. To address these issues, Arabic language instruction at MAN Islam Cendekia Bengkulu should include intensive phonetic training, focused instruction on Arabic sentence structures, and the development of learners' awareness of the linguistic differences between Bengkulu and Arabic.

Phonetic Interference from the Bengkulu Language Instead of Arabic phonemes

The most noticeable form of interference was in the pronunciation of Arabic sounds. Phonetic interference occurred when the students used sounds from the Bengkulu language instead of Arabic phonemes. The findings indicate that consonant articulation was the area most affected by the interference of the Bengkulu language.

For example, the Arabic 'ع' (*'Ayn*), a pharyngeal voiced fricative that does not exist in the Bengkulu language, was often replaced by the 'h' sound or omitted entirely. This led to several mispronunciations. In cases where 'ق' (Qaaf) was pronounced, students frequently used the hard '*k*' sound, similar to the one used in the Bengkulu language. This substitution is consistent with previous studies on phonetic interference in second language acquisition (Gass et al., 2021), suggesting that learners tend to replace sounds in the target language with similar sounds from their first language.

Another area of phonetic interference was the misarticulation of short vowels in Arabic. In Arabic, vowel sounds are more distinct, and their pronunciation is crucial to accurately producing words. For instance, the 'a' and 'u' sound in Arabic were frequently pronounced more broadly, as students tended to produce them with a more relaxed articulation, characteristic of the Bengkulu language. These mispronunciations affected not only the students' speech but also their overall comprehensibility in Arabic. For example, the word 'كتاب' (*kitāb*, book) was often pronounced with a vowel shift that made it sound closer to 'kitāb' in Indonesian, which did not fully adhere to the correct Arabic pronunciation.

Furthermore, several students struggled to articulate emphatic sounds, such as 'ص' (*Shad*) and 'ض' (*Dhaad*), which have no exact counterparts in the Bengkulu language. As a result, these sounds were frequently substituted by regular 's' and 'd' sounds, affecting their pronunciation accuracy and contributing to a noticeable foreign accent.

The phonetic interference observed in this study highlights a recurring issue in second language acquisition, particularly when learners' first language (L1) lacks phonemic equivalence with the target language (L2). The substitution or omission of Arabic phonemes such as ‘ص’, ‘ق’, ‘ع’, and ‘ض’ with more familiar Bengkulu sounds underscores the influence of L1 phonological inventory on L2 pronunciation. This phenomenon aligns with the Perceptual Assimilation Model by Best & Tyler, which suggests that non-native sounds are perceived and produced based on the closest equivalent in the learner's native phonetic system. Such misarticulations not only impair intelligibility but also hinder learners' confidence and fluency in speaking. Moreover, the vowel distortion found in Arabic short vowels further supports research by Flege and Bohn, who argue that vowel production is particularly susceptible to L1 interference due to its reliance on articulatory precision. In the

context of Arabic, which relies heavily on vowel clarity for meaning differentiation, such phonetic inaccuracies can significantly distort communication.

Syntactic Interference from the Bengkulu language instead of Arabic.

The interference in sentence structure was another significant finding in this study. Arabic, unlike Indonesian and Bengkulu, typically follows a Verb-Subject-Object (VSO) word order. This contrasts sharply with the Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) structure that is dominant in both the Bengkulu language and Indonesian. Because of this structural difference, many students struggled to adjust their sentence construction when speaking Arabic.

This syntactic mismatch often led to students placing the subject before the verb, resulting in non-standard Arabic sentence patterns. These errors were especially apparent during oral language activities, where students instinctively reverted to their native language structure. As a result, their Arabic sentences, while understandable, deviated from proper grammatical conventions, affecting both fluency and accuracy in communication.

For instance, in the Arabic sentence, "ذهب محمد إلى المدرسة" (*Dhahaba Muhammad ila al-madrasah*, Muhammad went to school), the verb 'ذهب' (went) precedes the subject 'محمد' (Muhammad), as per Arabic's VSO structure. However, students who were influenced by the SVO structure of their native language often produced sentences like " محمد ذهب إلى المدرسة" (*Muhammad dhahaba ila al-madrasah*), which follows the subject-verb order used in both Bengkulu and Indonesian. This syntactic interference was particularly evident in oral exercises, where students struggled to place verbs before subjects as required in Arabic.

Additionally, errors in subject-verb agreement were also observed. In Arabic, subject-verb agreement is crucial for conveying the correct gender and number. However, students from the Bengkulu region often showed difficulties matching the verb forms to the subject, particularly when dealing with plural forms. This issue was exacerbated because Bengkulu has a simpler agreement system, where gender and number distinctions in verbs are less complex than in Arabic. Consequently, students frequently used verbs in their base form without making the necessary modifications for agreement, leading to grammatical errors such as "ذهبوا محمد" (*Dhahabū Muhammad*), where the verb does not match the singular subject.

The syntactic interference evident in students' Arabic speech reflects the deep-seated influence of native language structure, particularly the transfer of Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) order from Bengkulu and Indonesian to Arabic, which predominantly uses a Verb-Subject-Object (VSO) structure. The persistent production of SVO structures in Arabic sentences by students such as "محمد ذهب إلى المدرسة" instead of "ذهب محمد إلى المدرسة" indicates a negative transfer from L1, a phenomenon well-documented in second language acquisition research. Additionally, the errors in subject-verb agreement, especially in gender and number inflections, further underscore the limited morphological parallels between Arabic and the Bengkulu language. Moreover, learners' preference for default or unmarked forms in Arabic verb conjugation such as using masculine singular forms inappropriately can

be explained through the lens of processing constraints proposed by the Unified Competition Model, which argues that learners default to simpler and more frequent forms under cognitive load.

Lexical Interference

Lexical interference was also prevalent in the study, particularly in the use of vocabulary. Students often substituted words from their native language (Bengkulu) or Indonesian for Arabic words. This typically occurred when students lacked sufficient confidence in their Arabic vocabulary, leading them to rely on more familiar linguistic resources. These substitutions were especially frequent in everyday terms, where students chose words that were easier to recall or more commonly used in their native linguistic environment.

Moreover, the interference extended to function words, such as prepositions and pronouns. In these cases, students often replaced Arabic elements with equivalent Indonesian or Bengkulu terms, not only altering meaning but also creating syntactic and grammatical inconsistencies. These substitutions reflect a broader challenge in vocabulary acquisition, where learners default to their first language as a compensatory strategy when faced with lexical gaps in the target language.

For example, students frequently used the Indonesian word *'pergi'* (go) instead of the Arabic 'ذهب' (*dhahaba*), and similarly, words like *'rumah'* (house) were used in place of 'منزل' (*manzil*). While these substitutions might have been understood by a local audience familiar with Indonesian or Bengkulu, they were inappropriate in standard Arabic contexts and often led to confusion. The students' heavy reliance on their first languages for vocabulary impeded their ability to engage with Arabic fully. It hindered their development of a richer, more nuanced Arabic lexicon.

The lexical transfer also extended to the use of certain function words. For example, students often applied Indonesian structures in expressing prepositions or pronouns, which led to awkward phrasing. A common example was using the preposition *'ke'* (to, in Indonesian) in place of the Arabic 'إلى' (*ilā*), as students were more comfortable with the Indonesian equivalent, reflecting their linguistic habits from both Indonesian and Bengkulu.

Lexical interference in students' Arabic speaking skills reveals that limited vocabulary mastery poses a significant barrier to effective communication. When students struggle to recall or access the appropriate Arabic vocabulary, they tend to substitute familiar words from their native languages—Bengkulu or Indonesian. This reflects a compensatory linguistic strategy, where learners draw upon their first language (L1) when their proficiency in the target language (L2) is insufficient. Substitutions such as *pergi* for ذهب or *rumah* for منزل demonstrate a reliance on familiar linguistic forms encountered in daily life. While these substitutions may be understood by local peers who share the same linguistic background, they are inappropriate in formal Arabic contexts and ultimately hinder students' ability to acquire a richer and more accurate Arabic lexicon. Moreover, this reliance extends to function words such as prepositions and pronouns, where learners often apply structures from Indonesian. For instance, the frequent use of the Indonesian preposition *'ke'* in place

of the Arabic إلى (*ilā*) suggests not only lexical interference but also a deeper structural transfer.

Table 1. Linguistic Interference of Bengkulu Language in Arabic Speaking

Type of Interference	Description	Examples	Causes
Phonetic Interference	Substitution or omission of Arabic sounds with similar sounds from the Bengkulu language.	Arabic 'ع' → replaced with 'h' or omitted- 'ق' → replaced with hard 'k'- 'ص', 'ض' → replaced with 's,' 'd'- Misarticulation of vowels like 'a' and 'u.'	Absence of Arabic phonemes in Bengkulu- Influence of native sound system- Tendency to generalize or simplify unfamiliar sounds
Syntactic Interference	Use native language word order (SVO) instead of Arabic VSO structure; errors in subject-verb agreement.	"محمد ذهب إلى المدرسة" instead of "ذهب محمد إلى المدرسة"- "ذهبوا محمد" (incorrect subject-verb agreement)	Structural differences between Arabic and Bengkulu/Indonesian- Simpler verb agreement in native language
Lexical Interference	Substitution of Arabic vocabulary with Indonesian or Bengkulu words; misuse of function words.	Using *'pergi'* instead of 'ذهب'- Using *'Rumah'* instead of 'منزل'- Using *'ke'* instead of 'إلى'	Lack of Arabic vocabulary knowledge- Reliance on familiar words- Confidence issues in word retrieval

This table illustrates that the interference of the Bengkulu local language in students' Arabic speaking skills occurs across three linguistic domains: phonetic, syntactic, and lexical. Such interference emerges due to structural differences between Arabic and the student's native language, as well as limited mastery of Arabic vocabulary. These three types of interference significantly hinder fluency, accuracy, and acceptability in students' spoken Arabic.

Phonetic interference, for instance, leads to mispronunciations that may affect intelligibility and communicative clarity. Syntactic interference often results in grammatically incorrect sentence constructions that disrupt the intended meaning, especially when the word order does not align with standard Arabic norms. Lexical interference demonstrates students' dependency on familiar words from Indonesian or Bengkulu, indicating gaps in lexical acquisition and a lack of confidence in language retrieval. This suggests a strong influence of first language habits and highlights the need for Arabic instruction that not only emphasizes vocabulary expansion and grammar accuracy but also addresses the contrastive features between Arabic and local languages. Adopting a contrastive analysis approach and integrating targeted pronunciation and sentence structure drills may help learners overcome these barriers and improve their spoken Arabic proficiency.

Discussion

The findings of this study show that the Bengkulu local language significantly interferes with students' Arabic speaking skills at MAN Islam Cendekia Bengkulu, particularly in phonetic, syntactic, and lexical aspects. This interference supports language transfer theory, which explains that elements from a learner's first language (L1) tend to influence second language (L2) acquisition, especially when the two languages differ structurally.

Phonetic interference, the most commonly observed phenomenon in this study, involves the substitution or omission of Arabic phonemes with similar sounds from the Bengkulu language. For example, Arabic letters such as 'ع' are often replaced with 'h', or omitted entirely, while letters like 'ذ' are substituted with 'd'. These phonological simplifications are indicative of the learners' tendency to approximate unfamiliar Arabic sounds with familiar L1 sounds—a pattern also reported by Hasyim, who observed similar phonetic adjustments among Indonesian Arabic learners (Hasyim, 2025).

This finding corroborates the theory that when L2 contains phonemes absent in L1, learners will often replace them with the nearest phonological equivalent, a process known as negative transfer (Amengual, 2024). Such interference can lead to pronunciation errors that obscure meaning and hinder communicative competence. Kang et al., argue that phonological interference can severely limit oral fluency and affect listener comprehension (Kang et al., 2018).

Another issue observed is vowel misarticulation, such as confusing 'a' with 'u'. This is consistent with research by Khasawneh & Khasawneh, who found that vowel mispronunciation is prevalent among Arabic learners from non-Arabic-speaking countries, particularly those with L1s that lack similar vowel systems (Khasawneh & Khasawneh, 2022). The complexity of Arabic's vocalic system poses significant challenges for students whose native phonology is more limited in vowel variation.

Syntactic interference is also prominent. Students tend to use the subject-verb-object (SVO) structure from Bengkulu or Indonesian, instead of the verb-subject-object (VSO) structure typical of Arabic. For example, they might say "محمد ذهب إلى المدرسة" in the incorrect sequence, reflecting a direct transfer of native syntax into Arabic. This supports research by Yusof et al., who found that Malay-speaking students exhibited similar syntactic patterns due to the dominance of SVO in their L1 (Sulaiman et al., 2020).

The structural differences between Arabic and Indonesian or Bengkulu syntax lead to subject-verb agreement errors as well. These mistakes reflect what terms "syntactic interference", where learners improperly map their L1 grammar onto L2 expressions (McManus & Marsden, 2019). In Arabic, accurate sentence structure is crucial due to its inflectional morphology, which demands concord in number, gender, and verb form—elements often simplified in local Indonesian languages.

Lexical interference was also observed, particularly the replacement of Arabic vocabulary with Indonesian or Bengkulu equivalents, such as using "*kamu*" instead of "أنتَ" or "*rumah*" instead of "منزل". This type of interference is typically caused by a lack of vocabulary mastery in Arabic. According to Md Zolkapli & Salehuddin, lexical interference

often stems from limited exposure to L2 vocabulary and over-reliance on L1 words that appear semantically close (Md Zolkapli & Salehuddin, 2019).

The overuse of familiar words and hesitation to retrieve appropriate Arabic terms suggest issues with lexical access and language confidence. As highlighted by Sato & Tanaka, learners often default to L1 words during moments of retrieval failure, especially when their L2 lexical store is underdeveloped (Sato & Tanaka, 2014). This has pedagogical implications, as it points to the need for more intensive vocabulary instruction.

Another contributing factor to lexical interference is the absence of sufficient contextual practice. Without frequent and varied usage of Arabic in real-life or simulated contexts, learners fail to internalize new vocabulary. As suggested by Alahmadi & Foltz, meaningful interaction in L2 is crucial for long-term vocabulary retention and functional usage (Alahmadi & Foltz, 2020). This highlights the importance of communicative and task-based learning approaches in Arabic classrooms.

Confidence issues also amplify interference. Many students reported feeling hesitant when speaking Arabic, leading them to switch to familiar L1 terms or structures. This is supported by Robertson et al., who argue that affective factors like anxiety and self-confidence significantly affect L2 oral performance (Robertson et al., 2018). Building learners' confidence is therefore critical to mitigating interference.

Furthermore, the limited classroom focus on speaking drills in Arabic restricts opportunities for learners to correct phonological and grammatical errors. As shown in a study by Alisoy, students who practiced oral drills in phonetics and sentence construction demonstrated fewer interference errors over time (Alisoy, 2024). Thus, curriculum adjustments are necessary to provide more emphasis on oral production.

These patterns of interference underscore the need for teachers to be aware of their students' linguistic backgrounds. As suggested by Yu & Li, culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy allows educators to design instruction that anticipates specific interference issues based on students' L1 (Yu & Li, 2025). This is particularly relevant in multilingual settings like Indonesia.

The findings of this study also contribute to the theoretical discourse on interlanguage. Selinker concept of interlanguage explains how learners form a temporary linguistic system influenced by both L1 and L2 (Barone, 2024). The interference patterns seen in MAN Islam Cendekia students exemplify this, where their Arabic is shaped by internalized rules from Bengkulu that do not yet conform to Arabic grammar.

Addressing interference requires not only correction but also metalinguistic awareness. Students should be explicitly taught how Bengkulu and Arabic differ, especially in areas of phonology and syntax. In summary, the data presented illustrate that Bengkulu language interference affects Arabic speaking skills in systematic ways, shaped by phonological, syntactic, and lexical transfer from the student's native language. While such interference is natural in the SLA process, its persistence can be mitigated through targeted instruction, increased speaking opportunities, and awareness of linguistic contrastive features.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study demonstrate that interference from the Bengkulu local language significantly affects students' Arabic speaking proficiency at MAN Islam Cendekia Bengkulu, particularly in phonetic, syntactic, and lexical domains. Phonetic interference, such as the substitution or omission of Arabic phonemes, emerges as the most prevalent issue. These findings reinforce the theory of language transfer, especially negative transfer, where learners apply familiar L1 patterns to the acquisition of structurally different L2 elements. Additionally, syntactic errors—especially incorrect word order and agreement—reflect the imposition of L1 grammar on Arabic. Lexical interference, such as the use of L1 vocabulary in place of Arabic terms, often results from limited exposure to Arabic and insufficient vocabulary mastery. These linguistic interferences underscore the complexity of second language acquisition in multilingual contexts, where L1 influence can impede accurate communication. The study thus provides strong empirical support for the relevance of interlanguage theory in understanding and addressing L2 learning challenges among Indonesian students.

This research has significant pedagogical implications. It highlights the urgent need for Arabic language educators to adopt linguistically responsive teaching strategies that anticipate and directly address common areas of L1 interference. Explicit instruction on phonetic distinctions, sentence structure, and vocabulary usage between Bengkulu and Arabic can enhance learners' metalinguistic awareness. Additionally, the implementation of task-based learning and regular oral drills can improve fluency, build confidence, and reduce reliance on L1 structures. For future research, it is recommended to expand the scope beyond MAN Islam Cendekia to include other regions and language groups across Indonesia, to determine whether similar interference patterns exist across different L1 backgrounds. Longitudinal studies that examine how interference patterns evolve with increased Arabic exposure and instruction would also be valuable. Finally, further investigation into affective variables—such as anxiety and motivation—may offer deeper insight into the cognitive and emotional factors that influence language transfer and oral proficiency in Arabic.

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The authors are also thankful for the valuable guidance from their academic advisors, as well as the support from family and friends, whose encouragement made the completion of this study possible. This research, highlighting the influence of Bengkulu local language interference on Arabic speaking skills, is the result of collaboration and is hoped to contribute to the improvement of Arabic language instruction in similar linguistic contexts.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

The author of this study takes full responsibility for the conceptualization, methodology, data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the research findings. The research was designed to explore the impact of Bengkulu local language interference on the

speaking skills of students learning Arabic at MAN Islam Cendekia Bengkulu. The author conducted all interviews and classroom observations, which is essential for gathering data on language interference's phonetic, syntactic, and lexical aspects.

The data analysis, including identifying key factors affecting Arabic proficiency, was carried out independently by the author, who applied existing second language acquisition (SLA) theories, particularly those related to language transfer and phonological interference, to interpret the results. The author also proposed practical strategies for addressing language interference, such as pronunciation drills, syntax exercises, and vocabulary-building activities, which were designed to enhance the effectiveness of Arabic language instruction.

Throughout the research, the author integrated feedback from academic advisors and instructors, ensuring that the study aligns with current educational practices and contributes to improving language instruction in regions with similar linguistic challenges.

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