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ARABIC LOANWORD IN HAUSA AND MALAY LANGUAGE:
A DESCRIPTIVE-ANALYTICAL STUDY

Abdallah Saleh Abdallah ^{1*}, Abdul Basir Awang ², Ummu Aiman Azmi ³ Muhammad Sulaiman Abdullahi ⁴, Muhammad Saiful Anuar Yusoff ⁵

¹ Fakulti Pengajian Islam (FPI), Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin (UniSIRAJ) Perlis, Malaysia.

Email: dr.abdallah@kuips.edu.my

² Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Perlis, Arau.

Email: abasir180@uitm.edu.my

³ Pusat Bahasa dan Pengajian Umum, (UniSIRAJ). Perlis – Malaysia.

Email: ummuaiman@unisiraj.edu.my

⁴ Faculty Arts & Islamic Studies, Bayero University Kano, Nigeria.

Email: msabdullahi.hau@buk.edu.ng

⁵ Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA Kelantan Branch, Malaysia.

Email: saiful673@uitm.edu.my

* Corresponding Author

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Abstract:

This descriptive-analytical study examines the systematic integration of Arabic loanwords into Hausa and Malay languages, focusing on phonological, morphological, and semantic adaptation mechanisms and their cultural implications. The research addresses a significant gap in comparative linguistics by analyzing two typologically distinct languages that have undergone extensive Arabic lexical borrowing, primarily within religious, cultural, and educational domains, with nominal categories representing the predominant borrowing pattern. Through comprehensive literature review methodology utilizing Scopus database analysis, the investigation reveals divergent adaptation strategies, i.e. Hausa demonstrates extensive morphophonological restructuring and broader functional integration across religious, educational, and daily communicative contexts, while Malay exhibits more conservative phonological assimilation patterns concentrated within religious and cultural lexicons. The findings contribute substantially to contact linguistics theory by elucidating the complex interactions between phonological and morphological systems in accommodating foreign lexical elements, while documenting how shared linguistic influence manifests differently across typologically disparate languages, thereby advancing understanding of cross-linguistic borrowing processes and their role in cultural and linguistic transformation.

Keywords:

Arabic Loanwords, Hausa, Malay, Linguistic Influences, Phonological Adaptation, Morphological Change, Semantic Shift.

Introduction

Arabic language spreading across diverse linguistic regions stands as one of the most enduring outcomes of historical intercultural exchange, driven largely by religion, trade, and education. As Islam expanded beyond the Arabian Peninsula, Arabic functioned not only as a sacred language but also as a passage for transmitting legal, philosophical, and scientific knowledge, resulting in the incorporation of Arabic vocabulary into many non-Arabic-speaking societies, including Hausa in West Africa and Malay in Southeast Asia. These languages captivated Arabic words primarily through the spread of Islam, which introduced a shared religious framework supported by ritual practices, theological teachings, and institutional structures. Therefore, Arabic loanwords were diffused via religious texts, oral traditions in mosques and Islamic schools, and commercial interactions, becoming rooted not only in linguistic systems but also in religious identity and cultural expression. The integration of these words was far from passive; it reflected dynamic processes of cultural transformation, identity negotiation, and linguistic adaptation. Thus, this study investigates how Arabic has left a lasting imprint on the phonological and lexical structures of Hausa and Malay, shaped by historical eventualities, regional contact, and internal linguistic restraint. Hausa often employs tonality adjustments and native affixation, whereas Malay favours vocable simplification and minimal morphological alteration to fit Malay norms. Together, these phenomena offer insight into the deep interchange of language contact, cultural identity, and phonological change, setting the foundation for a comparative analysis of Arabic loanword adaptation in these two distinct linguistic communities. Both languages -Hausa, an Afro-Asiatic language, and Malay, an Austronesian language- show systematic phoneme substitution and preservation of core religious meanings, but differ in their integration strategies. This study concludes that Arabic has utilize a profound and enduring influence on the linguistic and cultural landscapes of both Hausa and Malay, enriching their lexicons and shaping their phonological and morphological systems, while also reflecting broader patterns of language contact, identity, and cultural exchange.

Literature Review

Based on the researchers' academic experience and through their findings on the previous scholarly contribution in this field, it was showed that, there is a shortage of comparative studies that thoroughly study the nature and scope of Arabic loanwords in both Hausa and Malay. Though, individual studies exist for each language, there remains a gap in research that explores the similarities and differences in the phonological, morphological, and semantic adaptations of Arabic words across both languages, leaving our understanding of this shared linguistic influence incomplete. Thus, if we are to understand the historical factors that led to the adoption of Arabic loanwords in Hausa and Malay languages, we need to consider the cultural, religious, and socio-economic interactions between Arabic-speaking regions and these language communities. Therefore, some literatures discussed on several related factors, such as:

Historical, Cultural and Sociolinguistic Background

The historical context of Arabic influence on Hausa and Malay is rooted in religious, cultural, and economic exchanges. The spread of Islam played a crucial role in introducing Arabic vocabulary into these languages, reflecting the deep cultural ties between the Arabic-speaking world and the regions where Hausa and Malay are spoken (Ennaji 2025). While, according to (Jaafar, Zahid, and Abu Bakar 2024), the sociolinguistic factors, such as the speaker's attitude and the need for new lexical items, also drive the borrowing process, further embedding Arabic loanwords into the linguistic fabric of these languages. Arabic loanwords have greatly enriched the lexicon of African languages, including Hausa, due to tight cultural, commercial, political, economic, and linguistic ties with the Arabic-speaking world since the ninth century. See (Ennaji 2025).

Additionally, (Aubakirova et al. 2016) narrates that, the continuous coexistence of Arabs and Turks has essentially enriched the vocabulary of both languages with loanwords, indicating a long-standing historical and cultural influence.

Therefore, if we look into other related languages, i.e. Tatar and Swahili, we can see that the morphological assimilation of Arabic loanwords in them – as in (Fattakhova and Mingazova 2015) -, has been influenced by Arabic in religious, scientific, cultural, and economic aspects, highlighting the profound impact of Arabic on these languages. To conclude, the linguistic characteristics of Arabic loanwords in Hausa and Malay involve phonological adaptations, semantic changes, and grammatical influences. The historical and cultural influences of Arabic loanwords are evident in the deep ties between the Arabic-speaking world and African languages, as well as the continuous coexistence of Arabs and other communities. However, there is limited direct information on the historical and cultural influences of Arabic loanwords specifically in Hausa and Malay languages.

Cultural and Sociolinguistic Implications

It is very important to mention what (Uni 2015) and (Ennaji 2025) said regarding Arabic loanwords unambiguous influence in the Malay language, with Arabic being the second-largest donor language to the Malay vocabulary after Sanskrit. The precise presentation of Arabic-origin Malay loanwords and their etymologies have been found to benefit Arabic speakers learning Malay as a foreign language, indicating the historical and cultural significance of these loanwords. Read (Uni 2015). Accordingly, (Muhamad, Yusof, and Mat 2016) indicates that, the use of Arabic words in the Malay language has been a tradition signifying the growth of knowledge in Malay civilization, particularly in the context of daily worshipping acts and prayers. Nevertheless (Mainasara et al. 2021) cited, the effectiveness of utilizing Arabic loanwords in teaching the writing skill in Arabic to Hausa learners has been studied, with results showing a high level of significance in the effectiveness of loanwords in teaching. Thus, (Al-Aqtash 2024) elucidated that, the study of Arabic loanwords in contemporary Arabic dialects at the morphological and derivational level has revealed that linguistic borrowing in contemporary Arabic dialects is characterized by improvisation, randomness, and spontaneity, indicating sociolinguistic implications of loanwords.

Cultural Borrowing and Semantic Changes

In accordance with (Jalaluddin, Sarudin, and Ahmad 2012), the semantic assimilation of Arabic loanwords in Malay commonly results in a departure from their original meanings. For example, the word 'alim' (pious) in Arabic has expanded to include additional meanings in

Malay, influenced by the sociocultural context. Also, (Jaafar et al. 2024) explained further saying, this phenomenon is indicative of cultural borrowing, where new objects or concepts introduced by Arabic culture are integrated into Malay, enriching its vocabulary. But, based on (Ennaji 2025) opinion, Arabic loanwords in Hausa reflect cultural and religious influences as well, underscoring the historical ties between the Arabic-speaking world and sub-Saharan Africa. Coming back to Malay language as featured before, (Uni 2015) acknowledged that, the explicit presentation of Arabic-origin Malay loanwords and their etymologies benefits Arabic speakers learning Malay as a foreign language, leading to increased vocabulary acquisition. Whereas, (Zahid et al. 2024) said: the semantic change of Arabic loanwords in Malay involves extending their meaning, with patterns of general and specific definitions observed, providing a formula for the meaning of loanwords in the language. Remarkably, (Jalaluddin et al. 2012) further clarified that, the semantic assimilation process and the Malay sociocultural lifestyle have led to changes in the core meaning of Arabic loanwords, as evidenced by the expansion of meaning being semantically motivated. Thus, the semantic change and extension of meaning of Arabic loanwords in Malay have been explored, identifying patterns of general and exact descriptions, which contribute to the linguistic and phonological characteristics of these loanwords. Read more from (Zahid et al. 2024).

Grammatical and Phonological Adaptations

As aforesaid, Arabic is the second most significant source of loanwords in the Malay vocabulary after Sanskrit, reflecting its profound historical and cultural impact. Therefore, the nativization of Arabic loanwords in Malay is influenced by the grammatical differences between the source and target languages, leading to phonological changes and adaptations (Ahmad, Jalaluddin, and Osman 2013). Moreso, (Ennaji 2025) said: the adoption and adaptation of Arabic script and lexicon in African languages, including Hausa, have been influenced by historical multilingual and multicultural contexts, indicating a deep historical and cultural impact. While in Malay, Arabic loanwords undergo various grammatical and phonological changes to conform to the Malay language system. For instance, Malay disfavours consonant clusters and geminates, leading to phonological processes like vowel harmony and degemination to fit the basic syllable structure of Malay (Ahmad et al. 2013). Similarly, (Jaggar 2006) cited that, in Hausa, Arabic loanwords are adapted to fit the tonal and grammatical gender system of the language, which includes complex noun pluralization and extensive palatalization. While, (Jaafar et al. 2024) indicates these adaptations ensure that the loanwords are seamlessly integrated into the recipient languages. So, Arabic loanwords in Malay are categorized based on word class, with nouns being the most borrowed into the Malay language.

Added to the above, (Ahmad et al. 2013) indicated that, the phonology of Arabic loanwords in Malay go through adjustments to accommodate to the Malay phonological system, particularly its basic syllable structure. This phonological adaptation of Arabic loanwords in Malay is influenced by grammatical differences between the source and target languages, as evidenced by the active operation of native ranking of constraints on the loanwords. On the other hand, (Uni 2015) narrates by saying: the phonology of vowel harmony and degemination of Arabic loanwords incorporated into the Malay language has been studied, revealing that, Arabic loanwords undergo phonological alteration to comply with the Malay phonological system. Moreso, if we are to look into the language evolution and identity, we will notice that, the nativization of Arabic loanwords in the language is attributed to grammatical differences as highlighted above, indicating the impact of loanwords on language evolution. Thus, (Muhamad

et al. 2016) concluded that, the regressing usage of certain Arabic words by the Malay community and the shift towards more commonly used Arabic words, reflect the evolving nature of language and its impact on identity.

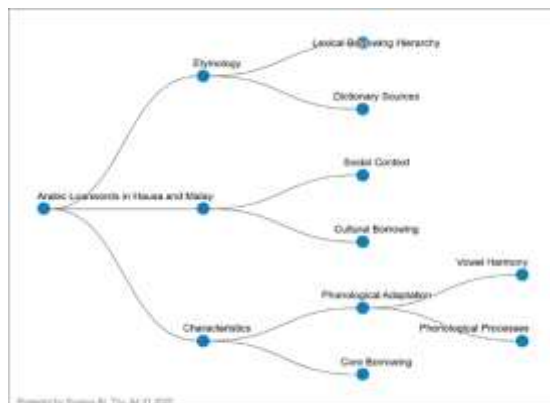


Figure 1, General Overview

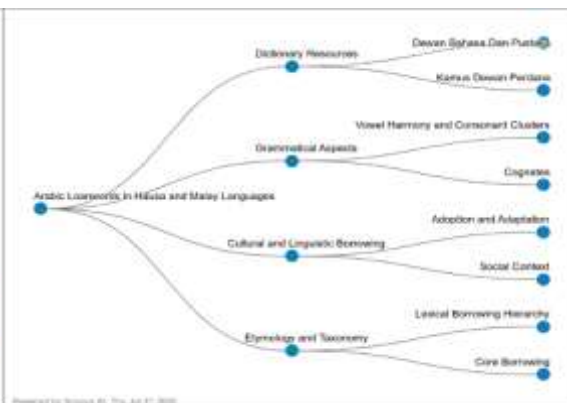


Figure 2, Literature Review

Theoretical frameworks relevant to the topic

Language-Contact And Borrowing Theory (Thomason & Kaufman; general contact linguistics)

Explains borrowing as a function of intensity of contact, social role of the source language, and bilingualism; predicts domain-specific borrowing (religion, law, education) when contact is mediated by religion and trade — directly applicable to Arabic → Hausa/Malay. (Supported by historical and sociolinguistic accounts in the corpus).

Loanword Phonology & Nativization (Constraint-Based Models / OT Approaches)

Accounts for systematic phonological substitutions (e.g., /q/→/k/, degemination, vowel epenthesis) via language-specific constraint rankings; used to explain Malay vowel harmony and degemination (Ahmad et al., 2013) and similar processes in other recipient systems.

Morphological Integration And Derivational Adaptation

Models of morphological nativization explain how borrowed stems receive native affixes or are reanalysed into productive morphological patterns (e.g., Hausa suffixation *-i*, *-ci*, *-anci*). Comparative morphology frameworks clarify why Hausa shows more visible derivational adaptation than Malay.

Cognitive-Semantic Theories (Prototype Theory, Semantic Extension/Metaphor)

Used to explain meaning extension and semantic reanalysis of borrowings (e.g., expansion of *‘ālim* in Malay); cognitive approaches illuminate motivations for narrowing vs. broadening. (See Jalaluddin et al., 2012; Zahid et al., 2024).

Sociolinguistic Identity And Prestige Models

Theories of linguistic prestige and indexicality account for the retention of Arabic forms in liturgical registers and their role as identity markers; this explains attitudinal patterns reported for both Hausa and Malay.

Key findings from prior theoretical works

Phonology: Malay loanwords undergo vowel harmony and degemination to meet (C)V(C) constraints; Arabic consonant clusters and emphatics are simplified. Hausa adapts via vowel epenthesis, gemination retention in some contexts, and obligatory tonal assignment when integrated. (Ahmad et al. 2013; Jaggar 2006).

Morphology: Hausa frequently attaches native derivational suffixes to Arabic stems (productivity visible in *-i*, *-ci*, *-anci*), whereas Malay commonly preserves stems and applies Malay affixation only as needed. (Fattakhova & Mingazova, 2015; Jaafar et al., 2024).

Semantics: Malay exhibits notable semantic expansion and cultural re-mapping of Arabic lexemes (e.g., *‘ālim*), while Hausa shows strong retention of religious senses though local semantic shifts occur in daily usage. (Jalaluddin et al., 2012; Zahid et al., 2024; Ennaji, 2025).

Sociocultural drivers: Islamization, religious education (Jawi/Ajami use), and trade are primary conduits for lexical transfer in both regions; prestige and liturgical need maintain conservative meanings in religious domains. (Ennaji, 2025; Uni, 2015).

Pedagogical implications: Presenting Arabic-origin etymologies aids Malay learners and supports instructional designs for Hausa learners of Arabic; loanwords thus have applied value in language teaching. (Uni, 2015; Mainasara et al., 2021).

Summary Of The Findings

Study (author, yr)	Theoretical analytic approach	/ Domain(s) examined	Key empirical/theoretical finding	Relevance to current study
Ahmad et al., 2013	Constraint-based OT analysis of loanword phonology	Phonology (Malay)	Vowel harmony & degemination explain Malay adaptations; native constraints drive substitution.	Provides formal phonological tools to analyze Malay adaptations.
Jalaluddin et al., 2012	Cognitive-semantic (prototype)	Semantics (Malay)	<i>‘Alim</i> shows meaning expansion in Malay; semantic extension predictable via cultural mapping.	Useful model for semantic shifts in Malay borrowings.
Jaafar et al., 2024	Taxonomic/grammatical classification	Morphology/lexical classes (Malay)	Nouns predominate among Arabic borrowings; taxonomy of retained/unretained/mixed loans.	Guides corpus categorization by word class.

Study (author, yr)	Theoretical analytic approach	/ Domain(s) examined	Key empirical/theoretical finding	Relevance to current study
Zahid et al., 2024	Semantic prototyping / corpus approach	Semantics (Malay)	Systematic semantic extension patterns (general vs. specific) in Malay loanwords.	Offers typology to code change.
Jaggar, 2006	Descriptive phonology (Hausa)	Phonology/morphology (Hausa)	Hausa phonology (tone, palatalization) conditions specific adaptation paths.	Essential for predicting Hausa tonal assignment and segmental shifts.
Ennaji, 2025	Macro-contact historical overview	/ Sociolinguistics, historical contact	Documents Arabic impact on African trade and Islamization as drivers.	Supports historical RQ contextualization.
Fattakhova & Mingazova, 2015	Comparative morphological assimilation	Morphology (Tatar/Swahili)	Shows derivational assimilation across languages.	Similar typological patterns evidence for cross-recipient morphological nativization.
Uni, 2015; Mainasara et al., 2021	Applied linguistics pedagogy	/ Education teaching	Arabic-origin items assist Malay loanwords pedagogy for Hausa learners.	Indicates practical value of loanword analysis for curricula.

Analyzing Selected Arabic loanwords from Hausa and Malay Languages

Word after (Malay language)	structure borrowing	Word after borrowing (Hausa language)	structure after (Hausa language)	Arabic Words	S\N
Solat		Sallah		الصلاة	1
Zakat		Zakkah		الزكاة	2
Haji		Hajji		الحج	3
Sedekah		Sadakah		الصدقة	4
Matti		Mutuwa		الموت	5
Qiyas		Kiyasi		القياس	6
Hajah		Hujjah		الحجة	7

Dalil	Dalili	الدليل	8
Rahmat	Rahama	الرحمة	9
Maghfirat	Gafara	المغفرة	10
Akhirat	Lahira	الآخرة	11
Kiamat	Hisabi	الحساب	12
Syarahan	Sharhi	الشرح	13
Dakwah	Da'awa	الدعوة	14
Masjid	Masallaci	المسجد	15
Sahabat	Sahabi	الصحابي	16
Hadis	Hadisi	الحديث	17
Zalim	Zalinci	الظلم	18
Nabi	Annabi	النبي	19
Ilmu	Ilimi	العلم	20
Jema'ah	Jama'ah	الجماعة	21

Based on the above table it is clear to us that, the phonological adaptation patterns observed in Arabic loanwords within Hausa and Malay demonstrate distinct strategies for integrating foreign phonemes into indigenous sound systems. In Malay, the pharyngeal fricatives /h/ and /ʕ/ from Arabic are systematically replaced with /h/, as evidenced in the adaptation of الحج /ħadʒ/ → /ha.dʒi/ (haji) and العلم /al.ʕilm/ → /il.mu/ (ilmu), reflecting Malay's lack of pharyngeal consonants. Similarly, the emphatic consonants characteristic of Arabic, such as /sˤ/ in الصلاة /sˤa.la:/ (prayer), undergo de-emphasis in Malay, yielding /so.lat/, while maintaining closer phonetic fidelity in Hausa as /sa.lah/. Hausa demonstrates greater tolerance for consonant clusters and preserves gemination more faithfully, as seen in the retention of /dʒdʒ/ in الحجة /huj.dʒah/ (proof) compared to Malay's simplification to /ha.dʒah/, suggesting that Hausa phonotactics are more accommodating to Arabic phonological features.

Morphological integration reveals divergent strategies between the two languages in handling Arabic derivational and inflectional morphology. Hausa exhibits extensive morphological adaptation through the application of native derivational processes, exemplified by the transformation of Arabic الموت /al.mawt/ (death) into /mu.tu.wa/, which completely restructures the lexeme using indigenous morphological patterns rather than simple phonological borrowing. This contrasts sharply with Malay's tendency toward more conservative borrowing, as demonstrated in الزكاة /za.kat/ which maintains close structural fidelity to the Arabic source /za.ka:(t)/. Furthermore, Hausa frequently employs native affixation patterns, such as the addition of locative suffixes in المسجد /ma.sal.la.tʃi/ (mosque) derived from Arabic /al.mas.dʒid/, whereas Malay preserves the Arabic form more directly as /mas.dʒid/. The integration of the Arabic definite article /al-/ also differs significantly: Hausa selectively retains it in specific lexemes like النبي /an.na.bi/ (prophet), while Malay systematically omits it across most borrowings.

The semantic domains and cultural significance of these loanwords illuminate the sociolinguistic contexts of Arabic-Islamic influence in both language communities. Religious terminology constitutes the predominant semantic field, encompassing ritual practices (الصلاة /so.lat/, /sa.lah/ for prayer), religious obligations (الزكاة /za.kat/ for almsgiving), and eschatological concepts (الآخرة /a.khi.rat/, /la.hi.ra/ for afterlife), indicating the profound impact of Islamic religious discourse on both linguistic systems. However, the degree of semantic specialization varies considerably: Hausa demonstrates broader semantic extension, as evidenced by الظلم /za.lin.tʃi/, which transforms the Arabic concept of injustice /aðˤ.dˤulm/ into a more generalized notion of oppression through native morphological processes. Malay maintains more restricted semantic fields, with borrowings typically preserving their original Arabic religious connotations without significant semantic shift. The chronological depth of borrowing is also reflected in the varying degrees of phonological nativization, with older loans showing greater integration into indigenous phonological patterns, particularly in Hausa, where some Arabic loanwords like المغفرة have undergone complete morphophonological restructuring from /al.may.fi.ra(h)/ to /ga.fa.ra/ while retaining their core semantic content.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive-analytical content analysis to examine the phonological, morphological, and semantic adaptations of Arabic loanwords in Hausa and Malay. Using the Scopus Analyzer, relevant peer-reviewed articles were identified through targeted keywords (*Arabic loanwords, Hausa, Malay, linguistic influences, phonological adaptation, morphological change, semantic shift*). Selected publications were reviewed to compile a comparative corpus of Arabic-derived terms. Drawing on the researchers' joined personal expertise in both languages, the analysis combined literature findings with first-hand evaluation of loanword usage, enabling the identification of adaptation patterns, cross-linguistic similarities and differences, and underexplored aspects of Arabic influence in the two languages.

Research Questions

RQ1. What are the historical factors that led to the adoption of Arabic loanwords in Hausa and Malay languages?

RQ2. How do Arabic loanwords in Hausa and Malay languages impact the linguistic and cultural identity of these communities?

RQ3. What are the similarities and differences in the integration of Arabic loanwords in Hausa and Malay languages?

RQ4. How do Hausa and Malay phonology and morphology influence the semantic development of Arabic loanwords?

Research Objectives

1. To know the historical factors that led to the adoption of Arabic loanwords in Hausa and Malay languages.
2. Identifying the impact of Arabic loanwords in the linguistic and cultural identity of these two communities.
3. To describe the similarities and differences in the integration of Arabic loanwords in Hausa and Malay.
4. To examine how Hausa and Malay phonological and morphological features shape the semantic shifts of Arabic loanwords.

Research Findings and Discussion

Historical Factors That Led to The Adoption of Arabic Loanwords in Hausa and Malay

Understanding the historical factors that led to the adoption of Arabic loanwords in Hausa and Malay languages, is related to the cultural, religious, and socio-economic interactions between Arabic-speaking regions and these language communities. For example, there is a clear cultural and religious influence in Hausa language, which make the adoption of Arabic loanwords significantly influenced by the spread of Islam. Many Arabic loanwords in Hausa are religious phrases, such as "Assalamu Alaikum," which are used in both direct and translated forms. See (Pawlak 2020); of course this indicates a strong cultural and religious connection, as Islam brought with it not only religious practices but also linguistic elements from Arabic. Another point is, the historical trade and political ties between Arabs and many African counties; as mentioned by (Ennaji 2025), since the ninth century, sub-Saharan Africa, including regions where Hausa is spoken, has maintained tight cultural, commercial, political, economic, and linguistic ties with the Arabic-speaking world. These interactions facilitated the borrowing of Arabic words into Hausa, enriching its lexicon.

Though, there is Islamic influence in Malay language similar to Hausa, as the advent of Islam to the Malay world brought essential influence on the language. In this regard, (Jalaluddin et al. 2012) concludes in their work that, the increase in Arabic words in Malay vocabulary is closely tied to the spread of Islam, which introduced new religious and cultural concepts that were previously non-existent in Malay culture. Other similar point is the trade and economic interactions between Arabs and Malays. As historical trade routes, particularly those associated with the Indian Ocean trade, played a crucial role in the adoption of Arabic loanwords in Malay. So, the interactions between Malay speakers and Arabic traders facilitated the exchange of not only goods but also linguistic elements. See (du Plessis 2023). Added to the above points is the cultural borrowing. (Jaafar et al. 2024) confirms that, many Arabic loanwords in Malay are categorized as cultural borrowings, referring to new objects or concepts introduced through cultural exchange. Moreso, this includes terms that were integrated into the Malay language to describe new ideas and items brought by Arabic-speaking traders and scholars.

In a nutshell, based on the previous takes we can understand that, the adoption of Arabic loanwords in both Hausa and Malay languages is primarily driven by the spread of Islam, which brought significant cultural and religious influence, then historical trade interactions that facilitated the exchange of linguistic elements. These factors collectively contributed to the integration of Arabic vocabulary into these languages.

Impact of Arabic Loanwords in the Linguistic and Cultural Identity in These Two Communities

We can lament that, there will be no doubt if we said, Arabic loanwords have significantly influenced both the linguistic and cultural identities of Hausa and Malay communities, thus, this impact can be noticed through different angles; such as:

Hausa Linguistic Enrichment

As we mentioned earlier during our discussion on historical factors, we have learned that, Arabic loanwords have enriched the Hausa lexicon, particularly in religious contexts; common sayings like "Assalamu Alaikum" and other sacred vocabulary have been integrated into

everyday language and literature, reflecting a shared cultural-linguistic area in West Africa. For further readings see (Pawlak 2020).

Cultural Identity

The advancement of Islam, has shaped the cultural and religious identity of Hausa people; which resulted in making the adoption of Arabic loanwords in Hausa language closely tied to Islam. Thus, it was verified by (Ali and Alduagishi 2024) that, this integration has helped unify the community under a common religious and cultural framework.

Ethnic Identity

By looking into Hausa community in Saudi Arabia, we can realize that, proficiency in their language, which includes Arabic loanwords, tie-in with a strong sense of ethnic identity. (Alsahafi 2025) suggests that, the linguistic connection to Arabic strengthens their cultural and ethnic self-identification.

Malay Linguistic Enrichment

Discussing on Malay linguistic enrichment, as mentioned, also (Jaafar et al. 2024) and (Uni 2015) agreed that, Arabic is the second-largest donor language to Malay, contributing significantly to its vocabulary. These narrations are observed by the researchers clearly while undergoing this current study; it was noticed that, many Arabic loanwords in Malay are cultural borrowings, introducing new concepts and objects that were previously absent in Malay culture.

Semantic Changes

More often than not, some Arabic loanwords have undergone semantic shifts in Malay language, adapting to the sociocultural context of the community. For instance, (Jalaluddin et al. 2012), explained by saying, the word 'alim' has expanded in meaning beyond its original Arabic connotation, reflecting the assimilation process.

Cultural Identity

The expansion of Islam in the Malay peninsula has deeply affected the Malay language and culture. Thus, (Ali and Alduagishi 2024) said that, Arabic loanwords in Malay, notably in religious contexts, have helped unify various ethnic groups in Malaysia, fostering a national identity that is crisscross with Islamic values.

To end this part, it is very clear to us that, Arabic loanwords have an important role in advancing the linguistic and cultural identities of both Hausa and Malay communities. In Hausa, these loanwords reinforce religious and ethnic identity, while in Malay, they contribute to linguistic enrichment and cultural unification under Islamic values. Therefore, the integration of Arabic vocabulary into these languages highlights the profound influence of Arabic culture and religion on the aforementioned communities.

Similarities And Differences in the Integration of Arabic Loanwords in Hausa and Malay

Below is a summary of the similarities and differences in the integration of Arabic loanwords in Hausa and Malay languages.

First, the similarities as it can be remarked, both Hausa and Malay languages adapt Arabic loanwords to suit their phonological systems. For Malay, as confirmed by (Ahmad et al. 2013), this involves processes like vowel harmony and degemination to conform to its basic syllable structure. Likewise, Hausa integrates Arabic loanwords by modifying them to apt its phonological rules, which include laryngealized affricate and guttural ejectives. See (Jaggar 2006). Additionally, it is worth mentioning that, the integration of Arabic loanwords in both languages is significantly influenced by cultural and religious factors. Based on (Ennaji 2025) findings, Hausa, being a major language in a predominantly Muslim region, incorporates many Arabic loanwords due to the historical and cultural ties with the Arabic-speaking world. Also in Malay, the advent of Islam brought an enormous arrival of Arabic vocabulary, enriching the language in various areas. See (Jalaluddin et al. 2012). However, on the semantic extension, both languages exhibit semantic changes in the meanings of Arabic loanwords. In Malay, some Arabic loanwords undergo semantic extension, where their meanings are broadened or altered in order to be appropriate with the Malay context. Refer to (Zahid et al. 2024). Similarly, (Ennaji 2025) highlighted that, this phenomenon is observed in Hausa, where loanwords may obtain new meanings or slight difference in the local context.

Secondly, the differences in the integration of Arabic loanwords in these two languages, includes grammatical interlocking, where Arabic loanwords are categorized into different word classes in Malay, with nouns being the most borrowed category. The concatenation consist of grammatical modification to suit Malay syntax and morphology; see (Jaafar et al. 2024). In another way, Hausa, which has a complicated system of noun pluralization and grammatical gender, according to (Jaggar 2006), integrates Arabic loanwords while maintaining these grammatical distinctions. Next are the phonological constraints differences; the specific phonological constraints differ between the two languages. For example, (Ahmad et al. 2013) explained that, Malay disfavors consonant array and biform, leading to phonological changes in Arabic loanwords to comply with these constraints. Hausa, on the other hand, has considerable palatalization of coronal stops before front vowels and uses tonal distinctions, which influence how Arabic loanwords are adapted. See (Jaggar 2006). While, the degree of assimilation of Arabic loanwords varies. In Malay, some loanwords retain their original forms, as we noticed during the analysis of the selected words in this research; while others undergo crucial phonological and semantic changes (Zahid et al. 2024) and (Jaafar et al. 2024). But we have seen in Hausa that, the integration process may involve more extensive modifications to fit the tonal and phonological system of the language, as in (Jaggar 2006).

In conclusion we can said that, the integration of Arabic loanwords in Hausa and Malay languages shows both similarities and differences. Where both adapt these loanwords to fit their phonological and grammatical systems, influenced by cultural and religious factors. However, the specific phonological constraints and the degree of assimilation differ, reflecting the unique linguistic characteristics of each language.

Semantic Adaptations of Arabic Loanwords Between Hausa and Malay

To compare the semantic adaptations of Arabic loanwords in these languages, we need to discuss several related points; such as:

Semantic Adaptations in Malay

On the advent, let's look into the expansion of meaning. Basically, Arabic loanwords in Malay often undergo significant semantic changes as highlighted earlier. E.g. (Jalaluddin et al. 2012),

explained that, the word 'alim' (pious) has expanded to include other meanings beyond its original Arabic sense. As the process of semantic extension in Malay can be categorized into general and specific definitions, indicating a broadening of meanings. See (Zahid et al. 2024). Next, we mentioned the cultural influence; because, many Arabic loanwords in Malay -as confirmed by (Jaafar et al. 2024) -, are cultural borrowings, bringing new conceptions not previously present in Malay culture. Also, the sociocultural lifestyle of Malay speakers plays a crucial role in the semantic assimilation of these loanwords. See (Jalaluddin et al. 2012). Apart from these, we have the grammatical adaptation; (Jaafar et al. 2024) assured that, Arabic loanwords are categorized into retained, unretained, and mixed loanwords in Malay, showing a structured approach to their integration.

Semantic Adaptations in Hausa

Starting with the lexical borrowing in Hausa, where many Arabic loanwords were included, enriching significantly its lexicon. See (Jaggar 2006) and (Ennaji 2025); as the process is influenced by both social and grammatical factors, with a focus on the speaker's mood and the grammatical aspects of the language. Read in (Jaafar et al. 2024). Secondly, the realm of use, as we noticed from the earlier analysis and explanations, Arabic loanwords in Hausa are often related to cultural and religious contexts, reflecting the historical and ongoing influence of Arabic on Hausa-speaking regions. See also, (Ennaji 2025). While, it is noted that the adaptation process involves both phonological and semantic modifications to fit the Hausa linguistic system. For more details read (Jaggar 2006) and (Ennaji, 2025).

Finally, the semantic adaptations of Arabic loanwords in Malay involve critical expansion and cultural integration, motivated by the sociocultural context. In contrast, Hausa focuses on lexical enrichment with cultural and religious incentive, though detailed semantic changes are less documented. Both languages show a structured approach to integrating these loanwords, reflecting their unique linguistic and cultural landscapes.

Shapping The Semantic Shifts of Arabic Loanwords by Hausa and Malay Phonological and Morphological Features

Phonological and Morphological Features in Hausa

According to (Jaggar 2006), as this research highlighted in some places, Hausa's phonological system consist of laryngealized implosives, gutturalized ejectives, extensive palatalization of coronal stops before front vowels, and timbre distinctions. These features influence the adaptation of Arabic loanwords, as the phonological modifications required to fit Hausa's system can lead to changes in the semantic interpretation of the loanwords. For example, tonality changes can affect the meaning of words, and the adaptation of sounds not present in Arabic can lead to new semantic nuances. Refer to the selected words analysis of this research.

Additionally, Hausa's complex noun pluralization, grammatical gender, and extensive use of derivational extensions for modifying verbal semantics and reactiveness impact the morphological adaptation of Arabic loanwords. These features can lead to significant changes in the meaning of loanwords as they are integrated into Hausa's grammatical system. For example, the addition of plural forms or gender distinctions can alter the semantic scope of the loanwords. See (Jaggar 2006).

Phonological and Morphological Features in Malay

Similarly, as explained above, Arabic loanwords in Malay undergo necessary phonological changes to adjust to Malay's phonological rule. Malay disfavors consonant clusters and geminates, leading to processes like vowel harmony and degemination. These changes are driven by constraints which govern syllable structure, and controls disyllabic word requirements. See (Ahmad et al. 2013). Referring to our earlier selected words analysis, this adaptation impacts the semantic progress by altering the phonological form of the loanwords, potentially leading to shifts in meaning.

Moreover, as in (Jalaluddin et al. 2012), the morphological assimilation of Arabic loanwords in Malay involves changes that reflect Malay's grammatical structure. For example, the word 'alim' has undergone semantic development in Malay, deviating from its original Arabic meaning due to sociocultural influences and the process of semantic assimilation. This expansion is motivated by cognitive theories such as prototype theory and metaphor conceptualization, indicating that morphological changes can lead to broader semantic shifts.

Semantic Evolution in Hausa and Malay

Based on the aforementioned discussing and analysis, we can understand that, the phonological and morphological features in Hausa, collectively impact the semantic evolution of Arabic loanwords. Therefore, the integration of loanwords into Hausa's tonal system and complex grammatical structure leads to semantic shifts that align with Hausa's linguistic norms. Thus, these changes can result in loanwords acquiring new meanings or nuances that are specific to the Hausa language. Read in (Jaggar 2006). In as much as, in Malay, the semantic evolution of Arabic loanwords is influenced by both phonological and morphological changes. Phonological adaptations like vowel harmony and degemination and morphological expansions, contribute to the semantic extension of loanwords. This process can result in new meanings that are distinct from the original Arabic terms, reflecting Malay's sociocultural context. For further readings refer to (Ahmad et al. 2013) and (Jalaluddin et al. 2012).

In a nutshell, the phonological and morphological features of both languages literally impact the semantic evolution of Arabic loanwords, leading to new meanings and adaptations that reflect the linguistic and sociocultural contexts of the recipient languages.

Summary of the main findings

Focus Area	Findings in Malay	Findings in Hausa	Comparative Insights
Historical & Cultural Drivers	Borrowing mainly through Islamization, Qur’anic education, and trade; Arabic is the second-largest donor after Sanskrit.	Borrowing primarily via Islamic scholarship, religious education, and trade across West Africa.	Islamic Islam and commerce are the strongest shared drivers; cultural prestige reinforced adoption.
Phonological Adaptation	Simplification of consonant clusters, vowel harmony, and degemination (e.g., <i>solat</i> , <i>zakat</i>).	Use of vowel epenthesis, gemination (e.g., retention, and tonal assignment <i>sallah</i> , <i>zakkah</i>).	Malay prefers simplification; Hausa restructures forms to fit tonal/agglutinative system.

Focus Area	Findings in Malay	Findings in Hausa	Comparative Insights
Morphological Integration	Predominantly stem preservation; occasional Malay affixation (<i>dakwah</i> , <i>jema'ah</i>).	Frequent native and use of nominalizer (<i>dalili</i> , <i>zalinci</i>).	Hausa shows deeper morphological assimilation; Malay remains closer to Arabic stems.
Semantic Evolution	Semantic expansion and cultural re-mapping; e.g., <i>'alim</i> broadens meaning.	Retains strong religious sense; some extension into everyday domains.	Malay loans show broader semantic drift; Hausa retains conservative meanings.
Educational & Pedagogical Use	Arabic loanwords aid learners of Arabic by providing familiar lexical roots.	Arabic loanwords used effectively in Hausa Arabic teaching contexts.	Loanwords are pedagogically valuable in both languages.
Research Gaps	Many single-language studies; limited comparative research.	Similar limitation noted.	Comparative, cross-linguistic analysis remains underexplored.

Conclusion

This comparative analysis has elucidated the complex mechanisms underlying Arabic lexical integration within Hausa and Malay linguistic systems, revealing systematic patterns of phonological, morphological, and semantic adaptation that reflect both universal borrowing principles and language-specific structural constraints. The investigation demonstrates that historical Islamic expansion and sustained commercial networks constituted the primary vectors for Arabic lexical transmission, establishing a foundational stratum of religious and cultural terminology that remains integral to both linguistic communities. The differential adaptation strategies observed—Hausa's tendency toward extensive morphophonological restructuring versus Malay's preference for conservative phonological assimilation—illuminate the varying degrees of structural compatibility between Arabic and the recipient languages, with Hausa exhibiting greater morphological flexibility in accommodating foreign lexical material. The findings contribute significantly to comparative contact linguistics by documenting language-specific constraints on borrowing processes and revealing how identical source lexemes undergo divergent evolutionary trajectories within distinct phonological and morphological systems. Particularly noteworthy is the evidence for selective retention of Arabic morphological features, as exemplified by Hausa's preservation of gemination in *الحجة* /*huj.dʒah*/ versus Malay's systematic simplification, suggesting that borrowing fidelity correlates with structural congruence between donor and recipient languages. Furthermore, the semantic domain analysis reveals that while both languages privilege religious terminology, the extent of semantic extension and lexical productivity varies considerably, with Hausa demonstrating greater morphological creativity in generating indigenous derivatives from Arabic roots. The implications of this research extend beyond descriptive linguistics to encompass pedagogical applications in Arabic-as-a-heritage-language instruction and cross-linguistic literacy development programmes within multilingual educational contexts. Future investigations should prioritise corpus-based diachronic analysis to trace the chronological stratification of Arabic borrowings, supplemented by sociolinguistic fieldwork to document contemporary usage patterns across generational and regional varieties. Additionally, experimental phonological studies examining real-time adaptation processes

could provide crucial insights into the cognitive mechanisms underlying loanword integration, thereby advancing theoretical understanding of contact-induced language change and its role in shaping linguistic identity within Islamic cultural spheres.

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