

## ARTICLE

# Examining the Influence of Diglossia on Arabic-Speaking Students' Progress in Modern Standard Arabic

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## ABSTRACT

The diglossia term makes reference to a linguistic phenomenon whereby in the same language, two varieties are found to coexist and are used simultaneously by the speakers of that language. This is exhibited in the use of Modern Standard Arabic in formal settings and the regional dialect in daily communication, with such duality set to influence Arabic language learners and presenting an urgent need to highlight the influences of this phenomenon. The aim of this study is to address an identified gap in the literature by examining the influence of diglossia on the progress of Arabic-speaking students in Modern Standard Arabic. Fifty-six teachers and parents participated in the study, whereby they completed a ten-item quantitative questionnaire and semi-structured qualitative interviews. The participants' responses were collected, analysed, and organised into themes that were aligned with the study focus. The primary study findings present novel perspectives by highlighting how the phenomenon of diglossia directly influences the progress of Arabic-speaking students in Modern Standard Arabic, a field that remains overlooked. Moreover, the study advocates for teachers to develop curricular activities that advance students' exposure to Modern Standard Arabic and encourage parents to expose their children to more opportunities for Modern Standard Arabic usage. These findings lead to an

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improved understanding of the influences of diglossia on Arabic-speaking students' progress in Modern Standard Arabic and provide strategies that might be used in mitigating its influences.

**Keywords:** Regional Dialect; Arabic Speaking Students; Modern Standard Arabic; Diglossia; Influences

## 1. Introduction

Arabic is a rich language that has been known for its stability for over 1,500 years, with the first engraving of Arabic dating back to the first century <sup>[1]</sup>. Before that, it had been identified that the most ancient known paradigm of the Arabic language was a writing in the Syrian desert in the 4th century AD <sup>[2]</sup>. Despite variations in letter patterns, educated Arabs can readily comprehend ancient books and documents <sup>[3]</sup>. Arabic belongs to the Semitic language group, a branch of the Afro-Asiatic language family <sup>[4]</sup>. As per Abalkheel <sup>[1]</sup>, the Semitic group is a subfamily that is mainly located in the Levant, the Fertile Crescent, and the Arabian Peninsula. The Arabic language is symbolic of and echoes Arabs' spiritual traditions and history, and therefore it can be said to be the Arabic identity's most vital component. Beyond the Middle East region, it is possible to find non-exclusively Arab societies that speak Arabic. Moreover, all Muslims employ Arabic to a certain degree, due to their need to utilise the Arabic language during their daily prayers. Consequently, Arabic still serves as a connection to the broader Muslim milieu, and even for those for whom the language represents a second language. Arabic is the only language that has not experienced substantial transformations since educated Arabs still have the ability to read ancient books and classical manuscripts relatively efficiently, despite the variations in letter patterns that exist <sup>[3]</sup>. Geographically, Arabic dispersed into three particular regions: (1) prior to Islam's emergence it was spoken in the Arabian Peninsula (north and central); (2) following the Islamic conquests, the language extended into the south of the Arabian Peninsula; and finally (3) the language spread beyond the geographical boundaries of the Arabian Peninsula <sup>[5]</sup>.

Arabic has two main varieties <sup>[6]</sup>: Modern Standard Arabic, which is used in formal settings, and regional dialects, that is preferred for daily life conversation <sup>[7]</sup>. This situation of Arabic highlights the existence of these two varieties, which is a phenomenon referred to as diglossia <sup>[8]</sup>.

Arabic children learn their regional dialects from their environment, while Modern Standard Arabic is taught in

their schools on a daily basis. Researchers believe that their proficiency in Modern Standard Arabic is affected because the language spoken in their community during their early years differs from that which they must learn in an academic setting <sup>[9]</sup>. Consequently, Arabic-speaking students who are raised in Arabic-speaking societies must achieve mastery in both their regional dialect for daily communication and Modern Standard Arabic for formal writing and speaking. To explore this phenomenon, the present study aims to answer the following question: What are the influences of diglossia on Arabic-speaking students regarding their progress in Modern Standard Arabic?

### 1.1. The Research Problem

According to Thomure et al. <sup>[10]</sup>, diglossia in the Arabic language presents a challenge for students in terms of switching between the regional dialect and Modern Standard Arabic, with the linguistic distance between the two forms likely to interfere directly and consistently with language development <sup>[11]</sup>. Moreover, it has been argued that diglossia affects Arabic-speaking students' improvement in their language skills <sup>[12]</sup>. It has also been pointed out that language variation in the Arabic language creates significant difficulties for Arabic-speaking students, thus hindering their educational progress in the language <sup>[8]</sup>.

Artika et al. revealed that limited exposure to any language hinders students' ability to linguistically progress and excel <sup>[8]</sup>. It has been stated that diglossia contributes to lower student awareness of the phonological structure, which is vital to achieve in the process of acquiring phonics <sup>[13]</sup>. Furthermore, a significant body of the academic literature has indicated a gap in Arabic-speaking students' proficiency in terms of Modern Standard Arabic <sup>[10]</sup>.

Accordingly, this research intends to fill a gap in the existing literature by responding to the research question that seeks to explore the influences of diglossia on Arabic-speaking students' progress in Modern Standard Arabic, with the aim of providing an improved understanding of the influences of diglossia and contributing to both bridging the

identified literature gap and enhancing students' progress.

## 1.2. The Significance of the Study

In terms of teaching the Arabic language to non-native speakers, numerous studies have been conducted. Nevertheless, what makes this study distinct is its emphasis on the tuition of the language for native Arabic speakers, a phenomenon that has received a paucity of research focus to date. Importantly, prior investigations have primarily focused their lens on the teachers' and administrators' roles. In contrast, this study highlights the critical role of parents, acknowledging their significant influence in terms of their children's education [7].

Moreover, although the phenomenon of diglossia has been investigated and studied from different sociolinguistic perspectives, its direct influences on Arabic-speaking students' progress in Modern Standard Arabic are rarely addressed. Accordingly, this research offers an innovative contribution by linking this phenomenon to measurable academic standards and performance in the field of education.

## 2. Literature Review

It has been stated that the term "Diglossia" is a combination of two Greek words: "di" which means two, and "glossia" which means language [14]. Within the same context, AlQahtani stated that linguists have debated the origins of diglossia and how it was coined [15]. It was first studied by Karl Krumbacher in "Das Problem der Neugriechischen Schriftsprache" in 1902. Georges Marçais advanced the phenomenon in "La Diglossie Arabe" in 1930. It gained popularity after Charles Ferguson discussed it at a 1958 conference [16]. Ferguson stated that Arabic is one of four main languages demonstrating diglossia [14], where the everyday language differs significantly from that used in schools and formal settings.

This diglossic situation emerges from the gap between the regional dialect and Modern Standard Arabic [16], impacting both spoken and written forms [17], and presenting linguistic and sociolinguistic challenges. Arab children typically become familiar with the regional dialect before formal schooling begins [12,18]. Arabic encompasses shared similarities and distinct differences due to its complex diglossic nature [19]. Arabic speakers are expected to be flu-

ent in both spoken dialects and Modern Standard Arabic [19]. Differences in phonemic structure account for the discrepancies between the two, as certain syllabic phonological structures are exclusive to Modern Standard Arabic, while others are unique to the regional dialect [20]. Research indicates that the disparity in pronunciation between the regional dialect and Modern Standard Arabic may affect the development of phonological skills essential for literacy in Modern Standard Arabic. According to Saiegh-Haddad [19], Arabic-speaking students face challenges in distinguishing between regional dialect and Modern Standard Arabic phonemes. Furthermore, producing complete sentences in Modern Standard Arabic requires significant effort from students, which leads to more communication challenges among students [21]. Asadi discussed that researchers investigated this phenomenon and its effects on students learning [22], whereby they concluded that the phonology of the Arabic language is linked to grammatical errors and challenges in reading and comprehension among students from grades one to six.

Additionally, there are several differences between the regional dialect and Modern Standard Arabic at the level of phonology. For example, in Modern Standard Arabic, there is no word starting with a consonant cluster, while this is common in the regional dialect. For example, the word for brain in the regional dialect is (جَمَل) "jmal" while, it is (جَمَل) "jamal" in Modern Standard Arabic [19].

Moreover, it has been discussed that diglossia influences students' confidence in using Modern Standard Arabic, as students feel that it is not their first language and is not used in their everyday conversations [7]. Also, many researchers have highlighted the significance of the early years of a child's life in developing their linguistic abilities and skills [12]. During these early years, children acquire language skills through interactions with family and other social settings, which help them understand and communicate effectively [23].

Although the phenomenon of diglossia in Arabic language has been discussed and widely investigated, few studies have paid attention to its influences on Arabic-speaking students who learn their native language [12]. This gap in the literature is critical to address due to the central role of Modern Standard Arabic in students' understanding of their heritage language and its legacy [7]. Therefore, this research

intends to fill a gap in the literature by examining the direct influences of diglossia on students' progress in Modern Standard Arabic, aiming to provide practical strategies that might inform language learning.

### 3. Methodology

In this study, the explanatory sequential mixed-method approach was used, where three stages of data collection and analysis were employed. The first stage was conducted through quantitative analysis achieved via a questionnaire completed by 37 teachers and parents. In the second stage, qualitative analysis was employed using data drawn from semi-structured interviews conducted with ten teachers and nine parents. In the third stage, triangulation was employed whereby the quantitative and qualitative data were triangulated and compared with the literature reviewed in this study [24]. According to Sebanz and Knoblich [25], this approach is of critical value as it allows for the integration of various views from both methods of data collection, leading to more validity and reliability.

The methodological approach combined descriptive and inferential analysis, which led to a structured framework that contributed to contextualising the participants' perspectives [4].

In terms of the sampling technique, the simple random approach was employed for the quantitative phase and the purposive sampling technique for the qualitative phase, targeting knowledgeable parents and experienced teachers. Regarding confidentiality, all participants' names were kept anonymous.

#### 3.1. The Instrumentation, Ethics, Reliability, and Validity

Two data-collection instruments were used in this study. Firstly, a ten-item questionnaire was completed by the teachers and parents, aimed at exploring the participants' views regarding the influences of diglossia on students' progress in Modern Standard Arabic. The second instrument was a semi-structured interview, involving experienced teachers and parents regarding their concerns and views related to diglossia.

For the research ethics, the main consideration in this study was confidentiality, with all questionnaires and inter-

view records kept anonymous, while all identifiers and quotations have been anonymized [7].

For reliability and validity, the use of constant phrases by the same researcher ensures a high degree of reliability. Additionally, the use of an explanatory sequential mixed-method approach where a range of instruments were utilised ensures validity in this study [4].

#### 3.2. Data Collection and Analysis

The quantitative data of this research were gathered through a questionnaire distributed to the participants using Google Forms. The semi-structured interview data were collected via online interviews. The first phase of the data analysis focused on the analysis of the quantitative data, involving descriptive analysis.

The second phase, which focused on the analysis of the qualitative data, employed thematic analysis following the four stages of coding as outlined by Bryman [26]. This approach was particularly valuable in helping the researcher organise and categorise the interviewees' responses into distinct themes. The use of these two analytical methods ensured a better understanding of the data, as the numerical data were supported and explained by in-depth qualitative analysis [24].

### 4. Research Findings

#### 4.1. Quantitative Analysis Regarding the Influences of Diglossia on Students' Progress in Modern Standard Arabic

A total of thirty-seven teachers and parents responded to the questionnaire, providing valuable insights in response to the main research question regarding the influences of diglossia on Arabic-speaking students' progress in Modern Standard Arabic. In response to the first question in the questionnaire, which was about the impact of the inconsistent use of Modern Standard Arabic, it was found from analysing the questionnaire data that approximately 93% of the participants affirmed that it hinders students' learning and makes learning Modern Standard Arabic challenging. This highlights the significant role that Modern Standard Arabic exposure has in various contexts such as in the home and in other social interactions. Similarly, about 96% of the

participants noted that the lack of Modern Standard Arabic use by parents, combined with insufficient encouragement for children to use it, negatively affects students' progress in Modern Standard Arabic learning. This points to a gap in the linguistic environment at home, where parents' use of regional dialects deprives students of more opportunities to use and develop language skills in Modern Standard Arabic, which leaves it as a required subject at school rather than as a living language.

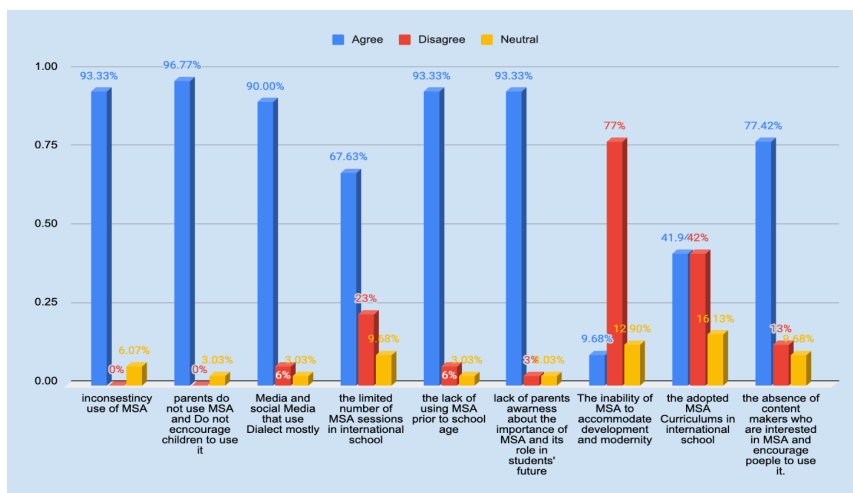
Additionally, it was found from the questionnaire data analysis that 90% of the respondents confirmed that the lack of Modern Standard Arabic use on social media plays a significant role in limiting students' exposure to Modern Standard Arabic in everyday life, and thus reduces opportunities for its development. Similarly, 77% of the participants believed that the scarcity of content creators using the language significantly reduces students' opportunities to be immersed in a Modern Standard Arabic linguistic environment, which leads to inadequate Modern Standard Arabic representation in digital spaces and less relevance to contemporary contexts. In addition, 67% of the participants highlighted the limited number of Modern Standard Arabic sessions in schools as a critical factor slowing students' progress in mastering the language. This shortage in Modern Standard Arabic's use at school places more pressure on teachers and educators to cover this shortage within a limited timeframe. Addressing these challenges would require collaborative efforts between schools, content creators, and

digital platforms to ensure Modern Standard Arabic is represented as both a functional and engaging language for students.

Furthermore, the questionnaire data revealed that 93% of the participants believed that the use of dialects before school age, coupled with the infrequent use of Modern Standard Arabic in everyday life and the lack of parental awareness about the importance of the language and its role in children's futures, all significantly hinder students in terms of their progress in Modern Standard Arabic. As a result of this situation, students perceive learning Modern Standard Arabic as learning a new language that is disconnected from their daily experience.

In a different context, when asked about Modern Standard Arabic's ability to accommodate modernity, 77% of the participants disagreed. Concerning the Modern Standard Arabic curriculum used in international schools in the UAE, 41% of the participants felt it does not align with students' educational needs or effectively motivate them, while 42% disagreed with this view.

In summary, the analysis reveals a consensus among the teachers and parents who participated in the questionnaire. They emphasised the need for students to have more exposure to Modern Standard Arabic through additional enrichment opportunities that promote its use outside of school. This increased exposure is seen as crucial for fully immersing students in a Modern Standard Arabic linguistic environment, as illustrated in **Figure 1** below.



**Figure 1.** The Participants' Responses Regarding the Influence of Diglossia on Students' Progress in Modern Standard Arabic.



## 4.2. Qualitative Analysis Regarding the Influences of Diglossia on Arabic-Speaking Progress in Modern Standard Arabic

Nineteen Arabic teachers and parents participated in the semi-structured interviews in response to the main research question related to the influences of diglossia on Arabic-speaking students' progress in Modern Standard Arabic. The responses were categorised into two themes related to the research question [27]. The perceptions of both teachers and parents were consistent with the data gathered from the questionnaire. The first theme addressed the familiarity of teachers and parents with the diglossic nature of the Arabic language, where regional dialects are used in everyday life while Modern Standard Arabic is reserved for formal contexts. This theme also explored how this linguistic duality affects the progress of Arabic-speaking students in Modern Standard Arabic.

All parents and teachers confirmed the negative impacts of diglossia on the progress of Arabic-speaking students in Modern Standard Arabic. Students typically use the regional dialect at home and then encounter Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) at school, which limits their exposure to the language and hinders their progress. For instance, Participant 1 shared: *"My child started learning MSA when he entered school at the age of five, in grade one. At that time, he was first exposed to MSA and felt like he was learning a new language. As an Arab family living in Dubai, we use the regional dialect at home and English, so he is only exposed to MSA at school. He struggles in grammar and also vocabulary, which are rarely used in our daily conversations. Therefore, learning MSA has been and continues to be challenging for him"*. This situation sheds light on the disadvantage that students face as they do not encounter Modern Standard Arabic in their daily life. This lack of Modern Standard Arabic use leads to challenges in understanding it and makes the students feel that they are learning a new language. Therefore, the students enter school with no foundation to succeed in Modern Standard Arabic.

Similarly, Participant 2 noted, *"My students prefer using the regional dialect for speaking tasks because they feel more comfortable with it due to greater exposure. The regional dialect is the variety used at home, with friends, in markets, and in the media. Consequently, this duality in the Arabic language, represented by diglossia, affects students'*

*progress in MSA and deprives them of the opportunity to be fully immersed in an MSA linguistic environment"*. This statement highlights the challenge of the limited presence of Modern Standard Arabic in students' cultural spaces, which leads to reducing students' opportunities for more immersion and leads to students feeling that Modern Standard Arabic is an obligation not a living language.

Participant 3 added that the lack of Modern Standard Arabic use outside of school slows their child's progress, stating, *"My child is only exposed to MSA during Arabic sessions, and I believe this is insufficient for achieving better results in MSA. I believe that this limited time of being exposed to MSA won't help him sound like an Arabic native speaker"*. This reflects the concern of most parents and teachers regarding the limited number of Modern Standard Arabic sessions that are available in schools, which leads to a lack of use of it, as students often feel unconfident when they are asked to speak using Modern Standard Arabic. All other parents and teachers echoed these sentiments, agreeing that diglossia slows students in terms of their progress in Modern Standard Arabic.

The second theme derived from the interviewees' responses addressed the following open question: In what specific ways does diglossia influence students regarding their progress in Modern Standard Arabic? There was consensus among the participants regarding the overall negative effects of diglossia on students in terms of their progress in Modern Standard Arabic. Some participants highlighted its impact on speaking, particularly regarding the use of short vowels and the correct vowel endings, which are required in Modern Standard Arabic but are not present in the regional dialect. In this regard, Participant 4 stated, *"Although my students are in grade 9, they still struggle with choosing the correct vowels at the ends of words, as this process is not found in the regional dialect and is only encountered in MSA classes. This difference between MSA and the regional dialect really makes learning and then making progress in MSA challenging"*.

Similarly, Participant 5 commented, *"It is difficult for my grade 5 students to pair Arabic verbs with the correct prepositions, as the use of prepositions in the regional dialect often differs from their use in MSA. For instance, they collocate the verb "go" with "on" not "to"*". This example shows the syntactic variations between Modern Standard

Arabic and the regional dialect that lead to more confusion and less confidence among students.

Many participants also pointed out the challenges that diglossia creates in terms of word choice. In this regard, Participant 6 remarked, *“My child struggles with speaking and writing in MSA, as he tends to use regional dialect words, which are not acceptable at school. Mixing the regional dialect with MSA results in low scores, leading to disappointment and demotivation to learn MSA”*. This comment refers to the emotional difficulties created by the diglossic situation of the Arabic language, as students face constant criticism due to their use of regional dialect words instead of Modern Standard Arabic words. As a result, students feel disengaged from learning Modern Standard Arabic. In this regard, the participants suggested that positive encouragement and gradual plans for improvement would assist students to gain confidence, which will help in bridging the gap between the two varieties.

Participant 7 added, *“My students struggle with connectives, as the conjunctions used in MSA are completely different from those in the regional dialect. For example, the word “then” translates to “Thumma” in MSA and “Ba-deen” in the regional dialect, which complicates matters for my students”*. This example provided by one of the teachers shows how the variation between Modern Standard Arabic and the regional dialect leads to errors in terms of the structures of sentences and affects students’ ability to use complex sentences in their speaking and writing tasks.

Participant 8 responded to this issue, and this challenge was also mentioned by most of the participants: *“my children struggle with pronouncing specific MSA letters correctly as we do not pronounce them in the regional dialect. Letters such as (th ث), (q ق), (dha ض), (th ذ), are pronounced differently in the regional dialect as (S س), (A ق), (Z ظ) and (Z ذ). This complex situation is represented in changing the sounds of some Arabic language alphabet, making students uncertain regarding the right choice of sounds and thus less confident in choosing words that include these letters”*.

Participant 9 stated, which was also mentioned by most participants, that *“the use of dual form in Arabic is one of the notable grammatical variations between MSA and the regional dialect. In MSA, the structure of dual form refers to two items by adding (an أن) and (ain أين), depending on the accusative or genitive cases. While the dual form in the re-*

*gional dialect is replaced by plural as there is no distinction between dual form or plural in the regional dialect. This leads my students to neglect using dual form in speaking and writing tasks, which, for sure, impacts their accuracy in the use of grammar, and then impacts in assessments and or other tasks”*.

One more major difference between Modern Standard Arabic and the regional dialect which contributes to hindering the students’ progress in Modern Standard Arabic, and which was mentioned by most of the Arabic teachers who participated in the interviews, is the use of negation. In Modern Standard Arabic, there are specific tools for negation depending on the tenses. For instance, (*lam* لم) is used in the form of the past, (*lan* لن) is only used in the form of the future, and (*la* لا) is used only in the present tense. In contrast, negation in the regional dialect is structured frequently by adding the tool (*ma* ما) before verbs in all tenses. This variation in the use of negation makes students mix rules when they speak or write in Modern Standard Arabic, which leads to unnatural structure in formal settings.

In conclusion, the responses from both the teachers and parents, along with the literature reviewed in this study, collectively contributed to answering the main research question, where all responses consistently highlighted the negative influence of diglossia on the progress of Arabic-speaking students in Modern Standard Arabic. They unanimously agreed that diglossia limits students’ exposure to Modern Standard Arabic since the regional dialect is the variety used in daily life. They also confirmed that this limited exposure to Modern Standard Arabic creates a disconnect between the two varieties and lowers the opportunities to bridge the gap between them. This situation affected students’ competence and their confidence as they found Modern Standard Arabic less relevant to their daily conversational needs.

Moreover, the data obtained from the questionnaire and interviews stress the need for intervention plans that would help in mitigating the challenges that students face when they learn Modern Standard Arabic such as increasing the number of sessions in schools, more focused real-life activities that make learning Modern Standard Arabic meaningful and engaging, and providing students with more opportunities to practise the language outside of schools.

## 5. Discussion

This study identifies diglossia as a significant factor affecting the progress of Arabic-speaking students in terms of learning Modern Standard Arabic, aligning with existing literature on the subject. Holt suggested that variations in semantics <sup>[28]</sup>, syntax, and morphology due to diglossia hinder students regarding their progress in the Arabic language and contribute to a lack of confidence in their native language. Also, Ibrahim argued that diglossia impacts the development of reading skills among Arab students due to the cognitive load of the variation of languages and dialects <sup>[29]</sup>. This variation identification places an additional burden on students, which would slow their progress in Modern Standard Arabic and demotivate them. Also, the psychological influence, such as the feeling of frustration and the lack of confidence when using the language, further compounds these difficulties, particularly when students feel that Modern Standard Arabic is a language they must learn rather than a living language that is part of their identity.

This study emphasises that raising awareness of teachers and parents regarding the challenges of diglossia would assist in mitigating the effects of it, through implementing practical strategies and teaching methods that promote the use of Modern Standard Arabic in different contexts.

A primary finding of this study stresses that students with less exposure to Modern Standard Arabic are more negatively influenced by diglossia. This was underpinned by the literature reviewed and the perspectives of the teachers and parents who participated in this study <sup>[7]</sup>.

This primary finding highlights that students' progress in Modern Standard Arabic is significantly linked with the level of exposure to Modern Standard Arabic. Accordingly, teachers and parents are required to create more opportunities for students that lead to greater Modern Standard Arabic use outside of school.

One of the recurrent themes from the semi-structured interviews indicates that the regular use of the regional dialect in daily life contributes to students' uncertainty and lack of confidence in terms of learning Modern Standard Arabic. This finding is aligned with Alahmad et al. <sup>[7]</sup>, who concluded that diglossia leads to insufficient mastery in Modern Standard Arabic. This situation not only impacts students' progress, but also creates negative attitudes to-

wards learning the language. Therefore, without creating constant exposure to Modern Standard Arabic in different contexts, diglossia will continue to maintain the gap between the two varieties <sup>[30]</sup>.

This approach will help students perceive Modern Standard Arabic as a living language that relates to their daily life and identity, rather than viewing it as an isolated requirement in schools.

## 6. Conclusions

The responses from the teachers and parents, gathered through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, generally align with the literature reviewed in this study. The findings explicitly highlight the detrimental influence of diglossia on Arabic-speaking students regarding their progress in Modern Standard Arabic. While diglossia undeniably hampers the progress of these students, the reality is that neither the language nor its variations can be altered.

This duality, which is rooted in the Arabic communities, is a longstanding historical phenomenon. However, by recognising this phenomenon and adjusting curricula accordingly, policymakers, educators, and school leaders can help mitigate some of the negative effects of diglossia on students' learning, thereby improving their progress in Modern Standard Arabic. It is important to acknowledge the phenomenon of diglossia as an inherent part of the Arabic language, as it enables educators to develop strategies and policies that support bridging the gap between the two varieties rather than viewing them as different domains. Within the same context, most participants suggested that curricular reforms including strategies that increase the number of Modern Standard Arabic sessions in schools, and using engaging and interactive learning resources, would provide students with more Modern Standard Arabic immersion opportunities and strengthen their linguistic skills over time. Moreover, it is suggested that the expansion of activities through teaching other subjects in Modern Standard Arabic would normalise the use of the language and ensure that students have more opportunities to be exposed to and immersed in a Modern Standard Arabic-rich environment. This approach would help students perceive the language as dynamic and practical, beyond formal Modern Standard Arabic classes.



Additionally, emphasis in the study is placed on the critical role of parents in bridging the gap for students in terms of their progress by actively exposing their children to Modern Standard Arabic in various contexts outside the school environment through television programmes and other enrichment opportunities. Moreover, the study suggests that early exposure to Modern Standard Arabic would create a solid foundation for students before they start their formal education, as some studies suggest that story telling in kindergarten fosters students' comprehension <sup>[30]</sup>.

It is also suggested by this study that this would happen through engaging children in conversations using the language and exposing them to Modern Standard Arabic-rich media such as animated television programmes and other applications designed for this purpose. Also, initiatives such as using Modern Standard Arabic in schools' announcements or cultural events might foster students' motivation and engagement in the language. These strategies will ensure that children perceive Modern Standard Arabic as a living language they relate to, rather than viewing it as a language they have to learn and only use in schools. To conclude, transforming Modern Standard Arabic into an essential part of students' daily life would shift their thoughts of the language from being merely a requirement in school to becoming a meaningful part of their daily experience and identity. By creating a linguistic environment where Modern Standard Arabic is integrated in everyday life, students will be more connected to the language, which will have a high likelihood of promoting students' confidence and reducing resistance to learning, thus ensuring a more seamless transition between the two forms of Arabic.

This study contributes to knowledge and the existing body of social science on the influences of diglossia on the development of Arab students' education in the context of learning Modern Standard Arabic as a first language. The research contributes to enhancing our understanding of the phenomenon of diglossia among teachers and parents, which might assist in involving parents in their children's education and thus mitigating the negative influences of diglossia by adopting shared policies, practical strategies, and more engaging curricular activities that might promote students' progress in Modern Standard Arabic.

The study also offers an original contribution by emphasizing the academic consequences of diglossia on Mod-

ern Standard Arabic learning, with the findings highlighting an urgent need for innovative policies and strategies tailored to this diglossic situation.

The research further offers an original contribution by highlighting the academic consequences of diglossia on Modern Standard Arabic acquisition. These findings call for innovative pedagogical approaches tailored to diglossic learners.

## Author Contributions

Conceptualization, A.A., M.H., A.A.S. and Z.I.; methodology, A.A., M.H. and A.A.S.; software, A.A., A.A.S. and Z.I.; validation, A.A., M.H. and A.A.S.; formal analysis, A.A. and Z.I.; investigation, A.A., M.H. and Z.I.; resources, A.A.S. and Z.I.; data curation, A.A., M.H. and A.A.S.; writing—original draft preparation, A.A., M.H., A.A.S. and Z.I.; writing—review and editing, A.A., M.H. and A.A.S.; visualisation, M.H., A.A.S. and Z.I.; supervision, M.H., A.A.S. and Z.I.; project administration, A.A., M.H., A.A.S. and Z.I.; funding acquisition, M.H. and A.A.S. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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## Institutional Review Board Statement

This research was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Malaya in November 2024, under research ethics clearance application number\_4025.

## Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

## Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are

available on request from the corresponding author, Mohamad Hussin. The data, which contain information that could compromise the privacy of the research participants, are not publicly available due to certain restrictions.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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