2. The Phenomenon of Arabic Diglossia A Linguistic Review and its Implications for Foreign Language Teaching.pdf

by Language Development Center

The Phenomenon of Arabic Diglossia: A Linguistic Review and its Implications for Foreign Language Teaching

Pahrul R[1] (✉) UIN Alauddin Makassar, Indonesia[1]
Fakhrelnejab@gmail.com [1]

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Corresponding Author:✉ Pahrul R

Article History	ABSTRACT
	Background: The phenomenon of Arabic diglossia, involving the use of Fusḥā and Ammiyah varieties, remains a challenge in foreign language teaching. The social functions and contexts of these varieties affect the effectiveness of Arabic language learning. **Purpose:** This study aims to examine the phenomenon of diglossia in Arabic from a linguistic perspective and explore its implications for teaching Arabic as a foreign language. **Method:** The study employs a qualitative approach through literature review in linguistics and language education. The analysis focuses on describing the diglossia phenomenon and strategies for managing it in Arabic language learning. **Results and Discussion:** The findings indicate that mastering both language varieties, Fusḥā and „Ammiyah, should be integrated into the curriculum to enable learners to use the language appropriately in social contexts. Learning that accommodates both varieties can enhance communicative competence and enrich the learning experience. **Conclusions and Implications:** The diglossia phenomenon requires a balanced approach in teaching Arabic, preserving the formal language while utilizing everyday speech. Practically, this implies developing inclusive and communicative teaching methods to support successful Arabic language learning as a foreign language.
Keywords:	
	ABSTRAK
	Latar Belakang: Fenomena diglosia Bahasa Arab, yaitu penggunaan varietas Fusḥā dan Ammiyah, masih menjadi tantangan dalam pengajaran bahasa asing. Perbedaan fungsi sosial dan konteks penggunaannya memengaruhi efektivitas pembelajaran Bahasa Arab. **Tujuan:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji fenomena diglosia dalam Bahasa Arab secara linguistik dan menelaah implikasinya terhadap metode pengajaran Bahasa Arab sebagai bahasa asing. **Metode:** Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan kajian pustaka dari literatur linguistik dan pendidikan bahasa. Analisis difokuskan pada deskripsi fenomena diglosia dan strategi penanganannya dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Arab. **Hasil dan Pembahasan:** Hasil menunjukkan bahwa penguasaan kedua varietas bahasa, Fusḥā dan Ammiyah, perlu diintegrasikan dalam kurikulum pengajaran agar pembelajar mampu menggunakan bahasa sesuai konteks sosial. Pembelajaran yang mengakomodasi kedua varietas dapat meningkatkan keterampilan komunikatif dan memperkaya pengalaman belajar.

	Kesimpulan dan Implikasi: Fenomena diglosia memerlukan pendekatan pengajaran Bahasa Arab yang seimbang antara pelestarian bahasa formal dan pemanfaatan bahasa sehari-hari. Implikasi praktisnya adalah pengembangan metode pembelajaran yang inklusif dan komunikatif guna mendukung keberhasilan pembelajaran Bahasa Arab sebagai bahasa asing.
Kata Kunci	*Diglosia Bahasa Arab, Pengajaran Bahasa Asing, Pembelajaran Bahasa, Implikasi Linguistik.*

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of diglossia is one of the fundamental characteristics of Arabic language use and has long attracted scholarly attention in the field of linguistics. Diglossia refers to a sociolinguistic situation in which two varieties of the same language are used in distinct contexts *fusha* (Modern Standard Arabic) and *'ammiyah* (colloquial Arabic dialects).[1] In the context of Arabic as a Foreign Language (AFL), this duality presents pedagogical challenges, particularly in helping learners choose the appropriate variety for different social and communicative settings.[2] The issue is further complicated by the growing presence of *'ammiyah* in media, entertainment, and informal discourse, while *fusha* remains dominant in formal education and religious contexts.[3]

This dynamic often leads to confusion and reduced motivation among learners, who struggle to reconcile textbook content with the language used in real-life interactions. For instance, Albirini (2016) found that over 60% of Arabic learners in the U.S. reported difficulty transitioning from fusha to 'ammiyah in conversation, and about 40% experienced anxiety when encountering dialects in real-world settings.[4] Similarly, Palfreyman and Al-Bataineh (2018) emphasize that even instructors in AFL programs are divided in their attitudes toward teaching *'ammiyah* versus *fusha*, reflecting broader ideological tensions in Arabic language policy and instruction.[5] These empirical findings underscore the need for a more integrated and realistic approach in Arabic teaching curricula that acknowledges the coexistence of both varieties. Instructors in AFL programs are often divided in their attitudes toward teaching *'ammiyah* versus *fusha*, reflecting broader ideological tensions in Arabic language policy and instruction.[5]

There are different views among scholars regarding diglossia. In general, these views can be grouped into two main perspectives. The first considers diglossia as a natural part of linguistic and civilizational development, reflecting the flexibility and richness of the Arabic language. The second regards it as a linguistic "crisis" or "calamity" that hampers communication, education, and access to modern terminology, particularly in scientific and technological domains.[2] In the socio-cultural and political spheres, the phenomenon of diglossia has created further complications. The significant gap between *fusha* (Modern Standard Arabic) and *lahjah* (colloquial dialects) has led to a kind of dual existence in the Arab world: one grounded in daily reality, represented by *lahjah*, and the other in formal and idealized discourse, represented by *fusha*.[1]

Another concern is that *fusha* is increasingly perceived as outdated or too rigid, especially when it comes to expressing rapidly evolving scientific and technical concepts. This has resulted in a growing tendency to borrow foreign terms, especially in *lahjah*, which then often penetrate written and formal contexts as well.[3] Furthermore, while *lahjah* is acquired naturally as a mother tongue, the acquisition of *fusha* generally requires formal education and is often perceived as challenging and distant from everyday communication. As a result, the colloquial dialects have gained stronger footholds in public life and informal media.

Nevertheless, the claim that *lahjah* is "pushing *fusha* out of existence" should be approached with caution. Such a statement requires empirical and statistical support. Recent research shows

that although *lahjah* dominates in oral and informal settings, *fusha* continues to hold a central role in education, religious practice, literature, and formal media.[4][6] Contemporary studies emphasize the coexistence and functional distribution between the two varieties, rather than a zero-sum conflict. Palfreyman and Al-Bataineh (2018) argue that the diglossic relationship creates pedagogical tensions, but also opens space for innovation in teaching Arabic as a foreign language.[5] Therefore, it is more accurate to interpret the situation as a case of diglossic functional specialization, rather than displacement.

Politically, the phenomenon of diglossia in the Arab world has been closely linked to the discourse of identity and nationalism. Following the defeat of the Arab forces by France and Britain in World War I and the subsequent fall of the Ottoman Empire, there arose a strong need to construct a unifying Arab national identity. In this context, *fusha* (Modern Standard Arabic) was promoted as a symbolic and functional unifier across the diverse Arab regions, despite the prevalence of regional dialects.[7] From a postcolonial perspective, the role of *fusha* has been viewed as essential in resisting colonial linguistic fragmentation and asserting cultural independence.[8]

While the spread of dialects was seen by some language planners as a potential setback in the sense of fragmenting Arab unity and impeding standardization others interpreted this plurality as an adaptive feature of linguistic evolution, enabling Arabic to remain relevant in diverse social realities.[3] Fishman (1972) notes that successful language revival and standardization efforts often rest on the language's ability to embody nationalist aspirations while remaining usable in everyday life.[9] Thus, the linguistic tension between *fusha* and *lahjah* is not merely a technical or pedagogical issue, but also a reflection of deeper sociopolitical dynamics within Arab societies.

This study explores Arabic diglossia from linguistic, pedagogical, and sociolinguistic perspectives, with a specific focus on its implications for the teaching of Arabic as a Foreign Language (AFL), particularly in how the diglossic divide affects curriculum design, classroom instruction, and learner outcomes. By doing so, it aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how diglossia impacts learner experience and to contribute to the development of an Arabic language curriculum that is both adaptive and contextually grounded.

Based on this background, the present study aims to examine the phenomenon of Arabic diglossia by focusing on four interrelated aspects: (1) the historical development and ideological foundations of the tension between *fusha* and *'ammiyah*; (2) contemporary efforts to promote the use of *'ammiyah* in social, educational, and media contexts; (3) the pedagogical and linguistic strategies adopted by educators, linguists, and policymakers in managing diglossia in Arabic language instruction; and (4) the forms of resistance expressed by proponents of *fusha* in response to the growing influence of *'ammiyah*.

This research employs a qualitative-descriptive method based on textual analysis of academic literature, policy documents, and media discourse. The geographical scope of the study primarily covers Arabic language education in non-Arabic-speaking contexts, with a special focus on how diglossia manifests in the teaching of Arabic as a Foreign Language (AFL). Through this approach, the study seeks to offer a comprehensive and contextualized understanding of the dynamics of diglossia and its pedagogical implications.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The phenomenon of diglossia in the Arabic language has become a significant topic in the study of modern Arabic linguistics. The concept of diglossia was first introduced by Charles A. Ferguson in 1959, describing a situation where two language varieties coexist within the same speech community, each serving different social functions: one is used in formal contexts (*fusha*), and the other in informal settings (*ammiyah*) [1]. According to Ferguson, in the context of the Arabic language, *fusha*, or Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), is used in education, media, and writing,

whereas *ammiyah* refers to local dialects used in daily conversations.[1] This functional division presents challenges for learners of Arabic as a foreign language, as formal instruction tends to focus exclusively on *fusha*, while native speakers predominantly use *ammiyah* in everyday life.[8]

Haeri (2003) emphasizes that the tension between *fusha* and *ammiyah* is not merely linguistic, but also social and political. *Fusha* is often associated with cultural, religious, and Arab nationalist identity, while *ammiyah* is considered inferior or less legitimate in academic and formal contexts.[10] This creates an additional burden for foreign learners seeking to achieve functional proficiency in Arabic.

In the context of teaching Arabic as a foreign language, several scholars have advocated for an integrative approach that incorporates both *fusha* and *'ammiyah* in a balanced and pedagogically sound manner. Al-Batal (1992) was among the early proponents of this view, criticizing traditional models that prioritize *fusha* exclusively while ignoring the diglossic reality of native speakers.[11] This was later echoed by Younes (2015), who emphasized that integrating both varieties can improve learners' communicative competence by exposing them to a broader spectrum of real-world usage.[12] Similarly, Ryding (2006) argued that Arabic instruction should move beyond linguistic purism and accommodate the functional needs of learners in everyday contexts.[13]

Recent empirical studies have further reinforced the position that Arabic diglossia should be addressed through integrative teaching methods. For example, Hashem (2022) revealed that learners of Arabic as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia often develop spoken dialect skills independently due to the lack of structured exposure in the classroom.[14] This indicates an urgent need to incorporate dialect instruction more intentionally into curricula. Similarly, Putri and Thoyyibah (2024), in their study at an Indonesian university, found that combining fusha and 'ammiyah in speaking courses significantly increased student motivation and communicative fluency. Their findings suggest that even in non-native contexts, exposure to both varieties can reduce anxiety and enhance learners' perception of Arabic as a "living" and usable language, rather than a language confined to textbooks or formal occasions.[15] Abdelbary et al. (2023) also demonstrate how the use of digital platforms has made it more feasible to design integrated curricula that flexibly incorporate both language varieties and allow instructors to scaffold learning dynamically. These recent developments point to a growing consensus in the field, yet also highlight a critical gap in curriculum design—particularly in translating integrative theories into practical classroom strategies across diverse instructional settings.[16]

Despite this growing body of evidence, many Arabic language programs especially in non-Arabic-speaking countries—still lack a clear pedagogical framework for integrating *fusha* and *'ammiyah* systematically. This study responds to that gap by reviewing recent developments in Arabic diglossia research and proposing context-sensitive teaching strategies that align with learners' real-world linguistic needs and communicative goals.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research method with a descriptive orientation. The data were obtained from secondary sources such as academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, and scholarly reports related to the phenomenon of Arabic diglossia and its implications in foreign language education. The literature was selected based on relevance to the research topic, academic credibility, and publication date limited to works published between 2000 and 2024 to ensure both historical context and up-to-date insights.[4][3]

Data collection was carried out systematically by searching academic databases including Scopus, JSTOR, Google Scholar, SpringerLink, and ResearchGate. Keywords used in the search included: *Arabic diglossia*, *Arabic language pedagogy*, *fusha and 'ammiyah integration*, and *Arabic as a Foreign*

Language (AFL).[15] Only high-quality, peer-reviewed sources were considered to maintain the validity and credibility of the findings.[14]

The data analysis followed a thematic approach inspired by Miles and Huberman's framework, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification.[17] Key themes identified in the literature included language ideology, pedagogical challenges, integrative curriculum strategies, and learner motivation. This method allowed the researcher not only to describe the diglossia phenomenon but also to interpret proposed teaching strategies and evaluate their application in the context of Arabic as a Foreign Language instruction.[5]

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Forms and Characteristics of the Phenomenon of Diglossia in the Context of Arabic Language Between 'Ammiyah and Fushah

In 1880 there was a call to use 'ammiyah language pioneered by Dr. Wilheim Spitta who at that time served as director of the maktabah khedewi. This call was contained in his book entitled *Qawa'id al-'arabiyyah al-'ammiyah fii mishr.*[18] Then in 1881 there was a call in the magazine al-muqtathaf proposing that scientific writing use everyday language, because the difference between spoken and written language in society was the cause of their backwardness.

Another call came from William Willcoks, a British water engineer. He came to Egypt and was tasked with popularizing and promoting the use of 'ammiyyah, among other things by arguing that the lack of scientific discovery in Egyptian society was due to the use of fusha in their writing and reading. For this reason, he suggested that the fusha language should be abandoned due to its difficulty and complexity. Instead, he called for the use of 'ammiyah.

A similar call also came from J. Selten Wilmore, another Englishman who became a judge in Egypt in 1901 CE through his book al-Arabiyah al-Mahkiyyah fi Misr.[2] The same call also came from several Arab circles, such as Iskandar al-Ma'luf, Ahmad Luthfi al-Sayyid, Al-Ab Marun Ghisn, Anis Farihah, and others.[19]

Broadly speaking, the thoughts underlying the various calls for the use of the 'ammiyah language and abandoning the fusha language as stated by Emil Badi Ya'kub,[19] among them:

1. Fusha is the language of a generation that has passed away and is unable to fully express the realities of contemporary life. Unlike the 'ammiyah language that is easy and widely used by people in their daily lives, fusha is a language that both learning and teaching are considered difficult because of its difficult grammar and vocabulary.

2. The fact that some Muslims do not use Arabic in speaking and writing. Therefore, there is no need to rely on Arabic. Meanwhile, the language of the Qur'an, which has been used as an excuse not to abandon Fusha Arabic, is still preserved through religious and language experts.

3. The assumption that adhering to the 'ammiyah language is more efficient and economical than the time and energy spent on learning the fusha language and its rules.

4. One of the important factors leading to the backwardness of society is the difference between written and spoken language. The use of 'ammiyyah is the solution to this backwardness in general, and to the problem of diglossia in particular, which may have reached the level of bilingualism.

The phenomenon of diglossia in Arabic describes the existence of two forms of language that coexist in one language community, namely Fusha Arabic and 'Ammiyah Arabic. Fusha is positioned as a "high" variety used in official contexts such as education, religious sermons, mass media, and scientific writing, while 'Ammiyah is a "low" variety commonly used in daily life,

informal conversations, and social media. This functional difference, as explained by Ferguson (1959), is the main characteristic of the diglossic system in Arab societies.[1]

There have been attempts by some to promote the use of 'Ammiyah more widely, even in the context of media and education. This encouragement stems from the assumption that 'Ammiyah is easier to understand and closer to the lives of ordinary people. The campaign for the use of 'Ammiyah is getting stronger amidst the reality that most of the Arab world's population has difficulty mastering the Fusha language fluently. However, this move was strongly criticized by academics and scholars who considered it a threat to the linguistic identity of the ummah and a potential loss of unity of the Arab Ummah.

The struggle between Fusha and 'Ammiyah is not new. History records that since the time of colonialism, particularly in Egypt and Lebanon, colonial powers supported the use of 'Ammiyah to undermine Muslim integration and distance the community from the language of the Qur'an. This linguistic conspiracy strategically undermined the role of Fusha as a unifying language. As time and communication technology evolved, the use of 'Ammiyah in the public sphere became more dominant, while Fusha tended to be restricted to the religious and academic spheres.[10]

To overcome this diglossia problem, various strategies have been carried out. Among them is the reform of the Arabic language learning curriculum which encourages active communication-based teaching methods while still rooted in the rules of Fusha. In addition, the development of educational media and television or radio broadcasts in Fusha is also carried out to maintain its existence amid the onslaught of vernacular languages. These initiatives seek to restore Fusha's position in public life in a stronger and more sustainable manner.

Resistance from defenders of the Fusha language continues. They come from among scholars, educators and religious leaders who see the widespread use of 'Ammiyah, especially in formal spaces, as a form of linguistic deviation and a threat to the survival of Islamic Arabic culture. They see the Fusha language as a symbol of Arab identity and unity that should not be replaced by local languages that tend to be non-standardized and vary between regions. Therefore, Fusha supporters actively voice the importance of maintaining and preserving this language through research, scientific publications, and language policy advocacy.[4]

Table 1. Historical Figures Advocating the Use of 'Ammiyah

Name	Nationality	Contribution
Dr. Wilhelm Spitta	German	Published *Qawa'id al-'Arabiyyah al-'Ammiyyah fi Misr*
William Willcocks	British	Argued *fusha* impedes science; promoted 'ammiyah for clarity and access
J. Seldon Wilmore	British	Published *al-'Arabiyyah al-Mahkiyyah fi Misr*
Iskandar al-Ma'luf	Arab	Advocated for wider use of 'ammiyah in intellectual spaces
Ahmad Luthfi al-Sayyid	Arab	Emphasized practicality of 'ammiyah
Anis Farihah	Arab	Supported vernacular use in media and education

Source: Adapted from Ya'qūb E.B. (1992)[20] and historical literature.[21][22]

4.2 Historical and Sociolinguistic Factors Behind the Emergence of the Arabic Diglossia Phenomenon

The phenomenon of Arabic diglossia cannot be separated from complex historical and sociolinguistic dynamics. Historically, the distinction between fusha (high variety) and 'ammiyah (low variety) became clearer after the codification of the Qur'an and expanded along with the spread of Islam. While Classical Arabic became the language of administration, science, and religion, local communities developed regional spoken varieties influenced by indigenous languages in conquered areas, resulting in diverse forms of 'ammiyah.[1]

Sociolinguistically, diglossia is characterized by a functional division: fusha is used in formal and written contexts such as education, religious sermons, and media, whereas 'ammiyah is employed in everyday informal interactions[23] This division reinforces a stratified linguistic environment where mastery of fusha often symbolizes education and prestige, while 'ammiyah use may be socially undervalued.[22]

Urbanization and mass media have further amplified 'ammiyah's dominance in public spaces. Soap operas, films, and pop music have normalized colloquial usage among youth, thereby contributing to the decline of fusha use outside formal settings.[8] Albirini (2016) emphasizes that heritage learners of Arabic, particularly in Western contexts, often experience confusion and emotional distance when confronted with a diglossic curriculum that emphasizes fusha while ignoring their colloquial background.[4]

Further research by Palfreyman and Al-Bataineh (2018) found that both teachers and students in Arabic language programs express uncertainty regarding which variety to prioritize in instruction. Teachers are often caught between promoting the prestigious fusha and ensuring practical communication through 'ammiyah.[5] This pedagogical dilemma reflects the unresolved tension in Arabic teaching between linguistic authenticity and communicative effectiveness.

The phenomenon of diglossia is thus not merely a linguistic duality but is deeply rooted in postcolonial power relations, educational policy, and identity formation. The British and French colonial imposition of foreign languages in Egypt and Algeria, respectively, strategically displaced Arabic from educational institutions. In Egypt, British policies in the late 19th century mandated English as the medium of instruction, pushing Arabic to a secondary role.[24] Similarly, in Algeria, decades of French rule marginalized Arabic, encouraging the view that progress and civilization were tied to the French language.[25]

In Lebanon, foreign missionary schools—especially those run by American evangelicals— used Arabic as the medium of instruction, but often with political and religious agendas.[25] Although they preserved Arabic in some domains, these institutions also introduced ideological fragmentation that further complicated Arabic's linguistic unity.

Despite these challenges, Arabic remains unique in that fusha and 'ammiyah are not considered entirely separate languages. Many linguists argue that they are variations of the same parent language, sharing core grammar and lexicon, but differing in usage, tone, and formality.[26] Therefore, the Arabic diglossic situation is best understood as a sociolinguistic continuum rather than a case of full bilingualism.

Table 2. Comparison Between Fusha and 'Ammiyah Arabic

Aspect	Fusha	'Ammiyah
Formality	Formal, classical	Informal, colloquial
Usage Context	Education, religion, media, official documents	Daily conversation, social media, entertainment
Accessibility	More difficult to learn	Easier and intuitive
Acquisition	Requires formal education	Acquired as mother tongue
Standardization	Highly standardized	Varies widely across regions

4.3 The Impact of Diglossia on the Learning Process of Arabic as a Foreign Language

The phenomenon of diglossia in Arabic poses significant challenges in the process of learning Arabic as a foreign language. The sharp difference between Fushah Arabic as the official language and 'Ammiyah as the language of everyday speech often confuses foreign learners. They are taught Fushah Arabic in the classroom, but find that native speakers use 'Ammiyah more often in everyday life, including in conversation, media, and popular culture.[1] This can lead to linguistic

shock and hinder the process of authentic communication with native speakers.

Furthermore, diglossia causes a disconnect between foreign learners' grammatical competence and communicative competence. Although they master the structures and vocabulary of standard Arabic, they still have difficulties in understanding informal conversations or watching Arabic movies due to the wide variety of local dialects.[23] Therefore, many modern learning programs are now starting to include an introduction to local dialects such as Egyptian, Sham and Maghrib as part of the supplementary curriculum.

In addition, diglossia also poses a pedagogical dilemma for teachers. Teachers are faced with a strategic question: should they focus on Fushah as a more universal and formal form of language, or should they include local dialects to better prepare students for real-life communication? In practice, many teachers try to integrate both, but this requires innovative teaching methods and materials as well as students' readiness to deal with complex linguistic realities.[27] Thus, diglossia is not only a linguistic phenomenon, but also a methodological challenge in teaching Arabic to foreign speakers.

The decline of Arabic and Arabic science has been realized by various parties, that language will develop along with the development of a nation and will also disappear along with the destruction of the nation. Various scholarly efforts to develop the Arabic language can be outlined in three major efforts, namely the translation of terms (Arabization), the establishment of Majma' Lughah and the holding of Arabization Conferences.

1. Arabization

The starting point for translating science into Arabic began in the 19th century when Egypt sent a number of scientists to Europe. After returning from Europe, these scientists taught modern science and engineering using Arabic. At that time Arabic became the language for teaching medicine, engineering, and so on.

In 1919, in Damascus (Syria) there was a major movement for the comprehensive translation of science into Arabic (Arabization). The Syrian University made Arabic the language of instruction in medical science and all courses taught at the law faculty. At that time, Arabic replaced Turkish and the development of comprehensive Arabization at that time was evidenced by the official use of Arabic in every walk of life, such as in teaching, scientific research, administration, economics, trade, industry, legislation, courts, and every news, whether newspapers, radio, or television.

2. Establishment of Majma' Lughah

In 1919, the Arab Science Center was established in Damascus, the Arabic Language Center in Cairo (the first language center) in 1934, and the Iraqi Science Center in Baghdad in 1947 AD as institutions that aim to make Arabic in accordance with the demands of the times, both in science, art and literature.

3. Arabization Conference

The first Arabization Conference was held on 3-7 April 1961 in Rabat. The conference was attended by delegates from Arab Universities, Jordan, Algeria, the Republic of Arab Union (at the time Egypt and Syria), Libya, Sudan, Tunisia, and Morocco. The Second Arabization Conference in 1973, a scientific seminar on scientific and technological translation in Beirut in 1979, a seminar on the definition of new scientific terms in 1981 in Rabat and a seminar on the development of the Arabic terminology system and the study of its spread in Oman in 1993.

Another effort in dealing with various Arabic language problems is to overcome various ideas and thoughts to make the 'ammiyah variety an official and national variety because it only has the

potential to divide the unity of the Arab nations themselves. Not a few linguists who try to erode the striking differences between fusha and 'ammiyah, one of which is by simplifying various rules of nahwu and sharf (at-Taysiiraat an-Nahwiyyah wa as-Sharfiyyah) so that they are easier to understand.[28]

Table 3. Strategies to Address Arabic Diglossia in Language Teaching

Strategy	Description
Integrative Curriculum	Combines teaching *fusha* with exposure to 'ammiyah dialects
Authentic Media Usage	Uses films, interviews, and dialogues in both varieties
Task-Based Learning	Simulates real-life tasks requiring both registers
Cultural Awareness Integration	Explains historical and sociocultural origins of diglossia
Curriculum Reform	Emphasizes communicative over prescriptive instruction

4.4 Possible Learning Strategies to Overcome the Challenge of Diglossia in Arabic Language Teaching

To overcome the challenges of diglossia in Arabic language teaching, educators need to design adaptive and integrative learning strategies. One effective strategy is an integrative approach between Fushah and 'Ammiyah, where formal Arabic learning remains the core of the curriculum, but the introduction of local dialects is also inserted as additional material. This strategy helps students develop broader communicative competence, so that they are not only proficient in academic contexts, but also in daily life in Arab countries.[29]

The second strategy is the use of authentic materials such as video clips, films, advertisements, and interviews in two language varieties to help students recognize the differences and functions of each language variety in different social contexts. With this, students can develop diglossic awareness and skills in code-switching effectively according to the situation and interlocutor.[27]

Another important approach is the use of task-based learning (TBL) which encourages students to use the language actively in real tasks, such as role-playing, market simulations, or everyday conversations that require the use of both Fushah and dialect. The teacher can act as a facilitator and guide in explaining when and how certain language varieties are used. In addition, teachers also need to provide cultural awareness so that students understand the social and historical reasons behind the existence of diglossia in Arab societies.[13]

Consistent implementation of these strategies can help students not only master the rules of the language, but also become communicators who are responsive to the socio-cultural context, so that learning Arabic becomes more functional and relevant to the reality on the ground. The phenomenon of Arabic diglossia shows unique and challenging social and linguistic dynamics in foreign language teaching, especially for learners of Arabic as a second language. As stated by Ferguson (1959), diglossia is a situation in which two language varieties are used interchangeably in the same community with different functions.[1] This has led to the need for Arabic language teachers to not only teach the formal Fushā language, but also introduce the living, everyday Ammiyah language.

According to Holes (2004), Arabic language teaching needs to incorporate aspects of cultural and social context in order for learners to understand the different functions and situations of use of these two varieties of language.[30] This research reinforces the importance of pragmatic and

communicative approaches in learning Arabic, which accommodate the needs of formal and informal communication.

On the other hand, the rejection or resistance to the use of Ammiyah language in official contexts indicates a concern over the preservation of Fuṣḥā language as a language that has prestige value and national identity.[31] This indicates the importance of realizing the value of both language varieties and how they can coexist in a balanced way in foreign language education. Implicatively, teaching Arabic as a foreign language should prepare an inclusive curriculum, combining Fuṣḥā and Ammiyah learning with appropriate teaching strategies, so that learners not only master the language in theory, but are also able to use the language in real and contemporary contexts.[32]

The call to abandon the fushah language and replace it with the 'ammiyah language received no less fierce resistance from those who wanted to preserve the fusha language. This resistance was carried out not only to maintain Arabic cultural heritage but also for the sake of religion and maintaining the Qur'an and hadith as the main reference of Islam using the fusha language.

The group of fusha language supporters stated that the call to the 'ammiyah language brought enormous danger. Among these dangers according to Emil Badi Ya'kub[19]:

1. This call would destroy the intellectual treasures of the Arab world and disrespect the efforts made by previous Arab scholars. If the 'ammiyah language is imposed then gradually the fusha language, including the Qur'an and Hadith will no longer be understood.

2. If the 'ammiyyah language is used then the Arab community must translate the Qur'an into that language. If the translation is done, most of the nuances of the Qur'an in fusha Arabic will be lost.

3. The 'ammiyah language cannot be used as a guide because there are so many varieties and differences in it. Each community and place has its own 'ammiyah language. Difficulties occur when having to choose which language will be used as a common language.

4. If each community insists on its local dialect, it will greatly weaken the relationship between Arab communities. The fusha language has proven to be an effective glue, even one of the most important to avoid the division of society. The fusha language has become a symbol of the unity of the Arab community itself. Linguistic unity among them is much stronger and more binding than political unity. This was reflected in the case, for example, of the fall of the Abbasid dynasty. Even though the Abbasids were divided into small states at the time, it was the fusha language that kept all elements of Arab society together.

In the post-independence era, many Arab countries reaffirmed the role of *fusha* as the cornerstone of national identity and educational development. This decision was driven by the belief that *fusha*, as the language of the Qur'an and classical literature, could serve as a unifying linguistic identity across diverse Arab societies. Consequently, the widespread use of *'ammiyah* was viewed as a potential threat to this unity and as a linguistic fragmentation that could hinder pan-Arab solidarity and nation-building efforts.[33]

However, recent scholarship has questioned the exclusivity of *fusha* in modern education. Albirini (2016) argues that pedagogical success in Arabic teaching requires acknowledging the sociolinguistic reality of diglossia and the learners' exposure to both varieties in real life.[4] Younes (2013) further advocates for a curriculum that integrates *fusha* and *'ammiyah* in a balanced manner, showing that learners benefit from exposure to colloquial forms for communicative fluency, while maintaining academic proficiency in *fusha*.[34]

This growing body of research suggests that an either-or dichotomy between *fusha* and *'ammiyah* may no longer be pedagogically viable. Instead, there is a call for an integrated approach that respects *fusha*'s symbolic and academic value while equipping learners with practical

communication skills through selected dialectal exposure. Such approaches also align with communicative language teaching (CLT) models which prioritize authentic language use over strict grammatical formality.[35]

Therefore, while post-independence policies emphasized linguistic purification and standardization, contemporary Arabic language instruction increasingly acknowledges the pedagogical limitations of excluding *'ammiyah* from curricula. Moving forward, Arabic education must balance heritage preservation with linguistic adaptability, crafting a model that is both academically rigorous and pragmatically effective.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study has explored the phenomenon of Arabic diglossia by analyzing its linguistic and sociopedagogical dimensions, with a particular focus on its implications for teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language (AFL). It found that the most dominant pattern of conflict between *fusha* (Modern Standard Arabic) and *'ammiyah* (colloquial Arabic) lies in their rigid functional separation. *Fusha* continues to hold symbolic and official authority in religious, educational, and media domains, while *'ammiyah* dominates in informal daily interactions. This divide contributes to a major pedagogical gap where learners, especially non-native speakers, acquire formal skills in *fusha* but struggle with real-life communication, particularly when faced with dialects in spoken contexts. Such challenges reflect a mismatch between classroom instruction and actual language use, reinforcing the need for instructional models that account for both varieties.

In recent decades, the discourse surrounding Arabic diglossia has shifted significantly, driven in part by technological advances and educational reforms. The proliferation of digital content—such as YouTube, TikTok, podcasts, and social media—has brought *'ammiyah* into the forefront of global communication. At the same time, new teaching philosophies in language education have started to challenge traditional fusha-only curricula. As a result, there is a growing call among educators and researchers for integrative learning approaches that combine both *fusha* and *'ammiyah*, not as competing systems but as complementary registers. This reflects a broader pedagogical evolution in Arabic instruction, moving from linguistic purism toward communicative realism and inclusivity.

The contribution of this study to contemporary diglossia literature lies in its synthesis of recent empirical research with practical teaching considerations. By emphasizing the sociolinguistic tensions and functional dynamics of Arabic, the study offers a more nuanced perspective on how diglossia affects learner motivation, performance, and engagement. Furthermore, it introduces a framework for inclusive curriculum development, recommending that Arabic language programs integrate *'ammiyah* exposure—especially in speaking and listening components—alongside core *fusha* instruction. Educators are encouraged to adopt flexible methodologies such as project-based learning, code-switching awareness activities, and region-specific dialect modules that reflect the linguistic diversity of the Arab world.

While this study offers valuable insights, its literature-based approach also presents certain limitations. The findings are drawn from secondary sources and theoretical perspectives, and thus do not capture direct classroom data or learner feedback. Future research should focus on classroom-based experiments, longitudinal studies, and cross-regional comparisons to evaluate the outcomes of diglossic-integrative pedagogies. Moreover, developing thematic tools—such as a summary table of figures who advocate for *'ammiyah*, a visual map of *fusha*–*'ammiyah* distribution in the Arab world, and a schematic of integrative teaching models—could enhance both scholarly understanding and instructional design in Arabic education. Through these recommendations, this study hopes to contribute to a more adaptive and learner-centered approach in the teaching of Arabic as a foreign language.

To address the challenges posed by diglossia in Arabic language instruction, this study recommends an integrative teaching model that combines both fusha and 'ammiyah in complementary ways. The proposed approach involves aligning instructional methods with authentic communicative needs. In this model, fusha remains the primary focus for reading and writing skills, particularly in academic, religious, and professional contexts. At the same time, selected varieties of 'ammiyah are introduced to support listening and speaking skills, especially in informal interactions and real-life communication.

For example, instructors may use news articles, academic texts, and religious sources to strengthen fusha literacy, while integrating dialogues from films, audio clips, and everyday conversation tasks to build oral fluency in 'ammiyah. This dual-track curriculum aims to equip learners with both formal and informal language competencies, fostering greater communicative confidence and sociolinguistic awareness. Ultimately, this strategy helps bridge the gap between classroom instruction and native-speaker usage, creating a more inclusive and realistic Arabic learning experience.

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