Institutional Variations in Arabic Teachers' Metalinguistic Skills across Schools in Indonesia

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Abstract:
This study aims to examine institutional variations in the metalinguistic competence of Arabic language teachers by placing institutions as the main analytical variable. This study uses a comparative quantitative approach involving 19 Arabic language teachers at the Madrasah Aliyah level from four institutions with different institutional characteristics, namely MA Bahrul 'Ulum, MA Al-Bairuny, MA Mamba'ul Ma'arif, and MAN 4 Jombang. Primary data were obtained through a metalinguistic competence questionnaire covering three main domains, namely istima', qira'ah, and tarakib, while secondary data were collected through a documentation study of the institutions' profiles, visions, and missions. Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics and the Kruskal–Wallis comparative test. The results showed that there were no statistically significant differences in the metalinguistic competence of Arabic teachers between the four institutions (H = 1.238; p = 0.744), even though each school had a different vision, tradition, and pedagogical orientation. These findings challenge the common assumption that institutional variations automatically result in differences in teachers' professional competencies. Conceptually, this study shows that in a standardized education system, the influence of institutions on teachers' metalinguistic competencies is limited. Further research using a mixed methods approach and a more diverse educational context is recommended.

Keywords: Metalinguistic Competence, Arabic Teachers, Institutional Variation, Madrasah.

ملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى دراسة الاختلافات المؤسسية في الكفاءة اللغوية لمعلمي اللغة العربية من خلال وضع المؤسسات كمتغير تحليلي رئيسي. تستخدم هذه الدراسة نهجًا كميًا مقارنًا يشمل ١٩ مدرسًا للغة العربية في المرحلة الثانوية من أربع مؤسسات ذات خصائص مؤسسية مختلفة، وهي MA Bahrul 'Ulum و MA Al-Bairuny و MA Mamba'ul Ma'arif و MAN 4 Jombang. تم الحصول على البيانات الأولية من خلال استبيان الكفاءة اللغوية الذي يغطي ثلاثة مجالات رئيسية، وهي الاستماع والقراءة والتراكيب، بينما تم جمع البيانات الثانوية من خلال دراسة وثائقية لملامح المؤسسات ورؤاها ورسالتها. تم تحليل البيانات باستخدام الإحصاء الوصفي واختبار كروسكال-واليس المقارن. أظهرت النتائج أنه لا توجد فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية في الكفاءة اللغوية لمعلمي اللغة العربية بين المؤسسات الأربع(1.238 = H)؛ (0.744 = p ، على الرغم من أن كل مدرسة لها رؤية وتقاليد وتوجه تربوي مختلف . تتحدى هذه النتائج الافتراض الشائع بأن الاختلافات المؤسسية تؤدي تلقائيًا إلى اختلافات في الكفاءة المهنية للمعلمين. من الناحية النظرية،

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تظهر هذه الدراسة أن تأثير المؤسسات على الكفاءة اللغوية للمعلمين محدود في نظام تعليمي موحد. ويوصى بإجراء مزيد من البحوث باستخدام نهج أساليب مختلطة وسياق تعليمي أكثر تنوعًا.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الكفاءة اللغوية، معلمو اللغة العربية، الاختلافات المؤسسية، المدارس.

Introduction

In contemporary language education, teachers are increasingly expected to function not only as proficient language users, but also as pedagogical mediators who are able to explain how language works. This role places teachers as a link between abstract linguistic systems and concrete student learning processes.(Daulay et al., 2021) As pedagogical approaches emphasizing linguistic awareness, reflection on language forms, and conceptual understanding develop, the demands on the analytical capacity of language teachers are increasing. Teachers are no longer expected to simply present language input or model correct usage, but are also expected to facilitate students' understanding of the relationship between linguistic form, meaning, and communicative function.(Huth et al., 2019)

In this context, metalinguistic skills are a key component of language teacher professionalism. Metalinguistic skills are understood as the ability to consciously analyze, describe, and manipulate language elements, as well as articulate this knowledge in the form of pedagogical explanations that are accessible to students.(Ke et al., 2023) Various studies in the field of language pedagogy show that teachers' metalinguistic skills contribute significantly to the clarity of instruction, the quality of classroom interaction, and students' ability to build conceptual understanding of language structure. Teachers with strong metalinguistic awareness tend to be better able to respond to student errors reflectively, provide flexible explanations, and adapt teaching strategies to the linguistic needs of learners.(D.A., 2025)

The shift in language classes towards more explicit instruction focused on form further emphasizes the central position of metalinguistic competence.(Kieseier et al., 2022) This approach requires teachers to balance communicative practice with conscious linguistic analysis, so that students are not only able to use language functionally, but also understand the underlying structural principles. Within this framework, metalinguistic competence is no longer viewed as an additional theoretical skill, but rather as an integral part of the professional expertise of language teachers.

The need for strong metalinguistic skills is becoming increasingly prominent in Arabic language teaching. Arabic is known for its high morphological complexity, non-linear root and pattern systems, rich syntactic inflection, and functional diglossia phenomena.(Sulaikho et al., 2023) These linguistic characteristics require a deep understanding of the relationship between form, meaning, and language use. Arabic language teachers are not only required to be accurate linguistic models, but also to act as interpreters of complex language systems for students with diverse linguistic backgrounds.

These features require teachers to provide explicit explanations linking grammatical structures to semantic interpretations and communicative functions. Without adequate metalinguistic skills, Arabic language teaching risks being reduced to rote memorization of rules or mechanical repetition of language patterns. This kind of approach can limit the depth of students' linguistic understanding and hinder their ability to apply their language knowledge flexibly. Therefore, the effectiveness of Arabic language teaching is highly dependent on the teacher's ability to engage in metalinguistic reflection and articulate it pedagogically.(Hawamdeh et al., 2024)

In line with this argument, the metalinguistic skills of Arabic teachers in Indonesia are closely related to the pedagogical orientation and linguistic vision adopted by teachers. Studies conducted in Madrasah Aliyah (MA) and pesantren-based schools show that teachers who have a multilingual vision and apply an interactive approach tend to be more skilled in diagnosing student difficulties, using discussion and conversation simulation methods, and distinguishing Arabic language structures from other languages.(Nurbayan et al., n.d.) (Nurbayan et al., 2023) This approach allows teachers to relate Arabic linguistic phenomena to students' linguistic knowledge in a more reflective and analytical manner. However, the same study also revealed that only a small number of teachers consistently apply this approach in their daily teaching practices, indicating a gap between pedagogical potential and the reality of implementation in the field.

Variations in the application of these metalinguistic skills cannot be separated from the institutional context in which teachers work. Research in language education in general shows that teachers' professional competence and teaching practices often vary significantly between institutions. Schools as educational institutions shape academic culture, curriculum orientation, and expectations of the role of teachers, which in turn influence how teachers understand language and manage the learning process. Differences in policy, training systems, and professional environments can result in different approaches to teaching, even when the subjects taught are relatively similar.(Profesional Guru dalam Lanskap Pendidikan yang Berbeda et al., 2025)

In the Indonesian context, institutional differences have been reported to influence the metalinguistic skills of Arabic language teachers, particularly in terms of professional competence, teaching approaches, and teachers' educational backgrounds. The metalinguistic skills of Arabic language teachers vary greatly between institutions, influenced by the curriculum implemented, the availability of professional training, and a school environment that either supports or limits reflective practice. Institutions that provide specialized training, encourage pedagogical innovation, and foster a supportive academic culture tend to produce teachers with better metalinguistic skills. Conversely, schools that employ teachers with educational backgrounds that are not directly related to Arabic or with minimal professional support tend to show lower levels of metalinguistic skills.(Urio & Mwakabenga, 2025)

Although these findings provide strong indications of the role of institutions in shaping teachers' metalinguistic skills, existing research tends to be partial and limited to specific contexts.(Koswara & Rasto, 2016) Previous studies have generally not developed a systematic comparative analysis to map the variation in Arabic teachers' metalinguistic skills across institutions with different characteristics. As a result, the understanding of how and to what extent the institutional context shapes teachers' metalinguistic competence is still not fully articulated.

Based on these gaps, this study aims to investigate institutional variations in the metalinguistic skills of Arabic teachers in various school contexts in Indonesia. Specifically, this study seeks to identify patterns of differences in metalinguistic skills among teachers and analyze how institutional characteristics contribute to the formation and development of these skills. By placing institutions as the main analytical variable, this study is expected to contribute theoretically and empirically to the understanding of the relationship between school context and the professionalism of Arabic language teachers.

This study focuses on the metalinguistic competence of Arabic language teachers as the main object of study. The research uses a comparative quantitative approach by utilizing primary and secondary data. Primary data consists of Arabic language teachers' metalinguistic competency scores, while secondary data includes profiles and the vision and mission of the institutions obtained from official sources. The research participants consisted of 19 Arabic language teachers who teach at the Madrasah Aliyah (MA) level in Jombang District and come from four different educational institutions. Data collection was conducted through a questionnaire designed in three levels with a total of 18 questions covering three competency domains, namely *istima', qira'ah,* and *tarakib*. In addition, a documentation study was conducted to collect data related to the profiles and vision and mission of the institutions through the official school websites. The data obtained was analyzed using descriptive statistics to describe the level of teachers' metalinguistic competence, followed by a normality test and a comparative test using the Kruskal–Wallis test to identify significant differences in the metalinguistic competence of Arabic teachers between the four schools studied.

Results

This study was conducted with 19 Arabic teachers in Jombang who teach at madrasahs at the Madrasah Aliyah level. The questionnaire consisted of three levels covering three domains, namely istima', tarakib, and qiro'ah, with a total of 18 questions. The raw scores were converted into scale scores to facilitate categorization.

Table 1. Teacher Competency Metalinguistic Score

RESPONDENTS	INSTITUTION	RAW SCORE			SCALE SCOR			TOTAL METALINGUISTIC RAW SCORE	TOTAL METALINGUISTIC SCALE SCORE
		ISTIMA	*TARAKIB*	*QIRO'AH*	*ISTIMA*	*TARAKIB*	*QIRO'AH*		
1	MA BAHRUL ULUM	20	60	28	38,4	53,2	41,36	132,96	443,2
2	MA AL-BAIRUNY	16	65	23	36,92	55,05	39,51	131,48	438,2666667
3	MA AL-BAIRUNY	15	76	29	36,55	59,12	41,73	137,4	458
4	MA AL-BAIRUNY	14	68	25	36,18	56,16	40,25	132,59	441,9666667

RESPONDENTS	INSTITUTION	RAW SCORE			SCALE SCOR			TOTAL METALINGUISTIC RAW SCORE	TOTAL METALINGUISTIC SCALE SCORE
		ISTIMA	*TARAKIB*	*QIRO'AH*	*ISTIMA*	*TARAKIB*	*QIRO'AH*		
5	MA AL-BAIRUNY	16	71	22	36,92	57,27	39,14	133,33	444,4333333
6	MA MAMBA'UL MA'ARIF	11	68	24	35,07	56,16	39,88	131,11	437,0333333
7	MA MAMBA'UL MA'ARIF	19	65	23	38,03	55,05	39,51	132,59	441,9666667
8	MA MAMBA'UL MA'ARIF	19	79	25	38,03	60,23	40,25	138,51	461,7
9	MA MAMBA'UL MA'ARIF	18	77	26	37,66	59,49	40,62	137,77	459,2333333
10	MA MAMBA'UL MA'ARIF	15	83	28	36,55	61,71	41,36	139,62	465,4
11	MAN 4 JOMBANG	14	60	14	36,18	53,2	36,18	125,56	418,5333333
12	MAN 4 JOMBANG	13	61	14	35,81	53,57	36,18	125,56	418,5333333
13	MAN 4 JOMBANG	14	80	27	36,18	60,6	40,99	137,77	459,2333333
14	MAN 4 JOMBANG	18	73	22	37,66	58,01	39,14	134,81	449,3666667
15	MAN 4 JOMBANG	17	76	26	37,29	59,12	40,62	137,03	456,7666667
16	MAN 4 JOMBANG	19	82	30	38,03	61,34	42,1	141,47	471,5666667
17	MAN 4 JOMBANG	12	68	21	35,44	56,16	38,77	130,37	434,5666667
18	MAN 4 JOMBANG	15	74	22	36,55	58,38	39,14	134,07	446,9
19	MAN 4 JOMBANG	15	66	24	36,55	55,42	39,88	131,85	439,5

Next, descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to determine the minimum and maximum scores of teachers' metalinguistic competence, the mean, and the standard deviation.

Tabel 2. Results of Descriptive Statistical Analysis

Descriptive Statistics						
	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation

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	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
Metalinguistic_Score	19	53,03	418,53	471,57	446,6404	3,31392	14,44504
Valid N (listwise)	19						

Based on the results of descriptive tests of Arabic teachers' metalinguistic competency scores (N=19), a minimum score of 418.53 and a maximum score of 471.57 were obtained, with a score range of 53.03. The mean score was 446.64 with a standard deviation (SD) of 14.45. These findings indicate that the variation in Arabic language teachers' metalinguistic competency scores is moderate and does not show extreme data dispersion.

Tabel 3. Results of Tests of Normality

		Kolmogorov-Smirnov[b]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Institution	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Metalinguistic_Score	MA AL-BAIRUNY	,307	4	.	,879	4	,335
	MA MAMBA'UL MA'ARIF	,286	5	,200*	,865	5	,246
	MAN 4	,142	9	,200*	,953	9	,720
*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.							
a. Metalinguistic_Score is constant when Institution = MA BAHRUL ULUM. It has been omitted.							
b. Lilliefors Significance Correction							

Normality tests were conducted to analyze the distribution of teachers' metalinguistic competency scores in various institutions using the Shapiro–Wilk test, which is appropriate for small sample sizes (N=19). The results showed that the metalinguistic competency scores of MA Al-Bairuny (W = 0.879, p = 0.335), MA Mamba'ul Ma'arif (W = 0.865, p = 0.246), and MAN 4 (W = 0.953, p = 0.720) were normally distributed, as all significance values exceeded the threshold of 0.05.

However, the metalinguistic competency scores from MA Bahrul Ulum could not be tested for normality because the data remained constant among respondents, so there was no variance in this institutional group. Given the relatively small sample size and the fact that more than two institutional groups were compared, the analysis of differences in metalinguistic competency between schools was conducted directly using the Kruskal–Wallis test. This nonparametric test was chosen because it does not require the assumption of normal distribution and is considered most appropriate for the characteristics of this research data. Therefore, normality testing was not used as the basis for analytical decision making and was not discussed further.

Tabel 4. Result of Kruskal-Wallis

Test Statistics[a,b]

	Metalinguistic_Score
Kruskal-Wallis H	1,238
df	3
Asymp. Sig.	,744
a. Kruskal Wallis Test	
b. Grouping Variable: Institution	

The Kruskal–Wallis test results show that there is no significant difference in the metalinguistic competence scores of Arabic teachers between institutions (H = 1.238; df = 3; p = 0.744), indicating that the level of metalinguistic competence of teachers is relatively similar in the four schools studied.

Analysis of institutional profiles through documentation studies

Analysis of documents sourced from the official websites of each institution shows that the four institutions have different institutional characteristics, even though they generally depart from the basic values of Islamic education.

A. MA BAHRUL ULUM

Based on its historical profile, vision, mission, and educational objectives, MA Bahrul 'Ulum Tambakberas can be characterized as a modern Islamic boarding school that focuses on academic excellence, social leadership, and the integration of traditional Islamic values with contemporary educational demands. Since its inception, this madrasah has been designed as a response to social needs, developments in science and technology, and the moral responsibility of religious education, positioning this institution not only as a teaching institution but also as an instrument for shaping the direction of social and religious life. The vision of "Producing Outstanding Graduates and Leaders of Their Time" demonstrates a strong forward-looking orientation, with an emphasis on academic competitiveness and leadership capacity. The mission, which targets the acceptance of graduates into domestic and foreign universities, character building through organizations and extracurricular activities, and the integration of 21st-century skills, affirms the madrasah's competitive, adaptive, and progressive character, while remaining rooted in the values of Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah Annahdliyah.

Institutionally, MA Bahrul 'Ulum represents an institution that balances pesantren traditions with the modernization of the education system, as reflected in its excellent accreditation status, continuity of leadership, and orientation towards human resource quality development.[1]

With such institutional characteristics, teachers at MA Bahrul 'Ulum are likely to have the following traits:

a. Academically and achievement-oriented, with a strong awareness of quality standards and graduate achievements.
b. Religious-traditional yet adaptive, able to integrate Islamic boarding school values with modern pedagogical approaches.
c. Reflective and progressive, as they are required to develop 21st-century skills and prepare students to be social "movers and shakers."

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[1] "MA BU Tambakberas Jombang Official Website," *portal.mabutambakberas.sch.id*, accessed December 13, 2025. https://portal.mabutambakberas.sch.id/.

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d. Highly institutionally disciplined, in line with the culture of an accredited, quality-oriented madrasah.
e. Tends to have functional metalinguistic awareness, especially in explicitly explaining language structure as part of systematic academic learning.

B. MA AL-BAIRUNY

Based on its vision, mission, and vision indicators, MA Al-Bairuny can be characterized as a madrasah that is strongly oriented towards moral-spiritual guidance with a serious emphasis on the internalization of Islamic values before technical academic achievements. The vision of "creating quality Islamic human resources" places faith, morals, and sincerity in doing good deeds as the main foundations for student development, while mastery of science and technology is positioned as a means of service and social benefit, not as an end in itself.

The vision indicators show that MA Al-Bairuny emphasizes sincerity (jiddiyyah) in the educational process—both in the development of faith, exemplary morals, and the professionalism of school stakeholders. Thus, the character of this institution is normative-religious, ethical, and value-driven, with a strong orientation towards the formation of a well-rounded Muslim personality (integrated Islamic personality).

The madrasah's mission, which emphasizes the maximum development of all students' potential and the creation of a conducive learning environment, indicates that MA Al-Bairuny prioritizes a tarbiyah (nurturing) approach over a mere academic competition orientation. This focus positions the madrasah as a space for the continuous formation of religious and moral character.[2]

With such institutional characteristics, teachers at MA Al-Bairuny are likely to have the following traits:
a. Religious-normative, with a strong orientation towards instilling faith and moral values in the learning process.
b. Acting as moral educators as well as teachers, not merely academic instructors.
c. Emphasizing personal exemplarity, in line with a vision of sincerity and noble character.
d. A pedagogical approach that tends to be nurturing and supportive, with attention to the holistic development of students.
e. In the context of Arabic language learning, teachers tend to link linguistic aspects with religious values and meanings, although the level of explicitness of metalinguistic analysis may vary depending on the teacher's academic background.

This inference suggests that MA Al-Bairuny represents an institution with a strong religious habitus, which shapes teachers' pedagogical practices in a value-oriented manner. This character is important as an institutional context when interpreting quantitative findings related to teachers' metalinguistic competence.

C. MA MAMBA'UL MA'ARIF

Based on its founding history, educational system, vision, mission, and institutional objectives, MA Mamba'ul Ma'arif Denanyar can be characterized as a madrasah for the training of Islamic scholars based on a salaf-modern pesantren that

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[2] "MA Al-Bairuny Jombang Official Website," *ma-albairuny.sch.id*, accessed December 18, 2025. http://ma-albairuny.sch.id/.

places the strengthening of religious knowledge as the main focus of education, with general knowledge as a functional complement.

As an institution born from the tradition of Pondok Pesantren Denanyar which is rooted in the thinking of KH. Bisri Syansuri MA Mamba'ul Ma'arif carries the strong scholarly character of classical Islamic boarding schools, reflected in the dominance of religious subjects (70%) and the use of classical Islamic texts as the main source of learning. The integration of the national curriculum is carried out selectively, so that this madrasah continues to produce graduates who are formally recognized by the state, but with a strong pesantren identity.

The vision of "Realizing individuals who are faithful, knowledgeable, charitable, and have good character" affirms the normative-theological and practical orientation of education, with an emphasis on the continuity between knowledge, practice, and character building. The mission, which emphasizes strengthening faith, religious and general understanding, character building, and the pesantren learning culture, shows that MA Mamba'ul Ma'arif positions education as a long-term tarbiyah process, not merely the transmission of academic knowledge.

The focus on Arabic and English language specialization, as well as the application of pesantren-specific learning methods such as sorogan and bandongan, reinforces the madrasah's character as a linguistic-religious institution, which places language as the primary instrument for mastering Islamic sciences and global communication.[3]

With these institutional characteristics, teachers at MA Mamba'ul Ma'arif are likely to have the following traits:

a. Strongly oriented towards the scientific traditions of Islamic boarding schools, particularly in their mastery of classical texts and religious disciplines.
b. Possess a pedagogical identity as murabbi, not merely as subject teachers.
c. Tend to use a textual-analytical approach, especially in teaching Arabic and religious studies.
d. Emphasize the accuracy of language structure and meaning, in line with the tradition of reading and interpreting turats texts.
e. In the context of metalinguistic competence, teachers have the potential to have strong conceptual metalinguistic awareness, although its expression in the form of modern explicit pedagogy may vary.

Thus, MA Mamba'ul Ma'arif represents an institution with a very strong academic-religious habitus, which shapes teachers' teaching practices consistently across subjects. This character is an important context in understanding why teachers' metalinguistic competence can develop steadily even though it differs from more modern academically-oriented schools.

D. MAN 4

Based on academic documents discussing the vision and mission of MAN 4 Jombang, this madrasah can be characterized as a state Islamic educational institution with a multidimensional orientation, combining religious values, nationalism, academic intelligence, creativity, independence, and concern for the environment. The core values formulated in the vision of "Islamic, Nationalist, Intelligent, Creative, Independent, and Environmentally Conscious" indicate that

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[3] "MA Mamba'ul Ma'arif Denanyar Official Website," *mammdenanyar.sch.id*, accessed December 13, 2025. https://mammdenanyar.sch.id/.

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MAN 4 Jombang does not limit its educational goals to academic achievement alone, but also to the formation of religious citizens who are adaptive and socially and ecologically conscious.

The madrasah's mission, which includes fostering faith, mastery of Arabic and classical Islamic texts, and developing educational facilities and infrastructure, indicates MAN 4 Jombang's efforts to bridge traditional Islamic education with the demands of modern institutional education. As a public madrasah, MAN 4 Jombang operates within the framework of a standardized national curriculum, but still maintains distinctive Islamic learning elements, especially in Arabic language proficiency and religious literature.

This characterizes MAN 4 Jombang as a relatively inclusive and pedagogically heterogeneous institution, with ample room for variation in learning approaches, methodological innovation, and differentiation in teaching practices among teachers.[4]

With such institutional characteristics, teachers at MAN 4 Jombang are likely to exhibit more diverse professional variations than teachers at madrasahs based purely on Islamic boarding schools. In general, teachers can be characterized as follows:

a. Pedagogically heterogeneous, including teachers with religious-traditional backgrounds as well as teachers who are more oriented towards innovation and modern approaches.

b. Relatively adaptive to national policies and standards, given MAN 4's position as a public madrasah.

c. Having professional space for creativity, in line with the institutional vision that emphasizes intelligence and creativity.

d. In Arabic language learning, teachers have the potential to display variations in metalinguistic awareness, depending on their educational background and professional orientation.

Thus, MAN 4 Jombang represents an institution with a plural and flexible character, which allows for stability in teacher competence across individuals despite differences in teaching styles and orientations. This character is relevant to understanding the quantitative findings that show no significant differences in metalinguistic competence between institutions.Cross-institutional analysis shows that the four madrasahs, namely MA Bahrul 'Ulum, MA Al-Bairuny, MA Mamba'ul Ma'arif, and MAN 4 Jombang, have the same Islamic values, but display different institutional emphases in their educational orientation and pedagogical practices.

Institutional Similarities

In general, the four schools:

a. Place religious values as the main foundation of education, both through the reinforcement of faith, morals, and the habit of worship.

b. Integrate religious and general education, albeit with different proportions and emphases.

c. View Arabic as an important competency, both for the sake of Islamic scholarship and the formation of the madrasah's academic identity.

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[4] "MAN 4 Jombang Official Website," *man4jombang.sch.id*, accessed December 13, 2025. https://man4jombang.sch.id/.

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d. Direct education towards character building, not solely towards cognitive achievement.

These basic similarities create a relatively uniform pedagogical habitus, which contextually explains why there are no significant differences in teachers' metalinguistic competencies between institutions.

Institutional Character Differences

Despite sharing the same basic values, each institution exhibits distinctive characteristics. MA Bahrul 'Ulum represents a modern Islamic boarding school oriented towards excellence and leadership, with a strong emphasis on academic achievement, 21st-century skills, and the regeneration of social "activists." MA Al-Bairuny exhibits a normative-religious and value-driven character, with a primary focus on fostering faith, morals, and sincerity, while mastery of science and technology is positioned as a means of benefit. MA Mamba'ul Ma'arif has the character of classical Islamic boarding school-based scholar regeneration, with a dominance of religious learning, the use of classical texts, and a textual-analytical pedagogical approach. MAN 4 Jombang, as a public madrasah, displays a multidimensional and inclusive character, combining religiosity, nationalism, creativity, independence, and environmental awareness, as well as providing ample space for pedagogical variation among teachers.

Cross-Institutional Implications

These differences in institutional character reflect variations in educational orientation and institutional culture rather than fundamental differences in teachers' professional competence. In other words, despite their different institutional contexts, the four schools appear to produce relatively comparable levels of teachers' metalinguistic competence, possibly due to their shared core values, basic curriculum, and surrounding Islamic educational traditions.

Discussion

In addition to the differences in institutional characteristics and pedagogical orientation of each madrasah, the absence of significant differences in teachers' metalinguistic competencies can also be understood within a broader structural framework. The four madrasahs are under the same institutional umbrella, namely the Ministry of Religious Affairs, so they refer to a relatively uniform curriculum framework, teacher competency standards, and professional regulations. This policy uniformity has the potential to reduce the impact of institutional differences on teachers' professional competencies, including metalinguistic competencies.

In other words, although each madrasah has a different vision, mission, and institutional culture, the similarity in the curriculum framework and teacher training system can function as a boundary condition that limits the emergence of competency variations across institutions. These findings indicate that the influence of the institutional context on teachers' metalinguistic competencies is not absolute, but rather operates within the structural limitations of national education policy.

This study aims to examine institutional variations in the metalinguistic competence of Arabic language teachers in four madrasahs with different institutional characteristics in Indonesia. The main results of the study show that there are no statistically significant differences in the metalinguistic competence of Arabic language teachers between the institutions studied. Although each madrasah has a distinctive vision, mission, pedagogical orientation, and institutional tradition, ranging from Islamic

boarding school, normative religious madrasahs, madrasahs for the training of religious scholars, to state madrasahs with a multidimensional orientation, the level of teachers' metalinguistic competence tends to be relatively homogeneous.

This finding is significant because this study explicitly places the institution as the main analytical variable, not merely a contextual background. Thus, the results of this study not only report the absence of statistical differences but also challenge the common assumption that institutional variations automatically result in differences in teachers' professional competencies, particularly in the metalinguistic aspect.

The absence of significant differences in teachers' metalinguistic competence between institutions can be reflected through several structural and systemic factors. The most prominent factor is that the four madrasahs studied are under the same regulatory umbrella, namely the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. This structural position has direct implications for the uniformity of the curriculum, teacher competency standards, certification mechanisms, and professional development systems.

In this context, the Arabic language curriculum in madrasahs is not developed independently by each institution, but refers to relatively uniform national standards. Arabic teachers, regardless of where they teach, follow the same pedagogical and professional competency framework, both in pre-service education and in continuing training. This uniformity has the potential to create homogenization of professional competencies, including metalinguistic competencies.

In addition, the professionalization pathway for madrasah teachers in Indonesia through certification, Teacher Professional Education (PPG), and training organized by the state forms a relatively uniform professional ecosystem.(Mardhatillah & Surjanti, 2023) (Hanun, 2021) In such an ecosystem, differences in institutional character tend to influence pedagogical styles and value emphases, but do not always have a direct impact on professional cognitive capacities such as metalinguistic competence.(Adelia Javiarma et al., 2025) (Ulya et al., 2025)

Conceptually, these findings indicate that Arabic teachers' metalinguistic competence is cross-institutional, at least in the context of a standardized education system. This means that this competence is not entirely shaped by school culture or institutional vision, but develops within a broader professional framework.

These results indicate that school institution function more as an arena of enactment (a place for applying competencies) than as the main determinant of the formation of metalinguistic competence. Teachers may express their metalinguistic competence differently, for example, more textually in Islamic boarding schools or more communicatively in public madrasas, but their overall level of competence remains on a comparable spectrum.

Thus, these findings reinforce the view that metalinguistic competence is a generic professional competence, shaped through formal education, teaching experience, and training, rather than solely through the institutional identity of the place where teachers work.(Calafato, 2025) (Rankin & Wagner, 2025) (DOTSEVYCH & SLABOUZ, 2022)

Theoretically, this study contributes by introducing the perspective of boundary conditions in the institutional study of language education. The findings show that the influence of institutions on teacher competence is not universal, but is limited by certain structural conditions, such as the uniformity of curriculum policies and professional development systems.

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The practical implication of these findings is that efforts to improve the metalinguistic competence of Arabic teachers cannot be entirely left to the school level. Differentiation of vision and mission or institutional innovation alone is not sufficient to produce significant variations in competence. More effective interventions need to be directed at:

a. explicit metalinguistic training design,
b. strengthening teachers' pedagogical reflection,
c. and integrating metalinguistic awareness into continuing professional development programs.

Previous research has emphasized that institutional contexts such as school culture, curriculum orientation, and pedagogical environment have a significant influence on teacher practices and competencies.(Nadeem & Lilla, 2024) (Du Plessis, 2019) (Jentsch & König, 2022) In certain contexts, especially in less standardized education systems, these findings are valid and empirical.

However, the results of this study indicate that in centralized and standardized systems, such as madrasahs under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the influence of institutions on metalinguistic competence becomes more limited. Thus, this study does not contradict previous literature but rather limits its generalization by showing that the effect of institutions depends on the context of policy and the structure of the education system.

Within this framework, this study can be categorized as a boundary condition finding, which is a finding that explains the boundary conditions of existing theories or assumptions. This study shows that institutional variation affects teacher competence only to a certain extent, and that influence is weakened when institutions are in a uniform regulatory system.

This finding is important because it shifts the focus of the discussion from the question "do institutions have an effect?" to "when and under what conditions do institutions have an effect?". Thus, this study provides a more nuanced conceptual contribution to the study of Arabic teacher professionalism.

Based on the above findings and interpretations, several follow-up research agendas can be formulated. A mixed methods approach involving classroom observation and in-depth interviews is needed to capture how metalinguistic competence is manifested in actual learning practices. Cross-system education research, for example, comparing public madrasahs, independent Islamic boarding schools, and non-Ministry of Religious Affairs private schools, can re-examine these findings in a more contrasting context.

Conclusion

This study found that there were no significant differences in the metalinguistic competence of Arabic language teachers among the four institutions studied, even though each school had different characteristics, visions, and educational traditions. This finding is surprising because it contradicts common assumptions and some previous literature that emphasizes the strong influence of institutional context on teachers' professional competence. Conceptually, the results of this study enrich the study of metalinguistic competence by showing that institutional variation is not always a major determining factor, especially in the context of an education system that is under relatively uniform regulations and curricula. Methodologically, combining quantitative measurements of metalinguistic competence with institutional documentation studies allows for a clearer

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mapping of the limits of institutional influence. However, the limitations of this study lie in the relatively small sample size and the scope of institutions that are still within the same education system. Therefore, further research is recommended to use a mixed methods approach, involving classroom observation and in-depth interviews, as well as expanding the context of the study to more diverse education systems in order to re-examine and deepen these findings.

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