

Patterns of Religious, Cultural, and Literary Rhetorical Elements Usage Among Non-Native Arabic Learners: A Case Study at Mohamed bin Zayed University for Humanities

Naji M. AlQbailat*

English Language and Literature Department, Al-Balqa Applied University, Jordan

Eman Fadel AlQubelat

Department of Humanities, Faculty of Engineering Technology, Al-Balqa Applied University, Amman, Jordan

Mozah H. Al Kaabi

Arabic Language and Literature Department, Mohamed bin Zayed University for Humanities, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

Asma Saeed Almaamari

The College of Islamic Studies, Mohammed Bin Zayed University for Humanities, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

Abstract—This study investigated how non-native Arabic learners incorporate traditional rhetorical elements in their daily communication. An analysis of 20 international students at Mohamed bin Zayed University for Humanities examined Quranic verses, religious expressions, cultural proverbs, poetry, and modern colloquial expressions. Through interviews and focus groups, the study revealed that students' competency levels varied significantly across different rhetorical categories. Students demonstrated the strongest performance with common religious expressions in formal settings and basic cultural sayings in academic environments. The study found that modern poetry was used more frequently than classical verses. Colloquial expressions showed clear patterns based on social contexts. Students carefully considered cultural expressions in their communication. The analysis concluded that cultural understanding played a more crucial role than linguistic ability in successful rhetorical usage. These findings emphasize the need to integrate cultural context in Arabic language instruction and provide structured opportunities for authentic practice. The study recommends the development of specialized teaching materials that combine rhetorical elements with appropriate cultural contexts for academic settings.

Index Terms—Arabic rhetoric, non-native speakers, cultural expressions, language learning, UAE education

I. INTRODUCTION

The study of Islam, Islamic literature, and cultural output has always been an Arabic literature-based field in its cultural and language contexts. However, its relevance is now recognized globally beyond merely these interests, and it is gaining traction across global discourse, cultural understanding, and professional dialogue. Around 220 million speak Arabic as their first language, and another 230 million speak Arabic as a second language. Additionally, 1.5 billion Muslims worldwide use Arabic in religious practices (Ernst, 2013). In today's connected world, Arabic connects different cultures and communities in multilingual societies. Also, its significance extends beyond its role as the Quran's language; it is also a valuable part of human civilization's shared heritage (Ernst, 2013). Additionally, it has been observed that there has been a significant increase in the number of people who want to learn Arabic as a second language (Alfataftah & Jarrar, 2018; Calafato & Tang, 2018).

Arabic distinctive features include complex wordplay, metaphors, and rhythmic patterns that make it unique among Semitic languages. These elements transform Arabic from a basic communication tool into a sophisticated art form (Abalkheel & Sourani, 2023). The language's rhetorical structure and morphological system work together with its expressive capabilities to create meaningful communication (Farghal & Haider, 2024; Ryding, 2005). Research confirms that more learners now study Arabic and its rhetorical elements worldwide (Zikriah & Mauludiyah, 2024). This growing interest shows the importance of examining how non-native speakers engage with Arabic's sophisticated features in their language development. It is believed that language and culture shape how people think about and process language

* Corresponding Author.

internally and how they interact and communicate with others in their daily lives. This relationship influences both mental understanding and social exchanges (Ismail & Aljabr, 2025).

Despite this growing interest and recognition of Arabic's cultural-linguistic importance, non-native learners experience several challenges in learning Arabic as a second language due to its diversified scripts, syntactic complexities, and lexical sophistication compared to other languages (Abedalla, 2015). Ardaraz and Rubina (2019) state that the research of Arabic rhetoric and its cultural aspects is still considered an emerging and expanding field of linguistic research worldwide. However, even for a strong Arab language learner, mastering elements of Arabic rhetoric is one of the biggest challenges. They experience significant challenges in understanding Quranic verses and using traditional poetry and cultural proverbs when communicating in daily life (Muassomah et al., 2023). In fact, basic Arabic found in classroom curricula can suffice for communication, but if the communication requires rhetorical elements, deeper knowledge of local languages, dialects, and literary traditions is needed (Mohamed, 2023). Learners need to master advanced language skills to engage themselves effectively in Arabic cultural discussions. They must develop their language abilities to move beyond basic communication toward more sophisticated discourse. In this case, the learner could analyze cultural concepts, engage in intellectual debates, and join academic conversations effectively (Kim, 2020).

Many non-native Arabic learners reach a functional fluency in Arabic, but a few manage to employ traditional rhetorical elements in their speech in a natural fashion (Omari, 2016). This challenge applies mostly to them through their reluctance to quote Quranic verses or cultural sayings in places where quoting both would be suitable and implied by native speakers. This language barrier extends beyond basic comprehension to the cultural context. Learners often miss opportunities to employ traditional expressions that would enrich their communication. Their hesitation to use religious references and proverbial wisdom, even in appropriate settings, reflects uncertainty about navigating Arabic's rich rhetorical landscape (Shamsuddin, 2019). Notably, this reluctance persists even among advanced learners who understand the literal meaning of such expressions but remain unsure about their contextual application in daily discourse (Almelhes, 2024; Janadbah & Sharef, 2024). Al-Batal (2018) further added that the ability to engage with and properly use rhetorical elements marks language proficiency and cultural integration. According to their findings, those who are able to learn these features correctly not only have something to say but also possess the social visibility and linguistic compatibility necessary to be accepted as part of their Arabic-speaking community.

Equally important, learning Arabic became significant in global contexts, particularly after Arabic became a UN official language in the 1970s and following increased Arab participation in international affairs. In 1982, Arabic became a working language of the UN General Assembly and its Main Committees (UNESCO Executive Board, 2012). The UAE, especially Abu Dhabi, represents a unique research setting due to its multicultural environment and large expatriate population. At least 6 in 10 non-Arabic-speaking residents in Abu Dhabi are open to learning Arabic, and 64% of the non-Arabic-speaking residents of the UAE want to learn Arabic as well (Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi - Annual Report 2022, 2022). Within this context, the purpose of this study is, therefore, to determine whether or not and to what extent the Arabic rhetorical elements are used by non-native learners who have been instructed at a university operating in both Arabic and English languages. Specifically, this study examines how non-native Arabic learners at Mohamed bin Zayed University for Humanities use traditional Arabic rhetorical elements, such as Quranic verses and religious expressions, cultural proverbs, poetry, and modern colloquial expressions, in their daily communication. It identifies the main challenges they face when developing rhetorical competence.

The study's findings guide the instructors of non-native learners on how to teach Arabic to non-native learners in terms of both language skills and cultural integration. Also, the findings of this study provide an idea about students' awareness and knowledge of the rhetorical elements. The learners can use these study results as tools to improve clarity and effectiveness in identifying the correct Arabic element in the context, and the results may facilitate accurate language transfer for these learners. Thus, the current study aims to answer the following questions:

- 1- What types of traditional Arabic rhetorical elements (such as Quranic verses, Hadith texts, poetry, popular proverbs, and colloquial expressions) do non-native Arabic learners incorporate into their daily communication?
- 2- What specific challenges do non-native Arabic learners encounter when attempting to use traditional Arabic rhetorical elements in their everyday interactions?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Current Status Teaching Arabic as a Second Language*

The Arabic language is the fifth most widely used language globally, officially used in 22 countries. Additionally, it is the fourth most-used language in Internet communications (Mohamed et al., 2022). Consequently, it has emerged as the selected medium among "revealed languages" for language users worldwide (Heffner & Myers, 2021). Furthermore, the Arabic language continues to garner recognition within the international community as numerous countries have acknowledged and comprehended its importance in international discourse (Moghazy, 2021).

Learning Arabic as a second language is challenging, but it is important for people who want to live or work in the UAE (Salameh, 2018). Using Arabic as a second language helps people talk to locals and improve their communication skills (Kataw, 2016). More people worldwide want to learn Arabic, especially in countries that work closely with Arab nations. Many studies show that despite the fact that learning Arabic is challenging, the benefits encourage both students and teachers to keep studying and teaching it (Alkutich, 2017; Kharkhurin, 2015; Moeller & Catalano, 2015). International

students from non-Arabic-speaking countries wanted to learn Arabic to get jobs in Arab countries and talk to people. The study also found that Arabic is important for Arab culture and religion, and more people moving to Arab countries means more people want to learn and teach Arabic (Hussein & Gitsaki, 2018).

B. Definition of Arabic Rhetorical Elements

In Arabic culture, confidence and eloquence are fundamental rhetorical elements that form the cornerstone of effective communication (Koch, 1983). The assessment of speakers goes beyond mere content, as listeners evaluate the overall presentational skills and persuasive techniques employed (Suchan, 2014). This cultural emphasis on rhetorical prowess is particularly evident in formal settings, where a speaker's ability to engage and persuade is paramount. For instance, a religious figure or teacher who fails to employ proper rhetorical devices and speaks monotonously risks losing their audience's attention and respect (Johnstone, 1983). Rhetoric in Arabic can be used in basic communication and is a persuasive technique deeply embedded in social and cultural norms (Al-Khatib, 1994). Effective rhetoric in Arabic society is measured by the speaker's ability to create emotional resonance and influence listeners' responses in many contexts, such as advertisements, public speaking, and political discourse, where persuasion is the primary goal (Suchan, 2014). The mastery of these rhetorical elements is not merely about aesthetic presentation but represents a cultural competency that determines the speaker's effectiveness and credibility in various social contexts.

In Arabic classics, the term "Balagha" (rhetoric) is related to eloquence, the ability to capture the reader's or the audience's imagination by using the appropriate words and sentences and organizing the ideas in a logical thematic relationship (Abdul-Raof, 2006). The resultant combination should affect the reader's beliefs or judgment. Balagha presents linguistic proofs that persuade, clarify, and present educational or political messages (Al-Radi, 2007). It serves to increase written and oral skills. The study of Balagha introduces students to their inherent or potential talents, encourages the development of a variety of rhetorical styles, and ensures fairness in communication (Larkin, 1995). Balagha material is as equally important as mathematics, science, and social studies. The sources of Balagha can be traced to the younger Companions' prayers, oration, and poetry. Scholastic figures were then presented to Balagha using a systematic method (Abu Deeb, 1979).

C. Arabic Rhetoric Education

Arabic Rhetoric is a key part of all Arabic language programs and is needed for advanced language skills. Al Kaabi et al. (2024) stated, "Arabic rhetoric has traditionally relied on ancient texts and human interpretation for teaching purposes." It is also an important subject in Arab schools for developing language expertise. Also, university students still show medium to low levels of understanding and use of Arabic rhetoric. Since the 1990s, many studies have looked at Arabic rhetoric and found ongoing problems with student understanding. Students struggle with specific rhetoric concepts like haqiqah, majaz, majaz mursal, and isti'arah (Budiarti & Amel, 2024; AlQbailat et al., 2023).

Abushihab et al. (2023) recommended teaching literature in foreign classrooms to help learners enrich their language skills. Students rely on memorization instead of active language use (Abdullah et al., 2015).

D. Challenges Facing Non-Native Arabic Language Learners

Non-native Arabic learners face challenges with pronunciation when they are learning the Arabic language (Heffner & Myers, 2021). Unique consonant sounds and complex sounds in Arabic are difficult for those who are from different linguistic backgrounds. Some pronunciation mistakes can change word meanings (Heffner & Myers, 2021). Recent research (AlQbailat et al., 2024) recommended language teachers learn new methods of teaching pronunciation as students still struggle with pronouncing words that contain vowels. Therefore, Arabic learners must spend lots of time practising these basic parts. Similarly, Arabic grammar is another challenge because it has complex sentence patterns and word structures. The language has flexible word order, case marking, and a root-based system that needs much study to use them correctly (Rett & White, 2022). Students struggle with verb changes and how root words connect to other word parts. These grammar issues affect both learner's writing and speaking skills.

Furthermore, non-native learners need to understand Arabic communication's cultural and social parts. They must learn proper ways to address people and be polite to fit into the culture (Terui & Hsieh, 2020). Studies show that understanding how Arabic varies in different regions is key to good communication; thus, learners need to know different regional expressions and social rules for effective communication. (Terui & Hsieh, 2020).

Teaching Arabic to non-native speakers comes with unique challenges that need special teaching methods and approaches (Unal & Ilhan, 2017). Current research shows that we need better ways to teach and deal with these learning challenges in the classroom. Studies clearly show that good Arabic teaching must handle the language's difficulty while focusing on helping students communicate better in real situations (Abdul Ghani et al., 2019; Alimsaidova, 2021). Teaching through communication has worked well for Arabic classes. It allowed students to practice in real-life situations. Recent developments in task-based teaching have shown good results by using practical activities that students might face in real life (Alimsaidova, 2021). This method uses real practice conversations and cultural interactions as learning activities to help students learn functional Arabic they can use in everyday situations.

Moreover, research shows that culture plays a role in how students learn Arabic (Elachachi, 2015). Haron and Ahmed (2016) found that students struggle the most with learning vocabulary and grammar. Their research shows that students often avoid using new Arabic words because they are worried about making mistakes. Yang and Chen (2016) further

found two main issues: how culture affects how students see the language and how Arabic connects closely with Arab culture. Azaryad-Shechter (2018) points out that Arabic grammar is a major challenge when teaching it as a foreign language.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach to investigate how non-native Arabic speakers use rhetorical elements in their oral communication at Mohamed bin Zayed University for Humanities. According to Creswell (2018), qualitative methodology effectively captures the complexities of language use patterns and cultural adaptation processes. AbuHamda et al. (2021, p. 71) stated, "Quantitative and qualitative methods are the engine behind evidence-based outcomes".

The research specifically examines four categories of rhetorical elements:

1. Quranic verses and religious expressions
2. Cultural proverbs and sayings
3. Poetry and literary expressions
4. Modern colloquial expressions

A. Sample Selection and Setting

This study setting aligned with Mackey and Gass's (2015) qualitative language learning research recommendations. The study selected twenty international students (15 male and five female) from Mohamed bin Zayed University for Humanities using Dörnyei's (2014) guidelines. The students ranged from freshman to senior year, had studied Arabic for at least one year, and showed intermediate to advanced proficiency. All students showed intermediate to advanced Arabic skills through standardized tests (Taha-Thomure & Speaker, 2018). The students came from four East Asian countries with different language backgrounds. The university's Arabic department for non-speakers in Abu Dhabi provided a suitable research environment due to its language programs and diverse student population.

B. Data Collection Procedures

The study used two tools for data collection following Albirini's (2016) protocol. Participants completed a 45-60 minute semi-structured interview about their experiences with Arabic rhetorical elements. Interview questions followed Ryding's (2013) framework for assessing cultural language competence. Four focus groups were conducted using Brosh's (2019) guidelines to allow students to share experiences with rhetorical elements. Students also completed speaking tasks during the interview to describe personal experiences in Arabic to provide natural contexts for observing rhetorical element usage.

C. Data Analysis Framework

The study analyzed how students used Arabic rhetorical elements through interviews and focus group data. The study examined usage patterns for religious expressions in formal and informal contexts (e.g., /as-salaamu alaykum/). The analysis tracked pronunciation challenges with emphatic sounds and cultural appropriateness. For proverbs, the study documented frequently used sayings and cultural understanding. Poetry analysis compared students' preferences between classical and modern forms. With colloquial expressions, researchers studied how students switched between formal (/ala raasi/) and casual (/ya hala/) language. The analysis used qualitative feedback from students and native speakers instead of numerical scores, following Al-Batal's (2019) framework for Arabic learners' cultural-linguistic development.

IV. RESULTS

A. Quranic Verses and Religious Expressions

TABLE 1
ANALYSIS OF QURANIC VERSES AND RELIGIOUS EXPRESSIONS

Element	Arabic Example	English Translation	Context of Use	Common Errors
Opening Greetings	"السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ"	"Peace and God's mercy be upon you"	Formal meetings, emails, class entry	Timing in casual settings
Daily Supplications	"بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ"	"In the name of Allah"	Starting tasks, meals	Pronunciation errors
Gratitude	"جزاك الله خيراً"	"May Allah reward you"	After receiving help	Overuse in casual situations
Future Plans	"إن شاء الله"	"God willing"	Making promises, planning	Excessive repetition
Protection	"ما شاء الله"	"As Allah willed"	Complimenting, protecting from envy	Wrong context usage

Non-native learners experience many challenges in using Arabic religious expressions despite achieving functional fluency. According to Al-Batal (2018), these challenges stem from the complex interplay between linguistic ability and cultural understanding.

(a). Opening Greetings ("السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ" /as-salaamu alaykum wa rahmatullah/)

International students showed consistent usage of this greeting in formal academic settings. During interviews, student A explained: "When I enter my Arabic class, I always say السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ /as-salaamu alaykum wa rahmatullah/, but

with my friends at lunch, I am not sure if I should use it or just say hi." Another participant noted: "My instructor explained that *السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ* /as-salaamu alaykum/ is more appropriate than *مرحبا* /marhaba/ in formal emails, but I still get confused about when to use each one." This pattern aligns with Mohammad et al.'s (2024) observation that non-native speakers tend to rely heavily on 'safe' expressions while hesitating with context-specific ones.

(b). *Daily Supplications* ("بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ" /*bismillah ar-rahman ar-raheem*/)

Focus group discussions revealed the integration of this expression into academic routines. Student B shared: "Before starting my Arabic presentation, I say *بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ* /bismillah ar-rahman ar-raheem/ naturally now. I learned this from watching my Arab classmates." However, pronunciation errors persisted, as one participant admitted: "I struggle with the *ح* /h/ sound in *الرحمن* /ar-rahman/. My instructor often corrects my pronunciation." These pronunciation difficulties align with Muassomah et al.'s (2023) observation that non-native speakers require extensive practice with Arabic's unique sound system. As Mohamed (2023) argues, rhetorical elements demand sophisticated linguistic capabilities beyond basic communication skills.

(c). *Gratitude Expressions* ("جزاك الله خيراً" /*jazak Allah khayran*/)

Usage patterns indicated a clear distinction between formal and informal settings. During focus groups, student C remarked: "I use *جزاك الله خيراً* /jazak Allah khayran/ with instructors because *شكراً* /shukran/ feels too simple. But with classmates, I worry it sounds too serious." The focus groups documented this formal-informal divide, with Student D noting: "Sometimes I mix up when to use *جزاك الله خيراً* /jazak Allah khayran/ and when to just say *شكراً* /shukran/." This hesitation reflects cultural integration issues that Almelhes (2024) identified in his research on non-native speakers' rhetorical development.

(d). *Future References* ("إن شاء الله" /*in sha Allah*/)

"In sha Allah" emerged as frequently used but often misunderstood. Student E reflected: "I say *إن شاء الله* /in sha Allah/ for any future plan, but my Arab friends tell me sometimes it sounds like I'm avoiding commitment." Another participant shared: "In my country, we also say *إن شاء الله* /in sha Allah/, but I learned it has deeper meaning in Arabic conversations".

(e). *Expressions of Protection* ("ما شاء الله" /*ma sha Allah*/)

Students demonstrated limited mastery of contextual usage. Student F admitted: "I forget to say *ما شاء الله* /ma sha Allah/ when someone shows me their good grades. I only remember after seeing Arab students say it." During observations, Student G noted: "I understand *ما شاء الله* /ma sha Allah/ is for protection from the evil eye, but I'm never sure about the right moment to say it." Students also reported unsuccessful attempts with religious expressions. As Student K noted: 'Once I said /jazak Allah khayran/ to a classmate after casual help, but my Arab friends explained it was too formal for that situation. I learned to use /shukran/ instead.' Similar challenges emerged with the timing of expressions like /ma sha Allah/. Student L shared: 'I completely forgot to say it when my friend showed her an excellent project. My instructor later explained this was a missed cultural opportunity. This limited mastery supports Shamsuddin's (2019) observation about the gap between understanding religious expressions and appropriately using them in daily communication. As Kim (2020) notes, learners need to develop advanced language abilities for effective cultural discourse.

Common Error Patterns:

1. Timing errors in casual settings - students often use formal religious expressions in informal situations
2. Pronunciation issues with Arabic sounds not present in their native languages
3. Overuse of certain expressions, particularly "inshallah"
4. Missing cultural cues for appropriate usage

B. Cultural Proverbs and Sayings

TABLE 2
ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL PROVERBS AND SAYINGS

Proverb Type	Arabic Example	English Translation	Usage Context	Learning Source
Wisdom	"العلم نور والجهل ظلام"	"Knowledge is light, ignorance is darkness"	Academic discussions	Textbooks
Success	"من جد وجد"	"Who strives shall succeed"	Motivation contexts	Teachers
Friendship	"الصديق وقت الضيق"	"A friend in need is a friend indeed"	Social situations	Peers
Time	"الوقت كالسيف"	"Time is like a sword"	Time management discussions	Media
Patience	"الصبر مفتاح الفرج"	"Patience is the key to relief"	Consoling others	Social media

The findings reveal distinct patterns in how non-native learners navigate Arabic cultural proverbs in academic settings. As Abedalla (2015) notes, students show varying comfort levels with different types of proverbs based on their cultural complexity.

(a). *Wisdom Proverbs* ("العلم نور والجهل ظلام" /*al-ilmu noorun wal-jahlu thalam*/)

The data revealed complex patterns in how students incorporate wisdom proverbs into their academic discourse. Students predominantly used these expressions during classroom observations, formal presentations, and written

assignments. Student H elaborated: "When I prepare my Arabic presentations, I intentionally include العلم نور /al-ilmu noor/ because it adds depth and shows cultural understanding. My instructor always appreciates this." The focus group discussions further revealed that students viewed these proverbs as tools for academic success. Another participant noted: "In my research presentation, I started with العلم نور والجهل ظلام /al-ilmu noorun wal-jahlu thalam/ because it perfectly introduced my topic about educational development. My Arab classmates immediately connected with the message." This selective usage aligns with Ardaraz and Rubina's (2019) research about the complexity of Arabic rhetorical mastery, particularly in formal academic contexts.

(b). *Success-Related Sayings* ("من جد وجد" /man jadda wajada/)

These proverbs demonstrated the highest integration into students' daily academic discourse. During group work, students frequently exchanged motivational proverbs. Student I shared a meaningful experience: "During our final project preparation, when everyone was stressed, I remembered من جد وجد /man jadda wajada/. It became our group's motto." Another participant explained: "What makes من جد وجد /man jadda wajada/ special is its universal message. Even my non-Arabic speaking friends understand and use it now." The focus groups showed that students often paired these proverbs with specific academic challenges: "Before every Arabic grammar test, we remind each other من جد وجد /man jadda wajada/ - it becomes our success mantra." This preference for universal proverbs supports Kim's (2020) observation about non-native speakers' tendency to gravitate toward expressions with clear cross-cultural meanings.

(c). *Friendship Proverbs* ("الصديق وقت الضيق" /as-sadeequ waqt ad-deeq/)

The usage of friendship-related proverbs revealed interesting cultural adaptation patterns. Students expressed deep appreciation for these sayings but showed hesitation in their application. Student J elaborated during an interview: "I love the meaning of الصديق وقت الضيق /as-sadeequ waqt ad-deeq/, but using it feels like a big commitment in Arab culture. I need to be sure about the friendship level." Focus group discussions highlighted cultural sensitivity concerns: "In my culture, we express friendship differently. Here, using الصديق وقت الضيق /as-sadeequ waqt ad-deeq/ carries deeper meaning. I have learned to be more careful with friendship expressions." This cautious approach confirms Janadbah and Sharef's (2024) findings about non-native speakers' awareness of cultural weight in Arabic expressions.

(d). *Time-Related Expressions* ("الوقت كالسيف" /al-waqtu kas-sayf/)

Students demonstrated particular difficulty integrating time-related proverbs into natural conversation. During interviews, Student K explained: "Understanding الوقت كالسيف /al-waqtu kas-sayf/ metaphorically was challenging. In my language, we do not compare time to a sword." Cultural differences emerged as a significant barrier, as another participant noted: "When my instructor explains الوقت كالسيف /al-waqtu kas-sayf/, I understand its importance in Arab culture, but using it naturally in conversation feels forced." The focus groups revealed limited spontaneous usage, with student M reflecting: "I only use it during formal presentations when discussing time management. I've never used it in daily conversations like my Arab classmates do." These difficulties align with Mohamed's (2023) finding that rhetorical elements require deep understanding of cultural traditions beyond basic language skills.

(e). *Patience Sayings* ("الصبر مفتاح الفرج" /as-sabru miftah al-faraj/)

The usage of patience-related proverbs showed interesting patterns during academic stress periods. Student L shared during focus groups: "During finals week, الصبر مفتاح الفرج /as-sabru miftah al-faraj/ became our class motto. It helped us cope with stress." The expression gained particular significance in peer support contexts. Another participant elaborated: "When my friend was struggling with Arabic grammar, I told her الصبر مفتاح الفرج /as-sabru miftah al-faraj/. She appreciated both the support and the chance to practice cultural expressions." Observational data showed increased usage during challenging academic periods: "Before major assignments, you'll hear الصبر مفتاح الفرج /as-sabru miftah al-faraj/ in study groups. It's become our way of encouraging each other." It can be concluded that there are success-related proverbs that are highly used. However, students struggled with time-related expressions. Student M explained: "I tried using /al-waqtu kas-sayf/ in a class discussion about deadlines, but it sounded unnatural, and my classmates seemed confused. I stick to simpler expressions now." These patterns of proverb usage reflect what Almelhes (2024) identified as key challenges in cultural-linguistic integration.

C. Poetry and Literary Expressions

TABLE 3
ANALYSIS OF POETRY AND LITERARY EXPRESSIONS

Type	Example Source	Theme	Usage Context
Classical Poetry	Al-Mutanabbi	Wisdom	Formal presentations
Modern Poetry	Nizar Qabbani	Love/Romance	Social gatherings
Popular Songs	Fairuz	Nostalgia	Casual conversations
Folk Poetry	Local dialect	Daily life	Informal settings
Literary Quotes	Contemporary authors	Various	Academic writing

The analysis reveals significant challenges with Arabic poetry usage, particularly in classical forms. As Muassomah et al. (2023) note, this pattern is common among non-native speakers learning complex rhetorical elements.

(a). *Classical Poetry* ("متنبي" /Al-Mutanabbi/)

Analysis revealed limited engagement with classical poetry. Student N explained: "Even though we study المتنبي /Al-Mutanabbi/ in class, using his verses in conversation is challenging. The language is too complex." Students primarily used memorized verses in formal presentations. One participant noted: "I only use classical poetry when I'm certain about the pronunciation and context." This limited engagement with classical poetry aligns with Ardaraz and Rubina's (2019) observations about advanced learners' avoidance of complex rhetorical forms. As Omari (2016) found, students often understand but avoid traditional forms.

(b). *Modern Poetry* ("نزار قباني" /Nizar Qabbani/)

Students showed greater comfort with modern poetry. Student O shared: "قباني /Qabbani's/ love poems are easier to understand. I sometimes quote من أنت؟ /man anti?/ (Who are you?) in literary discussions." However, cultural sensitivity remained a concern: "I'm careful with love poetry because I'm unsure about cultural appropriateness. This preference for contemporary poetry reflects Mohamed's (2023) observation about the gap between basic communication skills and deeper cultural-linguistic competence.

(c). *Popular Songs* ("فيروز" /Fairuz/)

This category demonstrated the highest engagement. Student P enthusiastically reported: "I love using Fairuz's صباح الخير /sabah al-khayr/ (Good morning) lyrics. They are modern, meaningful, and well-received." The data showed students regularly incorporated song lyrics into casual conversations: "Fairuz's words help me express feelings when my Arabic vocabulary fails." The high engagement with modern songs supports Kim's (2020) findings about students' need for accessible cultural content in language learning.

(d). *Folk Poetry (Local Dialect)*

Students struggled with dialectal expressions but showed interest. Student Q admitted: "Understanding local poetry requires deep cultural knowledge. I only use phrases I've heard multiple times from native speakers." Focus groups revealed anxiety about dialectal accuracy: "I worry about mixing formal and informal Arabic in poetry." These challenges with dialectal variations confirm Al-Batal's (2018) observations about the complexity of integrating colloquial and formal Arabic. As Janadbah and Sharef (2024) note, this careful approach to dialectal expressions reflects a key aspect of cultural-linguistic development. The results also showed that their failed attempts with classical poetry revealed specific challenges. Student N reported: "During a presentation, I mispronounced Al-Mutanabbi's verse so badly that it lost meaning. This made me hesitant to try classical poetry again." Student O added: "I attempted to use Qabbani's love poetry in a friendly conversation but quickly realized it was culturally inappropriate".

D. *Modern Colloquial Expressions*

TABLE 4
ANALYSIS OF MODERN COLLOQUIAL EXPRESSIONS

Category	Expression	Meaning	Context
Greetings	"يا هلا"	Welcome	Daily interactions
Gratitude	"تسلم/تسلمين"	Thank you	Services/help
Agreement	"من عيوني"	My pleasure	Accepting requests
Respect	"على راسي"	With pleasure	Professional settings
Friendship	"حياتي"	My life (dear)	Close relationships

The analysis reveals specific patterns in how non-native learners navigate between formal and informal expressions. These patterns reflect what Almelhes (2024) identifies as key indicators of social meaning awareness in Arabic communication.

(a). *Greetings* ("يا هلا" /ya hala/)

The analysis revealed frequent usage of informal greetings in daily university interactions. Student AA shared during interviews: "I use يا هلا /ya hala/ with classmates, but initially I was confused about its casualness compared to السلام عليكم." Another participant noted: "Learning when to use يا هلا /ya hala/ helped me sound more natural in casual conversations. Arab students appreciated my effort to use colloquial greetings".

(b). *Gratitude* ("تسلم/تسلمين" /teslam/teslameen/)

Students demonstrated interesting patterns in using gendered gratitude expressions. Student BB explained: "Understanding when to use تسلم /teslam/ for males and تسلمين /teslameen/ for females took time, but now it's automatic." The focus groups revealed high frequency in service contexts: "At the university café, using تسلم /teslam/ with the staff

creates a friendly atmosphere." These challenges with gender-specific expressions align with Mohamed's (2023) findings about the complexity of cultural-linguistic competence.

(c). *Agreement* ("من عيوني" /*min 'ayooni*/)

This expression showed complex usage patterns. Student CC reflected: "Using من عيوني /*min 'ayooni*/ felt strange at first because it is very emotional compared to 'okay' in English." Focus groups revealed cultural adaptation: "I learned that من عيوني /*min 'ayooni*/ shows more sincerity than just saying 'حاضر' /*haader*/" This careful approach to emotional expressions supports Kim's (2020) observations about the need for deep cultural understanding in language learning.

(d). *Respect* ("على راسي" /*ala raasi*/)

Professional context usage revealed careful consideration. Student DD noted: "I reserve على راسي /*ala raasi*/ for instructors and older staff members. It shows deep respect." Students reported positive responses: "When I tell my instructor على راسي /*ala raasi*/, they appreciate my understanding of cultural respect markers".

(e). *Friendship* ("حياتي" /*hayati*/)

This intimate expression showed the lowest usage rates. Student EE explained: "I rarely use حياتي /*hayati*/ because it feels too personal. I'm afraid of using it inappropriately." The data indicated careful boundary awareness: "Even when Arab friends use حياتي /*hayati*/ with me, I hesitate to reciprocate until I'm sure about the friendship level. This hesitation with intimate expressions matches Muassomah et al.'s (2023) findings about cultural sensitivity in language learning. As Shamsuddin (2019) notes, non-native speakers often choose safer expressions when uncertain about cultural implications.

Analysis Patterns:

1. Students showed the highest comfort with greetings and basic gratitude expressions.
2. Gender-specific expressions created initial challenges but improved with practice.
3. Cultural weight of expressions influenced usage frequency.
4. Professional and intimate expressions required the most careful consideration.
5. Context awareness significantly impacted expression choice.
6. The analysis across all rhetorical categories reveals fundamental challenges in cultural-linguistic integration.

As Abedalla (2015) notes, mastering Arabic requires understanding beyond basic communication, particularly with rhetorical elements. Students demonstrated highest competency with expressions frequently encountered in structured academic settings but struggled with context-sensitive cultural elements. This supports Al-Batal's (2018) argument that true linguistic mastery requires deep cultural understanding. The observed tendency to avoid complex rhetorical elements in favor of simpler alternatives aligns with Mohamed's (2023) findings about the gap between functional fluency and cultural competence. These patterns, from preferring modern poetry over classical verses to carefully selecting appropriate religious expressions, reflect what Muassomah et al. (2023) identified as key challenges in Arabic language acquisition. The findings suggest that successful rhetorical element usage depends more on cultural understanding than mere linguistic ability, supporting Kim's (2020) emphasis on developing advanced cultural competence for academic discourse.

V. CONCLUSION

This study at Mohamed bin Zayed University shows how non-native speakers use Arabic rhetoric. In academic settings, students handle religious phrases like /*as-salaamu alaykum*/ and basic sayings like /*man jadda wajada*/. Regular practice and cultural understanding help students use these expressions correctly. The results of this study conclude that students show different skill levels with rhetoric types. They use daily phrases like /*bismillah ar-rahman ar-raheem*/ well but struggle with pronunciation. They prefer universal proverbs like /*al-ilmu noor*/ in academic settings. They rarely use classical poetry and choose modern forms. They use formal expressions like /*ala raasi*/ carefully in professional contexts.

Students struggle most with context-based expressions in poetry and formal sayings. This comes from cultural gaps rather than language skills. They avoid culturally heavy phrases like /*hayati*/ in friendship settings and classical poetry in presentations. They use simple phrases like /*shukran*/ instead of /*jazak Allah khayran*/ when unsure.

This study calls for changing Arabic teaching methods for non-speakers. The cultural context must join language instruction to build rhetorical skills. Students' success varies from basic greetings to cultural proverbs, showing they need structured learning with real practice. Arabic rhetoric teaching should focus on cultural education for true communication skills.

Finally, this study concludes that students at Mohamed bin Zayed University show different patterns in four areas. They master religious phrases best in academic settings. They select cultural proverbs based on context understanding. They use only modern, simple poetry forms and adapt casual expressions carefully in social and work settings.

The study focused on students from one UAE university, limiting geographical and institutional representation. The sample size of 20 participants, while sufficient for qualitative analysis, may not represent all non-native Arabic learners' experiences. Also, data collection occurred over one academic semester (4 months), which may not capture long-term development in rhetorical competence or seasonal variations in language use patterns. The university setting primarily provided formal and academic contexts for observation. Limited access to informal social situations may have affected the understanding of casual rhetorical element usage. Participants' diverse cultural backgrounds created varying baseline

understandings of Islamic and Arabic cultural references. This limitation may potentially affect their comfort with certain rhetorical elements. Finally, self-reporting in focus groups may have led to under-reporting of usage or missed instances of rhetorical element use. The presence of observers during formal interactions might have influenced natural language behaviour. Based on the study's results and conclusion, this study recommends the following:

1. Teachers should develop specialized materials combining rhetorical elements with appropriate cultural contexts to help students understand the proper usage of religious expressions and proverbs in academic settings.
2. Universities must establish regular interaction programs between native and non-native Arabic speakers to practice rhetorical elements in natural settings.
3. Arabic language programs must design new assessment methods that evaluate students' ability to appropriately use rhetorical elements in different cultural contexts.
4. Teachers should introduce rhetorical elements gradually, starting with basic religious expressions in formal settings before moving to complex cultural proverbs and poetry.
5. Universities teaching Arabic to non-native speakers should organize regular cultural activities, like conversation clubs or social events, where non-native speakers can interact with native Arabic speakers in natural settings.

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Naji Masned AlQbailat was born in Jordan in 1974. He holds a PhD in Computational Linguistics (Excellent with honors) from Universidad Carlos III de Madrid (UC3M), Spain, earned in 2020. He also holds a Master's degree in Educational Sciences with a focus on Curriculum and Teaching Methods, specifically on virtual classroom technology and individualized learning, from Mu'tah University, Jordan, and a Bachelor's degree in Education with a specialization in English Language from the University of Mosul, Iraq.

He is currently an Assistant Professor in Applied Linguistics and Computational Linguistics at Princess Alia University College, Al-Balqa Applied University (BAU) in Amman, Jordan. Previously, he held the position of Director of the Language Center at BAU three times, from 2015 to 2016 and from 2020 to 2024. He has also served as a Faculty Counterpart at Indiana University Bloomington, USA, and as an Academic Coordinator for the Erasmus+ program between Sofia University, Bulgaria, and BAU. Earlier in his career, he was the Coordinator of the Teletandem Arabic and English Exchange program at Georgetown University, USA, and a Lecturer of Arabic for Speakers of Other Languages at Middlebury College, USA. He has also held a position as Assistant Dean for Practicum and Development at Princess Alia University College, Jordan, and serves as a Lecturer of Instructional Technology at Al-Balqa Applied University and Ohio State University, USA. His research interests include electronic discourse, social media interactions, and the application of artificial intelligence in language teaching. He has published several papers on topics such as virtual classroom discourse, cultural integration in EFL teaching, and the analysis of political speech acts.

Dr. AlQbailat is a member of several professional committees, including the International Conference on E-Learning (ICEL) and the World Conference of International Conference Education (WICE). He has also served as a reviewer for the Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE) and has been involved in various academic outreach programs at institutions such as Harvard University, Brown University, and Kenyon College. His email is najimq1@bau.edu.jo

Eman Fadel Alqubelat was born in Jordan in 1980. She holds a PhD in Arabic Language and Literature, specializing in literary and critical studies, from the International Islamic Sciences University, earned in 2014. She also holds a Master's degree (2006) and a Bachelor's degree (2002) in Arabic Language and Literature from Mutah University, Jordan.

Dr. Alqubelat is an Associate Professor at Al-Balqa Applied University in Jordan, where she has been lecturing since 2008. Her research interests focus on literary and critical studies in both ancient and modern Arabic literature. She has published several papers in peer-reviewed journals, including "Paradox in Fadwa Touqan's Divan July and the Other Things" in *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, "The Osmosis of Literature and the Mechanisms for Employing Religious Heritage in Ibn Al-Wardi's Prose" in *Dirasat: Human and Social Sciences* (2022), "The Manifestations of Rhythm and its Indications in the Letters of Ibn Fadlallah al-Umari" in *Dirasat: Human and Social Sciences* (2022), and "Textual Overlap between Poetry and Prose in the Letters of Ibn Hijjah AlHamawi that existed in his Book Qahwat al-Inshā': An Analytical Study in Selected Models" in the *Jordanian Journal of Arabic Language and Literature* (2022).

Dr. Alqubelat's work contributes to the understanding of classical and contemporary Arabic literature, with a particular focus on the interplay between poetry, prose, and religious heritage. She is actively involved in academic research and continues to explore the intersections of literature, culture, and critical theory. Her email is dr.emanq@bau.edu.jo

Mozah H. Al Kaabi was born in the United Arab Emirates. She holds a PhD in Arabic Language and Literature, earned in 2015. Her research interests include discourse analysis, particularly in accordance with argumentative theories and classical rhetorical methodology, as well as language teaching and proficiency. She also holds a Professional Diploma in Teaching and is a certified evaluator by the Commission for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance.

Dr. Al Kaabi is an Associate Professor at Mohamed bin Zayed University for Humanities in Abu Dhabi, UAE, where she has over 10 years of experience in teaching Arabic at the university level, in addition to prior experience teaching Arabic at the primary level in general education. She has held several administrative positions, including Vice Dean of the College, Head of the Arabic Language Department, and Director of the Arabic Language Center. She currently serves as a member of both the College Council and various academic councils of the university. Dr. Al Kaabi has extensive expertise in academic affairs, particularly in managing examinations, evaluating faculty members, and supervising the Quality Office to obtain multiple academic accreditations. She has also played a key role in curriculum development, preparing course descriptions for various university programs, and continues to work within diverse teams preparing self-studies for numerous university programs. Throughout her academic career, Dr. Al Kaabi has held several administrative positions, including Assistant Dean of the College of Arts and Languages, Head of the Arabic Language Department,

and Director of the Center of Excellence in Arabic Language at Mohamed bin Zayed University for Humanities. She also serves as a member of the editorial board of the university's Applied Linguistics Journal.

Dr. Al Kaabi has published several research papers in peer-reviewed academic journals, including Scopus-indexed publications. She organized and supervised the Computational Linguistics Conference at the university in 2022 and has contributed to other conferences. She acts as a reviewer for several academic journals, conferences, and scientific competitions in her field of expertise. Additionally, she has contributed to organizing numerous extracurricular activities, including student events, seminars, and scientific workshops. Her email is mozah.alkaabi@mbzuh.ac.ae

Asma Saeed Almaamari was born in the United Arab Emirates. She holds a Master's degree in the Characteristics of Islamic Discourse and its Importance in Dialogue, as well as a Master's degree in Contemporary Jurisprudence with a thesis titled "The Requirements of Contemporary Fatwas in the Context of the Nation-State." She is currently pursuing a PhD in Renewing Religious Education. Additionally, she holds a Professional Diploma in Teaching and is a certified trainer.

Almaamari is an Assistant Professor at Mohamed bin Zayed University for Humanities in Abu Dhabi, UAE, where she teaches courses such as "The Legacy of Zayed" and "Moral Education." With over 15 years of experience in both university and general education, she has made significant contributions to the fields of educational studies and educational development in the UAE. Her research focuses on identity, society, and educational reform, and she has published several works in these areas. She is actively involved in academic and research activities aimed at advancing educational practices and policies.

Almaamari is a member of several professional and academic committees and has participated in various initiatives to promote educational innovation. Her current research interests include the renewal of religious education, the role of Islamic discourse in contemporary society, and the development of moral and ethical frameworks in education. She can be reached at her university email: asma.almaamari@mbzuh.ac.ae