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# Linguistic Problems of Arabic Learning in Various Indonesian Formal Schools (2019-2023): A Systematic Literature Review

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#### Abstract

Arabic language learning in Indonesia has become an important part of the formal education curriculum at various school levels. However, this learning process is not free from various linguistic problems that hinder its effectiveness. Students often face difficulties in understanding and using Arabic language correctly, which is influenced by differences in linguistic structures and characteristics between Arabic and their mother tongue. These problems include aspects of morphology, syntax, semantics and phonology, which require special attention so that learning Arabic language learning that occur in Indonesia in the 2019-2023 period. Using a systematic literature review method, this research examines various relevant studies and scientific articles in order to identify and analyze linguistic problems that arise in Arabic language learning at primary, middle and high school and even university levels. The results of this research produce a concept map of linguistic problems which are divided into four main areas: morphology, syntax, semantics and phonology. It is hoped that the concept map resulting from this research can become the basis for more effective learning development strategies and can help educators overcome linguistic problems faced in learning Arabic in Indonesia.

Keywords: Arabic Language Learning, Formal School Levels, Linguistic Problems

مستخلص البحث

أصبح تعليم اللغة العربية في إندونيسيا جزءًا مهمًا من مناهج التعليم الرسمي في مختلف المستويات المدرسية. إلا أن عملية التعليم هذه لا تخلو من مشكلات لغوية مختلفة تعيق فاعليتها. واجه الطلاب في كثير من الأحيان صعوبات في فهم اللغة العربية واستخدامها بشكل صحيح، تأثيرا في اختلاف البنية والخصائص اللغوية بين اللغة العربية ولغتهم الأمية. وتشمل هذه المشاكل علم الصرف، و علم النحو، وعلم الدلالة، وعلم الأصوات التي تتطلب اهتماما خاصا حتى يمكن تعليم اللغة العربية بشكل أكثر فعالية. هدف هذا البحث إلى إنشاء خريطة مفاهيمية للمشكلات اللغوية الحالية في تعليم اللغة العربية ولغتهم الأمية. وتشمل هذه المشاكل علم الصرف، و علم النحو، وعلم الدلالة، وعلم الأصوات التي تتطلب اهتماما خاصا حتى يمكن تعليم اللغة العربية بشكل أكثر فعالية. هدف هذا البحث إلى إنشاء خريطة مفاهيمية للمشكلات اللغوية الحالية في تعليم اللغة العربية التي تحدث في إندونيسيا خلال سنة ٢٠١٩ - ٢٠٢٢. باستخدام مراجعة الأبحاث المنهجية، درس هذا البحث العديد من الدراسات والمقالات العلمية ذات الصلة لتحديد وتحليل المشكلات اللغوية التي تنشأ في تعليم اللغة العربية في المراحل الابتدائية والمتوسطة والثانوية وحتى الجامعية. وقد انتج هذا البحث خريطة مفاهيمية للمشكلات اللغوية التي تنفي في تعليم اللغة العربية في رئيسية، وهي علم الصرف، وعلم النحو، وعلم الدلالة، وعلم الأصوات. و يرجي أن تصبح خريطة المفاهيم الناتجة عن هذا البحث أساسًا المراحل الابتدائية والمتوسطة والثانوية وحتى الجامعية. وقد انتج هذا البحث خريطة مفاهيمية للمشكلات اللغوية التي تنقسم إلى أربعة بجالات المراحل الابتدائية والمتوسطة والثانوية وحتى الجامعية. وقد البحث خريطة مفاهيمية للمشكلات اللغوية التي تنقسم إلى أربعة بحالات المراحل الابتدائية وهي علم النحو، وعلم الدلالة، وعلم الأصوات. و يرجى أن تصبح خريطة الماهيم الناتجة عن هذا البحث أساسًا إنسيتيجية تطوير تعليم أكثر فعالية ويمكن أن تساعد المعلمين في التغلب على المشكلات اللغوية التي يواجهونما في تعليم اللغة العربية في إندونيسيا.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المشكلات اللغوية، تعليم اللغة العربية، مستويات المدرسة الرسمية

#### Introduction

The status of the Arabic language in Indonesia is a foreign language (Sa'diyah & Abdurahman, 2021). With the majority of the population embracing Islam, this language has become a necessity for Indonesian society, primarily in terms of religion. In an effort to master it, perseverance is required in learning over long, complex, and sustained periods (Ibda et al., 2023). This language is also included in the official curriculum of formal education in Indonesia. Despite this, learning this Arabic language has presented a variety of problems among its learners, which can be classified into two main categories: linguistic and non-linguistic problems (Sofa, 2021).

Linguistic problems in Arabic language learning, including problems related to phonology, morphology, syntax and several other areas of linguistics, are highly varied and complex (Noermayanti and Isnaini 2022). This problem arises in Arabic language learning due to several factors derived from the internal ability of a learner (Rustandi 2023) and can occur in four areas of language proficiency, such as writing(Ritonga et al. 2021), listening(Solimando 2022), reading (Ismail et al. 2023) and speaking skills(Ritonga et al. 2022), in every Arabic language lesson.

In recent research, it has been found that linguistic problems often occur at several levels of formal education; for instance, linguistic problems occur at the elementary level, and students have difficulty reading vocabulary and dialoging using the Arabic language because their abilities are limited to mastering Arabic letters (Nofiansyah, Yamani, and Bamualim 2022). Furthermore, problems at the junior high school level result from several internal factors, such as difficulty pronouncing *hijaiyah* letters and some words or sentences in Arabic properly and correctly, making it difficult for them to understand the teacher's words when speaking Arabic.

The problem of learning Arabic also occurred at the high school, *madrasah Aliyah* (MA) and other forms of equivalent formal schools. At this level, students are more likely to find it difficult to understand Arabic grammar, which includes two important lessons that are commonly studied, the *nahwu* (arabic syantx) and *shorf* 

(arabic morphology) lessons, which are two subjects that are very important to master Arabic language. Even at the university level, there are also some language problems comprising phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics that are more complicated than those at the previous level, with more difficult and comprehensive subject matter.

According to several former works, there are a number of complex linguistic studies in several regions in Indonesia with various levels of education. Since there are no studies that comprehensively map linguistic problems in Indonesia, this study aims to construct a map of the latest linguistic problems related to Arabic learning that occur in Indonesia in period 2019 -2023. This study will answer important questions, such as the current linguistic problems in Arabic language learning, and the answers to these questions will be discussed in the analysis below.

This research used the systematic literature review (SLR) method and expected to contribute to understanding the dynamics of linguistic problems in Indonesia by analyzing several articles related to this research so that it will produce a systematic conceptual map which is useful for managing and solving the latest Arabic language problems that occur in Indonesia later.

#### Methods

This research used qualitative research methods with a systematic literature review (SLR) approach, also known as a systematic review, to identify, analyze and interpret all available evidence related to a particular research question in an impartial and (to some degree) repeatable way (Kitchenham 2007). Research with this approach helps to map and assess existing knowledge and gaps within specific issues, which further serves to develop a knowledge base.

This research method helps us to collect all publications and related documents according to previously formulated inclusion criteria to answer specific research questions; therefore, the procedure will become clear and systematic to minimize the occurrence of bias in analyzing, identifying and summarizing research data (Mengist, Soromessa, and Legese 2020). By using this SLR method, this research can provide an accurate and critical reflection on the development of science related to this topic and

can contribute to the development of Arabic language learning knowledge in Indonesia due to its diverse problems.

The source of the current research's data is taken from a database of journals and proceedings indexed in Google Scholar for the period 2019-2023. The keyword used in this study to find academic articles related to the research questions was "problematika pembelajaran bahasa Arab" on July 11, 2023, with the addition of *allintitle* configuration on Google Scholar. After the results were obtained, all of the data were excluded if they met several of the following inclusion criteria:

Table 1 Inclusion Criteria

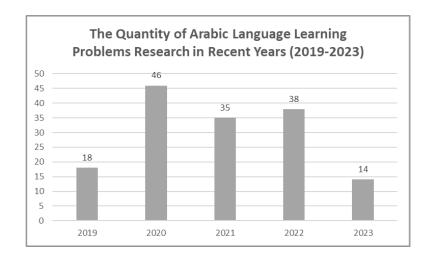
No	Inclusion Criteria	
1.	The research highlighted on linguistic problems in Arabic language learning in Indonesia	
2.	The research was published in 2019-2023.	
3.	Research is written in Indonesian and English language	
4.	Articles are Journals' article and Proceedings.	
5.	Articles are not citation, reviews and thesis.	
6.	Article documents' are available	

The articles obtained from the searched academic databases were sorted according to the following exclusion criteria. First, 151 articles were collected, and the remaining 77 articles were excluded because they did not fulfill the following criteria: articles were citations, theses, theses, dissertations, or books, for a total of 74 articles. Furthermore, of the 77 articles, there were no articles that were not written in Indonesian or English, so 77 articles remained. There were 42 articles that were not relevant according to the articles' abstracts, whether the article answered the specified research questions, and, according to these criteria, only 35 articles met the inclusion criteria. Furthermore, there were 5 articles that were not relevant to this research question according to the analysis of the entire content of the article; thus, 30 articles

met the inclusion criteria and provided answers to the objectives of this study. For more detail, these articles can be found in Scheme 1:

<b>Stage 1:</b> Formulating Keyword and identifying documents through database searching (n:151 Documents)	
	<b>Stage 2:</b> Excluding some documents based on:
The rest of the article (n: 77 Documents)	<ul> <li>Documents were book chapter, book, review, conference paper, conference reviews (n: 74 Documents)</li> <li>Articles' pdfs are unavailable and could not be accessed (n: 0 Documents)</li> <li>Document are not written by english language (n: 0 Documents)</li> <li>Publication period beyond 2019 to 2023 (n:0 Documents)</li> </ul> Stage 3.1: Excluding some documents based on: <ul> <li>Article's abstract does not give the exact research question of current research</li> </ul>
$\checkmark$	(n:42 Document)
The rest of the article (n: 35 Documents)	
•	<ul> <li>Stage 3.2: Excluding some documents based on:</li> <li>Article's entire content does not give the exact answer for research question of current research (n:5 Documents)</li> </ul>
Potential paper (n:30 Documents)	

# Scheme 1. Research Data Source Process



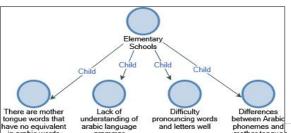
# **Figure 1.** Percentage of Research on Arabic Language Learning Problems in the period 2019-2023

In terms of the quantity of research on Arabic learning problems, 151 articles were found over a five-year period, namely, from 2019–2023, with the greatest increase occurring in 2020, with as many as 46 studies related to Arabic learning problems, followed by 14 related to the topic occurring in 2023. This is understandable because these research data were collected in July 2023.

#### **Results and Discussion**

Each level of school that applies Arabic learning as a subject will encounter its own linguistic problems in the learning process. After conducting the analysis, it was found that there are problems that are very varied at every level of formal education, starting from elementary school to the tertiary level, and we can divide these problems into four main problems in linguistics, namely, morphological, syntactic, phonological and semantic problems. Therefore, the results of the analysis of this study revealed four problems that exist in the process of learning Arabic in Indonesia.

#### **Phonological Problem**



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#### Figure 2. Elementary School Phonological Problems

At the elementary school level, there are several phonological problems faced by teachers in teaching Arabic subjects to students in Indonesia, such as a study that discusses the phonological problems of students at the elementary school level, which proves that students find it difficult to pronounce some words in Arabic because Arabic letters do not have their equivalents in Indonesia and have their own characteristics (Solkan 2020).

Furthermore, another problem felt by students at the elementary school level is the difficulty of pronouncing Arabic words that do have a different intonation from Indonesian as a mother tongue (Parihin et al. 2022), thus causing students to find it difficult to pronounce Arabic letters and words properly and correctly (Nofiansyah et al. 2022; Nurlaela 2020; Rahmah and Sumiarni 2019); for example, some students find it difficult to imitate the sound of Arabic letters according to native speakers (Ibda et al. 2023), and some students find it difficult to pronounce long vowels arabic (letters mad) (Azmi and Suratman 2020).

In addition, local language interference also affects the pronunciation of Arabic letters in Arabic language learning. A study of Malay Sambas people revealed that it is difficult to pronounce similar Arabic phonemes, such as pronouncing the letters qaf and kaf, which have similarities in pronunciation(Azmi and Suratman 2020). In addition, another example of phoneme differences is the difference in vowel and consonant sounds between Arabic and local languages, which is also a problem experienced by students; Arabic letters include the vowels fathah, kasrah and dhammah. Moreover, the local vowels of Malay Sambas are/i/,/e/,/a/,/ə/,/u/, and/o/(Azmi and Suratman 2020).

The last problem that is often faced by elementary school students in learning Arabic is that students do not pay attention to how to pronounce Arabic letters properly and correctly because they do not understand Arabic methods(Laubaha, Yasin, and Adam 2022), making it difficult for them to read an Arabic word or sentence with good and correct punctuation(Rahmah and Sumiarni 2019).

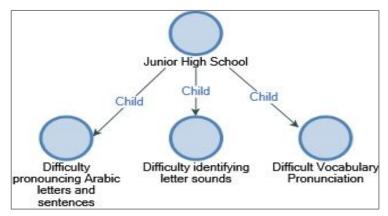
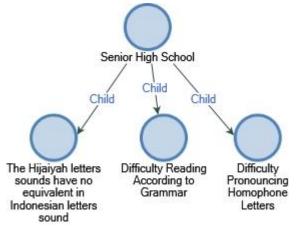


Figure 3. Junior High School Phonological Problems

At the junior high school level, there are three problems faced by students learning Arabic in class. The first problem is that they have difficulty identifying the sounds of Arabic letters because some letters are homophones, making it difficult for some students to understand simple expressions and ideas in forming a sentence pronounced by the teacher (Nadhif 2022).

Similarly, in a study at the Zaytun Islamic Boarding School, students found it difficult to rewrite voice recordings of listening Arabic material because they found it difficult to identify the sound characteristics of letters such as the letters *Ghain* and *Kho* (Nisa, Utami, and Ramadlan 2023). Another case with a study on learning writing skills (kitabah) was the subjects of dictation, khat, and composing. Some students find it difficult to distinguish letters that have similar sound sources because the teacher dictates a sentence too long and fast (Ariyanto and Nurhayati 2023).

The second problem is that some junior high school students find it difficult to pronounce Arabic letters properly and correctly because some letters have similar sounds, so some students find it difficult to express simple ideas directly in oral form (Nadhif 2022). In addition, some students also find it difficult to read Arabic writing with good and correct pronunciation due to external motivation problems such as a less supportive learning environment and teachers who do not understand the differences in personal intellectual qualities of each student even due to demands from parents so that learning awareness is not born from the student's personal self (Hamdah 2022). In addition, some students also find it difficult to pronounce words and sentences in Arabic properly because some students are not familiar with online learning, thus lowering students' motivation to learn Arabic (Nurjannah 2021).\



The third problem faced by junior high school students (SMPs) is the difficulty of pronouncing vocabulary that is difficult to speak using Arabic. Some factors, such as inadequate learning tools such as audio in online learning (Burhanuddin 2021), make it difficult for students to pronounce Arabic vocabulary and sentences properly and correctly during dialog.

# Figure 4. Senior High School Phonological Problems

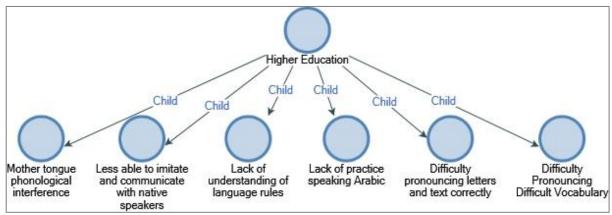
Phonological problems at the senior high school level (SMA) and in *Madrasah Aliyah* (MA) can be categorized into three difficulties: difficulty reading according to grammar, difficulty pronouncing homophone letters and Arabic letter sounds that have no equivalent in Indonesia. Letter sounds that do not have an equivalent in Indonesia, such as in the case of students at the Madrasah Aliyah Islamic Center Cirebon, who experience errors in rewriting Arabic words or sentences correctly due to letters that do not have their own sound equivalents in Indonesia, make it difficult for students to identify the letters (Dawud 2019).

Furthermore, the phonological problem that is also felt by students in Arabic subjects is that it is difficult to pronounce homophone letters(Belay et al. 2021), such as a phonological problem found in Madrasah Aliyah, where many students still find

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it difficult to read the letters *Syin* and *Dhad* (Janah et al. 2022). Another study revealed students' difficulties in distinguishing the letter sounds *ha*' and *Ha*, the sounds of the letters *Tsa*' from *Sin* and *Syin* (Dawud 2019).

The third problem is that some students find it difficult to read Arabic text with good and correct grammar. A study has shown that reading sentences with the right rules is the main problem faced by students in the "less" grade category (46%), the "enough" category (42%) and the "good" grade category (12%). Therefore, if students are not able to read Arabic text sentences correctly, it will greatly affect the difficulty



of students in processing vowel and consonant sounds in Arabic so that it can be assumed to be a phonological problem (Nasution 2021).

#### Figure 5. Higher Education Phonological Problems

At the university level, some students find it difficult to learn Arabic, and several problems can be seen in image 5. The first problem is that the phonological interference of first language, which affects stress, intonation and articulators in Arabic. The difference between labiodental letters, for instance the letters fa', and apicodental letters, for instance the letters Zai, is caused by the different phonological characteristics of first languages and Arabic as a second language (Rustandi<sup>\*</sup>, 2023).

The second problem is the difficulty in pronouncing letters correctly and precisely, as when pronouncing sentences in Arabic by following the speaker's native accent, students find it difficult to do so, causing some of them to still stammer and lack proper intonation with the meaning of a word (Noviani &; Hasan, 2023); this is the case for non-Arabic studies students (Fauziah et al., 2020) and Arabic studies

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students (Sungkar &; Lampung, 2019). In addition to difficulties in pronouncing letters, students also read Arabic texts with various factors, such as the choice of word equivalents, language grammar (Rustandi<sup>\*</sup>, 2023) or the background of students who had never studied Arabic at the formal school level before (Khasanah &; Tantowi, 2023).

The third phonology problem is that some students find it difficult to pronounce difficult vocabulary that has not been mastered (Corinna et al., 2020) because of an educational background that has never studied Arabic before taking an Arabic study program (Noviani &; Hasan, 2023), thus causing difficulties in dialog using Arabic due to the lack of quasivocabulary (Fauziah et al., 2020).

The fourth phonological problem is due to the lack of Arabic learners to train themselves in speaking Arabic (Corinna et al., 2020). Because of the lack of practice and habituation to speak using Arabic, students often find the pronunciation of words that are not correct in composing Arabic sentences when speaking (Tungkagi et al., 2022).

The fifth problem is the difficulty of imitating the accents of native Arabic speakers because teachers are less inclined to provide ideal examples for pronouncing sentences in Arabic (Noviani &; Hasan, 2023). In addition to these difficulties, students also find it difficult when dialoging with native speakers due to the limited teaching staff of native Arabic speakers and the limited time spent learning with native speakers (Abdurrahman et al., 2020).

The last phonological problem faced by students is that they do not understand Arabic grammar well. The mastery of Arabic methods, which include morphological and syntactic methods, greatly supports the ability of an Arabic language learner to pronounce a sentence correctly (Noviani &; Hasan, 2023). In addition to speaking skills, mastery of grammar also affects the ability to read Arabic texts (Abdurrahman et al., 2020); sometimes some Arabic texts are not written vowels, making it difficult for Arabic language learners to read the text (Rini et al., 2021).

# Morphological problems

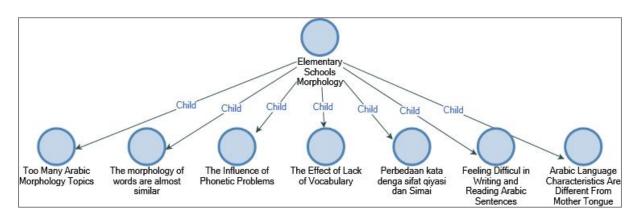


Figure 6. Morphological problems of elementary schools

The first morphological problem faced by students at the elementary school level or the same level is that there is too much morphological material in various chapters and topics taught in school, so sometimes it can take learning time to spend these materials, so students also find it difficult to follow the lesson (Laubaha et al. 2022; Solkan 2020).

With regard to writing proficiency, students also experience difficulty with an Arabic writing system that starts from right to left, making students feel slow in writing in books or on the blackboard (Ibda et al. 2023; Solkan 2020). In terms of reading proficiency, morphological problems are also found, and some students find it difficult to recognize Arabic writing because Arabic writing is very different, as Arabic writing does not involve capital letters (Rahmah and Sumiarni 2019).

In addition, another morphological problem is the combination of *simai* and *qiyasi* words and in part of the material chapter Sharf; for instance, one verb form (*fiil*) has two forms of nouns (*mashdar*) (Laubaha et al., 2022; Solkan, 2020). Other studies have shown that the influence of phonetic problems can also affect the difficulty of elementary school students in understanding Arabic morphological material (*Sharf*) (Laubaha et al. 2022; Solkan 2020). In addition, the lack of vocabulary owned by students can also affect students' difficulty understanding Arabic morphological material because the word change system in Arabic has a certain pattern that gives rise to certain meanings such that the mastery of vocabulary in a language greatly



affects a person's ability to use the language productively and receptively (Solkan 2020).

## Figure 7. Major High School Morphological Problems

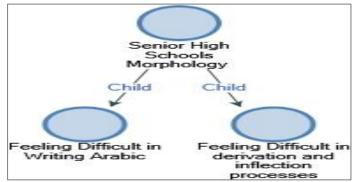
In Arabic morphology material, students also find it difficult to distinguish words in Arabic that have similar forms and roots with different meanings(Solkan 2020), such as word conjugation (*Tashrif*), the system of changing from one pattern to another that has the same root. In this context, changing words in Arabic are very different from those in the Indonesian language, which is easier for students to understand (Solkan, 2020).

At the Junior High School (SMP) and *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* levels, several morphological problems were found in Arabic language learning. The first problem in reading a text is that students sometimes find it difficult to read Arabic texts because they still do not master Arabic grammar and recognize texts that are not expected (Burhanuddin 2021).

Furthermore, in Arabic language learning, it was also found that some students experience morphological difficulties in writing Arabic texts, such as not being able to write hijaiyah letters properly and correctly, feeling slow when writing Arabic texts, difficulty distinguishing hijaiyah letters that can be connected and cannot be connected, and difficulty writing Arabic so that writing is difficult for them to read (Nadhif 2022).

Other morphological problems can also occur due to the lack of mastery of Arabic vocabulary by students, which has an impact on other skills, such as reading Arabic texts and understanding the text, because they cannot distinguish the position of a word in a sentence, as expressed by (Nasrulloh et al. 2020). This vocabulary problem consists of at least several problems, such as difficulty memorizing vocabulary, easily forgetting vocabulary that has been memorized before, and feeling that the vocabulary taught is not familiar to students (Nadhif 2022).

Another morphological problem is that students find it difficult to understand the morphological rules of Arabic in the learning process even though they have long learning times. The majority of students consider Arabic to be a difficult lesson,



especially if they understand the method, which can cause them to feel lazy and lack motivation to learn Arabic morphological methods(Hamdah 2022)

# Figure 8. Morphological problems of the senior high school

At the senior high school (SMA) level, two morphological problems were found in Arabic language learning. First, the difficulty in writing Arabic is similar to the problems that occur at the junior high school (SMP) level. revealed (Dawud 2019)that at the high school level, some students find it difficult to write letters that have similar letter shapes, such as the letters *Dal* and *ra*', and students often combine letters that should not be combined in word format; ultimately, students often write numbers in the Arabic language.

The problem that is also faced by students at the high school level is the difficulty in the derivation process, such as if students are asked by the teacher to change pronouns (*Dhamir*). For other pronouns, students need a rather long process and even tend to be wrong in carrying out the process of deriving the word. In

addition, students also find it difficult to process the inflection of a word in Arabic, such as changing a basic word to another type of word (Nasution 2021).

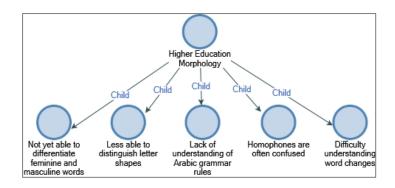


Figure 9. Higher Education Morphological Problems

The first problem faced by students in universities learning Arabic is the difficulty in understanding the morphological aspects related to word changes in Arabic, which are so varied that some students consider Arabic grammar methods to be a difficult subject (Abdurrahman et al. 2020). The second problem is writing skills, where students in a college-level language program still have problems distinguishing Arabic letters that have almost the same pronunciation, causing morphological errors in writing an Arabic word when dictated directly, such as letters *ain* and *hamzah* (Rini, Ahsan, and Aldini 2021).

Morphological problems among students also revealed that as many as 52% of the students felt that they did not understand Arabic morphological grammar, causing them to find it difficult to understand the text of a sentence (Corinna, Rembulan, and Hendra 2020); elsewhere, this finding proves that students who lack competence in mastering morphological grammar will have difficulty reading, writing and translating, as expressed by (Rustandi 2023). Similarly, it was found that students with a background in high school and vocational high school education felt that they were not able to master the basic theory of Arabic morphology, so that they were not as fluent in practically Arabic as they were in some universities (Khasanah and Tantowi 2023; Noviani and Hasan 2023; Tungkagi, Ali, and Kasan 2022).

Other morphological problems include the fact that students are less able to distinguish the shape of an Arabic letter from one another in good and correct morphological methods such as the letters tha and zha, which at first glance look similar and are only distinguished by one point (Sungkar 2019). Another morphological problem is that some college students find it difficult to distinguish between *Mudzakkar* (masculine) and *Muannast* (feminine) nouns (Sungkar 2019).

#### **Syntactic Problems**

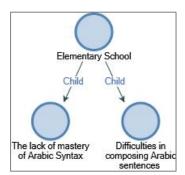
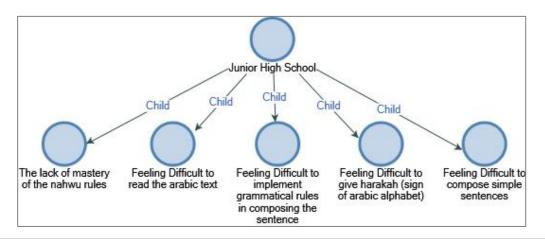


Figure 10. Elementary School Syntatical Problems

The author found two syntactic problems at the elementary school level, such as students' difficulties in composing Arabic sentences such using the grammatical rules as *mubtada' and khabar, na'at and man'ut, and fi'il and fa'il*. Due to the fact that arabic grammatical rule does not resembles as Indonesian grammar (Ibda et al. 2023). In addition, another syntactic problem experienced by elementary school students is the lack of mastery of Arabic syntactic rules (*ilm nahwu*). Thus, some students become difficult to read Arabic texts well(Solkan 2020), and they often read with the wrong *i'rob* (arabic parsing) (Wijaya and Hikmah 2023).



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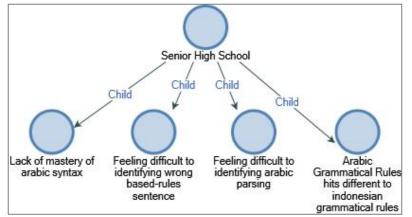
#### Figure 11. Junior High School Syntatical Problems

At the junior high school and *madrasah tsanawiyah* levels, syntactic problems develop into five problems that become obstacles to students' learning of Arabic. One problem that researchers have encountered at the previous level is the lack of mastery of the nahwu rules. This is because Arabic language learning process does not emphasize the aspects of nahwu rules(Nasrulloh et al. 2020). Therefore, this problem becomes the main and estuary for other syntactic problems who experienced by MTs Al Islamiyah Kotabumi students, due to the lack of mastery of *qowaid nahwu* and the lack of vocabulary, therefore it seems difficult for them to give the *harakat* (signs of arabic alphabet) of a sentence (Zakiah 2021). In another case, MTsN 1 Kendari's students also had difficulty to recognize arabic texts that were not marked by signs of arabic alphabet (Burhanuddin 2021). In fact, *harakat* is an integral part of the Arabic language that affects the meaning of a sentence. Difficulty in giving *harakat* can cause students to have difficulty understanding the meaning of the sentence comprehensively. This also creates confusion in understanding either Arabic texts or conversations.

In addition, the difficulty of reading texts is also a serious problem for students at the junior high school level. In this case, the educational background of students at the previous level is the main cause of this difficulty(Hamdah 2022; Nadhif 2022). Arabic texts have complex sentence structures and rich vocabulary and may be unfamiliar to students who come from the former educational background which does not teach arabic language lesson. Thus, the lack of fluency in reading can obstruct the overall comprehension of the text and may affect students' motivation to learn.

The heterogeneity of students' educational backgrounds has also created another difficulty for some of them. In this case, it is difficult to write simple texts and free essays in Arabic. Research has shown that heterogeneity in skills, abilities, and motivation is also the factors in this difficulty(Ariyanto and Nurhayati 2023). Thus, without adequate skills in composing texts, students find it difficult to express ideas effectively in Arabic.

Finally, the problem experienced by junior high school students is the difficulty in applying the grammatical rules learned in composing texts. Research by (Nisa et al.



2023) revealed that the Arabic grammatical structure, which consists of the forms of *jumlah ismiyah* (nominal sentence) and *jumlah fi'liyah (verbal sentence)*, as well as the change in the *harakat* at the end of the word or known as *I'rob* (arabic parsing), has become the base of this difficulty. This demonstrates the importance of a more practical learning approach and direct application in the daily use of Arabic language so that students can master the language better.

# Figure 12. Senior High School Syntatical Problems

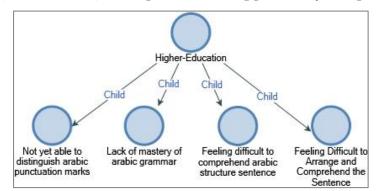
The development of syntax materials at the high school level also presents a variety of problems encountered by researchers. The first problem comes from research at the MAN 2 Model Medan school. In this school, students experience two syntactic difficulties in Arabic, both are difficulties identifying incorrect sentences anddetermining arabic parsing *(irab)*. The existence of these two difficulties is motivated by the heterogeneity of Arabic language teachers who do not emphasize the use of correct syntax in Arabic language learning. In fact, understanding the grammatical rule is very important for students so that they can compose good sentences and understand the meaning of a sentence as a whole (Nasution 2021).

Furthermore, students who lacked understanding of the arabic syntax (*nahwu*) rules continued to reach the senior high school level due to the previous educational background is also considered as the cause of this lack of understanding. Thus, even placing vocabulary in very simple sentences in conversations gives implications for

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students' difficulties(Yunisa 2022). It is known well that every language has its own rules, Arabic grammar rules are arranged in such a way that users of the language do not make mistakes in writing and speaking.

The last problem at this level is the difficulty of students in writing skills due to differences in grammatical laws in Arabic sentence structures compared with those of Indonesians (Dawud 2019). This problem is supported by Sarip in (Yunisa 2022),



who states that the scope of Arabic syntax includes nouns, verbs and letters arranged in two sentence structures, namely, *jumlah Ismiyah* with subject/predicate/object patterns and *jumlah Ismiyah Fi'liyah* with predicate/subject/object patterns. These make it difficult for students to learn Arabic sentence structure.

#### Figure 13. Syntatical problems in higher education

At the university level, the author was able to identify at least four problems experienced by students. Unfortunately, some of the problems encountered by this author were found at earlier levels, and they still continue up to this phase. First, there is difficulty in constructing sentences. This difficulty is the result of students' lack of grammatical rules at the previous level (Abdurrahman et al. 2020). In addition, differences in Arabic grammar that are different from those of Indonesians suggest that it is difficult for non-Arabic learners to learn Arabic (Fauziah, Rembulan, and Ambarwati 2020).

Second, there is difficulty in understanding the sentence structure. In line with what is written above, Arabic, which is a Semitic language, has a different grammatical structure than Indonesian. This makes it difficult for students to understand the structure of Arabic sentences. In addition, students' education at the

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previous formal level is also the core of this problem (Khasanah and Tantowi 2023). Arabic language learning in Indonesia itself has been implemented since the elementary school level, and it will be very difficult to follow the material at a certain level if it is not followed linearly at the previous level of education.

Similar cases were also reported by participants of the 2021 Gontor Ulama Cadre Program. Some participants also had difficulty understanding the structure of Arabic sentences. This problem is caused by the inability of some participants to read Arabic books that are not marked by *harakat*. This is what causes some participants feeling difficult to read and understand the structure and meaning of Arabic sentences(Rini et al. 2021).

The next problem is the students' lack of understanding of Arabic language rule. This problem is still a major scourge for Arabic language learners up to the university level. A lack of understanding of these methods can cause various problems for students in several areas of language skills, such as reading skills (Corinna et al. 2020) and speaking skills (Noviani and Hasan 2023). In general, it is known that all difficulties in understanding Arabic rules are based on the educational background of students who come from *non-madrasa schools*, as the result, students have no basis for understanding these materials (Tungkagi et al. 2022).

The last syntactic problem at the university level is the inability of students to distinguish punctuation marks, even those not fluent in pronouncing Arabic letters. In addition, what is also meant in this case is the lack of student ability to identify the position of a word in a sentence. Therefore, it is difficult for students to start reading Arabic texts (Sungkar 2019).

#### Semantic problems

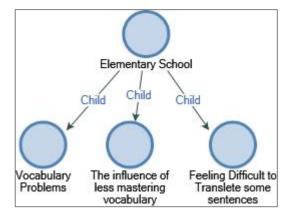


Figure 14. Elementery School Semantic Problems

For basic-level learners, the first problem encountered is the difficulty of learners in understanding Arabic texts. A person's tendency to understand the meaning of a foreign language is to translate the meaning of sentences in his native language. Thus, learners must understand meaning first to read it correctly (Nurlaela 2020). When a student is unable to interpret the meaning of Arabic text as Indonesian language, he will have no clue to comprehend its actual meaning.

Another problem comes from something more detailed, such as a word. Learners who are less familiar with vocabulary will certainly have difficulty translating sentences as a whole. In fact, some Indonesian vocabulary has loan word from Arabic words, therefore, it can be an advantage for learners to guess the meaning of a word. However, word which changes from the original sound, can cause problems, such as in the word "*kabar (Indonesian word)*", which comes from the word "*khabar (arabic word)*" (Laubaha et al. 2022). Learners may overwrite the original Arabic expression, which is considered similar to its Indonesian meaning. Thus, they can erode the original memory of the script.

In addition, the low level of students' ability to read Arabic texts is greatly influenced by their lack of vocabulary(Wijaya and Hikmah 2023). It considered that vocabulary is the main element that is crucial as a barometer for mastering Arabic language skills. Grammar proficiency is necessary, but vocabulary mastery proficiency cannot be ruled out. Both synergize with each other to form and understand sentences as a whole. For elementary school students, the habit of reading Arabic texts can be taught through the routine of reading and writing the Qur'an. In addition, teachers must emphasize learning methods for vocabulary enrichment.

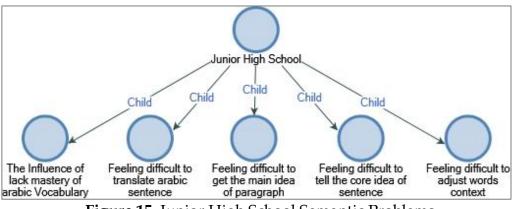


Figure 15. Junior High School Semantic Problems

Arabic language teaching problems at the junior high school level are more developed than are internal problems related to the foreign language. Students' analytical skills in interpreting texts are hindered by their limited reading skills, in the way indicates students cannot determine the main idea in the reading text(Nadhif 2022). This can lead to ineffective reading time management. In addition, students will have difficulty knowing the core problem or discussion that is being reviewed in a reading.

The second problem in reading proficiency is related to students' ability to master Arabic grammar and recognize texts that are not punctuated. In addition, they also have difficulty understanding the meaning of various vocabularies that tend to be different in each text (Burhanuddin 2021). The variety of Arabic vocabulary allows the use of different words with similar meanings. Moreover, some Arabic words are interpreted differently from their literal meaning or, in other words, the meaning of the word adjusts to the context being discussed(Abdul-Ghafour et al. 2022; Jabar and

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Mansor 2021). This difference creates an inappropriate or unfamiliar perspective for students to understand.

Learners' abilities are not limited to understanding the Arabic context. Another problem that arises is the difficulty in expressing ideas to answer questions related to the reading text. More specifically, students have difficulty searching, finding, using, and even arranging the right words so that they become coherent sentences and in accordance with the desired answer to the reading text(Nadhif 2022). This problem is inseparable from the lack of vocabulary knowledge and inadequate grammar.

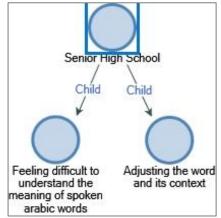
The next problem is that students have difficulty translating Arabic texts. This is influenced by poor vocabulary mastery (Ariyanto and Nurhayati 2023). Although students do not need to interpret words as a whole, knowledge of Arabic text translation is very helpful for students to understand the meaning of the context of a reading. Thus, students' difficulties in translating Arabic text can be an inhibiting factor in terms of linguistics.

Arabic vocabulary learning involves such many complex topics as *isim* or nouns, *fi*'*il* or verbs and letters (Nisa et al. 2023). It requires perseverance and persistence as well as a good understanding of the concept so that the vocabulary that has been learned can be applied in composing sentences and communicating. This is a challenge for teachers to find the right method for teaching vocabulary to students. In addition, the results of research by (Zakiah 2021) showed that many students do not apply the vocabulary they know in their daily activities, so they forget it, and the teacher must repeat it again when teaching material related to the learned vocabulary. Another inhibiting factor that follows is the lack of students' desire from within and

consciously to find the meaning of the vocabulary that they do not know. This situation causes students to lack motivation to learn Arabic (Hamdah 2022).

## Figure 16. Senior High School Semantic Problems

Arabic language learning at the high school level develops in the context of listening and speaking skills. At this stage, teachers, as educators, began to use Arabic more actively to enrich students' vocabulary in the classroom. Unfortunately, there

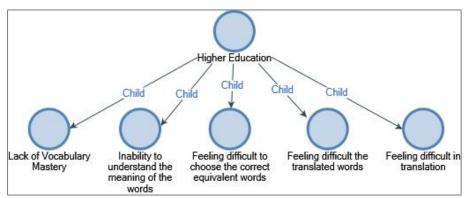


are obstacles to achieving this goal, as students tend to have difficulty understanding the meaning of the teacher's speech (Nasution 2021). This is due to the lack of intensive habituation to the use of Arabic in the school environment.(Curdt-Christiansen 2020; Said 2021) The students' fear of making mistakes when using words in conversation is another factor that follows. Among the most common examples are when people are hesitant to use pronouns (*dhomirs*) because they are afraid of being wrong or have difficulty pronouncing a term in Arabic.

In addition, another problem with Arabic writing skills arises when students have difficulty placing vocabulary in the certain context. Arabic words can be combined with sentences and can change from their literal meaning depending on the context of the sentence(Jabar and Mansor 2021). Furthermore, not all words that have similar meanings can be placed in related sentences. There are times when it is necessary to adapt the term to the context of the sentence being discussed. This appropriateness sometimes makes it difficult for students to sort and select words that are appropriate for the context of the given reading. The rest of the problems experienced by students are in constructing sentences using the vocabulary they get through Google Translate (Dawud 2019). This results in the use of inappropriate vocabulary in Arabic sentences, which leads to sentence confusion.

# Figure 17. Higher Education Semantic Problems

Despite reaching the level of higher education, the lack of understanding of the meaning of vocabulary in Arabic is still a major problem (Noviani and Hasan 2023).



According to the findings of (Corinna et al. 2020), most students have difficulty understanding the meaning of different vocabulary words in any text. This finding was obtained in the context of *Maharah Qira'ah*. This is due to different previous educational backgrounds and different comprehension skills. In addition, the Arabic language contained in each text has internally different vocabulary meanings depending on the context of the text in question.

In certain cases, translating Arabic texts is necessary. For example, the tasks of translating certain Arabic books or reviewing the contents of Arabic books are simple. Therefore, the ability of students to understand reading texts well is necessary. Meanwhile, the problem that occurs is the lack of vocabulary owned by students, which affects the difficulty of understanding the content of reading and translating Arabic texts into Indonesian texts (Sungkar 2019).

One Arabic word can have more than two other words with similar meanings or so named by synonym words(Al-Matham, Al-Khalifa, and Uddin 2021). For example, the word "Raja'a", which means to go home, has other equivalents in the form of "Insharafa" and "aada", which have similar meanings. Students' limitations in exploring vocabulary that has word equivalents such as this can be an obstacle to

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understanding the context of reading in Arabic. The problem lies in the lack of students mastering the semantic aspect of micro linguistics (Rustandi 2023).

According to the research results of (Rini et al. 2021), some of her research respondents from among students could not read sentences in Arabic books or writings. This is due to the absence of *harakat* on sentences in some Arabic books. The absence of these harakats makes it difficult for students to read. Therefore, they cannot understand the structure of words and the meaning of the translation of sentences in the Arabic books they are reading.

In Arabic, vocabulary can form a sentence structure that is adapted based on the rules. In the context of language teaching, the transfer of foreign language words can cause problems for individuals who do not understand, such as the concept of change in Arabic, in the form of a single form (Mufrod), 2 forms (Mutsanna) or many forms (plural) (Khasanah and Tantowi 2023). Some students tend to find it difficult to memorize Arabic vocabulary because when memorizing, there are sometimes vocabulary words whose pronunciation is sometimes confused. In this case, there are still many students who have not memorized Arabic vocabulary. This is due to the students' lack of intensity in using Arabic, so the vocabulary acquired in class is forgotten because it is rarely used (Fauziah et al. 2020).

#### Conclusion

The results of this research show that learning Arabic in formal schools in Indonesia involves various complex and varied linguistic problems. The resulting concept map reveals that in the field of morphology, students experience difficulties in understanding and using word forms and changes in word forms in different contexts. In the field of syntax, the Arabic sentence structure and grammar often cause confusion because of differences in the students' mother tongue. In the field of semantics, understanding the meaning of words and phrases is a challenge, especially when dealing with different cultural contexts. Moreover, in the field of phonology, the main problem lies in correct pronunciation and intonation, which often differ greatly from students' daily habits.

However, this study merely serves as a mapping of the issues delineated in selected literature. Nevertheless, its findings can serve as a reference for all scholars in the field of Arabic language studies to address these dynamic issues. This can be achieved by developing more effective learning strategies, including the use of innovative and contextual teaching methods. Additionally, training educators to comprehend and address linguistic challenges is crucial for enhancing the quality of Arabic language education in formal schools as the implication of this research.

The limitations of this research lie in several aspects. First, the use of the systematic literature review (SLR) method, which focuses on studies and scientific articles, may not cover the entire spectrum of linguistic problems encountered in practice, as not all issues and practical experiences are published in the scientific literature. Second, the research period limited to 2019-2023 may not fully capture recent changes or developments in Arabic language learning that occurred after this period. Additionally, the research's focus on four main linguistic aspects (morphology, syntax, semantics, and phonology) may overlook other influential aspects, such as pragmatics or sociolinguistics. Lastly, the generalization of the research findings may be limited due to the diverse contexts of Arabic language learning in Indonesia, which are influenced by specific local factors.

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