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Linguistic Economy in Urban Arabic: A Sociolinguistic Study of *Naḥt* in Egyptian Colloquial Arabic

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Mufrodi[1]
Zaki Ghufron[2]
Hannanah Mukhtar[3]
Azizah Alawiyyah[4]
Yuttana Kuakul[5]

Email:[1]mufrodi@uinbanten.ac.id, [2] zaki.ghufron@uinbanten.ac.id
[3]hannanah.mukhtar@uinbanten.ac.id, [3] azizah.alawiyyah@uinbanten.ac.id,
[3]yuttana.j@psu.ac.th
[1,2,3,4]Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin, Banten, Indonesia
[5]Princes of Songkla University, Pattani, Thailand

Abstract

This study investigates the productivity and structural patterns of naḥt (morphological acronyms) in Egyptian Arabic ('āmiyah), aiming to explain how these forms function as mechanisms of linguistic economy and socio-cultural adaptation in urban speech communities. Departing from earlier scholarship that primarily examines naḥt in Fusḥā and classical religious contexts, this research focuses on spoken dialectal data that remain under-documented in morphological studies. Using a qualitative design with linguistic content analysis, the study analyzes a corpus of Egyptian 'āmiyah drawn from films, social media discourse, and semi-structured interviews with native speakers. The findings demonstrate that dialectal naḥt forms -such as ma'lish, 'ashān, fīn, and away- emerge through systematic processes of phonological contraction, segmental elision, and morphological reanalysis. These forms are not random reductions but rather patterned innovations shaped by communicative efficiency, frequency of use, and urban interactional norms. The study concludes that naḥt in Egyptian Arabic represents a productive morphological strategy that reflects both structural simplification and socio-pragmatic negotiation in informal contexts. By foregrounding spoken data, this research contributes to expanding Arabic morphological theory beyond Fusḥā-centric models and provides pedagogical implications for teaching Arabic as a foreign language within context-sensitive and dialect-aware frameworks.

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Keywords: *Naḥt, ʿĀmiyah, Egyptian Dialect, Morphology, Acronym.*

Introduction

Arabic morphology has long been recognized for its structural richness and generative capacity, enabling speakers to adapt linguistic forms to changing communicative, social, and cultural needs. One productive mechanism of lexical innovation in Arabic is *naḥt* (**نحت**), traditionally defined as the formation of a new lexical item through the fusion of two or more lexical elements into a single phonological and morphological unit,[1] as seen in the Indonesian term Akabri (Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia).[2] Classical examples include *basmalah* (**بسملة**), *ḥamdalah* (**حمدلة**), and *ḥawqalah* (**حوقلة**), derived respectively from formulaic religious expressions. The three acronyms are forms of **بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم**, **الحمد لله ربّ العالمين**, dan **لا حول ولا قوّة إلّا بالله العليّ العظيم**. In classical theory, *naḥt* was treated as a legitimate process of *ijtihād lughawī* - a conscious linguistic innovation aimed at economy without loss of semantic transparency.[3]

However, the concept of *naḥt* must be analytically distinguished from other processes that also yield shortened or modified forms. This study, therefore, establishes clear operational criteria: (1) *Naḥt* is identified when (a) two or more lexical elements are fused, (b) the resulting form functions as a new lexical unit, and (c) the formation involves morphological reanalysis rather than mere phonetic erosion;[4] (2) Phonological reduction refers to processes such as elision, assimilation, or vowel shortening that affect pronunciation but do not create a new morphologically reanalyzed lexeme (e.g glottal deletion or vowel centralization in fast speech); (3) Borrowing (loanword adaptation) is identified when a lexical item originates from a non-Arabic source and undergoes phonological adaptation

[1] Ibnu Jinni, *Al-Khashaish, Jilid 1* (Kairo: Dar Al-Hadits, 2007); Ali Abdul Wahid Wafi, *Fiqh Lughah* (Kairo: Nahdlah Mishr, 2004).

[2] Mufrodi, "Fonologi Dan Morfologi Bahasa Arab 'Amiyah Mesir," *Arabiyat : Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab dan Kebahasaaraban* 2, no. 2 (December 31, 2015): 192–215, https://doi.org/10.15408/a.v2i2.2184.

[3] Kees Versteegh, *The Arabic Language*, Second Edi. (Edinburg: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctt1g0b09q; KEES VERSTEEGH, *Approach to Arabic Dialects*, *Journal of Chemical Information and Modeling*, vol. 8, 2017.

[4] Muhammad bin Ibrāhīm, Fiqh Al-Lughah (Riyadh: Dār Ibn Khuzaimah, 2005).

without internal morphological fusion.[5] These distinctions are crucial because many colloquial Arabic forms appear shortened but are not necessarily products of naḥt. For example, Egyptian Arabic forms such as *fēn* (**فين**) and *minīn* (**منين**) may involve contraction and glottal deletion; whether they qualify as *naḥt* depends on evidence of lexical fusion and reanalysis rather than surface reduction alone.

In classical Arabic grammar, *naḥt* is understood as the formation of a new lexeme through the combination of two or more lexical elements into a single form. In modern linguistics, this process can be understood as: a) morphological fusion (similar to combination/composition); and b) followed by lexical reanalysis, which is when speakers no longer process the form as a combination of its original elements but as a new lexical unit. This concept of reanalysis is discussed in the theory of language change by Hopper & Traugott[6] and in lexical morphology by Bauer.[7] The main characteristics of *naḥt* can be summarized as follows: (a) It involves two or more lexical elements; (b) It produces new lexemes with new grammatical functions; (c) It involves morphological reanalysis (loss of internal transparency); (d) It has lexical stability within the speech community. An example is **علشان** (*ʿashān*), which is a combination of **على + شأن**. In this example, the new form functions as a causal conjunction; speakers no longer productively parse it as a preposition + noun, and there is a grammatical category shift (lexical shift). This shows that naḥt is not merely an abbreviation but the formation of a new lexical unit.

Meanwhile, phonological reduction is a change at the sound level without altering the morphological structure or lexical status. In phonological theory such as McMahon[8] and Hayes,[9] reduction can take the form of sound deletion, assimilation, vowel shortening, glottal deletion, and lenition. However, the

[5] Uri Tadmor, "Loanword in The World's Languages: Findings and Results," in *Loanwords in the World's Languages: A Comparative Handbook*, ed. Martin Haspelmath and Uri Tadmor (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co., 2009).

[6] Paul J. Hopper and Elizabeth Closs Traugott, *Grammaticalization*, Second Edi. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[7] Laurie Bauer, *Introducing Linguistic Morphology* (Washington D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2003).

[8] April M.S McMahon, *An Introduction to English Phonology* (Edinburg: Edinburgh University Press, 2002).

[9] Bruce Hayes, *Introductory Phonology*, First Edit. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009).

morpheme structure remains the same, and no new lexemes are formed. The characteristics of phonological reduction are that it does not produce new lexemes, the morphological structure remains recognizable, it is phonetic/phonological in nature, it often depends on the speed of speech, and there is no grammatical reanalysis. Examples in Egyptian *'āmiyah* include: **أنتَ** → **إنتَ** *(inta)*. The initial hamzah is deleted, and there is no change in category or function. Here, the change occurs only at the phonetic level. The same applies to the examples **فِين** *(fēn)* and **مَنْين** *(minīn)*. Next, borrowing (adaptation of loanwords) can be defined as vocabulary borrowed from non-Arabic languages and then adapted phonologically into the Arabic sound system, without involving the internal morphological formation process of Arabic, thereby retaining its original etymological identity. Based on the language contact typology of Martin Haspelmath and Uri Tadmor,[10] loanwords are the result of cross-linguistic lexical transfer that retains their original etymological identity but undergoes phonological adjustments to conform to the sound system of the recipient language, such as **تليفون** *(tilifōn)*, which comes from the English word "telephone" and has been adapted in terms of vowels and syllable rhythm, rather than being the result of naḥt or other Arabic morphological processes; and **أوتوبيس** *(ūtūbīs)*, which comes from the English word "bus/omnibus" and has undergone adaptation in terms of vowels and syllable structure, rather than undergoing Arabic derivation. According to Bauer,[11] the formation of new lexemes through blending or fusion is included in word-formation processes, not merely phonetic variation. *Naḥt* falls into this category because it produces new lexical entries in the mental lexicon. In contrast, phonological reduction is discussed in generative phonology as part of the articulatory process, not word formation.[12]

Referring to Muhammad bin Ibrahim's classification,[13] *naḥt* can be divided into several types. First, *naḥt ismi*, which is an acronym of two nouns, such as **جلمد** from **جلد** and **مجد**. Second, *naḥt fi'li*, which is an acronym of a sentence (jumlah) in

[10] Martin Haspelmath and Uri Tadmor, "The Loanword Typology Project and the World Loanword Database," in *Loanwords in the World's Languages: A Comparative Handbook*, ed. Martin Haspelmath and Uri Tadmor (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co., 2009).

[11] Bauer, *Introducing Linguistic Morphology*.

[12] Hayes, *Introductory Phonology*.

[13] Muhammad bin Ibrāhīm, *Fiqh Al-Lughah*.

the form of a verb, such as *بسملة* from *بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم*. Third, *naḥt nisbi* is an acronym that serves to explain a person's lineage to a tribe or school of thought, and so on, such as *عبشمي* from *عبد الشمس*. Fourth, *naḥt wasfi* is an acronym of two words to indicate a trait, such as *صهصلق* from *صهل* and *صلق*, which means to neigh and scream. This form of *naḥt* serves to indicate someone who has a loud voice. In its development, this phenomenon is not only found in *Fusḥā* (standard) Arabic, but also develops productively in *ʿĀmiyah* (non-standard/colloquial) Arabic, especially in the Egyptian dialect, which is widely known regionally and internationally. This dialect has become one of the most widespread and influential forms of spoken Arabic in the Arab world through mass media, cinema, and cross-regional social interaction.[14] In daily communication, Egyptians use acronyms that are often not found in standard dictionaries, such as *معليش (ma'lish)* from *mā + 'alayka + shay'*, *أيوه (aywa)* from *iy + wallāh*, and *دلوقتي (dilwa'ti)* from *dha + al-waqt*. On the one hand, this is an example of a morphological process that reflects the efficiency of language, local phonological adaptation, and the pragmatic needs of Egyptian urban society,[15] but on the other hand, it also reflects the egalitarian lifestyle typical of Egyptian urban society, which is characterized by familiarity and demands speed, flexibility, and informality in social interactions.[16]

As explained above, traditionally, naḥt is understood as the process of forming a new lexeme through the combination of two or more lexical elements. In the classical perspective, this process is considered a form of *ijtihād lughawī*—a creative effort to shorten long expressions without losing their essential meaning. In modern linguistics, this tendency aligns with the principle of linguistic economy, as formulated by George Kingsley Zipf in *Human Behavior and the Principle of Least Effort*.[17] Zipf states that language systems develop through a compromise between: *first*, the speaker's need to minimize effort; and *second*, the

[14] K Versteegh, *Arabic Language* (Edinburg: Edinburgh University Press, 2001).

[15] Janet C. E. Watson, *The Phonology and Morphology of Arabic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[16] Mahmoud Al-Batal, "Challenges in Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language," ed. Dalal Abo El Seoud, *Challenges in Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language* (June 18, 2024): 227, http://www.jstor.org/stable/jj.809340.

[17] George Kingsley Zipf, *Human Behavior and the Principle of Least Effort: An Introduction to Human Ecology* (San Fransisco: Addison-Wesley Press, 1949).

listener's need to maintain clarity of information. In functional linguistics, economy is understood as a universal tendency to reduce the complexity of forms when the context allows.[18] *Naḥt* can be understood as the morphological realization of this principle. Linguistic economy operates at several levels (phonetics, morphology, syntax). *Naḥt* primarily operates at the lexical morphological level because it: (1) reduces the length of complex expressions; (2) integrates elements into a more concise unit; and (3) reduces the processing load in production and perception. An example is the word **بسملة** (basmalah), as explained above.

In order for economic concepts not to be abstract, they need to be operationalized. Here are four main indicators commonly used in morphological and sociolinguistic studies. *First*, form length reduction, which is the reduction in the number of syllables, phonemes, or morphemes compared to the original form. The higher the frequency, the shorter the form. Hopper and Traugott also show that in grammaticalization, forms tend to undergo phonetic erosion. *Second*, phonological complexity, which is the simplification of sound structures, such as the elimination of glottal consonants, cluster reduction, and prosodic simplification.[19] *Third*, token frequency, which indicates that the more often a form is used, the more likely it is to undergo reduction and lexicalization. In usage-based linguistics theory,[20] high frequency accelerates phonetic reduction, morphological fusion, and grammaticalization. *Fourth*, interactional context. In urban sociolinguistics,[21] language variation is influenced by social pressure and the tempo of interaction. Milroy shows that dense social networks accelerate innovation and simplification of forms. Linguistic economy often increases in situations of rapid conversation, informal interaction, and urban environments with high communication density.[22]

[18] Zipf, *Human Behavior and the Principle of Least Effort: An Introduction to Human Ecology*; John A. Hawkins, *Efficiency and Complexity in Grammars* (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2004).

[19] Nikolai Sergeyevich Trubetzkoy, *Studies in General Linguistics and Language Structure*, ed. Anatoly Liberman (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).

[20] Joan Bybee, *Language, Usage and Cognition.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[21] William Labov, *Principles of Linguistic Change* (New Jersey: Wiley, 2010).

[22] James Milroy, Linguistic Variation and Change (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishing, 1992).

In urban sociolinguistic studies, the use of *naḥt* in *ʻāmiyah* cannot be separated from the social reality that underlies linguistic practices.[23] Large cities are understood as social environments where daily interactions are fast-paced, heterogeneous, and intense. Due to the high frequency and diversity of interpersonal contact, speech situations occur in rapid succession, and speakers tend to choose simple, practical, and easily processed forms of language in order to communicate quickly and effectively. In urban environments such as Cairo and Alexandria, many interactions are pragmatic in nature, for example, commercial interactions, transportation queues, or brief conversations between pedestrians, so that concise and efficient language varieties- such as the use of *naḥt* -become more dominant than complex formal varieties. This context explains why urban communities prioritize simple and practical forms of speech.[24] Expressions such as **فين** *(fēn)* from *fī + ayna* and **منين** *(minīn)* from *min + ayna* show phonological reduction in the form of glottal consonant deletion and morphemic contraction, a characteristic phonetic feature of the Egyptian dialect.[25] This poses a particular challenge for learners of Arabic as a foreign language because the meaning of words in *ʻāmiyah* is often not found in formal dictionaries, requiring an understanding of characteristic non-standard morphological patterns. Furthermore, *naḥt* forms such as *balāsh* (don't) and *makānsh* (no/not) in the Egyptian dialect function not only as a means of communication but also as markers of social identity and indicators of interpersonal relationships. These forms are often used in informal and egalitarian situations, reflecting close social relationships. Therefore, Mufrodi concludes that understanding acronyms in *ʿĀmiyah* Arabic, known as *naḥt*, is very important for mastering the language, given that acronyms

[23] Zaki Ghufron et al., "Preserving Meaning and Context: A Study of Cultural Adaptation in The Translation of Arabic Proverbs," *Alsinatuna: Journal of Arabic Linguistics and Education* 9, no. 1 (2023): 77–87, https://doi.org/10.28918/alsinatuna.v9i1.2007.

[24] Catherine Miller and Jacopo Falchetta, "Standardization and New Urban Vernaculars," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Language Standardization*, Ayres-Benn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 713–740, https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/abs/cambridge-handbook-of-language-standardization/standardization-and-new-urban-vernaculars/E44FA59DEECEE58A2B63453054826ADD?

[25] Karin C. Ryding, "Teaching Arabic in the United States II," in *Handbook for Arabic Language Teaching Professionals in the 21st Century, Volume II*, ed. M Wahba, Kassem, Liz England, and Zeinab Ahmed Taha, 1st Editio. (New York: Routledge, 2017), 9; Karin C. Ryding, "Arabic Word Structure: An Overview," in *A Reference Grammar of Modern Standard Arabic*, ed. Karin C Ryding, Reference Grammars (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 57–73, https://www.cambridge.org/core/product/EFCFB110A884DA780527BFBEF8E52CDB.

are widely used in the daily communication of its speakers. Thus, the analysis of *naḥt* in the Arabic *ʿĀmiyah* dialect is not only linguistically meaningful but also has anthropological, economic, and sociological dimensions.[26]

Previous studies, such as those conducted by Muhammad bin Ibrāhīm in Fiqh al-Lughah, focused more on the context of *fusḥā* and examined classical types of *naḥt*, such as *basmala* (**بسمل**), *ḥawqala* (**حوقل**), and *ḥamdala* (**حمدل**), which are generally abbreviated forms of religious phrases.[27] Similarly, modern Arabic linguistic studies have mostly emphasized classical structural and grammatical aspects, such as the research conducted by Kaffah,[28] while the phenomenon of naḥt in everyday dialects, especially in the form of *ʻāmiyah*, has not received commensurate attention. Another study conducted by Bassiouney[29] explains the structure, function, and grammatical shifts between Arabic varieties, including the role of the media and social interactions in influencing everyday language. Additionally, a study conducted by Munazzalurrohmi et al.,[30] which discusses *ʻāmiyah* and fusḥā, concludes that there are three main aspects that distinguish *fusḥā* Arabic from Yemeni *ʻāmiyah* Arabic: vocabulary, phonology, and stylistics. The study states that among the differences is vocabulary, where the vocabulary in *ʻāmiyah* contains a lot of *naḥt*, which has not been discussed further, resulting in the productivity and uniqueness of naḥt in modern spoken language or *ʻāmiyah* dialects -especially in Egyptian dialects- receiving insufficient attention in contemporary academic literature. Therefore, there is an important scientific gap to be filled through this research. This study attempts to analyze *naḥt* in Arabic *ʿĀmiyah* from the perspective of form, structural formation, and pragmatic function in the social context of Egyptian speakers. This approach is relevant because: (1) *naḥt* in *ʻāmiyah* is more productive and varied than in *fusḥā*; (2) many foreign learners of Arabic have difficulty understanding *ʻāmiyah* vocabulary

[26] Mufrodi, "Fonologi Dan Morfologi Bahasa Arab 'Amiyah Mesir."

[27] Muhammad bin Ibrāhīm, *Fiqh Al-Lughah*.

[28] Silmi Kaffah, "An-Naht Fi Al-Lughah Al-Arabiyyah Baina Al-Qudama Wa Al-Muhadditsin," *An-Nas* 2, no. 1 (April 10, 2018): 146–159, https://doi.org/10.36840/an-nas.v2i1.94.

[29] Reem Bassiouney, "Diglossia and Dialect Groups in The Arab World," in *Arabic Sosiolinguistics* (Edinburg: Edinburgh University Press, 2021).

[30] Muhammad Munazzalurrohmi, Khusnul Mubarok, and Syawal Rizki Akbar, "Bahasa Arab Fuṣḥá Dan ʻĀmiyah Yaman: Kosakata, Fonologi, Dan Stilistika," *Al-Ma'rifah: Jurnal Budaya, Bahasa, dan Sastra Arab* 22, no. 1 (2025): 117–128, https://doi.org/10.21009/almakrifah.22.01.09.

because its forms are not found in formal dictionaries; and (3) there is no systematic documentation of the structure, function, and origin of *naḥt* forms in this dialect. For example, the forms فين and منين, as mentioned by the author in the previous paragraph, are the result of *naḥt* that reflects the distinctive local phonology by omitting glottal consonants and combining prepositions with question words.[31] This certainly requires special understanding on the part of learners so that they do not misinterpret everyday speech.

This research is important in several aspects. First, from a pedagogical perspective, the results of this study can serve as a foundation for communication-based Arabic language teaching that integrates dialectal variations, making learning more contextual and communicative, as many expressions in dialects are not found in standard dictionaries. Second, from a theoretical perspective, this study enriches Arabic morphological theory by incorporating dialectal variations that have been largely overlooked in academic literature, thereby expanding the scope of Arabic morphological studies to be more inclusive of dialectal realities. Third, in terms of language documentation, this research can initiate the development of a more systematic *'āmiyah* linguistic corpus, which has not been extensively addressed by traditional approaches in Arabic linguistics. Thus, this study aims to fill the gap in the analysis of *naḥt* in the Egyptian dialect by examining its form, formation process, and pragmatic function within the actual social context. This study not only contributes to the advancement of contemporary Arabic linguistics but also opens up new interdisciplinary fields of study between linguistics, sociology, and language education.

Method

This study uses a qualitative design with a linguistic content analysis approach to identify, classify, and interpret forms of naḥt in Egyptian *'āmiyah*. A qualitative approach was chosen because this study focuses on the meaning, function, and context of morphological forms in natural communication practices, rather than on

[31] Salima Harrat, Karima Meftouh, and Kamel Smaili, "Machine Translation for Arabic Dialects (Survey)," *Information Processing and Management* 56, no. 2 (2017): 262–273, http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ipm.2017.08.003.

quantitative measurements of frequency alone.[32] The research data consist of a corpus of Egyptian *'āmiyah* obtained from three main sources: (1) dialogues in popular Egyptian films that represent urban spoken language; (2) authentic conversations on social media (e.g., comments and public posts) that reflect contemporary informal language use; and (3) semi-structured interviews with native speakers of Egyptian *'āmiyah* to confirm the form, meaning, and pragmatic function of the data found in the written and audiovisual corpora. The selection of data sources was conducted using purposive sampling, taking into account the representativeness of everyday language varieties and the emergence of naḥt phenomena relevant to the research focus.

Data collection was carried out using documentation and linguistic note-taking techniques, followed by orthographic and phonological transcription of audiovisual dialogues as necessary to capture elision, assimilation, and sound reduction phenomena.[33] The data were then coded based on morphological categories (structural formation), syntactic function, and pragmatic value in the context of utterances. Data analysis was carried out in several stages: (1) data reduction by identifying forms that met the criteria of *naḥt*; (2) classification based on formation patterns (e.g., lexical combination, phonological elision, and morphosyntactic compression); (3) contextual analysis to interpret their semantic and pragmatic functions; and (4) reflective conclusion drawing by comparing the findings with the original forms in the *fuṣḥā* language.[34] To maintain data validity, this study applied source triangulation (films, social media, and interviews) and confirmation from native speakers as a form of limited member checking. With these procedures, this method allows for a systematic exploration of the structure, function, and dynamics of *naḥt* morphological innovation in contemporary Egyptian *'āmiyah* language communication practices.

[32] Matthew B Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldana, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, Third Edit. (California: Sage Publication Ltd, 2014).

[33] Klaus Krippendorf, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*, ed. Mattes Byrnie, *SAGE Publications, Inc.*, Third. (California: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2013).

[34] Schreier Margrit, *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice* (California: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2012).

Results and Discussions

Based on the author's research on Egyptian *ʿĀmiyah* Arabic data, several forms of *naḥt* (النحت) commonly used in everyday conversation were identified. These forms result from combining two or more root words that have undergone elision, simplification, or phonetic contraction to create a new word with a specific meaning and function.

The following are popular forms of *naḥt* used in Egyptian *ʿĀmiyah* Arabic, along with their meanings, as documented by the author:

No	*Naḥt*	Transliteration	Origin of the term	Meaning
1	معليش	*Ma'lish*	ما + عليك + شيء	tidak apa-apa
2	عشان	*ʿAshān*	على + شأن	agar/karena
3	مالكش	*Malaksh*	ما + لك + شيء	kamu tidak punya apa-apa
4	أيوه	*Aywa*	إي + والله	iya, demi Allah
5	دلوقتي	*Dilwa'ti*	ذا + الوقت	sekarang
6	علشان	*Alshan*	على + شأن	agar/karena
7	بلاش	*balash*	ب + لا + شيئ	Jangan /Gratis
8	إيه	*Ih*	أيّ + شيئ + هو	Apa (kata tanya)
9	ليش	*Lish*	ل + أيّ + شيئ	Untuk apa
10	كدة	*Kida*	هكذا	Seperti ini
11	مكانش	*Makansh*	ما + كان + شيئ	Tidak ada (verba perfek)
12	ميكونش	*Maykunsh*	ما + يكون + شيئ	Tidak ada (verba imperfek)
13	ماليش	*Malish*	ما + لي + شيئ	Tidak memiliki apa-apa
14	أهو	*Aho*	هذا + هو	Ini dia (m)
15	أهي	*Ahe*	هذا + هي	Ini dia (f)
16	ليه	*Lih*	ل + أيّ + شيئ +	Kenapa

			هذا	
18	مفيش	*Mafish*	ما + في + شيئ	Tidak ada
19	ما عرفش	*Ma'arafsy*	ما + عرف + عنه + شيئا	Dia tidak tau
20	بُصً	*Bush*	ابصر	Lihat
21	ما حَدِّش	*Mahaddisy*	لا + أحد + شيئا	Tak seorangpun
22	سالخير	*salkheir*	مساء + الخير	Selamat sore
23	ع العموم	*'Al 'umum*	على + العموم	Secara umum
24	مُش كدة	*Musy kedah*	ما + هذا + الشيء + هكذا	Bukan begitu
25	واللا إيه	*Walla eih*	و + إلا + أي + شيء + هو	Atau bagaimana?
26	ماقدرش	*Ma'darsy*	ما + أقدر + على + شيء	Saya tidak sanggup
27	زيك؟	*Zaiyak?*	زي (مثل) + ماذا + حالك + أنت؟	Apa kabar?
28	حمد الله	*hamdillah*	الحمد + ل + الله	Alhamdulillah / baik
29	ما ألش	*Ma alsy*	ما + قال + شيئا	Dia tidak mengatakan sesuatu
30	عقبالك	*'u-balak*	و + العاقبة + لك	Semoga yang akan datang adalah giliranmu
31	يا ريت	*Ya Rit*	يا + ليتني + مثل + ذلك	Semoga saya seperti itu

Tabel 1

Kumpulan Naḥt

Based on the functions and classifications of *naḥt* types, they can be described in the table below:

No	*Naḥt*	Function	Type of *Naḥt*	Source (AA-AI)[35]
1	معليش	Entertaining/forgiving someone	*Naḥt Ismī*	AA
2	عشان	Stating the reason or purpose	*Naḥt Ismī*	AA
3	مالكش	Expressing negative ownership	*Naḥt Fi'lī*	AA
4	أيوه	Affirmation/strengthening of affirmation	*Naḥt Wasfī*	AA
5	دلوقتي	Showing the time	*Naḥt Ismī*	AA
6	علشان	Stating the purpose or reason	*Naḥt Ismī*	AA
7	بلاش	Prohibition or rejection	*Naḥt Ismī*	AA
8	إيه	Question words	*Naḥt Ismī*	AA
9	ليش	Asking about the purpose/cause	*Naḥt Ismī*	AA
10	كدة	Designation of manner or condition	*Naḥt Wasfī*	AA
11	مكانش	Past negation	*Naḥt Fi'lī*	AA
12	ميكونش	Denial of the present/future tense	*Naḥt Fi'lī*	AA
13	ماليش	Denial of ownership	*Naḥt Ismī*	AA
14	أهو	word to indicate something nearby (m)	*Naḥt Wasfī*	AA
15	أهي	word to indicate something nearby (f)	*Naḥt Wasfī*	AA
16	ليه	Asking about the reason	*Naḥt Ismī*	AA
17	مفيش	Rejection of existence	*Naḥt Ismī*	AA
18	لسة	Expressing a time that has not yet occurred	*Naḥt Ismī*	AA
19	ما عرفش	Expressing ignorance about	*Naht fi'li*	AA

[35] To simplify classification in the table, the author created abbreviations: AA for Arabic-Arabic and AI for Arabic-English.

		something		
20	بُصَّ	Command to see/hear	*Naht Ismi*	AI
21	ما حَدِّش	Declaring that no one	*Naht washfi*	AA
22	سالخير	Greetings to say good afternoon	*Naht washfi*	AA
23	ع العموم	Ungkapan secara umum	*Naht washfi*	AA
24	مُش كدة	Expression of refusal	*Naht washfi*	AA
25	واللا إيه	Reinforcement expression	*Naht washfi*	AA
26	ماقدرش	Expression of inability	*Naht washfi*	AA
27	زيك؟	Asking about someone's well-being	*Naht washfi*	AA
28	حمد الله	Declaring a state of something	*Naht washfi*	AA
29	ما ألش	Remaining silent or not saying anything	*Naht fi'li*	AA
30	عقبالك	Expression of hope / prayer	*Naht washfi*	AA
31	يا ريت	Mexpressing wishes/prayers	*Naht washfi*	AA

Tabel 1

Fungsi, Jenis, dan Sumber Pembentuk Naḥt

In example number 1, both in Table 1 and Table 2, the lexical form analyzed is used as a response to minor mistakes or apologies in everyday verbal interactions. This expression is functionally equivalent to the expressions "tidak masalah" (no problem) or "tidak apa-apa" (it's okay) in Indonesian. Morphologically, this form is the result of the contraction of three words into a single, complete, and functional morphemic unit, reflecting a communication strategy that prioritizes speed, efficiency, and interpersonal nuances such as tolerance or empathy. As explained by Badawi and Hinds[36], contracted forms in Arabic *ʿĀmiyah* often develop in pragmatic contexts to meet expressive and efficiency needs in informal oral communication. Example 2 shows the form *'ashān* (عشان), which is the result

[36] Martin Hinds and EL-Said Badawi, *A Dictionary of Egyptian Arabic* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1986).

of *naḥt* from *'alā shā'n* (على شأن), with the main function as a cause-and-effect conjunction. In its evolution, this form underwent phonological assimilation and simplification of articulation, reflecting a shift from the standard *Fusḥā* Arabic structure towards a more practical form in the context of *'āmiyah* speech. Although its form has changed, its grammatical function as a marker of cause or purpose has been retained. Owens [37] notes that in many Arabic dialects, morphological evolution does not always change syntactic function but is rather directed toward optimizing speech production.

According to Holes, [38] variations in Arabic dialects demonstrate linguistic creativity in adapting formal expressions to the needs of everyday communication. In example number 5, the lexical form analyzed expresses non-possession or negates possession. This form uses a negative construction typical of the Egyptian dialect with the suffix -sh (ش), which is a productive negation particle in *'āmiyah*. This structure is the result of syntactic and phonetic innovations that allow negative expressions to be shorter and more direct. Woidich[39] explains that the use of the suffix -sh originated from the influence of North African dialects and developed into a characteristic feature of Egyptian dialect negation, often replacing the particle *lā* (لا) in *Fusḥā* structures. Example 6 shows a more emphatic affirmative form than the standard form na'am (نعم). This expression contains religious elements such as the word *wallah* (والله), which literally means "by Allah" and is often used in contexts of affirmation or justification. In the Egyptian dialect, this form not only reflects the intensity of agreement but also highlights the cultural and social dimensions of communication, where religious elements are used to reinforce the legitimacy of statements. As explained by Suleiman, in many Arab communities, religious expressions serve a broad pragmatic function, including markers of sincerity, trust, and honesty in interpersonal communication.

[37] Jonathan Owens, "Arabic Sociolinguistics," *Arabica* 48, no. 4 (2001): 419–469, https://doi.org/10.1163/157005801323163816.

[38] Clive Holes, *Modern Arabic: Structures, Functions, and Varieties*, Revised Ed. (Washington D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2004).

[39] Manfred Woidich and Rabha Heinen-Nasr, *Kullu Tamam! An Introduction to Egyptian Colloquial Arabic* (The American University in Cairo Press, 2023), http://www.jstor.org/stable/jj.12832918.

In the next example, the phrase used serves to indicate the time "now," which in the Egyptian dialect is often the result of a morphological process of compression or contraction of phrases. The combination of two nouns into one adverbial form shows a tendency in the *'āmiyah* dialect to simplify the form of speech without losing its temporal meaning. This phenomenon reflects the principle of language economization that commonly occurs in spoken language, as explained by Miller et al.,[40] that in oral communication, there is a tendency to shorten syntactic structures for the sake of communication efficiency. Following example number shows the phrase *'ashan* (عشان), which is the naḥt form of the combination *'ala shā'n* (على شأن), where the word *shā'n* itself means "purpose" or "interest." In its use, this form undergoes phonological reduction into a single lexeme meaning "so that" or "because." This process is part of the morphological dynamics in Arabic dialects, which often compress complex forms into single forms for the sake of fluency in oral interaction.[41]

In the following example, the phrase that appears is *balāsh* (بلاش), which is used to express prohibition or refusal of an action. Expressions such as *balāsh tikdib 'alayya* ("don't lie to me") and *balāsh takhud ālāmī* ("don't take my pen") reflect the pragmatic function of this form as a negative imperative expression. This form comes from the contraction *lā* + *shay'* (لا + شيء), which literally means "nothing," but in its usage has developed into a marker of prohibition or a request not to do something. Following Example shows the adaptation of interrogative words in the Egyptian dialect, where the word ih (إيه) is used as an equivalent of the interrogative word mādhā (ماذا) in *Fusḥā* Arabic. Expressions such as *taklī ih*?, which means "what are you (female) eating?", correspond to the *Fusḥā* "ماذا تأكلين," and this form is very common in everyday interactions and popular media, such as Nancy Ajram's song entitled إنت إيه. This phenomenon illustrates the lexical and syntactic shifts in Arabic *ʿĀmiyah* as a form of adaptation to more spontaneous

[40] Jim Miller and Regina Weinert, *Spontaneous Spoken Language*, *Spontaneous Spoken Language* (Oxford: Oxford University PressOxford, 1998), https://academic.oup.com/book/48455.

[41] Ernest T Abdel-massih et al., *A Comprehensive Study of Egyptian Arabic: A Reference Grammar of Egyptian Arabic* (University of Michigan Library: MPublishing, 2011).

and informal communicative needs.[42] In the next example presents the form *li'ēh* (لإيه), a combination of *li* + *ayyi* + *shay'* (ل + أي + شيء), which is used to ask about the purpose or reason for an action and can be translated as "what for?" or "why?". This expression is also often found in various popular media, such as the film *Omar wa Salma*,[43] illustrating the application of the *naḥt* form in narrative and dialogical communication. Linguistically, this form demonstrates how dialects adopt the question format from *Fusḥā* but with significant phonological and morphological modifications to suit the rhythm and habits of local speech.

In example number 10, the form *naḥt* analyzed results from shortening the word *hakadhā* (هكذا), which in *Fusḥā* Arabic indicates a certain way or state and can be translated as "like this" or "thus." This form is entirely derived from Arabic and is often found in the *'āmiyah* dialect, with certain phonological elisions or changes to suit the rhythm of spoken language. This morphological process reflects the principle of economization in spoken language, namely the tendency of speakers to simplify speech forms for the sake of speed and communication efficiency.[44] Furthermore, two forms of naḥt originate from a combination of words in *Fusḥā* Arabic: *mā* + *kāna* + *shay'* (ما + كان + شيء) and *mā* + *yakūn* + *shay'* (+ ما + يكون شيء). Both demonstrate the function of existential negation in two different aspects of time: the first form denies the existence of something in the past (perfect), while the second form expresses denial of existence in the present or future (imperfect). This construction reflects the flexibility of the morphological system in Arabic dialects, capable of expressing nuances of time concisely without losing the original semantic content.[45] In the next example, the *naḥt* form comes from ما + لي + شيء, which indicates a refusal of ownership and can be translated as "has nothing." The next Examples present the *naḥt* form from personal deictic phrases, namely *hā huwa* (ها هو) and *hā hiya* (ها هي), which refer

[42] Hossameddine Abouzahr and Mohammed Abouzahr, "Lexical and Lexical-Semantic Comparisons of Classical Arabic and Dialects," *International Journal of Arabic Linguistics* 11, no. 1 (2025): 66–98, https://doi.org/10.34874/PRSM.ijal-vol10.53535.

[43] Mohammad Sami, 3 عمر و سلمى (Egypt: Al Arabia Cinema Production & Distribution, 2012).

[44] Faten Amer, Bilal Al-Adaileh, and Belal Rakhieh, "Arabic Diglossia: A Phonological Study," *Argumentum* 7, no. 2 (January 1, 2011).

[45] Rania Habib, "Syrian Arabic Negators' Structural and Social Variation: Evidence from a Supralocal-Negation Variety," *Journal of Arabic Sociolinguistics* 1, no. 1 (March 1, 2023): 1–25, https://doi.org/10.3366/arabic.2023.0003.

to something close in masculine and feminine forms, respectively. In spoken Egyptian dialect, these two forms are abbreviated to *aho* (أهو) and *ahe* (أهي). The main function of this form is as a proximal demonstrative marker, and its use is very common in urban dialects.

According to Holes,[46] deictic forms in Arabic dialects undergo significant phonological adaptation while retaining their original semantic structure. Following example shows the form *naḥt* from the phrase *li* + *ayy* + *shay'* + *hādhā* (ل + أي + شيء + هذا), which semantically functions to ask the reason or cause of an event, allowing it to be translated as "why." This structure reflects the lexical compression of the lengthy interrogative form into a more concise but still communicative question, a characteristic of highly contextual spoken language.[47]

In example number 17, the *naḥt* form used comes from a combination of Arabic words, namely شيئ + في + ما, which undergoes a process of shortening and merging to form مافيش. This form indicates the rejection of the existence of something, so it can be semantically translated as "there is no." The use of this form is commonly found in everyday *ʿĀmiyah* Arabic conversation, especially in Egypt. The next example in the table is the form لسه, which is also the result of the *naḥt* process between the particle لـ and the word ساعة. This combination semantically expresses a time that has not yet occurred or has not yet reached a certain point, so the equivalent translation in Indonesian is "not yet." [48] A similar phenomenon can be seen in the next example, where لسه reappears as a *naḥt* form of the same elements (ل + ساعة) with an identical function.

All of the examples presented in this study demonstrate the unique morphological dynamics of *ʿĀmiyah* Arabic, where word formation does not strictly follow the standard patterns of *fuṣḥā* but is instead driven by practical considerations in oral communication. In everyday interaction, clarity and speed of meaning delivery are priorities, so speakers tend to rely on linguistic forms that are short, easy to

[46] Holes, *Modern Arabic: Structures, Functions, and Varieties*.

[47] Ekab Al-Shawashreh, Marwan Jarrah, and Eman Al Khalaf, "Variation in Verbal Negation in Jordanian Arabic: A Corpus-Based Analysis," *Lingua* 297, no. 1 (2024): 103644, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lingua.2023.103644.

[48] Mustafa Jarrar et al., "Lisan: Yemeni, Iraqi, Libyan, and Sudanese Arabic Dialect Corpora with Morphological Annotations," *Proceedings of IEEE/ACS International Conference on Computer Systems and Applications, AICCSA* 2, no. 2 (2023), https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2212.06468.

pronounce, and quick to understand. This phenomenon aligns with the views of Clark and Clark,[49] who emphasize that spoken language is interactive and efficient. In direct communication situations, speakers tend to choose more concise forms to maintain the flow of conversation and avoid excessive cognitive load that can hinder communication.[50] The forms of *naḥt* that appear in the Egyptian dialect do not merely serve a grammatical function but also have strong social and pragmatic dimensions. These acronyms are often used in informal communication, especially in everyday interactions among young people, as markers of emotional closeness, social solidarity, and even group identity. For example, the word خبطس (*khabṭas*), which means "mixed up" or "unclear," is often used jokingly to tease someone whose speech is incoherent or confusing. This term not only conveys meaning but also carries evaluative and emotional nuances that strengthen social relationships.[51] According to Holes,[52] lexical variation in Arabic dialects reflects the social and cultural dynamics within the communities that speak them. This is supported by the opinions of Chafe[53] dan Tannen,[54] who argue that there is a distinction between spoken and written language. Spoken language tends to use shorter and simpler structures due to the limitations of memory and the speed of real-time processing by listeners. This aligns with the explanation by Biber,[55] Mickan,[56] and Halliday[57] who state that spoken language

[49] Herbert. H. Clark and Eve. V. Clark, *Psychology and Language: An Introduction to Psycholinguistics*, ed. Jerome Kagan (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich International Edition, 1977).

[50] Balazs Huszka et al., "Language Economy and Its Implications for Language Teaching: Data and Evidence," *LingPoet: Journal of Linguistics and Literary Research* 2, no. 1 (January 31, 2021): 33–40, https://doi.org/10.32734/lingpoet.v2i1.5536.

[51] Kazuko Matsumoto, "Language Variation and Change," in *The Routledge Handbook of Japanese Sociolinguistics*, ed. Patrick Heinrich and Yumiko Ohara, 1st Editio. (London: Routledge, 2019), 199–217.

[52] Holes, *Modern Arabic: Structures, Functions, and Varieties*.

[53] Wallace L Chafe, "Semiotics Unfolding," in *Proceedings of the Second Congress of the International Association for Semiotic Studies Vienna, July 1979*, ed. Tasso Borbé (De Gruyter Mouton, n.d.), 1095–1102, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110869897-131.

[54] Deborah Tannen, "Spoken and Written Language: Exploring Orality and Literacy," in *Advances in Discourse Processes*, ed. Roy O Freedle, IX. (New York: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1982).

[55] Douglas Biber, *Variation Across Speech and Writing* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), https://archive.org/details/variationacrosss0000bibe/page/308/mode/2up.

[56] Peter Mickan, "Language and Education: Learning to Mean," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Systemic Functional Linguistics*, ed. Geoff Thompson et al., Cambridge Handbooks in Language and Linguistics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 537–560, https://www.cambridge.org/core/product/135FF995CA3755A38B567D45D51EBD87.

exhibits characteristics such as syntactic simplicity, phrase shortening, and a high frequency of functional words, all driven by the desire to convey meaning quickly and clearly.

In the context of globalization and the penetration of digital technology, young speakers in Egypt are creatively creating and disseminating new forms of language that reflect their social values, lifestyles, and group identities. This linguistic innovation not only reflects social and cultural dynamics but also shows the reality of language use, as seen in the use of euphemistic forms to avoid mentioning negative realities.[58] Thus, the process of *naḥt* can be understood as a form of linguistic adaptation to rapid social changes resulting from urbanization, the development of mass media, and the digitization of communication.

This aligns with Ferguson's view, which states that language in diglossic societies such as Arabic develops along two poles: formal *(fuṣḥā)* and informal (*ʿāmiyyah)*.[59] Innovative forms such as *naḥt* are more dominant in the informal sphere as a creative response to the community's expressive needs. Furthermore, these findings support Suleiman's idea that lexical innovation in dialects is a form of active cultural identity construction.[60] This occurs not only in Egypt but also among Jordanian dialects, as shown by research conducted by Dawaghreh and Suleiman. [61] Expressive techniques that use strategies such as acronyms, contractions, and truncations are identified as creative ways to convey emotions

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[57] M.A.K Halliday, "Spoken and Written Language," *Pragmatic Organization of Discourse in the Languages of Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Mickan, "Language and Education: Learning to Mean."

[58] Zaki Ghufron et al., "The Communication Language Style of The Government of Kuwait During The Covid-19 Pandemic | Gaya Bahasa Komunikasi Pemerintah Kuwait Di Masa Pandemi Covid-19," *Ta'lim al-'Arabiyyah: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab & Kebahasaaraban* 7, no. 1 (June 1, 2023): 128–155, https://doi.org/10.15575/jpba.v7i1.19054.

[59] Charles A Ferguson, "Diglossia," *WORD* 15, no. 2 (January 4, 1959): 325–340, https://doi.org/10.1080/00437956.1959.11659702.

[60] Yasir Suleiman, *A War of Words: Language and Conflict in the Middle East*, ed. Charles Tripp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Yasir Suleiman, *Arabic in the Fray: Language Ideology and Cultural Politics* (Edinburg: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctt5hh36s.

[61] Abdullah Dawaghreh and Mustafa Suliman, "Linguistic Economy and Slang as Used by Jordanians on Twitter," *Studies in English Language and Education* 11, no. 1 (2024): 510–529, https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v11i1.30988%0A%0A1CITATION1 citation on Dimensions.%0A.

and attitudes. This also aligns with the principle of linguistic economy described by[62], as well as [63]and Ababneh.

Thus, *naḥt* in dialects functions not only as a means of communication but also as a symbol of social and generational affiliation. *Naḥt* in Egyptian dialect shows that the dynamics of the Arabic language do not only occur at the *fusḥā* level but also at the *ʿĀmiyah* level, which reflects broader social and cultural processes, including speakers' strategies in negotiating meaning, identity, and social closeness in everyday communication practices. The morphological processes that occur in Arabic *ʿĀmiyah*, particularly in the formation of *naḥt*, are not merely deviations from formal rules *(fuṣḥā)* but rather linguistic adaptations that reflect the social function of language and the active role of speakers in shaping meaning contextually and efficiently.

Conclusion

Naḥt in Egyptian *ʿĀmiyah* Arabic is the product of linguistic innovation that takes into account phonological adaptability, communication effectiveness, and the sociocultural dynamics of urban areas. In addition to being created by phonological elision and contraction, *naḥt* also reflects the pragmatic traits and social identities of its speakers. In ordinary conversation, *naḥt* forms like *ma'lish*, *'ashān*, and *aywa* are frequently utilized since they have been shown to be highly productive. *Naḥt* in the Egyptian dialect plays an important role in speeding up informal communication, strengthening social solidarity, and conveying expressions of local culture. The most popular type of *naḥt* that has developed in Egyptian *ʿĀmiyah* Arabic is *naḥt ismi*. Theoretically, this study expands the scope of Arabic morphology studies by integrating dialectal variations that have been under-explored in academic literature. Pedagogically, these findings make an important contribution to the teaching of contextual Arabic, especially for learners of Arabic as a foreign language, because *naḥt* forms in dialects are often not found

[62] Peter Trudgill, *Sociolinguistics : An Introduction to Language and Society*, Fourth Edi. (London: Penguin Books, 2000), https://archive.org/details/sociolinguistics0000trud/mode/2up.

[63] Sameeh Ahmad Muhammad Miqdadi and Sami Muhammad Ababneh, "Analysis of Linguistic Economy as Conversational Feature According to Arab Mentality," *Journal of Linguistic and Literary Studies* 14, no. 1 (2023): 84–102, https://journals.iium.edu.my/arabiclang/index.php/jlls/article/view/1044.

in standard dictionaries. The use of these words shows that spoken language develops dynamically and adaptively to the needs of fast and efficient communication. Finally, this research opens up space for interdisciplinary studies between linguistics, sociology, anthropology, and language education, as well as lays the foundation for the development of a more systematic and representative corpus of *ʻāmiyah* linguistics.

Future research should build on this study by conducting large-scale, corpus-based quantitative analyses to measure the frequency and sociolinguistic distribution of *naḥt* forms. Comparative cross-dialectal studies are necessary to determine if similar morphological fusion patterns exist in other Arabic varieties. Additionally, psycholinguistic research should explore how speakers cognitively process *naḥt* forms, while pedagogical studies ought to examine their incorporation into Arabic as a Foreign Language instruction. These avenues will enhance the empirical and theoretical foundations of dialectal morphology research.

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