

# Orientalist Construction on the Existence of Ammiyah Arabic in Egypt in the 20 th Century

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**Submission date:** 10-Jan-2022 07:50AM (UTC+0700)

**Submission ID:** 1739280451

**File name:** ORIENTALIST\_CONSTRUCTION\_ON\_THE\_EXISTENCE\_OF\_AMMIYAH.pdf (494.62K)

**Word count:** 5930

**Character count:** 32752



## Orientalist Construction on the Existence of *Ammiyah* Arabic in Egypt in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Keywords:

Ammiyah Arabic; construction; Egypt; orientalist

#### How to cite:

Pabbajah, M. T. H., Pabbajah, M. (2020). Orientalist construction on the existence of ammiyah Arabic in Egypt in 20<sup>th</sup> century. *Langkawi Journal of The Association for Arabic and English*, 6(2), 218-228.

#### DOI:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.31332/lkw.v6i2.1962>

#### 42 story:

Received: 2020-06-10

Accepted: 2020-12-15

Published: 2020-12-26

### ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore how the Ammiyah language came about in Egypt in the 20th century. It adopted an observational research design. To gather the data, the books and journals covering Orientalism were examined. The study details three of the findings. First, the Ammiyah language differs from the Arabic Fusha in terms of syntax, lexical and phonological characteristics. Second, Ammiyah has often been used in Egypt in familial and social communication. Third, the construction carried out by Orientalists in popularizing the Ammiyah language in order to shift the role of the Arabic Fusha as the language of state administration in Egypt through two aspects. The government orders the writing of books and newspapers in the Ammiyah language using Latin letters, and prohibits the teaching of Fusha language in the school and all activities. Although the Orientalist effort failed because of the opposition from Arab literary groups both Muslim and Christian Arabs, as well as the Al-Azhar and Majma 'Lughah Universities which protected the purity of the Arabic language, there was still a social impact on Egyptian society. The Egyptian society utilizes a number of Ammiyah languages in day-to-day contact.

### 1. Introduction

Language is the identity of a nation and is used in correspondence, although there is a shift in the usage of both oral and written processes in its creation, while it also has the same significance. The Arabic language used by the Arabs has experienced a shift due to Orientalist influence in the use of everyday language or language termed *Ammiyah* (Muslimin, 2011). Arabic is the only major language in the entire Arabian peninsula which includes Egypt, Sudan, Libya, Tunisia, Maghribi, Algeria, Saudi Arabia and beyond (Burdah, 2011). The population of speakers of this language reaches 422 million speakers; therefore, along with the development of time has put Arabic as one of the world's major languages (Mustapa & Arifin, 2012). Even Arabic is the primary language of non-Arabic countries such as the Republic of Chad in Central Africa and the language of some people in countries such as Nigeria, Iran and the Soviet Union (Comrie, 2009). Thus, this study explains the shift in Arabic caused by Orientalist influence in Egypt in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The study of Arabic with various dynamics of change has led researchers to widely carried out some studies. Existing studies show three trends in the

*M. Taufiq Hidayat Pabbajah & Mustaqim Pabbajah: Orientalist Construction on the Existence of Ammiyah Arabic in Egypt in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*

transformation of the use of Arabic. First, Arabic perspectives on historical trajectories and civilizations (Buhori & Wahidah, 2017; Rauf, 2004). Second, teaching, understanding and learning Arabic (Baharudin & Ismail, 2014; Gunawan, 2009; Hizbullah & Mardiah, 2015; Rusydi, 2018; Wahab, 2015). Third, the comparison and debate of the Arabic language of *Fusha* and *Ammiyah* (Aziz, 2009; Ismail, 2002; Mufrodi, 2015; Muslimin, 2011) as well as changes and challenges in Arabic amid globalization (Hanafi, 2013; Ridlo, 2015). The existing studies describe the use of Arabic language that experiences development and change along with the context behind it.

Therefore, this study is a response to the previous study by completing the *Ammiyah* Arabic language shift study, both oral and written. Accordingly, three questions can be formulated. First, what is the historical language of *Fusha* and *Ammiyah* in Arabic?; Second, how the *Ammiyah* practices are used as daily communication tools in Egypt?; and third, how is the oriental construction of the use of the *Ammiyah* language in Egypt in the 20th century? These three questions will be explored in the discussion section of this study.

There are three arguments used in this study. First, *Fusha* has experienced a shift both verbally and in writing due to the popularization of the *Ammiyah*. It implies the meaning of the Arabic is turned down. Second, the arrival of Orientalists in the Arab region has changed the way of communicating Arabs who are more likely to use the *Ammiyah* language in daily practice. Likewise, the existence of an orientalist is not only a Middle Eastern researcher, but also to dominate and conquer physically and non-physically. It includes economics, politics and culture and ideology. Third, the arrival of orientalism is a supporting factor for the development of *Ammiyah* language among Egyptian and Middle Eastern people. The influence of orientalism on aspects of language in the Middle East in Arabic. Westerners likened *Fusha* Arabic as an ancient language that needed modernization. *Fusha* Arabic was also the unifying language of countries in the Arabian Peninsula. Popularizing of *Ammiyah* as the official language, there would be a gap between the Arab countries so that it was easy for the Orientalists to separate their union because differences have emerged in terms of language.

## **2. Method**

This study used an observational study design. It means that the researchers observed the data through reading, understanding and analyzing books and magazines or journals relating to Orientalism and its effect to Arabic Language construction. To analyze the data, we adopted thematic analysis discussing the construction of Arabic Language, Orientalism effect on Arabic language construction and the use of *Ammiyah* language in daily communication of Egypt society.

## **3. Findings and Discussion**

### **3.1. The Concept of Construction in Arabic Language**

The Egyptian *Ammiyah* language differs in terms of syntax, lexical and phonology with Arabic *Fusha*. It can be seen in the Table 1.

**Tabel 1.** The difference between *Fushah* and *Ammiyah*

	<i>Fushah</i>	<i>Ammiyah</i>	Mean
Syntax (ignoring the structure/ <i>I'rab</i> )	سَمِعَ - سَمِعَ - سَمِعَ فَهُمْ - فَهُمْ - فَهُمْ	سَمِعَ - سَمِعَ فَهُمْ - فَهُمْ	Listen Understand
Lexical (interpolation in sentence structure)	سوار ثلاثة شهر	إسورة ثلاث شهر	Bracelet Three months
Phonology (replacement of consonant with consonant)	خذ في ثلاثة ثمانية عشرة	خذ في ثلاثة ثمان عشر	Take it in the refrigerator Eighteen

Following to Berger and Luckman, it is linking social construction with its formation through social reality and knowledge. The reality is a quality conjoined in a phenomenon that is recognized to have its existence, so it does not depend on human will while knowledge is certainty in phenomena that have specific characteristics (Berger et al., 1990). Socio-cultural construction is considered as a common foundation or shared meaning as a result of the continued participation of individuals in various joint activities which are then accumulated and realized in the social environment of a particular group. This continuous joint activity builds and reconstructs the social reality in which these individuals live (Abdullah, 2006; Kashima, 2014). In the world of education, multicultural education becomes a form of social reproduction that functions as an agent of social reconstruction but in reality cannot fully provide opportunities for students to reflect on their cultural identity (Allen & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2004).

In the context of language construction as a means of social communication in society, culture and civilization are learned and passed down from generation using language. Interaction and communication between people are minimal without language. Likewise Arabic as a foreign language in Indonesia occupies a strategic position, especially for Muslims. Not only Arabic is used in religious rituals, but also becomes the language of science and the language of international relations. Arabic has rules regarding the preparation of speeches, ranging from words, phrases, clauses and sentences (Andriani, 2018). Construction of language lessons consists of two main aspects, namely, construction of pronunciation and understanding. In Arabic grammar, it emphasizes more on the construction of pronunciation even though understanding and analyzing it is also important. However, the most straightforward goal of Arabic grammar is to explain the way of speaking. Its grammar rules serve this reason, and it can explain the construction of the narrative as in the initial period (Al-khathla, 2017).

Similarly, construction is inevitable from the reality of Western domination and occupation of most Arab countries and the Islamic world in general, resulting in feelings of inferiority for some Muslims and Arabic speakers. The construction of the Arabic *Fusha*, which is considered no longer able to survive and compete amid developments in science and technology. Western Orientalists construct that *Fusha* Arabic as a medieval language that is no longer feasible to be maintained in the current modern era (Rahmap, 2016). It is in line with cultural construction that sees freedom

positively and negatively in social relations. the construction is influenced by political, historical and social conditions as well as an inheritance which is not a natural phenomenon and is not eternal but continues to develop in certain societies within a certain period (Konsa, 2013).

### **3.2. The Use of Ammiyah in the Life of Egypt Society**

The practice of hegemony with language media is not uncommon in life. It is what happened to *Fusha* Arabic in Egypt, due to the hegemony of the orientalist and colonialists who called for making *Ammiyah* as an administrative language replacing the position of *Fusha* by calling for the printing of textbooks and other works using the language *Ammiyah*. Orientalist steps to print works using the language *Ammiyah* received support from the colonial at that time.

Egyptian society was initially known as a society that spoke the Arabic *Fusha*. As Orientalists, colonialists and Western missionaries entered into power and hegemony, and they began to emphasize the printing of the *Ammiyah* language in several countries in the Middle East replacing the role of *Fusha* as the administrative language of the State. According to Abd al-Shabur Syahin (Syahin, 2006), Arabic is faced with several serious challenges. First, due to globalization, the use of the Arabic language *Fusha* among the Arab community itself began to decrease in frequency and proportion, tending to be replaced by the language *Ammiyah* or local dialect (*al-lahjât al-mahalliyah*). Every single Arab country has different *Ammiyah*. It does not include dialects of specific tribes and regions. For example, the local dialect of Alexandria (Alexandria) is not the same as the Thantha dialect, and so on. The phenomenon is a serious challenge for the world of education because there has been a degradation or elimination of some grammar (*qawâ'id*). The standard language methods are not given enough attention, while learning *qawâ'id* is generally ineffective. Second, the reality of *Fusha* Arabic in this modern era is also faced with the challenges of globalization, precisely the challenges of Western lifestyle and colonialization, including the spread of Arabic in the Islamic world. This colonization, if it does not replace Arabic, can at least reduce the prevalence of interest in learning Arabic among young people. Third, the swift waves of silting of creed, morals, and the alienation of young Islamic generation from sources of Islamic teachings through low imaging of the Arabic language.

At the same time, there was a massive campaign in the name of globalization to spread and make English the language most compatible with technological advancements. The development of Arabic, which is very significant in all corners of the world makes Orientalists feel furious. They are worried that the development of Islam will automatically follow the development of Arabic because Arabic is the language of the Muslim holy book, the Qur'an. Arkoun considers that the Qur'an is a source of language for Muslims. Understanding the existence of Arabic will be the perfect side for mastering al-Qur'an's signs and messages. In terms of language, if we pay attention, Arabic and the Qur'an are logical unity, harmony and word-for-word relationship (Arkoun & Lee, 2019; Latif, 2015; Lee, 2018).

Farid al-Ansari added that the neo-colonial agenda of globalism (*al-isti'mar al-'awlami al-jadid*) waged by the West against the Islamic world was indeed intended to "kill the character and cultural identity", especially Arabs. It can be seen from the arrogance of the United States, both regarding its foreign policy and political

behaviour, towards the Islamic world, especially the Middle East. These superpowers often interfere in matters within Islamic countries, either through "direct intervention" or through the operation of secret agents who are notoriously shrewd and slippery. Among the Agenda "smuggled" into the Arab world, The identity of the Arabic language and culture is silting. The Islamic teaching resources from the educational system in the Islamic world and secularization in various aspects of life are marginalized.

In addition to efforts to replace Arabic letters with Latin, Arabic language in educational institutions in the Islamic world also began to be shifted even though English or French has not replaced it as the language of instruction for learning science. Various live broadcasts of sports in the Arab world, especially football, which is broadcast from the West (English, Spanish, Italian, French or Dutch leagues) already use a lot of English. Likewise, television programs or programs in the Arab world have also been heavily influenced by Western secular and materialistic lifestyles and patterns (Koenig et al., 2012); (Thirumal, 2015). As a result, interest and motivation to learn Arabic seriously declined. Provisional accusations that the effort to replace the Arabic *Fusha* with *Ammiyah* is an attempt by the Orientalists to avoid Muslims from understanding the Qur'an. The Arabic *Fusha* will remain sustainable even though the Arabs themselves prefer to speak Arabic *Ammiyah*. However, the widespread use of Arabic *âmmiyah* remains a challenge that can threaten or at least reduce the quality of fidelity for Arab people or people in general (Maktabi, 1991).

### 3.3. The Orientalists' Construction on the Use of *Ammiyah* Language in Egypt

Orientalists and Orientalism in the Indonesian Dictionary is the science of eastern or eastern culture. In the book "Buhûst Fi at Tabsyîr Wa al Istisyraq" (Discussion on Missionarism and Orientalism), Hasan Abdur Rauf pointed out that the word orientalism was generally given to non-Arabs. It especially refers to Western scientists who study the eastern sciences, both in terms of language, religion, history, customs, civilization (Kashima, 2014) and customs (Teng, 2017). The Orientalists are people who are always trying to learn everything in the eastern hemisphere, in the end not only being a researcher and seeking knowledge about the East, especially Islam but at the same time to master and conquer physically and non-physically such as economics and ideology (Noor, 2013). Orientalism is a study conducted by Western scientists that focuses on geographical ambitions in the East, and traditionally they occupy themselves by studying things that smell in the eastern world (Haqan, 2011).

Orientalism studies have a special character, an inseparable part of the understanding of orientalism itself. It includes; First, orientalism is a study that has a very close bond with the Western colonialism, especially colonial Britain and France. Second, orientalism is a movement that has a firm bond with the Christianization movement. They are specially prepared for collaboration with Jewish orientalism to learn about Arabic, Islam, and Muslims, with diverse objectives. Third, orientalism is a private joint study between colonialism and the Christianization movement, whose scientific validity and objectivity cannot be justified, especially in the study of Islam. Fourth, orientalism is a form of study that is considered the most potential in the politics of the Western world to fight Islam and Muslims (Arif, 2008). Meanwhile, different from orientalism which from the beginning was intended as a severe study political-culture to legitimize the Western colonial powers in the East, identity was

*M. Taufiq Hidayat Pabbajah & Mustaqim Pabbajah: Orientalist Construction on the Existence of Ammiyah Arabic in Egypt in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*

born out of methodological problems of orientalism which he said were objective. However, behind the objectivity lies the interests of the West to dominate, reorganize, and dominate the East (Jubba et al., 2019). Orientalism has triggered nativist intellectuals to question the validity of Orientalist works in constructing eastern stereotypes (Rohanda & Nurrachman, 2017).

In shifting the role of the *Fusha* language as the language of state administration in Egypt, the Orientalists have made two attempts, namely; printing *Ammiyah* using Latin letters and prohibiting the use of *Fusha* in schools and any activities related to linguistics and replacing them with *Ammiyah*. This is in line with Prof. Dr. Shabir Toha (Dean of the Faculty of Islamic Da'wah, Al-Azhar University, Egypt) who said that in popularizing *Ammiyah* language in Egypt, orientalists emphasized more on a cultural and educational approach such as in speeches and conducting courses and research, as well as all activities related to language, were encouraged to use *Ammiyah* language.

3.3.1. *Spoken Language Writing: Effort to systematize the Ammiyah Language*

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which was the heyday of Western imperialism, missionaries in Asia and Africa contributed to the "colonial linguistic project" i.e. they codified foreign languages and examined and studied them in terms of philology so that differences between tribes and tribes were known. others (Errington, 2001). Among the illiterate community, this project aims to boost the popularity of the local dialect of an area to be used as a formal language. For example, in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, precisely in 1930, Catholic and Protestant Orientalists competed in studying Shona dialects so that they produced three different Shona languages based on their territorial boundaries (Migge & Léglise, 2008) The same thing also happened in Indonesia to Madagascar, where missionaries and orientalists gave rise to "lingua franca" based on the Bible's guide and succeeded in entering the kingdom (Errington, 2001), so they gained a great advantage because they succeeded in making it an official language. The orientalists and missionaries carry out further studies of philology and grammar and strive to produce Christian literature. They intend to reach all groups, including the educated.

In the Arabian Peninsula, orientalists and missionaries tended to use the second approach because of the high level of literacy of the Arabs. However, sometimes Arabs who speak using *Fusha* language insert the lingua franca in their speech even in their writing. Arabic also has an in-depth study of linguistics based on the Qur'an. Because the language used by the Qur'an is also considered the best form of Arabic. For centuries interpreters and grammars have analyzed the Qur'anic language and produced Arabic writing standards and invited writers to follow predetermined standards. Arabic linguists have made efforts to preserve *Fusha* Arabic. However, there are still irregularities in the *Ammiyah* Arabic dialects that are developing due to an expanding Arab-Islamic culture and reaching out to non-Arab circles, so that language assimilation occurs. Arabic writing aims to prevent deviations from establishing Arabic standardization. However, language changes are seen very clearly and have occurred continuously over the last few centuries. For example, Arabic writers and grammarians use foreign words or create new words to keep up with the times (Allen & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2004).

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when English and American orientalists and missionaries carried out their mission, Arabic *Fusha* was still the main language

because of its grammatical stability. However, along with the development of linguistics that produces new grammar models to be able to influence all groups of readers and writers. Arabic As an established classical language, it is also not free from the influence of linguistic development in order to become modern Arabic. It is evidenced by the many uses of English terms in Arabic at the end of the 20th century because orientalist and missionaries included English vocabulary and new language styles into Arabic aimed at educated circles (Sharkey, 2002),(Badawī, 1993).

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, missionaries wanted to develop their work programs to be able to reach people who were unable to read Arabic letters. Because scholars only knew the Arabic Fusha, the Missionaries thought that they should be able to create works in everyday language that were used by Egyptians that were different from *Fusha*. Thus, it can overcome obstacles in carrying out their mission. The idea to write and print works in a native language (*Ammiyah*) existed before the British colonial occupation of Egypt. In 1882, a group of Europeans and Americans in Egypt expressed concern about the Arabic *Fusha* which was used as the language of the mass media. They show an obvious difference between the Arabic *Fusha* and the everyday language of the Egyptians (*Ammiyah*), both in terms of vocabulary, pronunciation and syntax so that they are not able to be accessed by all groups and hinder society towards the development of the modern era. it is in line with what was predicted by Irwan Abdullah et al., that indifference is a challenge facing society and culture on the future (Abdullah et al., 2019).

The first person who puts forward this opinion was a German citizen named Wilhelm Spitta who came to Egypt in 1870. He served as deputy director of the Khedive Ismail library who was active and enthusiastic in studying the everyday language spoken by the Egyptians He published a work of his in German, namely *Grammatik des Arabischen Vulgardiakts von Aegypten* (The *Ammiyah* Language Rules of Egypt) and creating books using the *Ammiyah* language (Spitta-Bey, 1880). Spitta advocated and fought for the language of *Ammiyah* to be used as the language of the media because he considered that the manuscript that had been printed in *Fusha* was the main factor causing the high number of illiteracy in Egypt. Spitta also created the new Egyptian alphabet using modified Latin letters (Tohe, 2005).

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, other orientalist adopted and developed the Spitta agenda. They were amazed at what Spitta had done before and regarded it as structural logic and everyday language dynamism. Karn Vollers is a sample for this case. He is a German national who works as a director at Dar al-Pole Cairo stressed that the dialect of modern Arabic is not a deviation from the *Fusha* language as often expressed by Arabic linguists, but rather a language that has history and is the mother tongue of the Egyptians (Vollers, 2011). Furthermore, a British judge in the Cairo Court named J. Selden Willmore firmly stated that the Egyptian *Ammiyah* language was more similar to Aramaic and Hebrew than the *Fusha* language used in the Qur'an (Greenblatt, 1991).

Willmore further explained that the Egyptian *Ammiyah* language was more appropriate to be used as a literary language. He warned the Egyptians used regional languages (*Ammiyah*), then Fusha Arabic would gradually disappear because of the influence of foreign languages brought by Western Orientalists absorbed into the language *Ammiyah* (Willmore, 1901). Meanwhile, Daniel Willard Fiske, an American writer, fought for typing Arabic with Latin letters and disseminating the Latin



*M. Taufiq Hidayat Pabbajah & Mustaqim Pabbajah: Orientalist Construction on the Existence of Ammiyah Arabic in Egypt in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*

alphabet made by Spitta. He also said that the Arabic text *Fusha* was complicated to be studied and understood by the laity in Egypt (Fiske, 1904). Bayoumi Qandil in Abdul Aziz (Aziz, 2005) said that in Egypt there are two languages. The first language is Arabic *Fusha* for expatriates and the second is *Ammiyah* which is the mother tongue of the Egyptian community, where the first language according to Bayoumi is far from community independence and the Egyptians. Another attempt ever made by the orientalist is to try to replace Arabic letters with Latin letters. Bayoumi Qandil pioneered this business by calling for printing the *Ammiyah* language with Latin letters (Aziz, 2005) It was at this time that orientalist and missionaries began promoting Egyptian *Ammiyah* and were able to make it as a media language.

3.3.2. *Missionary, illiterate and Ammiyah language appeal*

Since setting foot in Cairo, British and American missionaries have spent several years learning Arabic, even though they continue to carry out the mission of spreading the gospel and other routines. For most of them, learning Arabic *Fusha* is an arduous struggle. A missionary likened it to the struggle of crossing a towering mountain and said that his five years' experience of learning Arabic forced him into spiritual life, where spiritual life was thought to be only to amuse himself in times of trouble (Woodberry, 2012). On this side, very influential debate in the context of religion which showing socioreligious contestation (Pabbajah et al., 2019). Initially, missionaries formally focused on studying Arabic and Islamic texts in the early to middle ages and only used the *Ammiyah* language in their daily interactions. Their system changed in 1912 after a Church Missionary Community (CMS) leader named W.H.T. Gardner decided that what had to be taught to the new missionaries was the language of Egyptian *Ammiyah*, not the *Fusha* language as contained in the Qur'an. He felt that this was more practical and more useful in carrying out their Christianization mission. Gairdner's efforts in analyzing and teaching the language of the *Ammiyah* reached its peak in 1917, when he published a book entitled "The everyday language (*Ammiyah*) of Egypt". In the book there are guidelines for improving *Ammiyah* language speaking skills (Gairdner & Sallam, 1917). In addition, the book also appeared in several subsequent editions and provided other *Ammiyah* language models, one of which was a guidebook created by missionaries for use in northern Sudan (Sharkey, 2002). According to Padwick (Padwick, 1963), Gairdner has emphasized that the Egyptian *Ammiyah* language is not a deviation from the *Fusha* language, but rather the native language of the Egyptians who have their phonetics and grammar. In other words, the research conducted by Gairdner on Arabic dialects corroborates the research that has been done by Spitta, Vollers, Willmore and others.

In 1922, exactly five years after the publication of Gairdner's book, a group of American missionaries surveyed Christian literature available to Muslims in Cairo. They planned for the development of Christian literature going forward. Based on the results of the survey, they found the fact that the majority of Muslims in Egypt had begun to study in schools so that the level of reading skills began to increase, as well as demand for textbooks, encyclopedias and storybooks that surged among the academic community (Nanda et al., 2020). In their observational report, they also provided an important note about the lack of Muslims who were able to read Arabic letters. They identified that the growth in the number of people who wanted to learn Arabic was not proportional to the number of schools that taught about the phonetic

values of Arabic. Because the missionaries had not yet mastered the *Fusha* language, to overcome this, they recommended printing printed text using the *Ammiyah* language. In 1925, a British female missionary supported the same thing, and she said that increasing population would increase the number of illiterate people, so to overcome this she suggested writing an *Ammiyah* language textbook using Latin letters (Nanda et al., 2020)

#### 4. Conclusion

Orientalist caused the construction of the *Ammiyah* language over the *Fusha* language attempts to influence the use of Arabic in Egypt. The results of the study show three important findings in the Oriental construction of the existence of *Ammiyah* language. First, the Egyptian *Ammiyah* language has many differences from the *Fusha* language in terms of syntax, lexical and phonological. It resulted in the lack of knowledge and understanding of the Arab community itself towards official and standard Arabic. Secondly, the language of *Ammiyah* is a language used by the Egyptian people in daily communication. Third, in the 19th century AD until the beginning of the 20th century AD, there were at least two forms of construction that were carried out by Orientalists in popularizing the *Ammiyah* language. The first printing of the *Ammiyah* language by using Latin letters was marked by the publication of *Ammiyah*-language newspapers and books. The second is the prohibition of schools and all activities related to language using *Fusha* language. Thus the oriental construction in shaping the image of the *Ammiyah* language in Egypt is considered to have a significant impact.

Based on the results of this study and the effort to explain the Oriental construction on the existence of the *Ammiyah* language, this study certainly still has limitations, especially in the aspect of data which is still relatively small and the lack of references found related to the study. Likewise, the approach used is only a constructive approach to qualitative analysis. Therefore, with some limitations in this study, it is expected that further studies will use more extensive data sources, as well as a contextual and comprehensive approach. With this reality, this study recommends that Arabic studies institutions immediately take preventive actions, such as translating foreign words and performing Arabic love movements so that the purity and standardization of Arabic can be maintained.

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**M. Taufiq Hidayat Pabbajah & Mustaqim Pabbajah: Orientalist Construction on the Existence of Ammiyah Arabic in Egypt in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

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