Social Competence in Arabic Language Teaching: Insights from Faculty Members in Southeast Sulawesi

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Abstract

This study aims to analyse the social competence of lecturers in Arabic language learning at an Islamic College in Southeast Sulawesi using Adams GR's theory. Employing a descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach, data were collected through participant observation, interviews, and documentation. The research sample consists of six Arabic language lecturers teaching across four faculties at IAIN Kendari. Data analysis was conducted using reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing techniques. The findings indicate that the lecturers exhibit strong social competence, evidenced by polite verbal communication, the use of sign language, written communication through technology, fairness towards students, and the provision of praise to enhance learning motivation. Based on these findings, it is concluded that empathy and fairness are key elements in fostering a positive learning atmosphere. These qualities contribute to a more inclusive, supportive environment that can enhance students' emotional well-being and academic success. The study's implications suggest that integrating empathy and fairness in teaching practices is essential for promoting a conducive learning experience, thereby potentially improving student outcomes in higher education settings.

Keywords: Arabic language teaching; empathy and fairness; social competence

Introduction

Language plays a crucial role in human life, as it enables good communication between individuals, nations, and ensures that all needs and the continuation of life can be fulfilled[1]. Language is a system of ideas and culture that serves as a natural gateway (*madkhal*) to explore the values accumulated in society throughout its history, as well as a means chosen by humans for communication (*tawashul*)[2]. In the context of education, language functions not only as a medium for teaching knowledge but also as a means to understand and internalize information.

Arabic is one of the languages that hold significant importance in the context of Islam, as it is the language of the Qur'an and many classical Islamic literatures. Arabic draws the interest of millions of people around the world to learn it, as many Islamic terms originate from Arabic and have also been taught in Indonesian pesantren (Islamic boarding schools)[3]. In Indonesia, Arabic has been present and studied alongside the arrival of Islam in the country[4]. In the Indonesian Education Curriculum, Arabic is classified as an international language and is clearly categorized as an elective subject because it is considered an international language that functions as a tool of knowledge and science, and the majority of students in Indonesia are Muslim[5]. As a language, Arabic also has four basic skills that need to be mastered: listening, speaking, reading, and writing[6]. The teaching of Arabic in Islamic higher education institutions aims not only at linguistic competence but also at understanding religious texts and enhancing the practice of Islamic teachings. In this regard, lecturers play a crucial role.

Lecturers are one of the main components of the education system. A lecturer's social competence can influence how they deliver material, interact

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[1]Muhammad Afif Amrulloh, "Analisis Kontrastif Proses Morfofonologi Bahasa Jawa Dan Bahasa Arab," *Arabiyatuna: Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 2, no. 2 (2018): 175, https://doi.org/10.29240/jba.v2i2.556.

[2]Abd Aziz and Saihu Saihu, "Interpretasi Humanistik Kebahasaan: Upaya Kontekstualisasi Kaidah Bahasa Arab," *Arabiyatuna: Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 3, no. 2 (2019): 299, https://doi.org/10.29240/jba.v3i2.1000.

[3]Rahmat Iswanto, "Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Dengan Pemanfaatan Teknologi," *Arabiyatuna: Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 1, no. 2 (2017): 139, https://doi.org/10.29240/jba.v1i2.286.

[4]Ardiansyah Ardiansyah, Sahrani Sahrani, and Dinda Izzati, "Arabic Interference in Manuscript of Hadza Kitab Mujarrobat: A Study of Arabic Philology and Sociolinguistics," *Arabiyatuna: Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 8, no. 1 (2024): 347, https://doi.org/10.29240/jba.v8i1.9496.

[5]Yunita Dwi Pramesti et al., "Translating Arabic – Indonesian Captions on TikTok Social Media," *Arabiyatuna: Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 7, no. 1 (2023): 179–200.

[6]Ahmad Afandi et al., "Increased Understanding of Nahwu through Innovation in the Application of Direct Methods: Experimental Studies on Arabic Language Students," *Arabiyatuna: Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 8, no. 1 (2024): 465, https://doi.org/10.29240/jba.v8i1.9434.

with students, and motivate them to learn[7]. Social competence involves the ability to communicate, empathize, and interact effectively with students. This competence is crucial for creating a conducive learning environment, enabling all students' potential to be fully developed in mastering the expected competencies[8]. Student mastery can be observed through their level of understanding, command of the material, and learning outcomes[9]. Specifically, the social competence of Arabic language lecturers plays a vital role in the success of the learning process. This is because lecturers significantly influence student success, especially in Arabic language learning[10], and are therefore expected to act professionally[11], including mastering social competence.The social competence of lecturers is something that is very important considering that with this competence they can be given the ability to create a positive learning environment[12], so that positive attitudes in students can grow and develop.

Research on lecturers' social competence has long attracted the attention of education experts in Indonesia and around the world. In the context of higher education, a lecturer's ability to interact effectively with students and colleagues can influence a conducive learning atmosphere and enhance student engagement in learning.[13] The issue of social competence is becoming increasingly relevant given the demands on lecturers to be not only conveyors of material but also facilitators who can understand and accommodate the social

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[7]Apriyanti Widiansyah et al., "Peranan Sumber Daya Pendidikan Sebagai Faktor Penentu Dalam Manajemen Sistem Pendidikan," *Manajemen Sistem Pendidikan. Cakrawala* 18, no. 2 (2018): 229–34, http://ejournal.bsi.ac.id/ejurnal/index.php/cakrawala.

[8]Fatwiah Noor, "Kurikulum Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Di Perguruan Tinggi," *Arabiyatuna : Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 2, no. 1 (2018): 1, https://doi.org/10.29240/jba.v2i1.305.

[9]Fatwiah Noor et al., "The Implementation of Cooperative Learning Method for Arabic Language Learning," *Arabiyatuna: Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 7, no. 2 November (2023): 589, https://doi.org/10.29240/jba.v7i2.6791.

[10]Hamidah Hamidah, Noor Amalina Audina, and Mahfuz Rizqi Mubarak, "How Is an Arabic Lecturer's Personality Competence as Expected by Students? An Analysis of Students' Perceptions in Indonesia," *Arabiyatuna : Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 6, no. 2 (2022): 399, https://doi.org/10.29240/jba.v6i2.5088.

[11]Mohammad Zaelani Musonif and Hanik Mahliatussikah, "Teachers' and Students' Perceptions of the Arabic Language E-Learning Platform," *Arabiyatuna: Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 7, no. 2 November (2023): 437, https://doi.org/10.29240/jba.v7i2.7077.

[12]Johannes König, Daniela J. Jäger-Biela, and Nina Glutsch, "Adapting to Online Teaching during COVID-19 School Closure: Teacher Education and Teacher Competence Effects among Early Career Teachers in Germany," *European Journal of Teacher Education* 43, no. 4 (2020): 608–22, https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2020.1809650.

[13]Rebecca M. Chory and Evan H. Offstein, "Too Close for Comfort? Faculty–Student Multiple Relationships and Their Impact on Student Classroom Conduct," *Ethics & Behavior* 28, no. 1 (January 2018): 23–44, https://doi.org/10.1080/10508422.2016.1206475.

and emotional needs of students[14]. On the other hand, SjamsiPasandaran and colleagues argue that the low creativity and innovation capabilities of lecturers in developing and implementing learning models are due to their low social competence.[15]

In recent decades, research on the social competence of teachers/lecturers has been documented by experts. For instance, Moreno-Olivos[16] revealed that the social competence of lecturers must be developed to prevent limitations in their teaching performance. According to him, limitations in lecturers' social competence can comprehensively damage their students' competency achievements. A research report by Sánchez-Tarazaga shows that prospective teachers who highly prioritize social competence will have a collaborative attitude, teamwork skills, and good relationships with their community.[17]Carstensen and Klusmann, based on a two-case study, found that social competence negatively predicts emotional exhaustion.[18] Their second finding revealed that prospective teachers did not show an increase in social competence during one year of training. However, after two years of training, these prospective teachers experienced significant changes in their social competence. Lastly, Asriati, Nappu, and Qalbiproved that 55% of teachers participating in the Teacher Professional Education agreed to treat students fairly without discrimination.[19] On the other hand, this research also reported that Teacher Professional Education contributes to enhancing teachers' social competence with several indicators. Firstly, teachers engage in discussions with one another, respond positively to others, can adapt well anywhere, and are able to communicate the results of learning innovations through various media.

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[14]Hong-biao Yin et al., "The Effect of Trust on Teacher Empowerment: The Mediation of Teacher Efficacy," *Educational Studies* 39, no. 1 (February 2013): 13–28, https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2012.666339.

[15]Sjamsi Pasandaran et al., "Teacher Competence in the Application of Social Science Learning Models," in *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Social Sciences (ICSS 2018)* (Paris, France: Atlantis Press, 2018), https://doi.org/10.2991/icss-18.2018.163.

[16]Tiburcio Moreno-Olivos, "Social Competences in University Teachers," *Revista de La Facultad de Medicina* 67, no. 4 (October 2019): 509–13, https://doi.org/10.15446/revfacmed.v67n4.62329.

[17]Lucía Sánchez-Tarazaga et al., "Social Competences in Pre-Service Education: What Do Future Secondary Teachers Think?," *Journal of Education for Teaching*, August 2023, 1–15, https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2023.2247340.

[18]Bastian Carstensen and Uta Klusmann, "Assertiveness and Adaptation: Prospective Teachers' Social Competence Development and Its Significance for Occupational Well-Being,"*British Journal of Educational Psychology* 91, no. 1 (March 2021): 500–526, https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12377.

[19]Sitti Asriati, Syamsiarna Nappu, and Nur Qalbi, "Professional Education Program for Junior High School In-Service Teachers' Social Competence," *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan* 14, no. 2 (June 2022): 2563–70, https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v14i2.1342.

Furthermore, Caena & Vuorikari explored the professional development of teachers through key competencies such as resilience, self-reflection, and collaboration as part of teachers' social competence.[20] This study reported that innovative professional development can help teachers better navigate unpredictable education scenarios. Meanwhile, Kim & Han[21] and Körkkö & Lutovac[22] discussed the importance of strategies in social competence to produce effective learning. Lastly, other researchers have emphasized the importance of social sensitivity and empathy in the interactions between lecturers and students.[23]Finally, other researchers emphasize the importance of social sensitivity and empathy in the interaction between lecturers and students.

Although extensive studies have been conducted on teaching methods and lecturers' academic competence, research on lecturers' social competence in the context of Arabic language learning remains scarce, particularly in Southeast Sulawesi. Most existing research focuses on linguistic and pedagogical aspects, often neglecting the equally critical social dimensions that directly impact teaching effectiveness and student engagement. Social competence, including social sensitivity, locus of control, empathy, and peer popularity, plays a crucial role in facilitating effective communication, creating an inclusive learning environment, and fostering students' social and emotional development. In higher education, particularly in language teaching, social competence is essential for addressing the unique challenges of student engagement and motivation. Arabic language learning, often perceived as complex and challenging, can benefit significantly from lecturers who demonstrate high social competence. Lecturers with strong social skills are better equipped to navigate diverse student needs, mediate cultural and linguistic differences, and foster an environment

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[20]Francesca Caena and Riina Vuorikari, "Teacher Learning and Innovative Professional Development through the Lens of the Personal, Social and Learning to Learn European Key Competence," *European Journal of Teacher Education* 45, no. 4 (August 2022): 456–75, https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2021.1951699.

[21]Hae Kyoung Kim and Heejeong Sophia Han, "Understanding Early Childhood Teachers' Beliefs and Self-Stated Practices about Social Competence Instructional Strategies in the Context of Developmentally Appropriate Practice: A Comparison of Preservice and in-Service Teachers in the United States," *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal* 23, no. 4 (August 2015): 476–96, https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2015.1087152.

[22]Minna Körkkö and Sonja Lutovac, "Relational Perplexities of Today's Teachers: Social-Emotional Competence Perspective," *Teaching Education*, January 2024, 1–17, https://doi.org/10.1080/10476210.2023.2298194.

[23]José María Fernández-Batanero et al., "Digital Teaching Competence in Higher Education: A Systematic Review," *Education Sciences* 11, no. 11 (October 2021): 689, https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11110689; Genute Gedviliene et al., "The Social Competence Concept Development in Higher Education," *European Scientific Journal* 10, no. 28 (2014): 36–49; Yin et al., "The Effect of Trust on Teacher Empowerment: The Mediation of Teacher Efficacy"; Chory and Offstein, "Too Close for Comfort? Faculty–Student Multiple Relationships and Their Impact on Student Classroom Conduct."

conducive to language acquisition. This study is important because it highlights how the social competence of lecturers can help overcome these challenges, promoting both academic and emotional success for students. By focusing on Arabic language lecturers at IAIN Kendari, this research fills a gap in the literature by providing empirical insights into how social sensitivity and empathy among lecturers can enhance the Arabic learning process.

The practical implications of this research are clear: lecturers can develop an understanding of the specific behaviors that contribute to good social competence, thereby improving the overall quality of their teaching. Contextually, the findings from this study can serve as a reference point for other higher education institutions facing similar challenges in Arabic language education. Empirically, this study demonstrates how fostering lecturers' social competence can create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment, leading to improved student outcomes. Ultimately, this research not only aims to enhance the quality of Arabic language teaching but also to contribute to the broader goal of nurturing students' social and emotional well-being in higher education settings [24].

The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative with a case study approach. The sampling method employed is purposive sampling based on specific considerations. Prior to data collection through observation, interviews, and/or documentation, the researcher obtained consent from informants using consent form agreeing to participate in the research. Participant observation was conducted by the researcher actively engaging with informants studied in the Arabic language learning WhatsApp group and observing in Arabic language learning classes, noting aspects directly related to the social competence of Arabic language lecturers at IAIN Kendari for the academic years 2019/2020 and 2020/2021. Interviews were conducted with 6 Arabic language lecturers: three classes from the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, one class from the Faculty of Ushuluddin Adab and Dakwah, one class from the Faculty of Sharia, and one class from the Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business. Documentation was carried out to expand data during fieldwork and as supplementary data sources to support the completeness of this article's data.

The social competence framework in this study is encored on GR Adams' theory, which defines social competence as the ability to apply appropriate emotions to social contexts (social sensitivity), empathize with others, and have confidence in one's abilities (locus of control). This theory is particularly relevant in foreign language teaching, especially Arabic, where

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[24]Yin et al., "The Effect of Trust on Teacher Empowerment: The Mediation of Teacher Efficacy." *Educational Studies* 39, no. 1 (February 2013): 13–28. https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2012.666339.

communication and cultural understanding are vital. Social sensitivity helps lecturers navigate cultural complexities and create an inclusive environment. Empathy allows lecturers to recognize and support students' struggles, fostering motivation. Locus of control ensures confidence in managing classroom dynamics and enhances the learning atmosphere. The study shows that social competence—social sensitivity, empathy, and locus of control—are essential tools in overcoming the challenges of teaching Arabic, making it not only a personal skill but also a crucial pedagogical asset.[25]."

Findings and Discussion

Social competence is an important aspect of interpersonal interaction, especially in the context of education. To understand the social competence of lecturers, the social development theory proposed by Gerald R. Adams (GR Adams) can be used as a comprehensive framework. Adams emphasizes that social competence is an individual's ability to function effectively in various social situations, involving the understanding, assessment, and application of social norms in interactions with others[26].And to interact with other people, a means is needed. And the means that is used as an effective communication tool is language[27].

In the teaching of Arabic in Islamic higher education institutions, applying Adams' theory of social competence can provide important insights. Lecturers with high social competence according to Adams' model can create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment, which in turn can enhance students' motivation and learning outcomes[28]. The ability to understand and respond to students' social and emotional needs is key to overcoming challenges that are often encountered in language learning, which is frequently perceived as difficult.

In this study, there are at least several findings related to social competence in Arabic language learning, namely: (1) The use of polite oral communication; (2) The use of sign language; (3) The functional use of

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[25]Gerald R. Adams, "Social Competence During Adolescence: Social Sensitivity, Locus of Control, Empathy, and Peer Popularity," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 12, no. 3 (June 1983): 203–11, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02090986.

[26]Adams, Gerald R. "Social Competence During Adolescence: Social Sensitivity, Locus of Control, Empathy, and Peer Popularity." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 12, no. 3 (June 1983): 203–11. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02090986.

[27]Aziz and Saihu, "Interpretasi Humanistik Kebahasaan: Upaya Kontekstualisasi Kebahasaan: Upaya Kontekstualisasi Kaidah Bahasa Arab." *Arabiyatuna : Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 3, no. 2 (2019): 299. https://doi.org/10.29240/jba.v3i2.1000.

[28]Sofyan Iskandar, Primanita Sholihah Rosmana, and Hilma Innayah Putri, "Peran Guru Dalam Membangun Lingkungan Belajar Yang Positif Di Kelas," *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai* 8, no. 2 (2024): 25762–70, https://jptam.org/index.php/jptam/article/view/16286.

communication and information technology; (4) Effective interaction with students; and (5) Providing solutions.

Communicate Verbally in A Polite Manner

In the learning process, lecturers aim for inclusive verbal communication, integrating students' diverse cultural and social backgrounds. Politeness is crucial in Arabic language teaching for several reasons. First, it fosters a respectful, low-anxiety environment, essential for student engagement and language acquisition. Polite communication builds trust and reduces intimidation, encouraging active participation. Second, Arabic's cultural and religious associations emphasize respect, and lecturers model these cultural values through polite communication, aiding students' understanding of the language's cultural context. Third, politeness in addressing both academic and personal matters signals empathy and inclusivity, motivating students and reducing disengagement. In summary, politeness is a vital pedagogical tool, enhancing the learning experience by creating a respectful, inclusive, and culturally relevant environment. This can be observed anchored on interview data as follows.

> **Nak, please** [politeness marker] attend the language seminar organized by the Language Center of IAIN Kendari, as it will broaden your linguistic insights while still requesting permission to be granted (ZI, Interview, April 9, 2024).

> **Please let Nak,** bring his baby to class. Arrange it as best as possible so that the lecture can still proceed smoothly. (AM, Interview, April 15, 2024)

> **Please** submit your assignment next week, **Nak**. I'm granting an extension because you were ill. (HN, Interview, April 16, 2024)

> **Please** submit your assignment, **Nak**, 3 days from now. I tolerate this because there is a reason, namely helping people. **You** have done well for today. (HN, Interview, April 16, 2024)

> It's okay, son, the assignment is due tomorrow, I tolerate it because you have done good in helping people**.** (NJ, Wawancara, 24 April 2024)

The interview data indicate that polite communication is evident from the frequent use of linguistic features by lecturers towards students. These linguistic features include the use of phrases like 'silahkan...ya' ('please...'), the use of the term 'nak' (a term of endearment), the use of the polite pronoun 'anda' ('you'), compromises such as the clause 'diatur bagaimana baiknya ya___' ('arrange it as best as possible'), and the use of clauses like 'tidak apa ya nak' ('it's okay, dear') indicating apologies.

Polite oral communication through specific linguistic features such as 'please,' 'child,' the pronoun 'You,' and expressions of apology aligns with Musaheri's (2009) statement that social competence is characterized by the ability to communicate effectively and politely[29]. In addition to polite oral communication, lecturers also engage in inclusive communication, which is demonstrated through the use of terms of endearment like 'child' and offers of assistance or leniency expressed with respectful and polite language.

The use of polite oral communication is a very important skill, especially in the educational context[30]. In oral communication, polite language reflects respect and consideration for others, which can strengthen interpersonal relationships and create a positive environment. Polite language not only reflects courtesy and appreciation for others but also creates a comfortable and respectful communication atmosphere, which in turn can enhance the effectiveness of interactions and the learning process. Therefore, it is important for lecturers and students to pay attention to how they communicate and try to always maintain politeness in interacting. In this way, they can create a positive work environment, strengthen relationships, and increase the effectiveness of learning[31].

Polite oral communication is a crucial element of a lecturer's social competence, especially in Arabic language instruction[32]. It enhances students' comprehension and significantly impacts their academic performance and motivation. In a study involving first-year Arabic students at IAIN Kendari, lecturers who used polite and encouraging language reported higher student engagement, increased participation, and improved academic outcomes. This polite communication fostered a safe, respectful environment, making students more comfortable to ask questions and contribute to discussions. Furthermore, polite communication also serves as a model for ethical behaviour, promoting empathy and respect among students during peer interactions. Lecturers with high social competence, particularly those who emphasize politeness, encourage greater autonomy and intrinsic motivation in students[33]. This aligns with the

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[29]Achmad Rizal et al., "Kompetensi Sosial (Societal Comptance)," *Jurnal Riset Dan Inovasi Manajemen* 1, no. 3 (2023): 10–23, https://doi.org/10.59581/jrim-widyakarya.v1i3.762.

[30]Nur Laily Fitri, Chalijah Adha, and Saidatul Fadhillah Nasution, "Pentingnya Penerapan Komunikasi Efektif Dalam Konteks Pendidikan," *Journal Of Social Science Research Volume* 3, no. 6 (2023): 5241–51.

[31]Vebri Filiandi et al., "Analysis of Language Politeness of Medan State University Physics Students Analisis Kesantunan Berbahasa Mahasiswa Fisika Universitas Negeri Medan," *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Holistik(JIPH)* 3, no. 2 (2024): 69–80.

[32]Louisa Silalahi and Dorlan Naibaho, "Pentingnya Kompetensi Sosial Guru Dalam Proses Pembelajaran," *Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisiplin* 1, no. 1 (2023): 151–58, https://doi.org/10.62017/merdeka.

[33]Ircham Surahman, "Komunikasi Dosen Dalam Meningkatkan Efektivitas Penyelesaian Tugas Akhir Mahasiswa Pada Prodi Manajemen Pendidikan Islam Di Universitas Darunnajah

"merdeka belajar" (freedom to learn) concept, where respectful communication fosters student independence and critical thinking. As a result, students become more self-directed in their learning, leading to enhanced language proficiency and academic success[34].

Polite and inclusive oral communication is crucial in the learning process, especially in a diverse cultural and linguistic setting like Indonesia. Effective communication by lecturers, as emphasized by Amerstorfer and Freiin von Münster-Kistner[35], not only increases student engagement but also strengthens their understanding of the material[36], and bridges communication gaps that may arise from cultural and linguistic differences[37]. In the context of Indonesia, where students come from various ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, the social competence of lecturers must be flexible enough to adapt to these diverse contexts[38].

For instance, Indonesia's linguistic diversity, with hundreds of local languages spoken alongside Bahasa Indonesia, presents a unique challenge for lecturers teaching a foreign language like Arabic. Lecturers must be sensitive to the varying levels of language proficiency among students[39]. Those who demonstrate empathy and patience in addressing the challenges faced by students from different linguistic backgrounds are more likely to foster an inclusive learning environment. For example, a lecturer who understands that students from rural areas may struggle more with Arabic due to limited exposure to formal education will adapt their communication style, using simpler language and providing additional support, thereby reducing anxiety and promoting student engagement. Culturally, lecturers must also navigate the hierarchical norms prevalent in Indonesian society. Respect for authority is deeply ingrained

Jakarta," *Tesis Universitas PTIQ Jakarta*, 2023, 1–227, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK558907/.

[34]Fateh Al Muhibbin et al., "Educators' and Learners' Responses to Optimising the Development of Arabic Teaching Module Based on the Merdeka Curriculum," *Arabiyatuna: Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 8, no. 1 (2024): 209, https://doi.org/10.29240/jba.v8i1.9878.

[35]Carmen M. Amerstorfer and Clara Freiin von Münster-Kistner, "Student Perceptions of Academic Engagement and Student-Teacher Relationships in Problem-Based Learning," *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (October 2021), https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.713057.

[36]Silvia Molina Roldán et al., "How Inclusive Interactive Learning Environments Benefit Students Without Special Needs," *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (April 2021), https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.661427.

[37]Irina-Ana Drobot, "Multilingualism and Awareness of Cultural Differences in Communication," in *Multilingualism - Interdisciplinary Topics* (IntechOpen, 2022), https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.99178.

[38]Giuliana Pastore and Reto Luder, "Teacher-Student-Relationship Quality in Inclusive Secondary Schools: Theory and Measurement of Emotional Aspects of Teaching," *Frontiers in Education* 6 (April 2021), https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.643617.

[39]Afandi et al., "Increased Understanding of Nahwu through Innovation in the Application of Direct Methods: Experimental Studies on Arabic Language Students."

in Indonesian culture, and this can sometimes inhibit open communication between students and lecturers. Socially competent lecturers who can blend politeness with approachability are better able to break down these barriers, encouraging students to ask questions and express their thoughts freely. For example, lecturers who use polite, inclusive language and demonstrate genuine interest in students' perspectives help create a classroom environment where students feel respected and valued, regardless of their cultural background or language proficiency. Moreover, in a religiously diverse country like Indonesia, Arabic language lecturers often deal with students from various religious backgrounds, even within an Islamic educational setting. Social competence here includes being mindful of different religious and cultural sensitivities and using inclusive language that respects the diversity of the student body. A lecturer who is culturally aware will avoid making assumptions based on religious or ethnic backgrounds and instead use communication strategies that promote unity and respect. Thus, politeness and inclusivity in communication are not only essential for effective teaching but also for adapting to Indonesia's complex cultural and linguistic landscape. Lecturers who are socially competent can create positive relationships with their students, facilitating a learning environment that is conducive to both academic success and cultural understanding.

Use of Sign Language

The author's observation results reveal that lecturers also use sign language in communicating with students. Sign language is manifested through facial expressions and hand gestures used by lecturers towards students. When a female student approaches to consult about her coursework assignment with one of the lecturers in the corner of the Integrated Laboratory while carrying her child, the lecturer displays a cheerful, friendly, and smiling face rather than an expression of anger. This is because the student was late in submitting the assignment given by the lecturer. Besides facial expressions, the lecturer also uses hand gestures to approve the late submission of the assignment.

The use of polite sign language indicates that the lecturer has good social competence. The sign language referred to here is a way of communication that uses hand movements, facial expressions, and appropriate body posture to convey messages. The use of sign language is not only intended for those with hearing impairments but also for anyone who supports inclusive and effective communication. Non-verbal communication, such as sign language through facial expressions and hand movements by lecturers, according to Abelha et al., is a form of empathy and patience[40]. This aligns with the research by Aldrup, Carstensen, and Klusmann, which states that empathy is a determining factor

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[40]Marta Abelha et al., "Graduate Employability and Competence Development in Higher Education—A Systematic Literature Review Using PRISMA," *Sustainability* 12, no. 15 (July 2020): 5900, https://doi.org/10.3390/su12155900.

that can support students' emotional well-being[41]. In addition to supporting students' emotional well-being, it turns out that teacher empathy towards students also correlates positively with reading achievement, both directly and indirectly through students' sense of belonging to the school. Specifically, students' sense of belonging to the school mediates 29% of the total effect of teacher empathy on reading achievement[42]. Although the research does not specifically examine lecturer empathy in teaching, it can be understood from this that empathy, which is part of a lecturer's social competence, is very important.

Functional Use of Written Communication Technology

In addition to verbal communication, lecturers also communicate in writing with their students. This is done by lecturers through the WhatsApp application. The communication covers various issues, from confirming class schedules and assigning tasks to addressing students' internet network problems. This is confirmed through screenshots of conversations between lecturers via WhatsApp as follows.
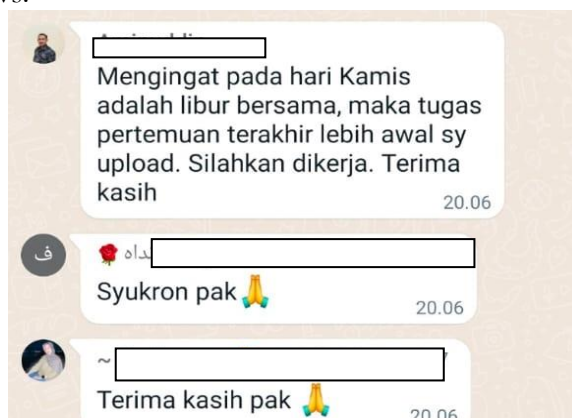

Figure 1.Screenshoot 1

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[41]Karen Aldrup, Bastian Carstensen, and Uta Klusmann, "Is Empathy the Key to Effective Teaching? A Systematic Review of Its Association with Teacher-Student Interactions and Student Outcomes," *Educational Psychology Review* 34, no. 3 (September 2022): 1177–1216, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-021-09649-y.

[42]Yuyang Cai et al., "The Interplay between Teacher Empathy, Students' Sense of School Belonging, and Learning Achievement," *European Journal of Psychology of Education* 38, no. 3 (September 2023): 1167–83, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10212-022-00637-6.

Figure 2.Screenshoot2

Figure 3.Screenshoot3

Figure 4.Screenshoot4

The screenshots above report that the lecturer demonstrates functional written language through several expressions, such as "silakan..." (Screenshot 1 and 4) and "terimakasih" (Screenshot 4). Furthermore, in Screenshot 2, it shows communicative conversation. This is evident when the lecturer responds with "akan saya jadwalkan" to the student's question "Assalamu'alaikum, Pak,saya mau tanya bagaimana yang blum stor hafalannya bahasa Arab?" within the WhatsApp group. On the other hand, the lecturer also shows empathy towards the student's situation when their internet connection is problematic (Screenshot 3).

Written communication using technology in a functional manner is closely related to a lecturer's social competence, especially in an increasingly digital educational environment[43]. This competence refers to the ability to write and send messages through various technological platforms with effective and efficient purposes. The wise use of WhatsApp can enhance the effectiveness of communication and create a more connected and productive academic environment[44]. WhatsApp allows for direct communication between lecturers and students, facilitating discussions, clarification of materials, or scheduling. Polite written communication can help build trust between lecturers and students. A prompt and polite response from lecturers can also make students

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[43]Ricardo Sisco Turnip, "Peningkatan Literasi Digital Di Kalangan Pelajar: Pengenalan Dan Praktik Penggunaan Teknologi Pendidikan, Abstrak," *Jurnal Review Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran* 6, no. 4 (2023): 2302–10.

[44]Maria Fransiska, "Efektivitas Komunikasi Interpersonal Antara Guru Melalui Media Daring Di UPTD SPNF SKB Kota Tengerang," *Jurnal Konvergensi* 5, no. 1 (2024): 1–8, https://journal.paramadina.ac.id/index.php/IK/article/view/969.

feel more comfortable asking questions or sharing problems if they feel valued and treated well.The use of WhatsApp is the functional use of technology both in the teaching and learning process, as well as in communicating as an implementation of the use of digital technology with creativity and information[45] development to make it easier for students to learn and communicate.

Lecturer's Fairness towards Students

The social competence of lecturers is further demonstrated by their fair attitude and avoidance of discrediting students with different backgrounds and characteristics. This can be seen in the grades given by lecturers based on students' abilities, or in the learning process in class. Participants narrate this in the following interview data.

> I always strive to remain fair by treating all students equally. (Am, Interview, April 26, 2024)

> Students must be treated equally. We must not differentiate them for any reason. (Mb, Interview, April 19, 2024).

> In my teaching, I treat all my students equally. They are all great individuals who are ready to learn. They have aspirations and hopes to achieve what they desire, which is to study and excel." (Nj, Interview, April 17, 2024).

> Our students must receive equal treatment regardless of ethnic differences: Tolaki, Buton, Muna, Moronene, Bugis, Makassar, Mandar, Aceh, Padang. Despite our differences, we are one in diversity, 'Unity in Diversity'. (Ha, Interview, April 18, 2024).

> We do not tolerate unfair treatment for any reason. They have the same rights and obligations. They are all students who are learning to equip themselves with the knowledge provided by their lecturers. They are all our children whom we must nurture together. (Zl, Interview, April 18, 2024)

> Alhamdulillah, so far I have not differentiated between students in any way, including grading. If they deserve the highest grade, why should it be reduced? (Hn, Interview, April 16, 2024)

The fair attitude of lecturers as an indicator of social competence is demonstrated by expressions such as "remain fair in action and attitude", "students must be treated equally. We must not differentiate between them", "I

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[45]Asep Maulana and Ahmad Tarajjil Ma'suq, "The Development of Google Sites-Based Learning Multimedia to Enhance Students' Competence in Vocabulary Translation," *Arabiyatuna : Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 8, no. 1 (2024): 115–46. https://dx.doi.org/10.29240/jba.v8i1.8776.

treat everyone the same", "equal treatment".The findings of this study show that lecturers consistently apply fairness and equality in their treatment of all students, without differentiating based on ethnic background or social conditions. This demonstrates a good understanding of the principles of social justice in education, which is crucial in building trust and respect among students. A lecturer's fairness towards students is an important aspect of social competence that influences relationships and effectiveness in the academic environment. Fairness reflects justice, integrity, and attention to the needs and rights of students. Hong et al. reported that the fairness demonstrated by teachers plays an important role in enhancing a positive learning environment[46]. Empathy and fairness are essential to be implemented in teaching practices to create a more inclusive and conducive learning environment. Lecturers who are empathetic and fair can improve students' emotional well-being and support their academic achievement

Showing Appreciation

The sense of praise in the study refers to cases where a lecturer gives praise to students to enhance their motivation and interest in learning. This was expressed by participants in the interview data as follows.

> **You're great,** managing work while studying. Keep working while still paying attention to your studies. This way, your studies will remain accessible and successful (MB, Interview, March 26, 2024).

The expression of praise was found in the use of the clause 'andahebat'. 'Hebat' in the Indonesian Dictionary refers to something extraordinary and indicates something very remarkable. This statement explains how a lecturer motivates their students to always pay attention to lectures, thereby achieving future success. Expressing praise in the context of teaching is one of the important aspects of a lecturer's social competence. Effective praise can strengthen the relationship between lecturers and students, motivate students, and create a positive learning environment. When students feel valued and recognized for their efforts, they are more likely to engage actively in learning and put in more effort. Additionally, consistently showing praise helps build a positive and supportive relationship between lecturers and students. Students who feel valued and recognized are likely to have a better view of their lecturer and their learning experience[47].With the praise given, students have been

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[46]Youjuan Hong et al., "Empathy and Teachers' Fairness Behavior: The Mediating Role of Moral Obligation and Moderating Role of Social Value Orientation," ed. Sónia Brito-Costa, *PLOS ONE* 17, no. 6 (June 2022), https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0268681.

[47]Resti Nuraeni, Gunawan Santoso, and Sartono Puji Nugroho, "Jurnal Pendidikan Transformatif (JPT) Eksplorasi Karakter Keingintahuan Mahasiswa FIP UMJ Di Abad 21 Jurnal Pendidikan Transformatif (JPT)," *Jurnal Pendidikan Transformatif (JPT)* 02, no. 05 (2023): 590–603.

directed to engage in a cognitive constructivist approach so that they actively build and refine their knowledge structures by synthesizing past experiences[48], including those obtained from the results of praise.

Conclusion

This study reveals the social competence of faculty members in Arabic language instruction at an Islamic higher education institution in Southeast Sulawesi through five primary indicators: 1) Polite verbal communication, employing terms such as "please" and "my child," which fosters an inclusive atmosphere. 2) The use of body language to clarify communication and convey empathy. 3) Written communication via WhatsApp, facilitating flexibility in correspondence. 4) Fair treatment of all students in both teaching and assessment. 5) The provision of praise to enhance students' motivation to learn. The practical implications suggest that lecturers should refine their communication skills, both verbal and non-verbal, and more broadly incorporate digital technology. Educational administrators are encouraged to prioritize training on social competence and empathy in teaching, while implementing regular feedback mechanisms for lecturers. Institutions are advised to promote policies that ensure fairness and inclusivity in instruction. Further research is recommended to explore the direct impact of lecturers' social competence on student learning outcomes.

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[48]Al Muhibbin et al., "Educators' and Learners' Responses to Optimising the Development of Arabic Teaching Module Based on the Merdeka Curriculum."

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