Elbash: Journal of Social Science and Education
E-ISSN: xxxx-xxxx
Volume 1, Issue 1, May 2026, pp. 62-74
DOI:

Arabic Debate Competition in Jordan as a Transnational Educational Arena: Enhancing Student Potential, Intercultural Competence, and ASEAN Learner Solidarity

Sultan Abdus Syakur[1*], Fadhel Mubarak[2], Iqmal Wahyudi[3]
[1,2,3] Yarmouk University, Irbid, Jordan
[1]2023184052@ses.yu.edu.jo, [2]2023184053@ses.yu.edu.jo, [3]2023184054@ses.yu.edu.jo
*Correspondence

Article Information:
Received: 21 April 2026
Revised: 28 May 2026
Accepted: 28 May 2026
Published: 30 May 2026

Keywords:
Arabic Debate, Transnational Education, Intercultural Competence, Student Potential, ASEAN Learner Solidarity.

Abstract

Previous studies on debate pedagogy have largely emphasized cognitive outcomes such as critical thinking, argumentation skills, and classroom participation, while limited attention has been given to how Arabic debate competitions operate as transnational educational spaces that foster intercultural competence and learner solidarity among ASEAN students. This study aims to examine the Arabic Debate Competition in Jordan as a transnational educational arena for enhancing student potential, intercultural competence, and ASEAN learner solidarity. Employing a qualitative case study design, the research collected data through semi-structured interviews, observation, and document analysis involving twelve ASEAN student debaters from Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Singapore. The findings indicate that the competition strengthened students' Arabic communicative confidence, public speaking ability, critical reasoning, argumentative competence, emotional resilience, and learner agency. It also created meaningful intercultural encounters through which students engaged with diverse accents, debate styles, educational backgrounds, and cultural expressions, including the encounter between fusha competence and Jordanian colloquial Arabic. Furthermore, the competition fostered ASEAN learner solidarity by generating peer support, friendship, shared academic struggle, and educational silaturahmi across national boundaries. Theoretically, this study contributes to social science and education by integrating debate pedagogy, intercultural competence, and regional learner solidarity into a single analytical framework. It reframes Arabic debate not merely as a linguistic competition, but as a social-pedagogical practice that connects language learning, intercultural formation, and transnational student engagement.

How to Cite this Article: Syakur, S. A., Mubarak, F., & Wahyudi, I. (2026). Arabic Debate Competition in Jordan as a Transnational Educational Arena: Enhancing Student Potential, Intercultural Competence, and ASEAN Learner Solidarity. *ELBASH : Journal of Social Science and Education*, *1*(1), 62–74.

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary international education, language is no longer understood merely as a grammatical system to be mastered, but as a social, intercultural, and political practice through which students construct identity, negotiate meaning, and participate in wider transnational communities. This shift is particularly visible in competitive academic events where students are required not only to speak a foreign language, but also to think critically, respond ethically, collaborate across difference, and perform intellectual agency in public. Within this context, Arabic debate competitions

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represent a distinctive educational phenomenon because they combine linguistic mastery, rhetorical performance, intercultural encounter, and youth mobility in a single pedagogical space. Recent studies on international student mobility, foreign language learning, and higher education internationalization suggest that short-term cross-border educational activities may contribute to global competence, intercultural awareness, and student agency when they are designed as meaningful social learning experiences rather than ceremonial events (de Wit & Altbach, 2021; Guo et al., 2024; Hernández-Torrano et al., 2024; Inouye et al., 2023; Li et al., 2025a).

The Arabic Debate Competition in Jordan, involving students from ASEAN countries, can therefore be viewed as more than a linguistic contest. It functions as a transnational educational arena in which ASEAN learners practice Arabic argumentation, engage with diverse cultural perspectives, and build social relationships with peers who share similar educational aspirations but come from different national, linguistic, and institutional backgrounds. Debate-based learning has been shown to support critical thinking, argument construction, reflective reasoning, and active student participation, especially when learners are placed in dialogic situations that require evidence-based reasoning and responsive communication (Cariñanos-Ayala et al., 2021; Chen, Wang, Zhai, & Li, 2022; Chen, Zhai, Zhu, & Li, 2022; Georgallis & Bruijn, 2022). However, when debate occurs in an international Arabic-speaking context such as Jordan, its educational meaning extends beyond classroom pedagogy; it becomes a site of intercultural learning, symbolic recognition, and learner solidarity.

Despite the growing academic interest in debate as a pedagogical strategy, existing research has tended to focus on its cognitive and instructional benefits, such as critical thinking, argumentation skills, speaking confidence, and classroom engagement. These studies have provided important evidence that structured debate can transform passive learners into active participants who negotiate claims, evaluate counterarguments, and develop higher-order thinking skills (Cariñanos-Ayala et al., 2021; Chen, Wang, Zhai, & Li, 2022; Chen, Zhai, Zhu, & Li, 2022). Nevertheless, relatively little attention has been given to how debate competitions function as transnational social spaces, especially in relation to foreign language learning, intercultural competence, and regional learner solidarity. This gap is significant because international debate events are not merely pedagogical exercises; they are also social encounters where students learn to position themselves within broader cultural, linguistic, and regional networks (Georgallis & Bruijn, 2022; Inouye et al., 2023; Yang & Zhang, 2023).

At the same time, studies on intercultural communicative competence in foreign language education have increasingly emphasized that language learning should enable students to interact meaningfully with people from different cultural backgrounds. Research in this area shows that intercultural competence develops through exposure, reflection, interaction quality, cultural metacognition, and pedagogical designs that move learners beyond linguistic accuracy toward empathy, adaptability, and critical cultural awareness (Huang, 2021; Huang, 2023; Mu & Yu, 2023; Zhang & Zhou, 2023; Zhou et al., 2024). More recent studies further suggest that foreign language proficiency and intercultural interaction are closely connected to the formation of global competence, particularly when students are given opportunities to use the target language in authentic and socially meaningful contexts (Guo et al., 2024; Li et al., 2025b; Xu et al., 2025). Yet, the specific role of Arabic debate competitions in cultivating intercultural competence among ASEAN students remains underexplored.

This issue becomes more urgent when situated within the broader landscape of ASEAN educational connectivity and regional student mobility. ASEAN-related higher education initiatives increasingly emphasize cross-border collaboration, student exchange, cultural understanding, and regional competitiveness, while recent scholarship on regional higher education governance highlights the growing importance of mobility programs and educational cooperation in the Global South (Hernández-Torrano et al., 2024; Ma, 2024; Ma & You, 2026; Tran & Bui, 2025). However, much of the literature on ASEAN student mobility tends to focus on institutional policy, regional governance, and formal exchange programs, leaving limited space for examining short-term, language-based competitions as micro-level sites of regional connection. The Arabic debate competition in Jordan offers a valuable case for understanding how ASEAN students experience regional solidarity not only through institutional frameworks, but also through shared intellectual struggle, peer interaction, and affective bonds formed during competition.

In the context of Arabic language education, this study is also important because Arabic is often taught through formal, textual, or grammar-oriented approaches, while students' motivation and communicative confidence may depend on opportunities to use Arabic in authentic, performative, and socially engaging situations. Recent research on Arabic as a foreign language has emphasized the importance of learner motivation, agency, and participation in shaping meaningful Arabic learning experiences, particularly outside conventional classroom boundaries (An & Zheng, 2022; Miao & Wang, 2023). Debate competitions provide such an opportunity because they require students to mobilize vocabulary, rhetoric, reasoning, pronunciation, cultural knowledge, and emotional confidence in real-time interaction. Therefore, the Arabic debate competition may be understood as a pedagogical bridge between formal Arabic learning and lived communicative practice.

The state of the art shows three major streams of scholarship relevant to this study. The first stream examines debate as an instructional strategy that enhances critical thinking, active learning, and argumentative competence (Cariñanos-Ayala et al., 2021; Chen, Wang, Zhai, & Li, 2022; Chen, Zhai, Zhu, & Li, 2022; Georgallis & Bruijn, 2022). The second stream investigates intercultural competence in foreign language education, emphasizing cultural awareness, intercultural interaction, metacognition, and global competence (Guo et al., 2024; Huang, 2021; Huang, 2023; Li et al., 2025a; Mu & Yu, 2023; Zhang & Zhou, 2023; Zhou et al., 2024). The third stream discusses international student mobility, higher education regionalization, and ASEAN educational cooperation (Hernández-Torrano et al., 2024; Ma, 2024; Ma & You, 2026; Mok et al., 2021; Tran & Bui, 2025). Although these three bodies of literature are individually well developed, they rarely intersect in a focused analysis of Arabic debate competitions as transnational educational arenas for ASEAN learners.

Based on this gap, this study argues that the Arabic Debate Competition in Jordan should be examined not only as a language competition, but as a multidimensional educational experience that integrates student potential development, intercultural competence, and ASEAN learner solidarity. The first gap concerns the tendency of debate research to prioritize cognitive and pedagogical outcomes while paying less attention to the social and intercultural relationships produced through competition. The second gap concerns intercultural competence research, which often focuses on classroom-based learning, digital interventions, or general study-abroad experiences, but rarely explores competitive Arabic-speaking events as spaces of intercultural formation. The third gap

concerns ASEAN student mobility studies, which tend to emphasize policy and institutional mobility while overlooking short-term academic competitions as meaningful arenas of regional learner connection (Chen, Wang, Zhai, & Li, 2022; Hernández-Torrano et al., 2024; Li et al., 2025b; Ma & You, 2026; Yang & Zhang, 2023).

Accordingly, this study is guided by the following research questions: first, how does the Arabic Debate Competition in Jordan function as a transnational educational arena for ASEAN students? Second, what forms of student potential are enhanced through participation in the competition? Third, how does the competition contribute to the development of intercultural competence among ASEAN learners? Fourth, how does the event foster learner solidarity, peer connection, and educational silaturahmi among students from different ASEAN countries? These questions position the study at the intersection of social science and education by treating debate not only as a method of language performance, but also as a social practice through which students develop agency, intercultural awareness, and regional belonging (Guo et al., 2024; Inouye et al., 2023; Li et al., 2025b; Mu & Yu, 2023; Nadeem et al., 2022).

The scope of this study is limited to two interrelated problems. The first problem concerns the pedagogical-linguistic dimension of student potential, including Arabic communicative confidence, argumentative ability, public speaking, critical thinking, and learner agency. The second problem concerns the socio-cultural dimension, namely intercultural competence and ASEAN learner solidarity formed through interaction among participants during the competition. This study does not attempt to measure long-term Arabic proficiency through standardized testing, nor does it claim to represent all forms of ASEAN educational mobility. Rather, it focuses on the lived educational meanings of a specific Arabic debate competition in Jordan as experienced by ASEAN students. Such limitation is necessary because short-term mobility and competition-based learning should be analyzed in relation to context, participant experience, and interactional meaning rather than treated as universally generalizable outcomes (Hernández-Torrano et al., 2024; Inouye et al., 2023; Li et al., 2025b; Tran & Bui, 2025).

The significance of this study lies in its theoretical, empirical, and practical contributions. Theoretically, it expands debate pedagogy by connecting it with intercultural competence and regional learner solidarity. Empirically, it offers a focused analysis of Arabic debate as a transnational educational experience involving ASEAN students in Jordan, a context that remains underrepresented in current research on foreign language education and student mobility. Practically, the findings may inform educators, debate trainers, Arabic language institutions, and international competition organizers in designing debate programs that do not merely reward linguistic excellence, but also cultivate critical agency, intercultural dialogue, and meaningful relationships among learners. In this sense, the Arabic Debate Competition in Jordan may be understood as an educational arena where language, thought, culture, and solidarity meet in a shared process of student formation (Cariñanos-Ayala et al., 2021; Guo et al., 2024; Hernández-Torrano et al., 2024; Huang, 2021; Ma, 2024; Zhou et al., 2024).

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design to examine the Arabic Debate Competition in Jordan as a transnational educational arena for ASEAN students. This design was selected because the study aims to understand participants' lived experiences, educational meanings,

intercultural encounters, and forms of learner solidarity within a specific event-based context. The case refers to the ASEAN-level Arabic debate competition in Jordan, including students' preparation, debate performance, intercultural interaction, and post-competition reflection. A qualitative case study is appropriate for exploring bounded social and educational phenomena in depth rather than producing statistical generalization (Priya, 2021).

The research was conducted in the context of an ASEAN-level Arabic debate competition held in Jordan. Jordan was selected as meaningful research setting because it provides an authentic Arabic-speaking environment where students experience Arabic not only as an academic subject but also as a communicative and intercultural practice embedded in daily social life. Participants were selected through purposive sampling because the study required individuals who had direct experience with the competition and could provide rich information about Arabic learning, debate performance, intercultural competence, and ASEAN learner solidarity. Purposive sampling is widely used in qualitative research to select participants based on relevance, experience, and their ability to illuminate the phenomenon being studied (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2025; Hennink & Kaiser, 2022).

A total of twelve participants were involved in this study, representing four ASEAN countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Singapore. Each country was represented by three student debaters, resulting in a total of twelve participants across four national delegations. Six participants from Indonesia and Malaysia were engaged through semi-structured interviews, while six participants from Thailand and Singapore contributed through observational data. No coaching staff or accompanying lecturers were present during the competition, meaning all data were derived directly from student participants. The Indonesian team comprised three debaters with notably diverse educational backgrounds: one had trained at Natiq Internasional Arabiyyah (Natiq Institute) in Pare, a well-regarded intensive Arabic language institution in East Java; another had received part of their education in Australia; and a third came from a traditional pesantren background. The Malaysian team, by contrast, had been trained in government-sponsored pesantren specifically dedicated to Arabic language education and had prior competitive experience at the Qatar Foundation Arabic debate competition, reflecting a more formally structured preparation pathway.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observation, and document analysis. Interviews explored participants' motivation, Arabic-speaking confidence, critical thinking, debate experience, intercultural interaction, and the meaning of solidarity and silaturahmi among ASEAN learners. Observation was conducted during debate sessions, preparation activities, informal peer interaction, and cultural encounters to capture verbal and non-verbal forms of communication, including post-competition interactions between participants from different countries. Document analysis included competition guidelines, debate motions, participant reflections, and official publications related to the event. The use of multiple data sources strengthened the credibility of the findings through triangulation (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Cena et al., 2024).

The data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. The process involved repeated reading of interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents; generating initial codes; identifying potential themes; reviewing and refining themes; naming the final themes; and connecting them with the research questions. This method was appropriate because the study aimed to identify patterns of meaning related to student potential, intercultural competence, and ASEAN learner solidarity. Themes that emerged from the data include Arabic communicative confidence, debate as student agency, critical thinking through argumentation, intercultural awareness through

dialect and educational background diversity, peer support, and learner solidarity as educational silaturahmi. Reflexive thematic analysis emphasizes interpretive depth, researcher reflexivity, and coherent theme development rather than mechanical coding procedures (Braun & Clarke, 2021, 2022).

Trustworthiness was ensured through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was strengthened through data triangulation across interviews and observation, as well as member checking with interview participants. Transferability was supported by providing thick descriptions of the competition context, participant backgrounds, and educational experiences. Dependability was maintained through clear documentation of the research process, while confirmability was supported by reflexive notes to minimize researcher bias. Ethical principles were applied by obtaining informed consent, ensuring voluntary participation, protecting participants' identities through pseudonyms, and storing data securely. Because the study involved students from different ASEAN countries, cultural sensitivity was maintained throughout the research process (Cena et al., 2024; Braun & Clarke, 2021).

This study is limited by its qualitative case study design; therefore, the findings are not intended to be statistically generalized to all Arabic debate competitions or all ASEAN students. The study also relies partly on participants' self-reported experiences, which may be shaped by memory and personal interpretation. Moreover, the short-term nature of the competition limits the study's ability to measure long-term changes in Arabic proficiency or intercultural competence. However, these limitations are consistent with the purpose of qualitative research, which prioritizes contextual depth, interpretive richness, and theoretical insight (Priya, 2021; Hennink & Kaiser, 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Arabic Debate as a Space for Student Potential Development

The findings reveal that the Arabic Debate Competition in Jordan significantly contributed to the development of students' potential across linguistic, cognitive, and affective dimensions. Participants from Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Singapore consistently reported that the competition served not merely as a language contest but as a transformative educational experience. As P6 (Malaysia) noted, *"this event was very good and beneficial for improving self-potential and building relations."* This statement reflects a dual awareness among participants: that debate competition simultaneously develops individual capacity and relational capital, a finding consistent with research showing that debate-based learning enhances both academic competence and interpersonal engagement (Bellaera et al., 2021; Rivas et al., 2022).

One of the most distinctive features of this competition was the diversity of educational backgrounds represented among the participants. The Indonesian team exemplified this diversity strikingly: one debater had trained at Natiq Internasional Arabiyyah (Natiq Institute) in Pare, a well-regarded intensive Arabic language course in East Java; another had received part of their education in Australia; and a third came from a traditional pesantren background. This heterogeneity of educational trajectories within a single team demonstrates that Arabic debate competitions can function as equalizing arenas where learners from structurally different educational pathways converge and perform on common ground. The competition thus revealed Arabic debate as a space that transcends institutional boundaries and validates diverse forms of Arabic language acquisition.

The competition was widely perceived as an event of high quality and international significance despite its regional ASEAN framing. P2 (Indonesia) stated, *"the event was fun and memorable, very satisfying, even though I finished in second place, even though it was an ASEAN event, it felt international in character."* This perception of internationality indicates that the competition successfully positioned ASEAN students within a broader global academic imaginary. The Arabic-speaking environment of Jordan amplified this sense, as students experienced themselves not only as regional competitors but as participants in a genuinely transnational intellectual arena. This aligns with recent scholarship suggesting that short-term cross-border academic activities can cultivate global competence and student agency when they are designed as socially meaningful experiences rather than ceremonial contests (de Wit & Altbach, 2021; Hernández-Torrano et al., 2024).

Debate, Critical Thinking, and Learner Agency

The competition also functioned as a practical space for developing learner agency and argumentative confidence. Participants acknowledged the emotional pressure involved in public Arabic performance while simultaneously affirming the supportive social environment that made such pressure productive rather than paralyzing. P3 (Indonesia) reflected, *"nervousness was inevitable, but the audience was mutually supportive and it was exciting because the atmosphere was very sportive."* This observation captures the dialectic between individual anxiety and collective support that characterizes high-stakes competitive learning. The sportive atmosphere created a psychologically safe space in which students could take risks, make mistakes, and grow, conditions identified in the literature as essential for developing learner agency and communicative courage (Inouye et al., 2023; Wang, 2021).

Furthermore, P1 (Indonesia) observed that the competition *"expanded Arabic language knowledge, and the participants turned out to be highly capable."* This moment of encountering peers of unexpected competence is pedagogically significant: it recalibrated students' understanding of their own learning trajectory and introduced them to higher benchmarks of Arabic performance. The Malaysian team came with substantial competitive experience, having previously participated in debates organized under the Qatar Foundation, one of the most prestigious Arabic debate platforms in the world. Encountering such experienced opponents pushed the Indonesian team to perform beyond their comfort zone, exemplifying what Vygotskian learning theory describes as growth through engagement with more capable peers within the zone of proximal development. Rather than being discouraged, participants from Indonesia reported that this exposure heightened their motivation and deepened their appreciation of Arabic debate as a serious intellectual discipline.

Intercultural Competence through ASEAN Student Encounters

The competition generated rich intercultural encounters that extended beyond formal debate rounds into the fabric of shared daily experience. Participants came from four ASEAN countries, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Singapore, each bringing distinct linguistic traditions, educational systems, and cultural orientations toward Arabic learning. The most vivid intercultural moment reported by participants was the final round between Indonesia and Malaysia, which crystallized both the competitive and the collaborative dimensions of ASEAN learner interaction. P4 (Malaysia) recalled, *"in the final, Indonesia competed against Malaysia, it was very exciting and competitive, and you could see the different dialects too, so we ended up learning from each other."* This account illustrates how linguistic difference, specifically dialectal variation in Arabic performance, became a vehicle for mutual learning rather than a source of division.

The contrast between the two finalist teams was not merely stylistic but also structural. The Malaysian team, trained in government-sponsored pesantren specifically designed for Arabic language education and experienced in prestigious international competitions, brought a high degree of formal preparation and competitive sophistication. The Indonesian team, by contrast, represented a more organically diverse formation, combining the intensive communicative approach of Natiq Institute, the cross-cultural adaptability of a member educated in Australia, and the classical grounding of pesantren tradition. This structural contrast made their encounter in the final round particularly instructive: students on both sides were exposed to Arabic debate styles shaped by fundamentally different pedagogical philosophies, and in doing so, gained insight into the breadth of Arabic educational possibility within ASEAN itself.

The Jordanian context added a further layer of intercultural depth. Participants encountered not only the Arabic of their fellow ASEAN competitors but also the colloquial Arabic of the host environment. P5 (Malaysia) articulated this encounter with particular clarity: *"Arabic in Jordan is certainly different from the fusha we studied, but fortunately understanding fusha greatly helped us understand Arabic in Jordan."* This reflection demonstrates sophisticated metalinguistic awareness, specifically the recognition that formal Arabic education provides a cognitive foundation transferable to colloquial registers. This finding supports recent research on Arabic as a foreign language emphasizing that fusha competence functions as a gateway to broader Arabic communicative repertoires (Calafato, 2023; Alshammari et al., 2024). The Jordanian immersion thus transformed participants' relationship with Arabic from a purely academic subject into a living communicative experience embedded in cultural and social context.

These intercultural encounters align with theoretical frameworks emphasizing that intercultural competence develops not through passive exposure but through active engagement with linguistic and cultural difference, combined with reflection on those encounters (Bartel-Radic & Cucchi, 2025; Tarchi & Surian, 2022). The competition created precisely such conditions by placing students in situations that demanded real-time cross-cultural communication, empathetic listening, and adaptive linguistic behavior.

ASEAN Learner Solidarity and Educational Silaturahmi

Perhaps the most significant finding of this study concerns the emergence of ASEAN learner solidarity as a lived social experience. Participants described a form of peer solidarity that exceeded the boundaries of formal competition and extended into the shared challenges of student life in Jordan. P1 (Indonesia) expressed this most directly: *"living in Jordan, we strengthened each other, and beyond this event, we also shared insights for navigating life in Jordan."* This statement reveals that the competition functioned as a catalyst for a broader solidarity network among ASEAN students resident in Jordan. The shared experience of being foreign students in an Arabic-speaking country, navigating daily life, managing cultural adjustment, and sustaining Arabic learning motivation far from home, created affective bonds that the competition then activated and deepened.

This solidarity was further materialized through post-competition social interaction. P4 (Malaysia) noted that *"after the event, Indonesia and Malaysia took photos together and the atmosphere became increasingly warm."* This apparently simple act of post-competition photography carries significant sociological meaning: it represents a ritual of solidarity in which former competitors consciously reframe their relationship as one of friendship and mutual respect. The post-competition exchange between Indonesian and Malaysian participants, including the sharing of

insights about competitive Arabic debate, educational backgrounds, and experiences of studying in Jordan, exemplifies what this study terms educational silaturahmi: the active cultivation of relational bonds through shared intellectual and affective experience.

The diversity of national origins among participants, covering Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Singapore, further strengthened the regional character of this solidarity. Although interview data was primarily drawn from Indonesian and Malaysian participants, observational data confirmed that participants from Thailand and Singapore were equally integrated into the warm social atmosphere of the event. The competition thus produced a micro-community of ASEAN Arabic learners whose bonds were forged through shared struggle, shared language, and shared aspiration. Such rituals of connection are recognized in the literature on international student belonging as important markers of social integration and regional community formation (Thies & Falk, 2023; Li et al., 2025b).

The concept of silaturahmi, maintaining and strengthening relational bonds, emerged organically from participants' accounts as the social logic underlying these interactions. In the ASEAN Islamic educational context, silaturahmi carries both cultural and spiritual significance, implying not merely social networking but a deeper ethical commitment to human connection. By reframing silaturahmi as an educational construct, this study argues that ASEAN learner solidarity is not an incidental byproduct of academic competition but a meaningful educational outcome in its own right (Tran & Bui, 2025).

Arabic Debate as a Transnational Educational Arena

Taken together, the findings confirm that the Arabic Debate Competition in Jordan operates as a transnational educational arena in three interconnected senses. First, it is pedagogical: it develops students' Arabic communicative confidence, argumentative ability, critical thinking, and learner agency, drawing on diverse educational traditions ranging from intensive language courses and pesantren to internationally educated learners. Second, it is intercultural: it brings ASEAN students from Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Singapore into meaningful contact with linguistic and cultural difference, both among themselves and in relation to the Jordanian Arabic-speaking environment. Third, it is social: it produces solidarity, friendship, and relational capital that extend beyond the competition itself into the fabric of shared student life in Jordan.

Theoretically, this tripartite framing extends debate pedagogy beyond its conventional cognitive focus by integrating intercultural formation and regional solidarity as equally legitimate educational outcomes. The present study adds to the growing body of research suggesting that debate, when situated in a transnational context, becomes a form of educational mobility and social learning that shapes identity, intercultural awareness, and regional belonging (Guo et al., 2024; O'Dowd, 2021). For Arabic language education specifically, the competition offers a compelling model in which fusha competence functions not as an end in itself but as a bridge to authentic communicative practice, cultural understanding, and transnational connection. The diversity of educational backgrounds among participants, from government-sponsored Arabic pesantren in Malaysia with Qatar Foundation debate experience to the eclectic formation of the Indonesian team, further demonstrates that Arabic debate competitions can serve as democratizing spaces where multiple pathways to Arabic excellence are recognized and celebrated.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Arabic Debate Competition in Jordan functions not merely as a language contest, but as a transnational educational arena that enhances student potential, intercultural competence, and ASEAN learner solidarity. Through Arabic debate, students are positioned as active learners who develop communicative confidence, critical thinking, argumentative ability, public speaking skills, emotional resilience, and learner agency. The theoretical novelty of this study lies in its explicit integration of three domains that are often discussed separately: debate pedagogy, intercultural competence, and regional learner solidarity. By conceptualizing Arabic debate as a transnational educational practice, this study extends previous discussions on language competition beyond linguistic performance and reframes it as a social-pedagogical space where students negotiate meaning, encounter cultural difference, and form educational relationships across national boundaries.

Contextually, this study contributes to the discourse on Arabic language education, ASEAN student mobility, and international educational engagement by showing that short-term academic competitions can become meaningful sites of regional connection and intercultural formation. Practically, the findings imply that Arabic language institutions, debate trainers, universities, and competition organizers should design debate programs not only to reward linguistic accuracy and competitive achievement, but also to cultivate critical agency, intercultural dialogue, peer collaboration, and long-term learner networks. However, this study is limited by its qualitative case-based design and its focus on one competition context; therefore, future studies may examine larger participant groups, compare similar Arabic debate competitions in different countries, or investigate the long-term impact of debate participation on Arabic proficiency, intercultural competence, and ASEAN educational networking. Ultimately, the future of Arabic debate should not be imagined only as a pursuit of trophies, but as a living educational movement where language becomes a bridge for intellectual growth, cultural understanding, and regional solidarity among young learners.

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