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Arabic Linguistic Creativity in Informal Communication: An Analysis of Non-Standard Expressions and Pragmatic Functions

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Abstract

Arabic language use in university contexts is often dominated by Standard Arabic (fusha) and emphasizes grammatical accuracy. However, in everyday informal interactions, students frequently employ more flexible, creative, and socially driven forms of expression that diverge from formal norms. This phenomenon reflects the dynamic nature of language as a socio-pragmatic resource shaped by interactional needs and community practices. This study aims to: (1) identify the types of non-standard expressions used in students' everyday conversations; (2) explain the interactional contexts in which these expressions occur; and (3) analyze the pragmatic functions of non-standard expressions in students' social relationships, including their roles in building solidarity, conveying emotions, strengthening interpersonal bonds, and sustaining group identity. Using a qualitative descriptive design, data were collected through participant observation and in-depth interviews with purposively selected students who actively engage in informal interaction. Data were analyzed with Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's interactive model (data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification). Trustworthiness was strengthened through source triangulation and member checking. The findings reveal 21 non-standard expressions that are recurrent and mutually intelligible within the student community. These expressions fall into six categories—lexical innovation, expressions uncommon in formal norms, shortening/ellipsis, repetition, cross-linguistic adaptation, and creative forms—and cluster across eight recurring interactional contexts. Pragmatically, they function to build solidarity, express emotions and bodily states, maintain relational harmony (facework), and sustain group identity. Overall, non-standard Arabic use should be viewed as an adaptive socio-pragmatic practice that strengthens pragmatic competence in Arabic language education.

A. Introduction

Language is a fundamental social resource in human life because it serves as the primary medium for communication (Tareche, 2020), the exchange of information, and the formation of interpersonal relationships (Klokova et al., 2023; Tribur, 2017). However, the function of language extends beyond the denotative transmission of messages; it also operates as a means through which speakers negotiate meaning, express emotions, display stance, and index social identity (Baider & Cislaru, 2014; Yang & Yang, 2025). In many situations, the choice of linguistic form—whether formal or informal, standard or non-standard—is shaped not only by linguistic structure but also by social context, communicative goals, speaker–interlocutor relations, and the norms that circulate within a given community (Deckker & Sumanasekara, 2025; Imeretinskaya, 2023). Accordingly, language can be understood as a reflection of its users' sociocultural dynamics: it is fluid, adaptive, and continually innovated in response to communicative demands across diverse social settings.

Within academic environments, particularly in higher education, students frequently navigate situations that require both proficiency in formal language and flexibility in everyday interaction (Balqissyah et al., 2024; Mammadova, 2025). This is evident among students of the Arabic Language Education Program (PBA) at Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Aji Muhammad Idris Samarinda (UINSI Samarinda). As learners who study Arabic systematically, they engage with what may be termed "institutional Arabic"—a variety that is taught, standardized, and practiced in the classroom through naḥw–ṣarf rules, the formal register (fushā), and structured linguistic norms. In academic settings, Arabic use is typically oriented toward structural accuracy, semantic precision, and conformity to prescribed rules, for example, in classroom discussions, presentations, skill-based (mahārah) exercises, and other forms of academic communication.

However, beyond the classroom, PBA students lead fluid social lives: joking with peers, exchanging greetings around campus, joining student organizations, or having casual conversations before and after lectures. It is within this domain that Arabic is often used in a different mode—more spontaneous, economical, expressive, and frequently more creative. This shift from a formal to an informal register is not merely a matter of "errors" or "lack of knowledge" of rules; rather, it constitutes a normal linguistic practice within speech communities, including communities of second/foreign language users (Roever, 2023). In informal settings, communicative goals commonly shift away from grammatical precision toward the successful management of interpersonal relationships—building closeness, conveying emotions, maintaining harmony, signaling solidarity, or producing humor (N. Bell, 2018; Tsakona & Chovanec, 2018). In other words, language functions both as a tool for managing social relationships and as a vehicle for self-expression.

A salient phenomenon in the informal language practices of PBA students at UINSI Samarinda is the emergence of non-standard expressions. In this study, non-standard expressions refer to utterances that depart from the Arabic norms typically taught in academic contexts (e.g., Standard Arabic/fushā), whether at the lexical, structural, or formulaic level (Abdelbary et al., 2023; Harrat et al., 2019). Such expressions may take the form of lexical innovation, the use of formulae uncommon in formal norms, shortening/ellipsis, repetition, cross-linguistic

adaptation, or other creative forms arising from speakers' pragmatic needs. Notably, although these forms are "non-standard," they often remain communicatively effective, readily interpretable within the group, and socially functional precisely because their meanings are sustained through shared conventions among community members.

For example, one expression used by PBA students at UINSI Samarinda is " قلب قلب في الطريق," which means "be careful on the road." From a normative perspective, this expression may be viewed as non-standard because its lexical choices and construction do not align with the conventional formal formulae used to convey caution. However, this is precisely what makes the phenomenon analytically significant: students appear to engage in linguistic creativity by selecting the word "قلب" (heart) and repeating it ("قلب قلب"), which echoes the reduplication pattern in Indonesian "hati-hati." The form thus reflects a process of localized adaptation and social meaning-making—how students actively "construct" an Arabic variety that functions within their own community. The intended message (a cautionary reminder) remains successfully conveyed, and interlocutors can interpret it with minimal difficulty because shared social context and group practices support mutual understanding.

Such practices indicate that linguistic creativity is not a peripheral phenomenon but rather part of the normal mechanisms through which language fulfills its social functions. Within student communities, non-standard expressions often serve as in-group markers (Rudyakov, 2023; Березович, 2020), a means of strengthening solidarity, and a strategy for creating interaction that feels more fluid, relaxed, and warm. By employing expressions that are recognized as "shared" and experienced as "natural" within their peer group, students construct a distinctive linguistic identity—an "Arabic of their community" that coexists alongside the Standard Arabic they learn in formal instruction. Consequently, this non-standard variety cannot be interpreted solely through a grammatical right–wrong lens; instead, it should be approached as a social practice that carries pragmatic functions and reflects particular language ideologies.

In sociolinguistics and pragmatics, variation in informal language use has long been a central concern (Cruz, 2024). Language in everyday practice frequently involves style shifting, register adjustment, and the deployment of pragmatic strategies shaped by speaker–interlocutor relationships (Zahnitko, 2022). Research on linguistic creativity further emphasizes that speakers routinely engage in language play (N. Bell, 2012; Horholiuk, 2023), generate novel forms, and draw on cross-linguistic resources to meet specific communicative needs. Classic scholarship likewise underscores that language is always produced in social contexts and is therefore inseparable from interactional goals. In this regard, Crystal's work on linguistic creativity, particularly in contemporary communicative settings (Crystal, 2003), and Duranti's discussion of language as social practice provide a conceptual basis for treating creativity and social context as inseparable elements in understanding everyday language use (Duranti, 2009).

However, despite this substantial body of work, existing studies have predominantly focused on well-established linguistic communities or native-speaker contexts, with relatively limited attention to how linguistic creativity emerges among second-language learners in naturally occurring informal interactions. In

particular, research on Arabic language use in educational settings tends to prioritize formal competence, grammatical accuracy, and classroom-based performance, while underexplored are informal, socially embedded language practices. This gap is especially evident among Arabic Language Education students in Indonesia, where Arabic is both a learned system and a socially negotiated communicative resource. Accordingly, this study seeks to address this gap by examining how non-standard expressions are produced, contextualized, and function pragmatically in students' informal interactions, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of Arabic as a lived and socially embedded language.

Nevertheless, studies that foreground Arabic linguistic creativity and non-standard expressions—especially among PBA student speakers in Indonesia—remain relatively limited, particularly in naturally occurring informal campus communication. Much Arabic-related research continues to focus on formal domains, including classroom learning, grammatical competence, language skills, and error analysis (Hidayat, Irwansyah, et al., 2024; Hidayat, Nukman, et al., 2024). However, if Arabic is positioned as a "living" language within learner/speaker communities, the non-standard forms that emerge in informal interaction offer valuable insights into how the language is internalized, negotiated, and socially construed by its users. This gap creates an opportunity for the present study to contribute not only by mapping deviations from formal norms, but also by accounting for the socio-pragmatic motivations underlying these forms and by clarifying their communicative functions in students' everyday lives.

Within the PBA student community at UINSI Samarinda, Arabic use spans a broad continuum—from standard forms in academic contexts to flexible, creative use in informal communication. Many students, despite receiving formal Arabic instruction, still prefer shorter, more readily intelligible, and better-aligned expressions when interacting with peers. This informal variety is not merely a "stylistic choice"; it is often embedded in everyday practices of togetherness—for example, to lighten the atmosphere, express familiarity, index relational closeness, or negotiate social positioning within the group. In this sense, non-standard expressions can be viewed as pragmatic resources that enable speakers to accomplish interactional goals effectively.

Preliminary observations indicate that non-standard expressions among PBA students function as a form of linguistically creative practice oriented toward social needs. Such expressions are used to convey messages more expressively, foster an egalitarian conversational atmosphere, and follow patterns perceived as "fitting" and culturally resonant within students' communicative norms. Accordingly, non-standard forms do not necessarily signal low linguistic competence; rather, they may reflect adaptive competence—the ability to calibrate language use to context, audience, and interactional purpose. From this standpoint, investigating non-standard expressions becomes important because it helps elucidate how students, as a community of practice, construct distinctive language routines and how Arabic is effectively "localized" within the social realities of campus life in Samarinda.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on Arabic linguistic creativity in PBA students' informal communication as a socio-pragmatic phenomenon worthy of close analysis. Unlike prior work that tends to foreground Arabic primarily in formal

and normative domains, this study centers on students' naturally occurring informal interactions—contexts in which language is mobilized for relational goals, expressive functions, and the indexing of group identity. By integrating sociolinguistic and pragmatic perspectives, the study not only documents the forms of non-standard expressions but also interprets their functions in students' social interaction: how particular expressions are used to signal closeness, generate humor, intensify meanings, mitigate (soften) utterances, or even construct boundaries between "us" and "them" within the community.

Overall, this study aims to provide a clearer account of linguistic creativity in the informal Arabic communication of PBA students at UINSI Samarinda. Specifically, it seeks to: (1) identify the types of non-standard expressions used in students' everyday conversations; (2) explain the interactional contexts in which these expressions occur; and (3) analyze the pragmatic functions of non-standard expressions in students' social relationships, including their roles in building solidarity, conveying emotions, strengthening interpersonal bonds, and sustaining group identity. Accordingly, the study is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of Arabic sociolinguistic and pragmatic scholarship in the context of Indonesian student speakers, while also offering practical implications for Arabic language education—particularly by highlighting that students' language practices are not confined to the classroom, but are enacted, negotiated, and continually developed through everyday social interaction.

B. Method

This study adopts a qualitative, descriptive research design (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). A qualitative approach was selected because the study seeks to explore meanings, understandings, and social phenomena associated with the use of non-standard expressions in the informal communication of PBA students at UINSI Samarinda. This approach also enables an in-depth examination of linguistic creativity within students' social contexts, without being constrained by numerical measures or statistical procedures, and instead focuses on how language is used in everyday life. As a qualitative descriptive study, it aims to provide a detailed account of non-standard expression use in students' informal interactions.

Data were collected through participant observation and in-depth interviews (W. Creswell, 2002). In participant observation, the researcher conducted direct observations of PBA students in informal communicative situations—outside the classroom, around campus, and in their everyday activities. The observations focused on students' use of non-standard expressions in peer conversations, both in small-group settings and in broader interactions. In-depth interviews were conducted with selected PBA students who served as key informants. The interviews were designed to obtain richer insights into students' understandings of non-standard expression use and the pragmatic functions these expressions serve in their social interactions. Participants were selected via purposive sampling based on the criterion that they frequently engage in informal communication on campus.

Data were analyzed using Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's interactive model of qualitative analysis, implemented iteratively from data collection through conclusion drawing. The model consists of three interrelated components: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles et al., 2020).

Trustworthiness was ensured through the following procedures (Rahardjo, 2023; Raharjo, 2020): (1) source triangulation, combining observation and in-depth interview data to produce a more accurate and comprehensive account of the phenomenon; and (2) member checking, whereby participants reviewed interview transcripts and preliminary interpretations to confirm that the captured information accurately reflected their intended meanings. These steps helped align the researcher's interpretations with participants' perspectives.

The study site was UINSI Samarinda, a university that hosts the Arabic Language Education Program (PBA). The study focused on actively enrolled PBA students because they constitute the group most frequently using Arabic in both academic and informal settings. The research population comprised approximately 280 active PBA students. The sample was purposively selected, comprising around 15–20 students who were active in extracurricular activities and tended to use Arabic in informal communication. Selection was guided by the criterion that participants regularly engaged in conversations involving non-standard expressions, both on campus and beyond.

C. Findings and Discussion

Drawing on participant observation of PBA students' informal interactions at UINSI Samarinda and in-depth interviews with selected informants, this study identified 21 instances of non-standard expressions in students' everyday Arabic use. These expressions emerged in casual campus-based conversations, including greetings, leave-taking, information-seeking, coordination of shared activities, the expression of physical conditions, and spontaneous responses to social situations. Although the forms diverge from the standard variety commonly taught in the classroom, they are consistently understood and recurrently used within the student community. To provide a systematic overview of these findings, the following table presents the 21 non-standard expressions alongside their more appropriate Standard Arabic (fushā) equivalents, as summarized below.

Table 1. The Comparison of Non-Standard Arabic Expressions Used by Students with the Standard Arabic (Fusha) Forms

No	Meaning	Non-Standard Expression (Student Use)	Appropriate Standard Arabic (fushā) Form
1	Hati-hati di jalan / Be careful on the road	قَلْبٌ قَلْبٌ فِي الطَّرِيقِ	اِنْتَبِهْ فِي الطَّرِيقِ / تَنَبَّهْ فِي الطَّرِيقِ
2	Dandan (berhias) / Get dressed up / Put on makeup	وَوَ	التَّزَيُّنُ / التَّجَمُّلُ
3	Maaf sekali / I'm very sorry	عَفْوًا جِدًّا	آسِفٌ
4	Saya duluan / I'll go first	أَنَا أَوَّلًا	أَذْهَبُ أَوَّلًا
5	Kamu sehat? / Are you healthy? / Are you okay?	أَنْتَ صِحَّةٌ ؟	هَلْ أَنْتَ بِصِحَّةٍ جَيِّدَةٍ ؟ / هَلْ أَنْتَ بِخَيْرٍ ؟

6	Apa ada ustadz? / Is there an ustadz (Islamic teacher)?	هَلْ مَوْجُود أُسْتَاذ ؟	هَلِ الأُسْتَاذُ مَوْجُودٌ ؟ / هَلْ هُنَاكَ أُسْتَاذٌ ؟
7	Saya pusing / I feel dizzy	أَنَا صُدَاعٌ	أَشْعُرُ بِصُدَاعٍ
8	Saya capek / I'm tired	أَنَا تَعْبٌ	أَنَا تَعْبَان / تَعِبْتُ
9	Di mana? / Where?	فِي أَيْنَ ؟	أَيْنَ؟
10	Badanku tidak enak / I don't feel well	جِسْمِي غَيرُ لَذِيذ	أَشْعُرُ بِتَوَعُّكٍ / أَشْعُرُ بِأَلَمٍ فِي جِسْمِي
11	Badanku tidak enak / I don't feel well	بَدَنِي لَا لَذِيذ	أَشْعُرُ بِتَوَعُّكٍ / أَشْعُرُ بِأَلَمٍ فِي بَدَنِي
12	Kamu ini (nuansa heran atau gemas) / You… (tone of surprise or affection)	أَنْتُم هَذَا	أنتَ حقًّا / أنتَ فعلًا
13	Keramas / Wash hair / Shampoo	قِرْدٌ ذَهَب	غَسْلُ الشَّعْرِ بِالشَّامْبُو
14	Sama-sama / You're welcome	سَوَى سَوَى	عَفْوًا / عَلَى الرَّحْبِ وَالسَّعَةِ / حُبًّا وَكَرَامَةً
15	Tidak apa-apa (gapapa) / It's okay	لَا مَاذَا مَاذَا	لَا بَأْسَ
16	Tidak mengapa / It doesn't matter	لَا لِمَاذَا	لَا بَأْسَ
17	Ayo cepat! / Come on, hurry up!	يَلَّا سَرِيع !	هَيَّا، أَسْرِعْ!
18	Sakit perut / Stomach ache	مَرِيضٌ بَطْنٌ	أَشْعُرُ بِأَلَمٍ فِي بَطْنِي
19	Pelan-pelan saja / Take it easy / Slowly	مَهَلًا مَهْلًا فَقَطْ	تَمَهَّلْ فَقَطْ / تَمَهَّلْ قَلِيلًا
20	Jangan sedih-sedih / Don't be sad	لَا تَحْزَنْ تَحْزَنْ	لَا تَحْزَنْ كَثِيرًا / لَا تُبَالِغْ فِي الْحُزْنِ
21	Jangan senang-senang / Don't get too happy	لَا تَفْرَحْ تَفْرَحْ	لَا تَفْرَحْ كَثِيرًا / لَا تُبَالِغْ فِي الْفَرَحِ

Types of Non-Standard Expressions Used by PBA Students

The identification results indicate that the non-standard expressions used by PBA students at UINSI Samarinda in everyday conversation can be classified into six types: lexical innovation, the use of expressions uncommon in formal norms, shortening/ellipsis, repetition, cross-linguistic adaptation, and creative forms. This

classification is based on observable linguistic features in the utterances and on comparisons with Standard Arabic (fushā) forms.

1. **Lexical Innovation**

Lexical innovation refers to the emergence of lexical forms that are uncommon in Standard Arabic (fushā) but are employed by students as meaningful terms within their community. In the present data, lexical innovation appears in highly abbreviated forms or as in-group codes whose meanings are established through habitual use rather than formal rules. Two items fall into this category: وَوَ, used to mean "to dress up/adorn oneself," and قِرْدٌ ذَهَب, used to refer to "washing one's hair (shampooing)." These forms suggest that students do not simply replace Indonesian words with standard Arabic equivalents; instead, they construct a community-specific lexicon that serves practical purposes in informal interaction. The meanings of these expressions are sustained primarily by repeated use and shared social agreement among students, allowing them to function effectively in communication despite deviating from the standard forms taught in the classroom.

2. **Expressions Uncommon in Formal Norms**

This category includes expressions whose lexical choices, collocations, or formulaic patterns do not align with conventional Standard Arabic (fushā), yet are still used because students consider them adequate for conveying intended meanings in informal interaction. Such nonconventionality typically appears in less idiomatic word choice or in the use of particles associated more closely with colloquial speech. In the present findings, students employed phrases whose lexical selection and idiomaticity diverge from fushā while remaining functional in casual talk. For example, عَفْوًا جِدًّا is used to mean "I am very sorry," and is pragmatically interpreted as an apology; however, in fushā, apologies are more commonly expressed with forms such as آسِفٌ or other conventional apology formulae. Nonconventionality is also evident in the physical-complaint expressions جِسْمِي غَيرُ لَذِيذ and بَدَنِي لَا لَذِيذ ("my body does not feel well"), where the adjective لَذِيذ is typically associated with "delicious/tasty" in the domain of food, making the collocation less appropriate for describing bodily states in Standard Arabic. In addition, the directive يَلَّا سَرِيع! ("Come on, quickly!"), While communicatively effective and frequent in conversational usage, it does not reflect the fushā formulae commonly taught in formal instruction. Taken together, these four items suggest that students prioritize interactional fluency and mutual intelligibility among peers, selecting socially effective expressions even when they do not fully conform to formal norms.

3. **Shortening/Ellipsis**

Shortening (ellipsis) refers to a strategy of making utterances more concise by omitting elements that would typically appear in a fully elaborated structure. Speakers rely on the conversational context to ensure that the intended meaning remains transparent. This type commonly occurs in exchanges that require rapid responses, such as managing action sequences or asking about someone's availability. In this study, shortening is reflected in students' tendency to simplify utterance structure for brevity and ease of production. The expression أَنَا أَوَّلًا ("I will go first") conveys precedence by presenting only the subject and an order marker, without explicitly stating the action verb that would ordinarily appear in a standard formulation; the intended action is inferred from the immediate context. A similar

pattern appears in the question هَلْ مَوْجُود أُسْتَاذ ؟ (“Is the teacher/ustadz here?”), where students use a succinct form that directly targets the core information, although fushā typically employs a fuller, more conventional structure. These two examples indicate that, in informal communication, students favor efficiency and smooth interaction, and that elliptical forms are considered sufficient as long as interlocutors can recover the meaning from context.

4. **Repetition**

Repetition involves the immediate duplication of linguistic material (typically a word) to create emphasis, convey familiarity, or express a particular stance. In the dataset, repetition is both dominant and consistent, especially in expressions that also rely on repetition in Indonesian. The findings show that students use repetition to produce utterances that feel more expressive and natural in informal interaction. Repetition appears in expressions such as قَلْبٌ قَلْبٌ فِي الطَّرِيقِ (“be careful on the road”), سَوَى سَوَى (“you are welcome/same to you”), and لَا مَاذَا مَاذَا (“it is okay/no problem”). The same pattern is also used to regulate pace and emotion, as in مَهَلًا مَهْلًا فَقَطْ (“just take it slowly”), لَا تَحْزَنْ تَحْزَنْ (“do not be sad”), and لَا تَفْرَحْ تَفْرَحْ (“do not be overly happy”). Structurally, repetition strengthens the intended message, makes the utterance sound more intimate, and helps speakers convey affective nuance in a way that is easily accessible to peers. The prevalence of repetition suggests that students prefer forms that are rapid, intelligible, and aligned with group interactional norms, even when these forms diverge from the fushā conventions emphasized in the classroom.

5. **Cross-Linguistic Adaptation**

Cross-linguistic adaptation refers to the direct transfer of Indonesian patterns into Arabic, including word order, pragmatic logic, and interrogative constructions. Such adaptations often yield forms that deviate from fushā structure, yet remain functional because the community shares the intended interpretation. In the present study, this process is evident when students map Indonesian expressions onto Arabic with minimal restructuring. For instance, أَنْتَ صِحَّةٌ ؟ is used to mean “Are you well/healthy?”, reflecting an Indonesian-like nominal pattern (“you + healthy”) rather than a conventional fushā question such as هَلْ أَنْتَ بِخَيْرٍ؟. A similar transfer appears in the location question فِي أَيْنَ ؟ (“where?”), where the preposition فِي mirrors the Indonesian locative marker “di,” even though Standard Arabic typically uses أَيْنَ؟ alone. Likewise, لَا لِمَاذَا is used to express “it is okay/no problem,” mapping the Indonesian meaning “tidak mengapa” (“it does not matter”) onto a form associated with the interrogative “why” (لِمَاذَا). Although formally unconventional, it functions pragmatically as a soothing response in casual talk. Overall, these three examples indicate that students prioritize communicative fluency and peer intelligibility, frequently using their first-language patterns as a template for producing non-standard Arabic forms.

6. **Creative Forms**

Creative forms encompass expressions that cannot be adequately accounted for solely as shortening, repetition, or literal transfer. In this dataset, creativity is manifested through the use of condition labels as predicates, the compression of complaint constructions, and the production of non-standard yet effective structures in informal contexts. The findings show that students produce

utterances that do not follow common fushā patterns but convey intended meanings in everyday interaction. For example, أَنَا صُدَاعٌ (“I have a headache/I am dizzy”) and أَنَا تَعْبٌ (“I am tired”) place a noun or condition label directly after the subject as a predicate, producing highly concise, rapidly deployable statements. A similar compression appears in مَرِيضٌ بَطْنٌ (“stomachache”), which condenses a physical complaint into a nominal phrase without the fuller construction typically expected in fushā. Beyond bodily complaints, creativity also emerges in the social-reaction expression أَنْتُم هَذَا (“you, really!”) used with a nuance of surprise or affectionate exasperation; despite structural inaccuracy, it functions as a marker of the speaker’s stance toward an interlocutor’s behavior in playful or gently admonishing exchanges. Collectively, these four items indicate that students exploit concise and flexible forms to meet everyday communicative demands, often prioritizing interactional effectiveness over strict adherence to formal grammatical norms.

Interactional Contexts in Which Non-Standard Expressions Emerge among PBA Students

This subsection outlines the situational contexts that give rise to non-standard expressions in the everyday conversations of PBA students at UINSI Samarinda. The analysis focuses on when and under what interactional circumstances these expressions are used, demonstrating that their use is not random but corresponds to recurring communicative needs in students’ social lives. Based on contextual tracing through participant observation and corroboration from interview data, the 21 non-standard expressions identified in this study cluster into the following eight major interactional contexts.

1. Leave-taking and safety concerns occur when students end a conversation and part ways—for example, when a friend is going home, heading out, or moving to another location—prompting the speaker to convey care in a quick, friendly manner. In this context, the non-standard expression قَلْبٌ قَلْبٌ فِي الطَّرِيقِ functions as an informal equivalent of “be careful on the road,” indexing concern and maintaining relational closeness, as the cautionary message is delivered in a relaxed, peer style rather than a formal register.
2. Greetings and well-being checks arise when students meet on campus and initiate interaction by asking about one another’s condition, particularly health, as a light and affiliative form of social care. Here, the non-standard expression أَنْتَ صِحَّةٌ ؟ is used to convey “Are you okay/healthy?”, typically when the speaker notices a friend looks tired, has just finished an activity, or wants to confirm their well-being before shifting to another topic. Although it does not follow a conventional fushā formula, the expression remains effective as an interactional opener because it signals concern, eases the conversational atmosphere, and strengthens interpersonal rapport.
3. Locating people/places and information seeking occur when students need quick confirmation to coordinate activities—for instance, checking whether an ustadz/lecturer is available or determining a friend’s location or a place on campus. In such situations, students use هَلْ مَوْجُود أُسْتَاذ ؟ when planning to meet an ustadz for academic purposes or consultation, and فِي أَيْنَ ؟ when asking directly and practically “Where?” in brief exchanges. These expressions typically appear in situations that demand rapid responses, such as before class begins,

when arranging a meeting, or when searching for someone on campus. Consequently, speakers opt for forms that are concise, easy to produce, and quickly interpretable, even if they do not fully align with standard fushā structures.

4. Turn/sequence management emerges when students need to negotiate who acts first in a shared activity—for example, entering a room, heading to a location, retrieving something, or initiating an activity before others. In these situations, the non-standard expression أَنَا أَوَّلًا is used to mean "I will go first," expressed succinctly without elaborating the action because interlocutors can typically infer the intended meaning from the immediate context. This concise form enables the speaker to communicate precedence efficiently, avoid lengthy explanations, and maintain a smooth, informal flow of interaction among peers.
5. Physical complaints and health-related talk occur when students report bodily discomfort in casual conversation—either to inform friends, justify reducing participation in activities, or elicit attention and empathic responses. In this context, students express specific complaints such as dizziness/headache using أَنَا صُدَاعٌ, fatigue using أَنَا تَعْبٌ, and a general sense of "not feeling well" through two variants, بَدَنِي لَا لَذِيذ and جِسْمِي غَيرُ لَذِيذ; stomach pain is expressed with مَرِيضٌ بَطْنٌ. These expressions typically arise after tiring activities, when friends notice changes in the speaker's condition, or when the speaker explains why they cannot participate in a particular activity. Thus, non-standard forms serve as quick, accessible ways to express physical states in informal interaction.
6. Coordination of pace and collective action arises when students manage the rhythm of group activities, accelerating or slowing movement as situational demands require. To speed things up, students commonly use يَلَّا سَرِيع! When they are pressed for time—for instance, when heading to class, trying to meet a schedule, or moving to another location—the utterance functions as a direct prompt for immediate action. Conversely, when calm is needed, or the speaker seeks to reduce urgency, مَهَلًا مَهْلًا فَقَطْ is used to ask others not to rush, lower intensity, and stabilize the situation. Together, these expressions show that non-standard forms function as practical coordination tools in everyday interaction, directing action efficiently while maintaining an affiliative peer tone.
7. Relational maintenance (facework) occurs when students seek to preserve interpersonal comfort, enact politeness, and defuse potential tension in daily interaction. In this context, عَفْوًا جِدًّا is used to apologize for minor issues such as being late, inconveniencing someone, or misunderstandings, functioning as a strategy to protect both the speaker's and the interlocutor's "face." Social responsiveness that sustains rapport also appears in سَوَى سَوَى, used as an informal "you are welcome" in response to thanks. Additionally, when minor mistakes occur or someone feels uneasy, students often use لَا مَاذَا مَاذَا and لَا لِمَاذَا to mean "it is okay/no problem," soothing the situation, closing small issues, and maintaining harmony without extended discussion.
8. Humor, teasing, and emotion management emerge when peer interaction is highly intimate, and language is used to create a relaxed atmosphere, signal closeness, and regulate emotional responses. In humorous exchanges, students employ non-standard terms such as وَوَ when discussing appearance or

preparations for "dressing up," and قِرْدٌ ذَهَب when referring to everyday self-care activities such as "washing one's hair," functioning as playful in-group codes. Teasing or affectionate reactions marked by surprise or exasperation are also evident in أَنْتُم هَذَا, typically used when a friend does something perceived as "odd" or "cute," serving as a mild admonition that avoids conflict. In terms of emotion management, students use لَا تَحْزَنْ تَحْزَنْ to comfort and reassure a sad friend, and لَا تَفْرَحْ تَفْرَحْ to restrain expressions of excessive joy, either as a serious reminder or as playful commentary that still preserves a warm interactional tone.

Pragmatic Functions of Non-Standard Expressions in PBA Students' Social Relationships

The pragmatic analysis in this section treats the 21 non-standard expressions as interactional tools. Accordingly, the focus is not on whether the forms are correct or incorrect according to fushā norms, but on what these utterances do in conversation. The data indicate that the most salient pragmatic functions fall into four domains: building solidarity, expressing emotions and self-states, strengthening bonds through facework, and sustaining group identity.

First, non-standard expressions are used to build solidarity and rapport in everyday talk. Solidarity is particularly evident in utterances that function as light affiliative moves and routine social responses. The expression قَلْبٌ قَلْبٌ فِي الطَّرِيقِ serves as a warm closing in leave-taking, signaling care when interlocutors part ways. The question أَنْتَ صِحَّةٌ ؟ operates as a caring greeting that opens interaction and activates relational closeness. Likewise, the response سَوَى سَوَى reinforces a sense of togetherness through a reciprocal reply that maintains the rhythm of everyday politeness among peers.

Second, non-standard expressions function to convey emotions and personal states, particularly bodily experiences and affective stances. Complaints such as أَنَا صُدَاعٌ, أَنَا تَعْبٌ, جِسْمِي غَيرُ لَذِيذ, بَدَنِي لَا لَذِيذ, and مَرِيضٌ بَطْنٌ do more than report physical conditions; they also invite empathic responses from interlocutors. On the interpersonal-emotional side, لَا تَحْزَنْ تَحْزَنْ provides emotional support to soothe a friend. In contrast, لَا تَفْرَحْ تَفْرَحْ regulates expressions of excessive joy, functioning either as a light reminder or as playful commentary.

Third, the data show a strong facework function in maintaining relational harmony and reinforcing interpersonal bonds. The expression عَفْوًا جِدًّا functions as an apology strategy that restores interactional neutrality after minor transgressions. The soothing responses لَا مَاذَا مَاذَا and لَا لِمَاذَا mitigate guilt and close off the potential escalation of small conflicts. In the domain of interaction management, أَنَا أَوَّلًا supports turn/sequence organization and helps prevent misunderstandings about who should act first, thereby sustaining smooth cooperation within the group.

Fourth, several expressions operate as markers of group identity and enact a shared "in-group Arabic" within the PBA community. This identity work is most apparent in terms that function as internal codes, such as وَوَ ("dressing up") and قِرْدٌ ذَهَب ("washing one's hair"), as well as the social-reaction expression أَنْتُم هَذَا, which is commonly used for affiliative teasing. In addition, repetitive patterns in several utterances contribute to a recognizable community style, creating a sense of alignment with students' shared communicative culture.

Beyond these four domains, the data also reveal pragmatic functions that facilitate activity flow, namely coordination and pace regulation. The questions هَلْ مَوْجُود أُسْتَاذ ؟ and فِي أَيْنَ ؟ enable rapid information seeking for coordination purposes. The directive يَلَّا سَرِيع! prompts immediate action, whereas مَهَلًا مَهْلًا فَقَطْ slows the pace to keep situations manageable. Together, these expressions synchronize group action efficiently without requiring extended explanation.

The interactional contexts and pragmatic functions of the non-standard expressions are summarized in the following table:

Table 2. Comparison of Non-Standard Arabic Expressions Used by Students: Interactional Context, Pragmatic Functions, and Social Roles

No	Non-Standard Expression (Student Use)	Interactional Context	Primary Pragmatic Function	Observable Social Role
1	قَلْبٌ قَلْبٌ فِي الطَّرِيقِ	Leave-taking and safety concern	Leave-taking care / safety-oriented concern	Solidarity and relational closeness
2	وَوَ	Humor/teasing and emotion management	In-group code for appearance-related talk	Group identity and humor
3	عَفْوًا جِدًّا	Turn/sequence management	Apology (repair initiation)	Facework and relational repair
4	أَنَا أَوَّلًا	Turn/sequence management	Turn/sequence management (claiming precedence)	Smooth collaboration / coordination
5	أَنْتَ صِحَّةٌ ؟	Greetings and well-being checks	Well-being check as greeting	Solidarity and conversation initiation
6	هَلْ مَوْجُود أُسْتَاذ ؟	Locating people/places and information seeking	Availability check (seeking someone's presence)	Social coordination and efficiency
7	أَنَا صُدَاعٌ	Physical complaints and health-related talk	Physical complaint (expressing discomfort)	Self-expression and eliciting empathy
8	أَنَا تَعْبٌ	Physical complaints and health-related talk	Fatigue complaint (expressing tiredness)	Self-expression and eliciting empathy
9	فِي أَيْنَ ؟	Searching for information about a person's location or whereabouts	Location inquiry (seeking whereabouts)	Rapid coordination

10	جِسْمِي غَيرُ لَذِيذ	Physical complaints and health-related talk	General malaise complaint (not feeling well)	Self-expression and seeking support
11	بَدَنِي لَا لَذِيذ	Physical complaints and health-related talk	General malaise complaint (not feeling well)	Self-expression and seeking support
12	أَنْتُم هَذَا	Humor/teasing and emotion management	Affiliative teasing / playful stance-taking	Rapport-building, stance-taking, and light humor
13	قِرْدٌ ذَهَب	Humor/teasing and emotion management	In-group code for everyday self-care activity	Group identity and humor
14	سَوَى سَوَى	Relational maintenance (facework)	Reciprocal response to thanks ("you're welcome")	Solidarity and harmony maintenance
15	لَا مَاذَا مَاذَا	Relational maintenance (facework)	Reassurance ("it's okay/no problem")	Facework and tension reduction
16	لَا لِمَاذَا	Relational maintenance (facework)	Reassurance ("it doesn't matter/no worries")	Facework and tension reduction
17	يَلَّا سَرِيع !	Coordination of pace and collective action	Directive to expedite action (hurrying)	Pace coordination and urgency
18	مَرِيضٌ بَطْنٌ	Physical complaints and health-related talk	Stomachache complaint (reporting pain)	Self-expression and seeking attention/care
19	مَهَلًا مَهْلًا فَقَطْ	Coordination of pace and collective action	Directive to slow down (pace regulation)	Pace regulation and mitigation
20	لَا تَحْزَنْ تَحْزَنْ	Humor/teasing and emotion management	Comforting / emotional support	Emotional support and solidarity
21	لَا تَفْرَحْ تَفْرَحْ	Humor/teasing and emotion management	Restraint of excessive affect (downplaying exuberance)	Emotion regulation and group norms

This study conceptualizes non-standard expressions as linguistic practices that emerge from interactional needs rather than as mere deviations from prescriptive

norms. The data show that the 21 non-standard expressions identified are recurrently used, mutually understood, and embedded in stable interactional contexts. This pattern suggests that PBA students manage linguistic varieties in a context-sensitive manner, shifting their style as the setting moves from the classroom to the broader social space of campus life. Such stylistic shifting is consistent with the notion of audience- and situation-responsive style variation. (Akhmadjonov & Dadadjonov, 2025; A. Bell, 1984).

Forms such as ؟ فِي أَيْنَ, ؟أَنْتَ صِحَّةٌ, and لَا لِمَاذَا illustrate a direct mapping of Indonesian patterns onto Arabic. This study interprets the phenomenon as part of an interlanguage system: students construct a provisional linguistic system that functions effectively within their community, even though it is not identical to Standard Arabic (fushā). The interlanguage framework helps explain why "non-standard" forms can become stable and systematic among second-language users. These transfer effects also align with cross-linguistic influence research, whereby previously acquired languages shape form selection in the target language. In the present data, transfer is particularly visible in interrogative constructions and in the pragmatic logic underlying certain expressions.

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Repetition constitutes the most dominant category. Expressions such as قَلْبٌ قَلْبٌ فِي الطَّرِيقِ, سَوَى سَوَى, لَا مَاذَا مَاذَا, مَهَلًا مَهْلًا فَقَطْ, لَا تَحْزَنْ تَحْزَنْ, and لَا تَفْرَحْ تَفْرَحْ demonstrate how repetition is used to create effects of emphasis, intimacy, and emotion management. Repetition is therefore interpreted as a strategic choice that enhances the pragmatic force of utterances, particularly in peer interaction where warmth and speed are valued. The notion of language play further clarifies why speakers may "relax" formal conventions to achieve social effects, including humor and affiliative closeness (Crystal, 1996, 2001; Ilmiasari & Wijana, 2025; Indarti & Luciana, 2025).

In relational maintenance contexts, expressions such as عَفْوًا جِدًّا, سَوَى سَوَى, لَا مَاذَا مَاذَا, and لَا لِمَاذَا function as mechanisms for managing interpersonal relations. This study understands these mechanisms as facework—strategies for protecting both the speaker's and the interlocutor's social self-image to keep interaction comfortable (Goffman, 2017; Khanna et al., 2023). At the level of politeness, apologies and the downplaying of minor issues reduce potential threats to the interlocutor's "face." Politeness frameworks help account for why speakers select forms that feel gentle, rapid, and non-confrontational, even when such forms are not fully standard.

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Lexical innovations such as وَوَ ("dressing up") and قِرْدٌ ذَهَب ("washing one's hair") point to processes that cannot be explained by transfer alone. These forms are more aptly interpreted as outcomes of internal meaning negotiation: students develop codes that are effective primarily within their own circle. This is where group-identity functions become most visible. A community-of-practice perspective illuminates the process, as members develop a shared repertoire through routine participation, and that repertoire subsequently indexes membership and strengthens cohesion.

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More broadly, the findings speak to a larger issue in Arabic language education: competence is often narrowed to structural accuracy. The present results challenge the proposition that non-standard forms necessarily reflect incapacity. Instead, the data show clear interactional functions, including solidarity (e.g., قَلْبٌ قَلْبٌ فِي الطَّرِيقِ, سَوَى سَوَى), emotion and complaint expression (e.g., أَنَا صُدَاعٌ, أَنَا تَعْبٌ, مَرِيضٌ بَطْنٌ), facework (e.g., عَفْوًا جِدًّا, لَا مَاذَا مَاذَا), and group identity (e.g., وَوَ, قِرْدٌ ذَهَب). These findings support the proposition that pragmatic competence develops through authentic use, not solely through mastery of formal rules (Al-Seghayer, 2024; Qin et al., 2024). Research on second-language pragmatic development likewise emphasizes the importance of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic awareness so that speakers can select forms appropriate to context.

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enabling speakers to select forms appropriate to context (Eslami et al., 2022; Eslami & Guo, 2025; Kasper & Rose, 2002).

At the same time, the study acknowledges the functional limits of non-standard usage. Forms that are effective within the PBA community may not be equally effective beyond it, particularly in interaction with Arabic native speakers or in academic contexts that require fushā. Therefore, the practical implication is not to "ban" non-standard forms, but to cultivate register and contextual awareness. Teachers can use paired non-standard and standard forms as reflective learning materials and train students to select varieties according to context, audience, and communicative goals. This approach preserves creativity while expanding communicative reach across situations.

D. Conclusion

This study concludes that Arabic linguistic creativity among PBA students at UINSI Samarinda, in informal communication, is evidenced by the emergence of 21 non-standard expressions used consistently and mutually intelligible within the student community. These expressions do not occur randomly; rather, they can be mapped onto six main types—lexical innovation, expressions uncommon in formal norms, shortening/ellipsis, repetition, cross-linguistic adaptation, and creative forms—each of which is produced to meet interactional demands for speed, intimacy, and expressiveness. In terms of interactional situations, non-standard usage clusters into eight recurring contexts: leave-taking and safety concerns, greetings and well-being checks, information seeking, turn/sequence management, physical complaints, pace coordination, relational maintenance, and humor with emotion management. Pragmatically, the findings show that non-standard expressions function as interactional resources to build solidarity, express emotions and self-states, maintain relational harmony through facework, and sustain group identity through shared codes and community-specific styles. Accordingly, non-standard expressions should not be understood solely as deviations from fushā, but rather as adaptive and functional socio-pragmatic practices. This implies that Arabic language education should make room for register awareness and pragmatic competence so that students can select appropriate linguistic forms in line with context and communicative goals.

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