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# Bridging Fusha and 'Ammiyah: Rethinking Arabic as a Foreign Language Curriculum in Diglossic Contexts

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### Abstract

Although Arabic diglossia between fusha and 'ammiyah has been widely examined in sociolinguistic studies, Arabic as a Foreign Language curricula in Indonesia largely remain fusha-centered and structurally oriented, with limited attention to the sociolinguistic and communicative realities of Arabic-speaking communities. This study addresses this gap by examining the functional use of *fusha* and *'ammiyah* in social interaction and analyzing their implications for Arabic language curriculum development in Indonesia. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach based on a critical review of relevant sociolinguistic and pedagogical literature, this research synthesizes conceptual findings on Arabic diglossia and curriculum orientation. The findings indicate that the dominance of a *fusha*-centered structural approach creates a mismatch between learners' linguistic competence and the communicative practices of native Arabic speakers, who predominantly rely on *'ammiyah* in everyday interaction. This study contributes to Arabic language pedagogy by proposing a conceptual framework for integrating selective *'ammiyah* elements into the curriculum alongside the development of intercultural communicative competence. Such integration is expected to enhance learners' contextual, pragmatic, and sociocultural abilities, enabling more effective and authentic communication in real-life Arabic-speaking environments.

**Keywords:** *Arabic diglossia, Arabic language curriculum, 'Ammiyah, sociolinguistics, intercultural competence, communicative approach*

### **Abstrak**

Meskipun fenomena diglosia Bahasa Arab antara fusha dan 'ammiyah telah banyak dikaji dalam studi sosiolinguistik, kurikulum pembelajaran Bahasa Arab sebagai bahasa asing di Indonesia masih didominasi oleh pendekatan struktural yang berpusat pada fusha dan belum sepenuhnya mengakomodasi realitas sosiolinguistik serta praktik komunikasi autentik masyarakat penutur Arab. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengisi kesenjangan tersebut dengan menganalisis penggunaan fusha dan 'ammiyah dalam interaksi sosial serta implikasinya terhadap pengembangan kurikulum Bahasa Arab di Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif berbasis studi pustaka kritis terhadap literatur sosiolinguistik dan pedagogi Bahasa Arab. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa dominasi pendekatan struktural yang berpusat pada fusha menyebabkan ketidaksesuaian antara kompetensi kebahasaan peserta didik dan praktik komunikasi autentik penutur asli Arab yang lebih banyak menggunakan 'ammiyah dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Penelitian ini menawarkan kontribusi konseptual bagi pedagogi Bahasa Arab melalui pengembangan kerangka integratif yang mengakomodasi unsur 'ammiyah secara selektif dalam kurikulum, disertai penguatan kompetensi komunikatif interkultural. Pendekatan ini diharapkan mampu meningkatkan kemampuan pragmatik, kontekstual, dan sosiokultural peserta didik dalam berkomunikasi secara efektif di lingkungan berbahasa Arab

**Kata Kunci:** *Diglosia Bahasa Arab, kurikulum Bahasa Arab, 'Ammiyah, sociolinguistik, kompetensi komunikatif interkultural, pendekatan komunikatif*

### **Introduction**

The teaching of Arabic as a foreign language cannot be understood merely as the mastery of grammatical rules (*nahw-sarf*) and the ability to read formal texts. The most fundamental challenge lies instead in what may be termed the “variety gap”: learners are trained to use *fusha* or Modern Standard Arabic as the classroom language, while authentic communication among native speakers in everyday life is predominantly conducted in colloquial varieties ('*ammiyah* or Spoken Arabic). At this point, linguistic competence that relies exclusively on formal structures risks producing outcomes that are “grammatically

accurate" yet pragmatically and communicatively weak when learners are confronted with real-life interactional situations.<sup>1</sup>

This condition is rooted in the distinctive sociolinguistic character of Arabic, namely diglossia; the coexistence of a standard variety (*fusha*) and colloquial varieties ('*ammiyah*) that serve different social functions.<sup>2</sup> *Fusha* functions as an institutional language used in education, formal media, administration, and religious texts, whereas '*ammiyah* serves as the primary medium of daily communication across speech communities. Because learners of Arabic in Indonesia are generally exposed to '*ammiyah* only to a limited extent, the linguistic distance between the standard and spoken varieties frequently creates obstacles in phonological processing (phonological distance), word formation (morphological distance), and the comprehension of sentence structures in natural speech (morphosyntactic or syntactic processing).<sup>3</sup>

In the practice of Arabic language teaching in Indonesia, this diglossic condition has not yet been fully reflected in curriculum design and instructional processes. Arabic curricula, both under the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum, still tend to position *fusha* as the sole focus of instruction, with a strong emphasis on *nahw*, *ṣarf*, and the reading of formal texts.<sup>4</sup> This orientation reflects the dominance of a structural approach to Arabic language teaching, in which language is treated as a system of normative rules to be mastered, while the functional, pragmatic, and sociocultural dimensions of language, including '*ammiyah*, receive limited attention in instructional design and language assessment.

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<sup>1</sup> Aqeela, M.M.F., M.H.A. Munas, and M.R.F. Ahana. "Traditional and Modern Teaching Methods in Teaching Arabic as a Second Language: A Comparative Study." *Sprin Journal of Arabic-English Studies* 2, no. 03 (October 2023): 48–53. <https://doi.org/10.55559/sjaes.v2i03.52>.

<sup>2</sup> Abd El-Raziq, Muna, Natalia Meir, and Elinor Saiegh-Haddad. "Lexical Skills in Children with and without Autism in the Context of Arabic Diglossia: Evidence from Vocabulary and Narrative Tasks." *Language Acquisition* 31, nos. 3–4 (October 2024): 199–223. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10489223.2023.2268615>.

<sup>3</sup> Jamil, Husnaini, and Nur Agung. "Tantangan Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Di Era Society 5.0: Analisis Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Berbasis Aplikasi Interaktif." *Alibbaa': Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* 3, no. 1 (January 2022): 38–51. <https://doi.org/10.19105/ajpba.v3i1.5536>.

<sup>4</sup> Hasanah, Mamluatul, Ahmad Mubaligh, Risna Rianti Sari, Alfiatus Syarofah, and Agung Prasetyo. "ARABIC PERFORMANCE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT: RECONSTRUCTION BASED ON ACTFL AND DOUGLAS BROWN PERSPECTIVE." *Ijaz Arabi Journal of Arabic Learning* 4, no. 3 (October 2021). <https://doi.org/10.18860/ijazarabi.v4i3.11900>.

A growing body of research has demonstrated that Arabic diglossia has significant linguistic implications across various levels of language structure, particularly phonological, morphological, and syntactic domains. Dakwar's phonological studies reveal that phonological distance between *fusha* and *'ammiyah* affects phonological representations and lexical acquisition processes among speakers in bilingual and diglossic contexts, leading learners to experience difficulties in mapping standard Arabic sound forms onto everyday spoken input.<sup>5</sup> At the morphological level, Kassem's research shows that differences between the morphological systems of the standard and spoken varieties influence the development of morphological awareness, particularly in the acquisition of inflectional and derivational patterns that are not consistently realized in *'ammiyah*.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, Idrissi's neurolinguistic studies in the syntactic domain highlight the dynamics of grammatical agreement processing in Standard Arabic and suggest that exposure to different language varieties and diglossic conditions shapes how speakers process specific syntactic structures.<sup>7</sup> Taken together, these findings underscore that diglossia is not merely a social phenomenon but also one that affects the internal linguistic mechanisms of Arabic language learners.

From a pedagogical perspective, several studies emphasize the importance of instructional approaches that do not ignore the reality of diglossia in Arabic language education. Elinor's intervention studies in early literacy demonstrate that instructional strategies which consciously embrace diglossia, by integrating spoken varieties as a bridge toward mastery of the standard variety, can enhance literacy readiness, metalinguistic awareness, and holistic language

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<sup>5</sup> Ghawi-Dakwar, Ola, and Elinor Saiegh-Haddad. "Word Learning in Arabic Diglossia in Children With Typical Language Development and Developmental Language Disorder." *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research* 68, no. 3S (March 2025): 1533–51. <https://doi.org/10.1044/JSLHR-23-00618>.

<sup>6</sup> Shahbari-Kassem, Abeer, Rachel Schiff, and Elinor Saiegh-Haddad. "Development of Morphological Awareness in Arabic: The Role of Morphological System and Morphological Distance." *Reading and Writing* 38, no. 8 (October 2025): 2235–67. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-024-10581-0>.

<sup>7</sup> Idrissi, Ali, Eiman Mustafawi, Tariq Khwaleh, and R. Muralikrishnan. "A Neurophysiological Study of Noun-Adjective Agreement in Arabic: The Impact of Animacy and Diglossia on the Dynamics of Language Processing." *Journal of Neurolinguistics* 58 (May 2021): 100964. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jneuroling.2020.100964>.

understanding.<sup>8</sup> Such approaches enable learners to connect the language they encounter in everyday life with the academic language taught in the classroom. In addition, research by Reem and Makhoul in bilingual education contexts finds that explicit awareness of diglossia is positively correlated with success in learning Arabic, both in language comprehension and production.<sup>9</sup> These pedagogical findings reinforce the argument that a purely *fusha*-centered structural approach is no longer sufficient to meet learners' communicative needs, and that Arabic curriculum design must take into account linguistic distance, the social functions of language, and learners' pragmatic needs in real-world language use.

Based on the mapping of previous studies, it can be concluded that international research on Arabic diglossia has developed significantly across phonological, morphological, syntactic, and pedagogical domains. However, most of these studies focus on native speakers or learners of Arabic in Arab and bilingual environments, with primary aims of explaining linguistic mechanisms or evaluating the effectiveness of specific instructional interventions. To date, relatively few studies have explicitly integrated sociolinguistic findings on diglossia into the framework of Arabic curriculum development for Arabic as a foreign language, particularly within the Indonesian educational context, which is characterized by distinct sociocultural backgrounds and learner needs. This limitation indicates a gap between the advancement of theoretical research on diglossia and its implementation in Arabic curriculum design that is responsive to actual language use.

This study offers conceptual and pedagogical novelty by synthesizing sociolinguistic findings on the variation between *fusha* and '*ammiyah* and directly linking them to the development of Arabic curricula in Indonesia. The novelty of this research lies in the formulation of an integrative framework that views '*ammiyah* not

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<sup>8</sup> Saiegh-Haddad, Elinor. "Embracing Diglossia in Early Literacy Education in Arabic: A Pilot Intervention Study with Kindergarten Children." *Oxford Review of Education* 49, no. 1 (January 2023): 48–68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2022.2090324>.

<sup>9</sup> Khamis-Dakwar, Reem, and Baha Makhoul. "The Relationship between Children's Explicit Knowledge and Awareness of Diglossia and Success in Learning Arabic: A Preliminary Investigation." *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 45, no. 6 (July 2024): 1819–33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2021.2025243>.

merely as a linguistic or social phenomenon, but as a pedagogical resource that can be selectively and systematically employed to bridge the gap between classroom language and real-life language use. Furthermore, this study positions intercultural communicative competence as a foundational principle of curriculum design, thereby orienting Arabic language learning not only toward structural accuracy but also toward socially appropriate and effective communication within the cultural contexts of Arabic-speaking communities.

Based on these objectives, this study seeks to address the following research questions: (1) how do *fusha* and *'ammiyah* vary in their use within the social interactions of Arabic-speaking communities from a sociolinguistic perspective? (2) what are the implications of Arabic diglossia for the teaching of Arabic as a foreign language in Indonesia? and (3) what directions and principles should guide the development of Arabic curricula in Indonesia to selectively accommodate *'ammiyah* while supporting the enhancement of learners' intercultural communicative competence?

## Method

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach employing a library research method.<sup>10</sup> This approach was selected because the research objective is not directed toward quantitative measurement or empirical hypothesis testing, but rather toward an in-depth understanding and conceptual synthesis of the phenomenon of Arabic diglossia and its implications for the development of Arabic curricula as a foreign language in Indonesia. Library research enables a systematic examination of relevant theoretical perspectives and findings from previous studies in both sociolinguistics and Arabic language pedagogy.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data comprise concepts, theories, and research findings that address Arabic language variation (*fusha* and *'ammiyah*), diglossia, and their relationship to Arabic language teaching and curriculum development. These sources were drawn from peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and other relevant scholarly publications. Secondary data include supporting literature that provides additional conceptual grounding, such as sociolinguistics textbooks, curriculum

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<sup>10</sup> George, Mary W. *The Elements of Library Research*. Princeton University Press, 2008. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400830411>.

studies, and references on intercultural communicative competence. To ensure relevance and currency, the literature analyzed was selected based on its thematic relevance to the research focus, clarity of scope, and source credibility, with particular emphasis on publications from reputable international and national journals.

Data collection was conducted through documentation techniques, involving the systematic identification, compilation, and examination of written sources relevant to the research focus. This process included identifying literature that discusses (1) the characteristics of Arabic diglossia, (2) phonological, morphological, and syntactic differences between *fusha* and *'ammiyah*, and (3) the pedagogical and curricular implications of diglossia in the teaching of Arabic as a foreign language. The collected literature was subsequently screened based on topical relevance and its contribution to the research objectives.

Data analysis in this study employed qualitative content analysis. The analysis proceeded through several systematic stages. First, data reduction was conducted by filtering and grouping information relevant to the research focus from the various sources. Second, a categorization stage was applied, in which data were classified into key analytical themes, including the sociolinguistic aspects of diglossia, linguistic variation between *fusha* and *'ammiyah*, and their implications for Arabic language teaching and curriculum design. Third, interpretive and conceptual synthesis was carried out to examine interrelationships among themes and to formulate an integrative understanding of the role of *'ammiyah* in Arabic language education and the urgency of strengthening learners' intercultural communicative competence. Fourth, conclusions were drawn by formulating theoretical and pedagogical implications based on a consistent and reflective synthesis of the literature.<sup>11</sup>

To ensure the validity and consistency of the analysis, this study applied the principle of source traceability by explicitly referencing all analyzed materials and conducting critical cross-reading across sources to compare and corroborate findings.<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, the results of this

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<sup>11</sup> Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña. *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2014.

<sup>12</sup> Lincoln, Yvonna S., Egon G. Guba, and Joseph J. Pilotta. "Naturalistic Inquiry." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 9, no. 4 (January 1985): 438–39. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767\(85\)90062-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767(85)90062-8).

study are not intended as empirical generalizations, but rather as a conceptual contribution that may serve as a foundation for reflection and for the development of Arabic curricula that are more contextualized and responsive to the sociolinguistic realities of Arabic-speaking communities.

## **Results and Discussion**

The results of this study are understood as conceptual findings derived from a process of critical synthesis of sociolinguistic and Arabic language pedagogy literature relevant to the phenomenon of diglossia. Unlike empirical studies that generate field data, the findings of this study are grounded in conceptual patterns that consistently emerge across previous research on the use of *fusha* and *'ammiyah*, the social functions of each language variety, and their implications for the teaching of Arabic as a foreign language. Accordingly, the results section of this study is not intended to present statistical data or experimental findings, but rather to formulate an integrative understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

The synthesis of sociolinguistic literature indicates that the use of Arabic in speech communities is not homogeneous, but instead follows a relatively stable pattern of functional diglossia. *Fusha* and *'ammiyah* are not selected freely by speakers; rather, their use is determined by communicative domains, social relationships, and interactional purposes. *Fusha* functions as a high variety used in formal, institutional, academic, and religious contexts, whereas *'ammiyah* serves as a low variety that dominates everyday spoken communication. This pattern confirms that Arabic language variation constitutes a socio-linguistic system that regulates language practices in real-life contexts, rather than merely reflecting differences in linguistic form.

The findings further reveal that Arabic diglossia is asymmetric in terms of access and exposure, particularly for learners of Arabic as a foreign language. In formal educational contexts, learners are almost exclusively exposed to *fusha* through textbooks, instructional materials, and academic assessment. By contrast, *'ammiyah*, which is most frequently used in authentic interaction, is rarely introduced in a systematic manner. This imbalance creates a gap between the language learned in the classroom and the language used in the social life of Arabic-speaking communities, causing learners to experience

difficulties when attempting to comprehend or participate in everyday spoken communication.

Table 1. Patterns of Arabic Diglossia in Social Interaction

Aspect	Fusha	'Ammiyah
Social status	High variety	Low variety
Primary domains	Education, religion, formal media	Everyday interaction
Dominant mode	Written and formal spoken language	Spoken language
Communicative function	Authority, legitimacy, formality	Familiarity, spontaneity
Usage pattern	Rule-bound and standardized	Contextual and flexible

Based on Table 1, Arabic diglossia operates as a system of language distribution that is socially and functionally structured. *Fusha* occupies the position of a high variety associated with formal and institutional domains, and its use is therefore linked to authority, legitimacy, and adherence to standardized linguistic norms. Conversely, '*ammiyah*' functions as a low variety that is predominantly used in everyday interaction and is characterized by oral, spontaneous, and context-dependent usage. This distinction indicates that language variety selection is not determined solely by individual speaker preference, but by social norms that regulate the appropriateness of language use in particular communicative situations. Thus, Arabic diglossia reflects a clear functional division between formal language needs and everyday communicative demands.

Furthermore, the literature indicates that language variety choice within Arabic-speaking communities also reflects social relations and the construction of cultural identity. The use of *fusha* is not merely a linguistic choice, but also a symbol of education, authority, and affiliation with scholarly and religious discourse. In contrast, '*ammiyah*' serves as a marker of social closeness, solidarity, and local or regional identity. In many interactional contexts, the use of '*ammiyah*' is considered more appropriate and communicatively effective because it facilitates familiarity and interactional efficiency. These findings underscore that proficiency in Arabic cannot be separated from an understanding of the social and cultural values attached to each language variety.

From the perspective of teaching Arabic as a foreign language, the implications of this pattern are substantial. Learners who are

equipped solely with the ability to use *fusha* risk developing competence that is confined to formal and receptive domains, while their ability to comprehend and respond to everyday spoken discourse remains limited. This indicates that diglossia is not merely a social backdrop to the language, but a structural factor that shapes learners' communicative competence outcomes. Therefore, an understanding of the social functions of *fusha* and '*ammiyah* constitutes a crucial prerequisite for the development of more contextualized and communication-oriented Arabic language instruction.

The synthesis of the literature further demonstrates that differences between *fusha* and '*ammiyah* are not limited to lexical variation, but extend to phonological, morphological, and syntactic aspects that directly affect language comprehension and production processes. These differences create a significant linguistic distance between the standard variety learned in the classroom and the spoken varieties used in everyday communication. In the context of teaching Arabic as a foreign language, this distance represents a key factor explaining why learners struggle to understand native speakers' natural speech despite having mastered the grammatical rules of *fusha*.

Table 2. Linguistic Differences between Fusha and '*Ammiyah*

Linguistic Aspect	Fusha	'Ammiyah
Phonological	Standard articulation; phonemes realized according to normative rules; short vowels largely preserved	Phoneme substitution (e.g., <i>q</i> → <i>g</i> / <i>k</i> ); vowel reduction; sound elision
Morphological	Active <i>i'rāb</i> system; standard inflectional patterns for verbs and nouns	<i>I'rāb</i> largely ignored; simplified inflection; more analytic forms
Syntactic	Standard sentence structures (VSO/SVO); relatively fixed word order	More flexible structures; strongly context-dependent
Rule consistency	High and normative	Low and contextual
Learner cognitive load	High at the production stage	High at the listening comprehension stage

Based on Table 2, the linguistic distance between *fusha* and '*ammiyah* is clearly observable across multiple levels of language

structure and is directly manifested in everyday communicative practices. At the phonological level, sound changes in 'ammiyah result in significant differences in speech perception and processing. One of the most common examples is the realization of the phoneme /ق/ (*qāf*) in *fusha* as a uvular plosive /q/, which in many varieties of 'ammiyah shifts to /g/ or even to a glottal stop /ʔ/. For instance, the word قلب (*qalb*, "heart") in *fusha* is often realized as *galb* (galb) or ألب ('alb) in spoken varieties. In addition, short vowel reduction frequently occurs, as in the word كتب (kataba, "he wrote"), which in natural speech may be realized as كتب (katab) with a more reduced articulation. These changes explain why learners accustomed to *fusha* pronunciation often struggle to recognize the same lexical items when they are produced in 'ammiyah.

At the morphological level, the most salient difference lies in the omission of the *i'rāb* system in 'ammiyah. In *fusha*, changes in word endings function as markers of grammatical relations, as illustrated in the sentences جاءَ الْوَلَدُ (jā'a al-waladu, "the boy came") and رأَيْتُ الْوَلَدَ (ra'aytu al-walada, "I saw the boy"), where the ending of *al-walad* varies according to its syntactic role. In 'ammiyah, these markers are generally absent, resulting in invariant word forms such as شُفِّتَ الْوَلَدُ (shuft el-walad) and شُفْتُ الْوَلَدَ (shuft el-walad), with no change in word endings. This simplification demonstrates that the morphological structures intensively taught in formal instruction are not always realized in everyday spoken communication.

Syntactically, the flexibility of sentence structure in 'ammiyah also constitutes a source of linguistic distance for learners. Whereas *fusha* typically follows standardized sentence structures such as سأَذْهَبُ إِلَى السُّوقِ غَدًا (sa'adhabu ilā as-sūqi ghadā), 'ammiyah allows for more concise and pragmatically driven realizations, for example بَرُوحُ السُّوقِ بُكْرَةً (barūh is-sūq bukra). The omission of formal temporal markers and changes in constituent order indicate that comprehension of 'ammiyah relies heavily on contextual and pragmatic knowledge rather than strict adherence to canonical syntactic structures.

Taken together, these concrete examples clarify that the differences between *fusha* and 'ammiyah are not merely theoretical, but are concretely realized in the sounds, word forms, and sentence structures encountered by learners.

Table 3. Impact of Diglossia on Arabic Language Learners' Competence

Competence Aspect	Fusha-Based Instructional Condition	Impact of Diglossia on Learners
Listening	Limited exposure to standard language	Difficulty understanding ' <i>ammiyah</i> '
Speaking	Controlled and formal language production	Rigid, less spontaneous speech
Reading	Mastery of formal texts	Restricted to standard discourse
Writing	Grammatically accurate structures	Limited adaptability to social contexts
Pragmatic competence	Minimal practice in social contexts	Inappropriate level of formality
Affective (confidence)	Secure within classroom settings	Low confidence in real interaction

Based on Table 3, it can be interpreted that Arabic diglossia results in an uneven distribution of learners' competencies. Reading and writing skills tend to develop more strongly because they align with the *fusha* variety that is systematically taught in formal education. In contrast, listening and speaking skills are hindered by limited exposure to '*ammiyah*', which dominates spoken communication. This imbalance indicates that learners may possess strong structural linguistic competence, yet lack fully developed contextual and functional communicative competence.

Furthermore, the impact of diglossia is also evident in learners' pragmatic competence and affective dimensions. Limited understanding of language-use norms in social contexts often leads to inappropriate choices of expressions and levels of formality. In addition, learners frequently experience reduced confidence when interacting with native speakers, as the language they have mastered differs from the language used in everyday communicative practice. These findings underscore that diglossia affects not only linguistic competence but also learners' social and psychological readiness to communicate.

For example, learners who are accustomed to *fusha* structures such as *مَاذَا تَرِيدُ أَنْ تَفْعَلُ؟* (*mādhā turīdu an taf'ala?*) often struggle to comprehend simple questions in '*ammiyah*' such as *عَايِزْ تَعْمَلُ إِيَّاهُ؟* (*āyiz ta 'mil ēh?*). Although the meanings of these utterances are equivalent,

phonological, lexical, and syntactic differences prevent learners from immediately recognizing their correspondence. In spoken production, learners also tend to produce formal utterances such as أريد أن أذهب إلى السوق (*urīdu an adhab ilā as-sūq*), which are grammatically correct but sound rigid and unnatural in everyday conversation when compared to the 'ammiyah form عايزة أروح السوق (*'āyiz arūh is-sūq*). This example illustrates how the gap between classroom language and real-life language use directly affects learners' communicative effectiveness.

Overall, the synthesis of these findings demonstrates that Arabic diglossia constitutes a structural factor that cannot be overlooked in the teaching of Arabic as a foreign language. An understanding of diglossic patterns, linguistic differences, and their impact on learner competence provides a conceptual foundation for developing Arabic language pedagogy and curricula that are more contextualized, communicative, and responsive to real-world language use.

### Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that Arabic diglossia cannot be positioned merely as a sociolinguistic phenomenon external to the learning process, but rather as a structural factor that shapes the learning experiences of learners of Arabic as a foreign language. The functional distribution between *fusha* and *'ammiyah*, the linguistic distance at the phonological, morphological, and syntactic levels, and their impact on learners' communicative competence indicate that the central issue in Arabic language education lies not only in *what* is taught, but also in *which* language variety is prioritized and *for what communicative purposes* instruction is oriented.<sup>13</sup>

The findings regarding the dominance of *fusha* in formal instruction help explain why learners' achievements are often asymmetrical. Learners tend to demonstrate relative strength in reading and writing formal texts, yet encounter difficulties when required to comprehend or respond to native speakers' spoken discourse. This discrepancy is not simply the result of insufficient practice, but rather a consequence of the systemic divergence between classroom language and social language. In this sense, diglossia functions as an "invisible

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<sup>13</sup> Mohammed Harbi, Abdullah. "Arabic Diglossia and Its Impact on the Social Communication and Learning Process of Non-Native Arabic Learners: Students' Perspective." *Arab World English Journal*, no. 283 (January 2022): 1–46. <https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/th.283>.

boundary" separating formal linguistic competence from the communicative competence required for real-life interaction.<sup>14</sup>

This discussion points to the need for a shift in the orientation of Arabic curricula from a predominantly structural approach toward a more contextualized communicative approach.<sup>15</sup> Such a shift does not imply negating the role of *fusha* as the standard variety, but rather positioning it proportionally as a language of formal literacy that coexists with spoken varieties. A curriculum that is responsive to diglossia should explicitly articulate learning outcomes that include the ability to understand and use language in accordance with communicative domains, including the ability to recognize and interpret spoken varieties commonly used in everyday life.<sup>16</sup>

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings support instructional approaches that strategically utilize language varieties as learning resources rather than treating them as deviations from the norm.<sup>17</sup> Teaching practices that provide space for exposure to spoken varieties, through authentic audio-visual materials, situational dialogues, and context-based tasks, can serve as a bridge between classroom language and real-world language use. Such approaches enable learners to develop pragmatic competence and sociolinguistic sensitivity without sacrificing structural accuracy in *fusha*.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Albirini, Abdulkafi, and Brahim Chakrani. "Switching Codes and Registers: An Analysis of Heritage Arabic Speakers' Sociolinguistic Competence." *International Journal of Bilingualism* 21, no. 3 (June 2017): 317–39. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367006915626587>.

<sup>15</sup> Hilmi, Danial, Nur Toifah, and Halimatus Sa'diyah. "Curriculum Development Strategy for Independent Learning in Arabic Language Learning at PTKIN in East Java." *LISANIA: Journal of Arabic Education and Literature* 7, no. 2 (December 2023): 159–77. <https://doi.org/10.18326/lisania.v7i2.159-177>.

<sup>16</sup> Taha Thomure, Hanada, Haitham Taha, Taline Sabella, and Rabab Saleh. "A Systematic Review of Teaching and Learning in the Context of Arabic Diglossia." *Social Sciences & Humanities Open* 12 (2025): 102281. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssho.2025.102281>.

<sup>17</sup> Khuluq, Muchsinul, Mamluatul Hasanah, Muasshomah Muasshomah, and Nurul Imamah. "Mobile-Assisted Language Learning Apps: The Analysis of Duolingo." *Al-Ta'rib : Jurnal Ilmiah Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Arab IAIN Palangka Raya* 12, no. 2 (December 2024): 229–46. <https://doi.org/10.23971/altarib.v12i2.8806>.

<sup>18</sup> YAKIN, AINUL, and Seif Robeth Al-Haq. "Tahlīl Al-Asālīb al-Lughawiyah Li A'dhāi Firqati al-Munādharah al-'Ilmiyyah Bi Tarbiyatil Mu'allimīn al-Islāmiyyah Fī Musābaqati al-Munādharah al-'Ilmiyyah." *Alibba': Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* 4, no. 2 (July 2023): 249–74. <https://doi.org/10.19105/ajpba.v4i2.8874>.

The discussion also highlights the importance of language ideology and teacher readiness in managing instruction within diglossic contexts. An overly rigid preference for the standard variety may constrain pedagogical space for the purposeful inclusion of language variation.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, professional development for Arabic language teachers should focus not only on linguistic content knowledge, but also on understanding the social functions of language varieties, strategies for variety selection in instruction, and methods for assessing learners' communicative performance in a fair and context-sensitive manner.<sup>20</sup>

In the Indonesian context of Arabic language education, limited exposure to Arabic-speaking environments renders the issue of language input particularly critical.<sup>21</sup> This discussion opens possibilities for the use of educational technology to expand exposure to spoken varieties through digital media, audio-visual resources, and communication-simulation tasks. However, such technological integration must be embedded within a clear curricular framework to ensure that it meaningfully contributes to the development of communicative competence rather than functioning merely as a supplementary component.<sup>22</sup>

Overall, this discussion demonstrates that addressing diglossia in Arabic language education requires an integrative approach that connects linguistic, pedagogical, and sociocultural dimensions. By grounding instructional decisions in the findings of this study, Arabic language education can be directed not only toward producing learners

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<sup>19</sup> Yulia, Fatma, Elsayed Makki Elbishr Ali Hasan, Andini Nur Bahri, Maskanatul Fiqiyah, and Muhammad Taufiq. "Effectiveness of Instructional Communication of Mahārah Al-Kalām at Sultan Idris Education University." *Ta'lim al-'Arabiyyah: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab & Kebahasaaran* 8, no. 2 (December 2024): 216–33. <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpba.v8i2.39201>.

<sup>20</sup> Arya, Diana J., and Amy Vetter. "Silence(Ing) across Learning Spaces: New Considerations for Educational Research Aims and Rationale." *Linguistics and Education* 68 (April 2022): 100965. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2021.100965>.

<sup>21</sup> Musalwa, Rahmat Satria Dinata, Syafrimen Syafril, Ahmad Basyori, Vanadya Amelia, Putri Amelia, and Salah Benrabah. "The Arabic Linguistic Landscape of Islamic Universities: Patterns, Strategies, and Pedagogical Practices in West Sumatra." *Alibba': Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* 6, no. 2 (July 2025): 243–63. <https://doi.org/10.19105/ajpba.v6i2.19601>.

<sup>22</sup> Sapawi, Mior Syazril Mohamed, and Nik Mohd Rahimi Nik Yusoff. "Integrating Technology into the Arabic Language Curriculum: A Systematic Review of Trends, Strategies and Cultural Dimensions." *Social Sciences & Humanities Open* 12 (2025): 101974. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2025.101974>.

who are structurally competent, but also toward fostering learners who are capable of communicating effectively and appropriately within the social contexts of Arabic-speaking communities.

### **Conclusion**

This study confirms that Arabic diglossia between *fusha* and '*ammiyah* constitutes a structural factor that significantly influences the teaching of Arabic as a foreign language. Diglossia is not merely a sociolinguistic phenomenon within Arabic-speaking societies, but also a source of disparity between the language taught in classrooms and the language used in everyday communicative practice. The functional distribution of language varieties, linguistic differences across phonological, morphological, and syntactic levels, and their impact on learner competence indicate that an instructional orientation focused exclusively on *fusha* tends to produce strong outcomes in formal literacy skills while providing limited support for the development of contextual communicative competence, particularly in listening, speaking, and pragmatic language use.

Based on the synthesis of these findings, this study concludes that Arabic language education should adopt a more contextualized and communicative approach that consciously and systematically accounts for the reality of diglossia. The selective integration of '*ammiyah*', without undermining the role of *fusha* as the standard variety, can function as a bridge between classroom language and social language, thereby strengthening learners' intercultural communicative competence. Although this study is based on a literature review and does not involve empirical field data, the conceptual contribution it offers provides a reflective foundation for the development of Arabic curricula and pedagogy in Indonesia. Future research is therefore recommended to empirically examine instructional strategies that pedagogically manage diglossia, so that Arabic language education may become increasingly responsive to learners' real-world communicative needs.

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