

Diglossia Interference in Arabic Language Acquisition: A Study of Indonesian Students at the Indonesian School of Mecca

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Abstract: This study examines the interference of ‘Amiyah (colloquial) Arabic in the use of Fuṣḥā (Modern Standard) Arabic among Indonesian diaspora students at the Indonesian School of Mecca, focusing on linguistic manifestations and contributing factors. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed with 16 fourth-grade students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected via non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Analysis followed Miles and Huberman’s interactive model integrated with Corder’s Error Analysis framework. Interference manifests in four domains: lexical, phonological, morphosyntactic, and grammatical (nahwu). Six contributing factors were identified: dominance of ‘Amiyah in daily communication, perceived ease of ‘Amiyah, limited Fuṣḥā practice opportunities, structural diglossia differences, foreign language anxiety, and pedagogical factors. This interference contributes to grammatical fossilization, reduced academic vocabulary, code-mixing, pronunciation deviations, and diminished speaking confidence. This study uniquely addresses Arabic diglossia interference within an Indonesian diaspora school context, an underexplored setting in Arabic sociolinguistics and second language acquisition research. Findings recommend sociolinguistically informed instruction incorporating explicit contrastive analysis between Fuṣḥā and ‘Amiyah to mitigate interference and enhance linguistic competence. This research contributes empirical evidence on diglossia interference patterns in diaspora educational contexts, offering actionable insights for curriculum designers and Arabic language educators to develop pedagogical strategies that address the unique challenges faced by learners in Arabic-speaking environments while strengthening Fuṣḥā proficiency.

Keywords: Arabic Diglossia, Dialect Interference, Fuṣḥā Arabic, ‘Amiyah Arabic, Mahārah Kalām

A. Introduction

The sociolinguistic status of the Arabic language is inseparable from diglossia, which is widespread across Arabic-speaking communities (Ferguson, 1959). In the context of Arabic, diglossia refers to a linguistic situation in which two language varieties coexist and perform different social functions within the same speech community (Boyd &

Latomaa, 1999; Ferguson, 1959). The first variety is Fuṣḥā Arabic, also known as Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), which functions as the high variety and is used in formal contexts such as education, print media, religious texts, official speeches, and government administration (Ibnu Hamid et al., 2025). The second variety is ‘Amiyah Arabic, or the local colloquial dialect, which serves as the low variety and is predominantly used in everyday communication at home, in markets, on the streets, and in other informal social interactions (Ni’mah, 2024). The fundamental difference between these two varieties lies in their adherence to grammatical rules, particularly Nahwu (syntax) and Sharaf (morphology). While Fuṣḥā Arabic strictly follows grammatical conventions, ‘Amiyah Arabic tends to simplify or omit these grammatical structures to facilitate everyday communication (Ni’mah, 2024).

In the sociolinguistic context of the Middle East, native Arabic speakers do not acquire Fuṣḥā Arabic as their first language. Instead, they naturally acquire their regional ‘Amiyah dialect from birth (Nursyahidatul Urwati et al., 2026). Fuṣḥā Arabic is typically learned later through formal education after children enter school (Asadi & Kawar, 2024). This situation presents significant challenges not only for native Arabic speakers but also for second-language (L2) learners who live and interact directly within Arabic-speaking communities (Mohammed Harbi, 2022). One notable example of this phenomenon can be observed among Indonesian students studying at the Indonesian School of Mecca (Sekolah Indonesia Mekkah/SIM) in Saudi Arabia.

In general, Indonesian students who study in Mecca are expected to possess a high level of proficiency in Fuṣḥā Arabic, given that they live in an environment where Arabic is the native language. However, preliminary field observations revealed a striking discrepancy between this expectation and the actual linguistic practices at the Indonesian School of Mecca. Students were found to use ‘Amiyah Arabic more frequently than Fuṣḥā Arabic in their daily communication. This phenomenon presents a sociolinguistic paradox. Although these students live in an authentic Arabic-speaking environment, continuous exposure to everyday ‘Amiyah does not necessarily strengthen their mastery of Fuṣḥā Arabic. Instead, it appears to facilitate the transfer of colloquial linguistic features into formal speech, even during Arabic language lessons where Fuṣḥā is expected to be used consistently (Ibrahim, 2024; Mohammed Harbi, 2022). This finding challenges the common assumption that immersion in a native Arabic-speaking environment automatically enhances learners’ proficiency in Modern Standard Arabic. Consequently, the proper use of Fuṣḥā Arabic in accordance with standard grammatical rules is rarely observed, both in informal conversations among students outside the classroom and during classroom learning activities. These findings indicate that exposure to an authentic Arabic-speaking environment does not necessarily guarantee mastery of the formal variety of the language (Fuṣḥā). Instead, the dominance of the colloquial variety (‘Amiyah) in everyday communication appears to interfere with students’ use of Fuṣḥā Arabic (Abu Dosh & Al-Mahameed, 2024; Putri & Thoyyibah, 2024).

Previous studies have extensively examined the relationship between Fuṣḥā and ‘Amiyah Arabic. For example, (Ni’mah, 2024) investigated the sociolinguistic use of both language varieties and concluded that Fuṣḥā is predominantly used in formal contexts, whereas ‘Amiyah dominates everyday communication. The study also emphasized that the primary distinction between the two varieties lies in their social functions and grammatical structures. Similarly, (Agustin et al., 2026) explored the sociolinguistic implications of the use of Fuṣḥā and ‘Amiyah among Indonesian students at Al-Azhar University, Egypt, and found that Fuṣḥā functions as a marker of academic identity, whereas ‘Amiyah serves as a practical tool for social adaptation. In contrast, (Diana Nahdliatin Nur & Hasanah Ushie Uswatun, 2025; Habib et al., 2025) focused on Arabic language errors among Indonesian students and identified four major categories of errors: phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic errors. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that Arabic diglossia remains a significant issue in Arabic language learning, particularly in relation to language variation and learner errors. Recent studies have also shown that diglossia environments influence children’s language development and formal Arabic use (Asli-Badarneh et al., 2023; Ibrahim, 2024). However, no previous study has comprehensively examined the forms of ‘Amiyah dialect interference, the factors contributing to such interference, and its influence on Fuṣḥā speaking skills among Indonesian elementary diaspora students living in Mecca. This gap is particularly important because these learners experience continuous interaction with three linguistic systems Indonesian, Fuṣḥā Arabic, and ‘Amiyah Arabic within a naturally diglossia environment. The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive investigation of the forms, contributing factors, and effects of ‘Amiyah dialect interference among Indonesian diaspora children at the Indonesian School of Mecca, who experience continuous language contact between Indonesian, Fuṣḥā Arabic, and ‘Amiyah Arabic in a naturally diglossia environment. Therefore, this study addresses these gaps by investigating the forms, causes, and effects of ‘Amiyah dialect interference on students’ *mahārah kalām* at the Indonesian School of Mecca.

This study makes an important theoretical contribution by extending the application of Language Contact Theory (Weinreich, 1953) and Error Analysis Theory (Corder, 1981) to the context of children’s language learning in a diglossia environment. In practice, the findings are expected to provide strategic recommendations for educators at the Indonesian School of Mecca for designing Arabic language curricula and instructional practices that are responsive to the local sociolinguistic context of Saudi Arabia. Based on this background, this study addresses three research questions: (1) What forms of ‘Amiyah dialect interference occur in the *mahārah kalām* of students at SIM? (2) What factors contribute to this interference? (3) How does this interference affect students’ Fuṣḥā speaking skills?

B. Methods

This study employed a qualitative, descriptive research design to identify, describe,

and analyze linguistic interference in a natural educational setting. A qualitative approach was selected because it is well-suited to exploring sociolinguistic realities and the complex dynamics of language contact between 'Amiyah Arabic (colloquial Arabic) and Fuṣḥā Arabic (Modern Standard Arabic) among language learners. The primary objective of this study was to comprehensively identify the forms of linguistic interference in students' oral production, examine the factors contributing to such interference, and analyze its overall influence on students' mahārah kalām (speaking skills). This research design enabled the researchers to investigate linguistic phenomena in their natural context without manipulating any variables, thereby ensuring a high level of ecological validity. The participants comprised 16 fourth-grade students from Class IV-B at the Indonesian School of Mecca (Sekolah Indonesia Mekkah/SIM) in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. The participants were selected using purposive sampling because they represent a unique population of Indonesian diaspora students who live, grow up, and interact in an authentic Arabic-speaking environment. Consequently, they are continuously exposed to the Hijazi dialect and other varieties of 'Amiyah Arabic outside the classroom while simultaneously being required to learn and use Fuṣḥā Arabic in formal educational settings. The study was conducted entirely at the Indonesian School of Mecca and focused on students' interactions during Arabic language lessons and their informal conversations on designated Arabic Language Days, when students were required to communicate in Arabic.

Data were collected using three complementary techniques to ensure data triangulation: non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Non-participant observations were conducted to capture students' spontaneous conversations and oral language production (mahārah kalām) both inside the classroom and in other areas of the school. These observations provided authentic evidence of interlanguage development and code-mixing as students communicated naturally. Semi-structured interviews explored participants' perceptions of the differences between the Arabic taught in school and the Arabic used in their daily environment. Finally, documentation supported the data collection process through the systematic transcription of audio recordings from both observations and interviews. These transcriptions served as the primary linguistic corpus for the analysis of language interference. The collected data were then analyzed using the interactive qualitative data analysis model developed by (Miles & Huberman, 1994), which consists of three interrelated and concurrent stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During the data reduction stage, transcripts of students' conversations were carefully reviewed and systematically selected to identify instances of linguistic deviations from standard Fuṣḥā Arabic. These deviations were subsequently classified and coded into specific linguistic categories based on (Corder, 1975), Error Analysis framework, which categorizes language errors into the domains of phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexis. Interview transcripts were also reduced and coded into thematic categories to identify the factors contributing to language interference and its effects on students' speaking fluency. During the data display stage, the categorized linguistic errors were

organized into comparative matrices presenting students' utterances alongside their corresponding Fuṣḥā Arabic forms. This presentation enabled the researchers to systematically visualize patterns of language interference and identify recurring linguistic features. Finally, during the conclusion drawing and verification stage, the findings were interpreted and triangulated using Language Contact Theory proposed by (Weinreich, 1953) and Diglossia Theory introduced by (Ferguson, 1959). This process ensured the credibility and validity of the findings and enabled the researchers to formulate comprehensive, evidence-based answers to the research questions.

C. Results and Discussion

This section systematically presents the research findings to address the three research questions: identifying the forms of 'Amiyah dialect interference found in students' oral production, examining the factors contributing to such interference, and analyzing its impact on students' mahārah kalām (speaking skills). Following the presentation of the findings, a comprehensive discussion synthesizes the results with the relevant literature in sociolinguistics and second-language acquisition. This approach offers a deeper understanding of diglossia among Indonesian diaspora learners in an authentic Arabic-speaking environment.

Forms of 'Amiyah Dialect Interference in Mahārah Kalām

Based on the data reduction process conducted on students' oral production during classroom observations, this study identified 50 instances of linguistic deviation that were classified as 'Amiyah dialect interference. These deviations were categorized into four major linguistic domains: lexical, phonological, morphological, and syntactic/grammatical (Nahwu) interference. The occurrence of these forms of interference reflects the cognitive tension between the formally acquired target language (Fuṣḥā Arabic) and the dominant language of everyday communication ('Amiyah Arabic), particularly the Hijazi dialect, which is widely spoken in Mecca.

1. Lexical Interference

Lexical interference was the most frequent form of language interference in the observational data. In this category, students spontaneously combined Fuṣḥā Arabic vocabulary with 'Amiyah Arabic lexical items while performing formal academic tasks and participating in classroom interactions. Such lexical substitutions demonstrate the strong influence of the colloquial dialect on students' spoken production, even in contexts where the exclusive use of Fuṣḥā Arabic was expected. Table 1 presents representative examples of lexical interference, along with their linguistic analyses.

Table 1. Forms of Lexical Interference of the 'Amiyah Dialect in Students' Use of Fuṣḥā Arabic in Mahārah Kalām

No	Student Speech (Data)	Target Form Fuṣḥā	Lexical Interference Analysis
1	أَبْغَى (abghā)	أُرِيدُ (urīdu)	Students use the word <i>abghā</i> , which is typical of the Hijazi dialect, to express the intention "I want", replacing the standard verb form <i>urīdu</i> .
2	إِشْ (īsh)	مَاذَا (mādzā)	There is a replacement of the standard interrogative pronoun "apa" (<i>mādzā</i>) with its colloquial equivalent <i>īsh</i> , which is very common in the dialects of the Arabian Peninsula and the Levant.
3	شَلُونَاك (shlūnak)	كَيْفَ حَالُكَ (Kaifa ḥĀluk)	The standard greeting phrase was replaced by the expression <i>shlūnak</i> (how are you), a colloquial idiom that is deeply rooted in the social interaction of Arab society.
4	يَلَّا (Yallā)	هَيَّا (Hayyā)	The use of colloquial invitation particles or inducements of <i>yallā</i> ("let's go") whose frequency is very high in the environment, replaces <i>hayyā</i> .
5	مَرَّة (Marrah)	جِدًّا (Jiddan)	The application of the word "intensifier" of <i>marrah</i> ("very/once") from the 'Amiyah dialect rejects the use of the standard adverb <i>jiddan</i> .
6	دَحِين (dahīn)	الآن (al-Anna)	Replacement of the standard temporal adverb "now" (<i>al-āna</i>) with the specific term Hijazi <i>dahīn</i> .
7	أَبْلَه (Ablah)	مُعَلِّمَة (mu'allimah)	The substitution of the academic noun "female teacher" (<i>mu'allimah</i>) with the colloquial honorific call <i>ablah</i> , which is often used in non-formal institutions or in everyday conversation.
8	شُوْوي (Shurway)	قَلِيل (Qalīl)	Students use the vocabulary of <i>shurway</i> to express "little", ignoring the standard form of <i>qalīl</i> .
9	بَعْدَيْن (ba'dain)	ثُمَّ / بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ (ṣumma / ba'da dzālika)	The use of the temporal conjunction <i>ba'dain</i> ("after") from the colloquial dialect instead of stringing sentences together with standard conjunctions.
10	زَحْمَة (zahmah)	إِزْدِيْهَام (izdiḥām)	The simplification of the standard noun "density/congestion" (<i>izdiḥām</i>) into its shorter colloquial derivation, <i>zahmah</i> .
11	بِقَالَة (biqālah)	الْمَتْجَر (al-matjar)	Students use the locative term <i>biqālah</i> ("small shop/grocery"), which is very common in Saudi Arabia, instead of using standard diction learned from textbooks.
12	رُحْتَ (ruḥt)	ذَهَبْتُ (dzahabtu)	The use of the root r-w-ḥ in the form <i>ruḥt</i> which in 'Amiyah exclusively refers to "go", discards the root dz-h-b in <i>Fuṣḥā</i> .

The findings presented above clearly indicate that lexical interference has become deeply embedded in the students' active vocabulary. Because 'Amiyah Arabic expressions are highly functional, carry strong pragmatic value, and are widely used in everyday communication throughout Saudi Arabia, students tend to retrieve these lexical items automatically from their long-term memory. As a result, the equivalent *Fuṣḥā Arabic* vocabulary, which is primarily learned in formal classroom settings, is often overlooked in spontaneous speech. This phenomenon is consistent with the principle of cognitive economy in language acquisition, which suggests that speakers tend to select lexical items that require the least cognitive processing effort during spontaneous communication.

2. Phonological Interference

Phonological interference occurs when the sound system of 'Amiyah Arabic influences or alters the pronunciation of standard Fuṣḥā Arabic phonemes. The observational data revealed two major subcategories of phonological interference: vowel shifts (changes in vowel quality or length) and consonant substitution. These deviations demonstrate the influence of the colloquial phonological system on students' production of standard Arabic sounds. Table 2 summarizes the main forms of phonological interference identified in this study.

Table 2. Forms of Phonological Interference of the 'Amiyah Dialect in Students' Use of Fuṣḥā Arabic in Mahārah Kalām

No	Student Speech (Data)	Target Form Fuṣḥā	Phonological Interference Analysis
1	أَدْخُلْ (<i>Adkhul</i>)	أَدْخُلْ (<i>Udkhul</i>)	There is an initial vowel shift in imperative verbs from <i>dhammah</i> to <i>fathah</i> , a characteristic of vowel simplification in dialect.
2	هَيْنَا (<i>Chinese</i>)	هَنَا (<i>hidden</i>)	The addition of diphthongs and vowel shifts in the demonstrative pronouns of the place from <i>hunā</i> to <i>hainā</i> .
3	إِنْتَ (<i>int</i>) / إِنْتَ (<i>core</i>)	أَنْتَ (<i>anta</i>) / أَنْتَ (<i>anti</i>)	The shift of the vowel from <i>fathah</i> to <i>kasrah</i> in <i>hamzah</i> at the beginning of the second person pronoun accompanied by the omission of the final vowel in the masculine form.
4	أَجْلِسِي (<i>Ajlisi</i>)	اجْلِسِي (<i>ijlisi</i>)	A mispronunciation of <i>fi'il amr</i> , where the <i>kasrah</i> vowel at the beginning of the word is pronounced as <i>fathah</i> , following the pattern of 'Amiyah.
5	كَمْ عُمْرُكَ (<i>kam 'umurk</i>)	كَمْ عُمْرُكَ (<i>kam 'umuruka</i>)	The total omission of the final inflectional vowel (<i>harakat i'rab</i>) reflects the colloquial tendency to end speech in closed consonant clusters.
6	مَعَ أُمِّكَ (<i>ma'a ummik</i>)	مَعَ أُمِّكَ (<i>ma'a ummuka</i>)	The dissolution of the final vowel in the possession pronoun, omits the <i>crucial i'rab</i> marker in the syntax of <i>Fuṣḥā</i> .
7	أَقْرَبِي (<i>aqroi</i>)	إِقْرَأِي (<i>Iqrai</i>)	Massive changes in the quality of the vocals and shifts in the quality of the vocals that change the shape of the orthopedic system.
8	عَدِيد (<i>Gadid</i>)	جَدِيد (<i>jadid</i>)	The substitution of the palatal african consonant /j/ (ج) for the vowel stop vowel /g/ (گ), a feature particularly prominent in the Egyptian dialect and some urban variants of the Hijazi.
9	دَغِغَة (<i>Dagigah</i>)	دَقِيقَة (<i>Daqiqah</i>)	The dilution of the uvular consonant /q/ (ق) to velar /g/ (گ) and the change (ح) to /g/, a feature of very strong interdialectal phonetic interference.
10	مَنْ (<i>sa</i>)	ثَ (<i>sa</i>)	The replacement of the soundless interdental fricative /θ/ with the alveolar fricative /s/ signifies the loss of interdental features.
11	زَ (<i>za</i>)	ذَ (<i>dza</i>)	Simplification of the sound of the voiced interdental fricative /ð/ into the alveolar fricative /z/.

Phonological interference significantly affects the rhythm, intonation, and phonetic accuracy of students' speech. The omission of final vowels, resulting in the complete loss of *i'rab* (grammatical case endings), reflects the direct influence of the phonotactic

characteristics of ‘Amiyah Arabic, which generally favor closed syllables at the end of words to facilitate faster and more natural speech. In addition, consonant substitutions (such as /q/ becoming /g/ or /j/ becoming /g/) indicate that students’ phonemic representations have been reshaped by continuous exposure to the multilingual and multicultural linguistic environment of Mecca. Consequently, these phonological changes reduce the accuracy of standard pronunciation required in Fuṣḥā Arabic.

3. Morphological and Syntactic Interference

Morphological and syntactic interference involves structural modifications to words and sentence patterns, including the attachment of colloquial affixes to standard Arabic roots and the transfer of ‘Amiyah Arabic word order and negation patterns into Fuṣḥā Arabic discourse. Table 3 presents the forms of morphosyntactic interference identified in this study.

Table 3. Forms of Morphological and Syntactic Interference of the ‘Amiyah Dialect in Students’ Use of Fuṣḥā Arabic in Mahārah Kalām

No	Student Speech (Data)	Target Form <i>Fuṣḥā</i>	Morphosyntactic Interference Analysis
1	بَرُوح (barūḥ)	أَذْهَبَ (adzhabu)	The attachment of the prefix <i>ba-</i> from the market dialect to denote present/future continuous in the verb, which prompts the standard inflection of <i>Fuṣḥā</i> .
2	بَسْتَرِي (basytarī)	سَأَسْتَرِي (sa’asytarī)	Substitution of the particle <i>sa-</i> future marker with the prefix <i>ba-</i> khas, colloquial, which is combined in a hybrid manner with standard verbs.
3	هُوَ مَا يَكْتُبُ (huwa mā yaktub)	هُوَ لَا يَكْتُبُ (huwa lā yaktubu)	The use of the negativity particle in the ‘Amiyah is common for verb <i>mudhari</i> , replacing the standard particle <i>lā</i> required by <i>Fuṣḥā</i> .
4	فِي بِنْتُ جَثْ (fī bint jat)	جَاءَتْ بِنْتُ (jā’at bintun)	The disruption of the standard word sequence of VSO (Verb-Subject-Object) into a colloquial existential structure that uses <i>fī</i> ("exists/exists").
5	أُرِيدُ أُرُوح (urīd arūḥ)	أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَذْهَبَ (Urīdu an Adzhaba)	The total omission of the subjunctive particle <i>an</i> (أَنْ) between two verbs, as well as the failure to give a correct inflection to the second verb.
6	إِنَّا نَدْرُسُ عَرَبِي (inḥna nadrus ‘arabī)	نَحْنُ نَدْرُسُ اللُّغَةَ الْعَرَبِيَّةَ (naḥnu nadrusu al-lughata al-‘arabiyyah)	The replacement of the standard plural first person pronoun with the form ‘Amiyah <i>iḥnā</i> , as well as the reduction of the noun phrase to singular.

The observed morphological mixing, such as the formation of the word *barūḥ*, reflects a complex interlanguage system in which students combine the grammatical patterns of ‘Amiyah Arabic with the communicative demands of formal classroom interaction. These findings suggest that students unconsciously construct linguistic hypotheses by transferring the simpler morphosyntactic patterns of ‘Amiyah Arabic such as simplified imperative forms and negation patterns into contexts where the grammatical structures of Fuṣḥā Arabic are required.

4. Grammatical Interference (Nahwu)

This category includes errors that directly violate the grammatical rules of *Nahwu*, particularly those involving gender agreement (*mudhakkar and mu'annath*) and the correct use of demonstrative pronouns (*ism al-ishārah*).

Table 4. Forms of Grammatical Interference (Nahwu) of the 'Amiyah Dialect in Students' Use of Fuṣḥā Arabic in Mahārah Kalām

No	Student Speech (Data)	Target Form <i>Fuṣḥā</i>	Grammatical interference analysis (Nahwu)
1	هُوَ عَمَّةٌ (<i>huwa 'ammah</i>)	هِيَ عَمَّةٌ (<i>Hiya 'Ammah</i>)	A pronoun conformity application error, where <i>huwa</i> (masculine) is used to refer to the feminine noun "aunt".
2	هِيَ مُعَلِّم (<i>hiya mu'allim</i>)	هِيَ مُعَلِّمَةٌ (<i>Hiya Mu'allimah</i>)	The use of the masculine profession noun format for the subject of the feminine pronoun (<i>hiya</i>), ignores the feminine marker suffix <i>ta' marbuthah</i> .
3	هَذَا سَبُّورَةٌ (<i>hādzā sabbūrah</i>)	هَذِهِ سَبُّورَةٌ (<i>Hādzihi Sabbūrah</i>)	The misplacement between the masculine isim isyarah (<i>hādzā</i>) and the feminine inanimate (<i>sabbūrah</i>).
4	هَذِهِ قَلَمٌ (<i>hādzihi qalam</i>)	هَذَا قَلَمٌ (<i>hādzā qalam</i>)	The use of feminine isyarah (<i>hādzihi</i>) for masculine inanimate nouns (<i>qalam</i>).
5	هُوَ طَبِيبَةٌ (<i>huwa ṭabībah</i>)	هِيَ طَبِيبَةٌ (<i>hiya ṭabībah</i>)	Repetitive errors in the use of masculine pronouns for feminine subjects.

These widespread grammatical errors are symptomatic of a *diglossia environment*, in which the strict agreement rules of *Fuṣḥā Arabic* are frequently simplified, relaxed, or even disregarded in everyday 'Amiyah Arabic communication. As a result, students gradually develop *grammatical fossilization*, whereby they no longer perceive gender agreement as an essential grammatical requirement for conveying meaning effectively.

Factors Causing Interference

A thematic analysis of the interview data obtained from the 16 participants identified six major factors contributing to the occurrence of 'Amiyah dialect interference in students' use of *Fuṣḥā Arabic*. These factors encompass sociolinguistic, psychological, and pedagogical dimensions (Rohman et al., 2025).

1. The Dominance of 'Amiyah Arabic in Everyday Communication

This factor emerged as the most dominant contributor to language interference and was explicitly reported by 12 of the 16 participants (e.g., R3, R4, R6, R7, R9, R10, R11, R12, R13, R14, R15, and R16). Most participants stated that 'Amiyah Arabic was used far more frequently than *Fuṣḥā Arabic* at home and in their surrounding social environment, including markets and playgrounds. In contrast, *Fuṣḥā Arabic* was generally restricted to classroom instruction. For example, R3 stated, "I use 'Amiyah Arabic more often than *Fuṣḥā*, so when I speak *Fuṣḥā*, I often unconsciously switch to

'Amiyah." Similarly, R10 explained, "Sometimes I mix *Fuṣḥā* and 'Amiyah because I use 'Amiyah so often." This constant exposure strengthens students' habitual use of 'Amiyah Arabic, making it the default linguistic system retrieved during spontaneous speech production. These findings support *Language Contact Theory* (Weinreich, 1953), which posits that the dominant language in the speaker ecosystem will systematically influence and disrupt other languages in cognitive production.

2. The perception that Amiyah Arabic is easier to use

Most participants (e.g., R3, R4, R6, R7, R10, R11, R15, and R16) believed that 'Amiyah Arabic is easier to use than *Fuṣḥā* Arabic. They perceived 'Amiyah as shorter, simpler, more flexible, and less constrained by grammatical rules, thereby facilitating everyday communication. R10 explained, "Amiyah Arabic is easier because it is shorter," while R6 stated, "Everyday Arabic is easier to speak, whereas *Fuṣḥā* requires greater attention to sentence structure." In contrast, *Fuṣḥā* Arabic requires speakers to process grammatical case endings (*i'rāb*), gender agreement, and verb inflection in real time. Because 'Amiyah Arabic eliminates or simplifies many of these grammatical features, students perceive it as a more cognitively efficient option for spontaneous communication. Consequently, when asked to speak *Fuṣḥā* Arabic, they tend to rely on familiar 'Amiyah patterns.

3. Lack of Practice and Habituation Using Fusha Arabic

Most participants (e.g., R1, R2, R4, R5, R8, R10, R11, R12, R13, R15, and R16) identified limited opportunities for active practice as a major source of their phonological and grammatical errors. Although the Indonesian School of Mecca has implemented an Arabic Language Day on Wednesdays and Thursdays, participants acknowledged that they rarely practiced speaking *Fuṣḥā* Arabic independently outside formal classroom activities. As R12 explained, "I rarely speak *Fuṣḥā* Arabic; I use English or Indonesian more often." Likewise, R11 commented, "The lack of practice makes me less familiar with *Fuṣḥā* Arabic." From the perspective of *Second Language Acquisition* (SLA) theory, insufficient opportunities for meaningful language output hinder the development of speaking proficiency. As a result, students fail to automatize the grammatical structures of *Fuṣḥā* Arabic and become increasingly dependent on 'Amiyah Arabic during spontaneous speech.

4. Differences Between the Linguistic Systems of 'Amiyah and Fuṣḥā (Diglossia)

The structural differences between *Fuṣḥā* Arabic and 'Amiyah Arabic constitute another major source of language interference. Participants such as R13 and R16 demonstrated an awareness that *Fuṣḥā* Arabic is governed by strict grammatical rules, including *Nahwu*, gender agreement (*mudhakkar* and *mu'annath*), case endings (*i'rāb*), and the correct use of demonstrative pronouns (*ism al-ishārah*). In contrast, 'Amiyah Arabic employs considerably simpler grammatical structures. As R3 explained, "In 'Amiyah

Arabic, gender distinctions are not always used, so I tend to carry that habit over when speaking *Fuṣḥā*." Because students acquire 'Amiyah Arabic naturally from an early age, they frequently transfer its grammatical patterns into *Fuṣḥā* Arabic, resulting in structural errors such as *huwa ummī* or the use of *ṭabīb* to refer to a female physician. These findings demonstrate how structural differences between the two varieties create an *interlanguage* system characterized by hybrid linguistic forms.

5. Psychological Factors: Foreign Language Anxiety

Psychological factors also played a significant role in the occurrence of language interference. Most participants reported experiencing anxiety, fear of making mistakes, embarrassment, nervousness, and a lack of confidence when required to speak *Fuṣḥā* Arabic (e.g., R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R10, R11, R12, R13, and R15). R11 explained, "I am afraid of making mistakes and being scolded or laughed at by my friends." Similarly, R10 stated, "I am afraid of making mistakes, especially when speaking in front of my teachers." Such *foreign language anxiety* consumes cognitive resources that would otherwise be allocated to grammatical monitoring and speech production. Consequently, students tend to rely on the more familiar 'Amiyah Arabic patterns, which they perceive as safer and less cognitively demanding than *Fuṣḥā* Arabic.

6. Pedagogical Approach and Teacher Feedback

The final factor relates to instructional strategies and the type of feedback provided by teachers. Several participants (e.g., R1, R3, R4, R8, and R14) reported that the most effective learning occurred when teachers combined explicit grammatical explanations with speaking practice and immediate corrective feedback. R3 explained, "The teacher's explanation helped me understand better. For example, when I incorrectly referred to a female doctor, the teacher explained that the correct form should use *tā' marbūṭah*." Although explicit correction helps students develop grammatical awareness, the findings also indicate that excessive correction may increase students' speaking anxiety if it is not delivered in a supportive and encouraging manner. Therefore, an imbalance between accuracy-oriented instruction and communicative fluency may unintentionally reinforce students' reliance on 'Amiyah Arabic, particularly outside the classroom, where teacher guidance is absent.

Effects of 'Amiyah Dialect Interference on Students' *Fuṣḥā* Arabic Speaking Ability

A comprehensive synthesis of the observational data and interview findings revealed five major effects of 'Amiyah dialect interference on the *mahārah kalām* (speaking skills) of students at the Indonesian School of Mecca (SIM).

First, dialect interference contributes to the *fossilization of grammatical errors*, particularly in *Nahwu*. As the findings demonstrate, errors involving gender agreement (*mudhakkar and mu'annath*), personal pronouns, and demonstrative

pronouns (*ism al-ishārah*) accounted for a substantial proportion of the observed deviations. Systematic errors such as *hādhā sayyārah* indicate that students' understanding of *Fuṣḥā Arabic* grammatical rules has gradually been replaced by the more flexible grammatical patterns of '*Amiyah Arabic*, which often disregard strict gender agreement for inanimate nouns (Reyza FM & Adila, 2022). This tendency may ultimately weaken students' grammatical competence in formal literacy-based assessments conducted in *Fuṣḥā Arabic*.

Second, lexical attrition occurs within formal academic contexts. Students' frequent reliance on '*Amiyah Arabic* vocabulary – such as using *ablah* instead of *mu'allimah* or *abghā* instead of *urīdu* – prevents the activation of the equivalent *Fuṣḥā Arabic* vocabulary learned in the classroom. Because these formal lexical items are rarely used in authentic communication, they gradually become less accessible in students' productive vocabulary, thereby limiting their lexical repertoire when delivering speeches, telling stories, or completing other *mahārah kalām* activities (Nasir & Ridwan, 2025).

Third, phonological interference results in non-standard pronunciation patterns. Changes in vowel realization (*ḥarakāt*) and consonant substitutions, such as pronouncing *daqīqah* as *dagīgah* or replacing *dhāl* (ذ) with *zāy* (ز), indicate that students' pronunciation has deviated from the accepted pronunciation norms of *Modern Standard Arabic*. Such phonological deviations affect not only pronunciation accuracy but also intelligibility, as changes in vowel length or consonant articulation may alter lexical meaning and reduce clarity of communication with Arabic speakers from other regions.

Fourth, code-mixing becomes normalized as a default communication strategy. Hybrid utterances such as *anā abghā jundiyyan*, *yallā udkhulī*, and *anā abrūḥ al-ḥammām* illustrate extensive intra-sentential code-mixing between *Fuṣḥā Arabic* and '*Amiyah Arabic*. These utterances demonstrate that students have not yet developed clear boundaries between the formal linguistic repertoire required in academic contexts and the informal variety used in everyday communication. Consequently, their speech no longer fully conforms to either *Fuṣḥā Arabic* or '*Amiyah Arabic*, resulting in hybrid linguistic forms.

Fifth, dialect interference negatively affects students' fluency, accuracy, and self-confidence in speaking *Fuṣḥā Arabic*. The constant cognitive conflict between students' habitual use of '*Amiyah Arabic* and the academic requirement to produce grammatically accurate *Fuṣḥā Arabic* often leads to hesitation, disfluency, and reduced participation in classroom discussions. Over time, this creates a cycle of avoidance that limits opportunities to develop their overall proficiency in *mahārah kalām*.

Discussion

Interpreting 'Amiyah Interference in Light of Language Learning Theories

The findings of this study indicate that the linguistic deviations observed in the spoken production of Indonesian diaspora students at the Indonesian School of Mecca are not merely incidental language errors but systematic manifestations of a diglossia environment in which two Arabic varieties coexist with different social functions. Students' frequent use of lexical substitutions, phonological simplifications, hybrid morphological forms, and grammatical inconsistencies reflects the continuous interaction between Fuṣḥā and 'Amiyah within their everyday communicative practices. Rather than functioning as two completely separate language systems, both varieties compete during spontaneous speech production, leading students to unconsciously transfer features of 'Amiyah into formal Arabic.

This phenomenon can be understood through Diglossia Theory (Ferguson, 1959), which explains that speakers living in a diglossia community constantly alternate between a high variety (Fuṣḥā) and a low variety ('Amiyah) according to social context. In the case of the participants, Hijazi 'Amiyah serves as the dominant language of daily interaction, whereas Fuṣḥā is largely restricted to formal classroom activities. Such unequal patterns of language exposure gradually strengthen students' reliance on 'Amiyah as their primary linguistic system, reducing the automatic retrieval of Fuṣḥā structures during spontaneous communication (Ibnu Hamid et al., 2025; Mohammed Harbi, 2022).

The predominance of lexical interference further illustrates the role of Language Contact Theory, which posits that prolonged and intensive contact between language varieties facilitates linguistic transfer (Weinreich, 1953). Expressions such as *abghā* replacing *urīdu* or *īsh* replacing *mādzā* demonstrate how frequently used colloquial vocabulary becomes cognitively more accessible than its Fuṣḥā equivalent. Because these expressions are repeatedly reinforced through authentic social interaction outside the classroom, they become deeply embedded in students' long-term memory and are retrieved automatically during speech. This finding is consistent with the principle of cognitive economy, whereby speakers naturally select linguistic forms that require the least processing effort (Abu Dosh & Al-Mahameed, 2024; Othman, 2025).

A similar pattern is evident in the phonological domain. The omission of final vowels and the substitution of consonants indicate that students' phonemic representations have gradually adapted to the phonotactic characteristics of Hijazi 'Amiyah. From the perspective of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Theory, such adaptations represent a natural consequence of sustained exposure to the dominant linguistic environment, where fluency and communicative efficiency often take precedence over formal pronunciation accuracy (Asli-Badarneh & Asadi, 2023). Consequently, despite

receiving formal instruction in Fuṣḥā, students continue to reproduce pronunciation patterns that are more consistent with the colloquial dialect.

Likewise, the hybrid morphological and syntactic forms identified in this study provide empirical support for Interlanguage Theory (Corder, 1975). Rather than indicating a lack of grammatical knowledge, constructions such as *barūḥ* suggest that students actively develop transitional linguistic systems by integrating grammatical patterns from 'Amiyah with Fuṣḥā lexical structures. These hybrid forms function as cognitive strategies that enable learners to maintain communicative fluency while reducing the processing demands associated with the more complex inflectional system of Fuṣḥā (Asadi et al., 2024; Khamis-Dakwar & Makhoul, 2024).

Finally, the recurring grammatical errors, particularly those involving gender agreement and demonstrative pronouns, reinforce the assumptions of Error Analysis Theory (Corder, 1975). Such errors should not be interpreted as random mistakes but as systematic evidence of learners' evolving linguistic competence. Continuous reliance on 'Amiyah, where grammatical agreement is often simplified in everyday communication, gradually weakens students' sensitivity to Fuṣḥā grammatical rules and contributes to the development of grammatical fossilization (Asadi et al., 2024; Selinker, 1972).

Positioning the Findings within Previous Research

The findings are further supported by (Mohammed Harbi, 2022) and (Putri & Thoyyibah, 2024), who argue that *diglossia* creates a functional communication gap in which *Fuṣḥā Arabic* is largely confined to formal educational settings, whereas *'Amiyah Arabic* dominates everyday communication. Likewise, (Asli-Badarneh et al., 2023) and (Khamis-Dakwar et al., 2012) reported that the linguistic distance between standard and colloquial Arabic, particularly at the phonological and morphosyntactic levels, promotes cognitive interference that negatively affects learners' literacy and oral fluency, including among diaspora children and non-native speakers.

Similarly, (Abu Dosh & Al-Mahameed, 2024) and (Albirini, 2016) observed that diglossia environments naturally encourage grammatical errors and lexical mixing, as identified among the participants in this study. In the field of Arabic language pedagogy, (Jamil & Agung, 2022) and (Hasanah et al., 2021) further argue that traditional instructional approaches emphasizing grammatical accuracy while neglecting learners' sociolinguistic realities contribute to increased foreign language anxiety and reduced confidence in oral communication. (Palmer, 2007) and (Oweini et al., 2020) likewise contend that excluding *'Amiyah Arabic* from formal instruction does not facilitate learning but instead makes it more difficult for learners to distinguish appropriately between formal and informal language varieties.

On the other hand, several neurocognitive studies have suggested that *diglossia* should

be viewed as a cognitive advantage rather than merely a linguistic challenge. (Ibrahim, 2024) and (Alrwaita et al., 2023) argue that individuals living in diglossia environments often develop stronger executive functioning, greater cognitive flexibility, and enhanced metalinguistic awareness, suggesting that bidialectalism may provide cognitive benefits comparable to those associated with bilingualism. Similarly, (Alrwaita et al., 2024) proposed that this cognitive flexibility should enable speakers to manage different language varieties effectively and reduce cross-variety interference. From a more traditional pedagogical perspective, some scholars have also argued that maintaining an exclusively *Fuṣḥā Arabic* learning environment by restricting the use of *‘Amiyah Arabic* is the most effective way to preserve the linguistic integrity of standard Arabic.

However, the empirical findings of the present study do not fully support these theoretical assumptions. Although navigating multiple language varieties may strengthen executive functions, as suggested by (Ibrahim, 2024), the participants in this study continued to experience substantial lexical, phonological, and grammatical interference during spontaneous *mahārah kalām* tasks. These findings indicate that cognitive control alone is insufficient to overcome the combined effects of sociolinguistic dominance and foreign language anxiety. Consequently, students remained strongly influenced by *‘Amiyah Arabic*, which had become deeply entrenched through daily use, leading to persistent interference in their spoken *Fuṣḥā Arabic*.

Pedagogical Implications for Mahārah Kalām Instruction

The findings of this study have important implications for Arabic language teaching in diglossia contexts, particularly in schools serving Indonesian diaspora students. The pervasive influence of *‘Amiyah* on students’ spoken *Fuṣḥā* suggests that conventional monolingual approaches, which emphasize exclusive use of *Fuṣḥā* while overlooking learners’ everyday linguistic experiences, may not adequately address the realities of language use in authentic Arabic-speaking environments. Instead, Arabic language instruction should adopt a more sociolinguistically responsive approach that acknowledges the coexistence of *Fuṣḥā* and *‘Amiyah* as an inevitable feature of students’ communicative lives (Othman, 2025; Taha Thomure et al., 2025).

One practical implication is the integration of explicit contrastive analysis into the teaching of *mahārah kalām*. Rather than treating dialectal features solely as errors to be corrected, teachers can systematically compare the lexical, phonological, morphological, and grammatical characteristics of *Fuṣḥā* and *‘Amiyah*. Such comparisons help learners recognize where the two varieties converge and diverge, thereby strengthening their metalinguistic awareness and reducing unconscious language transfer (Abu Dosh & Al-Mahameed, 2024; Ghazouani et al., 2024). By understanding the linguistic boundaries between the two varieties, students are more likely to make conscious language choices during formal communication.

The findings also indicate that affective factors should receive greater attention in Arabic language instruction. Because many participants reported anxiety when speaking Fuṣḥā, instructional practices should provide opportunities for meaningful communication in a supportive learning environment before placing strong emphasis on grammatical accuracy. Corrective feedback that encourages gradual improvement rather than immediate perfection may help reduce foreign language anxiety while increasing students' confidence to use Fuṣḥā in classroom interactions (Fu & Li, 2024).

At the curricular level, Arabic language programs in diaspora settings should incorporate learning activities that reflect the functional distribution of language varieties in students' daily lives. Classroom tasks, role plays, and speaking exercises can be designed to help learners distinguish situations in which Fuṣḥā is expected from those in which 'Amiyah is commonly used. Such contextualized practice not only reinforces communicative competence but also enables students to navigate diglossia environments more effectively without unnecessary code-mixing (Jamil & Agung, 2022; Putri & Thoyyibah, 2024).

Finally, efforts to strengthen the use of Fuṣḥā beyond the classroom should be accompanied by structured pedagogical support rather than language policies alone. School language programs, including designated Arabic-speaking days, are likely to be more effective when students are provided with functional vocabulary, communicative expressions, and scaffolded speaking activities that are relevant to everyday interactions. In this way, Fuṣḥā becomes not only the language of formal instruction but also a practical medium of communication that students can use with greater confidence in authentic school settings (Asadi & Kawar, 2024; Asli-Badarneh & Asadi, 2023).

D. Conclusion

This study concludes that students at the Indonesian School of Mecca (SIM) experience significant linguistic interference from 'Amiyah Arabic, particularly the Hijazi dialect, when producing speech in Fuṣḥā Arabic. The findings reveal that this interference consistently occurs across four major linguistic domains: lexical substitution, phonological interference involving vowel and consonant changes, morphosyntactic interference (such as the attachment of colloquial prefixes to standard Arabic verb forms), and grammatical interference involving errors in gender agreement and the use of demonstrative and personal pronouns. The study further identifies six major factors contributing to this phenomenon: (1) the dominance of 'Amiyah Arabic in students' daily sociolinguistic environment; (2) students' perception that 'Amiyah Arabic is simpler and easier to use than Fuṣḥā Arabic; (3) limited opportunities for meaningful and consistent practice of Fuṣḥā Arabic outside the classroom; (4) the structural differences between 'Amiyah Arabic and Fuṣḥā Arabic within a diglossia linguistic system; (5) high levels of foreign language anxiety during formal speaking activities; and (6) instructional practices that place greater emphasis on grammatical

accuracy than on contextual communicative practice. The cumulative effect of these factors is reflected in a decline in students' mahārah kalām (speaking skills). This decline is evidenced by the fossilization of grammatical errors, reduced mastery of Fuṣḥā Arabic vocabulary, the frequent occurrence of code-mixing, non-standard pronunciation patterns, and lower levels of communicative self-confidence. Based on these findings, this study suggests that Arabic language instruction at the Indonesian School of Mecca should move beyond an exclusively monolingual approach and adopt a more sociolinguistically informed pedagogy. Rather than ignoring the presence of 'Amiyah Arabic, educators should explicitly acknowledge its role in students' linguistic development and incorporate contrastive analysis between Fuṣḥā Arabic and 'Amiyah Arabic into classroom instruction. Such an approach can help students recognize the structural differences between the two language varieties, reduce unconscious language transfer, and improve their metalinguistic awareness. Finally, future research is recommended to investigate the effectiveness of contrastive pedagogical approaches through experimental or quasi-experimental designs. Such studies would provide stronger empirical evidence regarding the role of Fuṣḥā-'Amiyah contrastive instruction in improving the speaking proficiency of Arabic language learners living in comparable diglossia environments.

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