

THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN ARABIC LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract

Cultural competence has become an essential dimension in foreign language education, particularly in the teaching of Arabic as a foreign language. This article aims to explore the significance of integrating cultural competence into Arabic language instruction within diverse social contexts. Using a library research method, this study analyzes relevant scholarly works published in recent years to examine how cultural understanding enhances language acquisition and communicative effectiveness. The findings indicate that language learning cannot be separated from its cultural framework, as culture shapes meaning, context, and pragmatic usage. Learners who are exposed to cultural elements tend to demonstrate better comprehension, higher motivation, and more effective communication skills. Furthermore, the study reveals that incorporating cultural competence contributes to the development of intercultural awareness, which is crucial in today's globalized society. Teachers play a pivotal role in mediating cultural knowledge, and instructional strategies must be adapted to include authentic cultural materials and contextualized learning experiences. This research also highlights the social implications of culturally informed language teaching, particularly in fostering mutual understanding and reducing cultural barriers. Therefore, the integration of cultural competence is not only pedagogically beneficial but also socially necessary. This study concludes that strengthening cultural competence in Arabic language teaching is fundamental to achieving holistic language proficiency and meaningful social interaction.

Keywords: Arabic Language Teaching, Cultural Competence, Social Society



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INTRODUCTION

The importance of cultural competence in language education has increasingly gained attention as globalization intensifies interactions across diverse societies. In the context of Arabic language teaching, cultural competence is not merely an additional component but a fundamental aspect that shapes learners’ communicative abilities and contextual understanding (Byram, 2021; Risager, 2021). Language is inherently tied to culture, as it reflects values, norms, and social practices embedded within a community. Without adequate cultural knowledge, learners may struggle to interpret meanings accurately, leading to miscommunication and misunderstanding (Baker, 2022). Therefore, the integration of cultural competence into Arabic language instruction is essential to ensure that learners can use the language appropriately in real-life contexts. This study emphasizes the urgency of addressing cultural dimensions in teaching Arabic, particularly in multicultural societies where language serves as a bridge for social interaction and cultural exchange.

The growing diversity of learners in Arabic language classrooms has further highlighted the need for culturally responsive teaching approaches. Students from different social and cultural backgrounds bring varied perspectives, experiences, and expectations that influence their learning processes (Holliday, 2021). In such contexts, teachers are required to go beyond linguistic instruction and incorporate cultural elements that foster inclusivity and mutual understanding. Cultural competence enables learners to navigate intercultural interactions effectively, reducing stereotypes and promoting empathy (Fantini, 2021). Moreover, Arabic, as a language with rich historical and cultural heritage, offers vast opportunities for integrating cultural content into teaching practices. By doing so, educators can create meaningful learning experiences that connect language with real-world social contexts, thereby enhancing students’ engagement and motivation.

Despite its importance, the implementation of cultural competence in Arabic language teaching often faces significant challenges. Many instructional practices still prioritize grammatical accuracy and vocabulary acquisition, neglecting the cultural dimensions that give meaning to language use (Canale & Swain, 2021). This imbalance can result in learners who are linguistically competent but culturally unaware, limiting their ability to communicate effectively in authentic situations. Additionally, limited access to culturally relevant teaching materials and insufficient teacher training further hinder the integration of cultural competence (Liddicoat, 2021). Therefore, there is a need for comprehensive research that highlights the role of cultural competence and provides practical insights for its implementation in Arabic language classrooms.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to examine the importance of cultural competence in Arabic language teaching through a systematic analysis of existing literature. The research seeks to identify key concepts, teaching strategies, and social implications associated with culturally informed language instruction (Baker, 2022; Byram, 2021). By employing a descriptive narrative approach, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of how cultural competence contributes to effective language learning and social interaction. Furthermore, the findings are expected to offer valuable recommendations for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers in enhancing Arabic language education. Ultimately, this research underscores that integrating cultural competence is not only a pedagogical necessity but also a social imperative in fostering intercultural communication and global understanding.

Cultural competence is widely recognized as a central concept in modern language education, particularly within the framework of intercultural communicative competence. Scholars argue that language learning extends beyond grammatical mastery to include the ability to interpret and negotiate meaning across cultural contexts (Byram, 2021; Risager, 2021). This perspective highlights that communication is not merely a linguistic act but a socially and culturally situated process. In this regard, Byram's model of intercultural communicative competence provides a comprehensive framework consisting of attitudes, knowledge, skills, and critical cultural awareness, which collectively enable learners to engage effectively in intercultural interactions. Furthermore, cultural competence involves the ability to understand both one's own culture and that of others, thereby fostering mutual respect and reducing ethnocentric perspectives (Baker, 2022). Consequently, integrating cultural competence into Arabic language teaching is essential for developing learners who are not only linguistically proficient but also culturally aware and socially responsive.

The relationship between language and culture has been extensively discussed in linguistic and educational studies, emphasizing their inseparability in communication practices. Language is often viewed as a reflection of cultural identity, social norms, and shared values within a community (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2021; Holliday, 2021). This implies that understanding a language requires an understanding of the cultural contexts in which it is used. Research indicates that neglecting cultural aspects in language teaching can lead to superficial learning and limited communicative competence. Moreover, cultural knowledge helps learners interpret meaning, pragmatics, and non-verbal cues, which are crucial for effective communication (Baker, 2022; Risager, 2021). In the context of Arabic language teaching, this connection becomes even more significant due to the rich cultural and historical background associated with the language. Therefore, educators must integrate cultural elements into their teaching practices to ensure meaningful and contextually relevant learning experiences.

Recent studies have highlighted the role of cultural competence in enhancing students' motivation and engagement in language learning. Learners who are exposed to authentic cultural materials, such as literature, media, and real-life scenarios, tend to show greater interest and participation in classroom activities (Fantini, 2021). Empirical findings suggest that culturally enriched teaching approaches can significantly improve learners' communicative skills and intercultural awareness. In addition, the inclusion of cultural content helps learners connect language learning with real-world applications, making the learning process more meaningful and relevant (Baker, 2022). This is particularly important in Arabic language education, where cultural context plays a crucial role in understanding linguistic expressions and discourse patterns. As a result, integrating cultural competence into teaching strategies can enhance both cognitive and affective aspects of language learning.

Another important aspect of cultural competence in language teaching is its role in fostering intercultural communication skills. Intercultural competence enables learners to interact effectively with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds by promoting openness, empathy, and adaptability (Byram, 2021; Liddicoat, 2021). Studies have shown that developing intercultural communication skills is essential for students in higher education, as it prepares them to להתמודד global challenges and multicultural environments. Furthermore, intercultural competence encourages critical thinking and reflection on cultural differences, allowing learners to navigate complex social interactions (Risager, 2021; Baker, 2022). In the context of Arabic language teaching, this competence is particularly relevant due to the diverse cultural settings in which Arabic is used. Therefore, incorporating intercultural perspectives into language instruction is crucial for preparing learners to communicate effectively in a globalized world.

Despite its recognized importance, the integration of cultural competence in language teaching faces several challenges, particularly in terms of instructional design and teacher preparedness (Feng, 2021). Many language teaching materials still lack sufficient cultural content, which limits learners' exposure to authentic cultural contexts. Additionally, teachers often encounter difficulties in selecting appropriate cultural materials and addressing sensitive cultural issues in the classroom (Holliday, 2021). Research also indicates that limited professional development opportunities can hinder teachers' ability to implement culturally responsive teaching practices. These challenges highlight the need for systematic efforts to integrate cultural competence into curriculum design and teacher training programs. Therefore, addressing these barriers is essential to ensure the effective implementation of cultural competence in Arabic language teaching.

In response to these challenges, various pedagogical approaches have been proposed to integrate cultural competence into language teaching effectively. One such approach involves the use of culturally responsive teaching, which emphasizes the inclusion of learners' cultural backgrounds in the learning process (Liddicoat, 2021). Another approach focuses on the development of culturally relevant teaching materials that reflect authentic cultural practices and perspectives. Additionally, curriculum design plays a crucial role in incorporating cultural competence, as it determines the extent to which cultural elements are integrated into learning objectives and assessment methods (Baker, 2022; Risager, 2021). In Arabic language teaching, these approaches can be implemented through the use of authentic texts, multimedia resources, and interactive learning activities. Ultimately, adopting these strategies can enhance the effectiveness of language instruction and promote the development of culturally competent learners.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research method to explore the importance of cultural competence in Arabic language teaching. Library research is particularly suitable for this study as it allows for an in-depth examination of theoretical frameworks, empirical findings, and scholarly discussions related to the topic (Creswell, 2021). The primary objective of this method is to synthesize existing knowledge and identify patterns, themes, and gaps in the literature concerning cultural competence and language education. In this context, the researcher systematically collects and analyzes academic sources, including journal articles, books, and conference proceedings, to construct a comprehensive understanding of the issue. Furthermore, this method enables the researcher to critically evaluate different perspectives and approaches to integrating cultural competence in Arabic language teaching. By focusing on credible and relevant sources, the study ensures the validity and reliability of its findings, thereby contributing to the academic discourse on language education and cultural awareness.

The data collection process in this study involves the identification and selection of relevant literature published within the last five years to ensure the timeliness and relevance of the analysis. Sources are obtained from reputable academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, which provide access to high-quality peer-reviewed publications (Creswell, 2021). The selection criteria include relevance to the topic, methodological rigor, and contribution to the field of language education and cultural studies. Additionally, keywords such as "cultural competence," "Arabic language teaching," and "intercultural communication" are used to refine the search process. This systematic approach ensures that the collected data accurately reflects current trends and developments in the field. Moreover, the inclusion of diverse sources allows for a comprehensive analysis of different perspectives, thereby enriching the study's findings and providing a well-rounded understanding of the topic.

Data analysis in this study is conducted using a descriptive-analytical technique, which involves organizing, categorizing, and interpreting the collected information to identify key themes and patterns. The researcher begins by reading and reviewing the selected literature thoroughly, followed by coding relevant data based on thematic categories such as cultural competence frameworks, teaching strategies, and social implications (Creswell, 2021). This process enables the researcher to systematically analyze the data and draw meaningful conclusions from the existing literature. Furthermore, the analysis focuses on comparing and contrasting different viewpoints to highlight similarities, differences, and emerging trends in the field. By adopting this approach, the study provides a nuanced understanding of the role of cultural competence in Arabic language teaching. The use of descriptive analysis also allows for a clear and coherent presentation of findings, ensuring that the study's conclusions are well-supported by the data.

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the study, several validation strategies are employed throughout the research process. One of the key strategies is source triangulation, which involves using multiple sources of data to verify the consistency and reliability of the findings (Creswell, 2021). In addition, the researcher critically evaluates the quality of each source by considering factors such as publication credibility, author expertise, and research methodology. This rigorous evaluation process helps to minimize bias and ensure that the study is based on accurate and reliable information. Furthermore, the researcher maintains transparency in the data analysis process by clearly documenting the steps taken in collecting and analyzing the data. This transparency enhances the study's validity and allows other researchers to replicate the research if needed. As a result, the study provides a reliable and trustworthy analysis of cultural competence in Arabic language teaching.

Finally, this study adopts a descriptive narrative approach to present the findings in a coherent and accessible manner. This approach allows the researcher to explain complex concepts and relationships in a clear and engaging way, making the study relevant to both academic and practical contexts (Creswell, 2021). The narrative structure is designed to highlight the connections between cultural competence, language teaching practices, and social implications, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of the topic. Additionally, the use of a descriptive narrative approach enables the researcher to integrate theoretical and empirical insights into a unified framework. This approach also facilitates the identification of practical recommendations for educators and policymakers. Ultimately, the methodology employed in this study ensures a systematic, rigorous, and insightful exploration of the importance of cultural competence in Arabic language teaching.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The findings of this study reveal that cultural competence plays a fundamental role in shaping learners' communicative effectiveness in Arabic language learning. Language is not merely a system of grammar and vocabulary, but also a medium through which cultural meanings are conveyed and interpreted (Byram, 2021; Baker, 2022). Learners who possess cultural competence are better equipped to understand implicit meanings, social conventions, and contextual nuances in communication. This ability significantly enhances their interaction skills, particularly in real-life situations where language use is deeply influenced by cultural norms (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2021). Moreover, the integration of cultural competence allows learners to avoid misunderstandings that may arise from cultural differences. The analysis of various studies indicates that students exposed to cultural elements demonstrate higher levels of communicative confidence and adaptability. Therefore, cultural competence is not an optional component but a core element that determines the success of Arabic language learning.

Another important finding highlights that cultural competence contributes significantly to learners’ motivation and engagement in the learning process. When cultural elements are incorporated into teaching materials, learners tend to find the content more relevant and meaningful (Fantini, 2021). This relevance creates a sense of connection between the learners and the target language, which in turn increases their interest and participation in classroom activities. Additionally, culturally enriched learning environments encourage students to explore new perspectives and develop curiosity about different ways of life (Baker, 2022). The findings also suggest that the use of authentic cultural resources, such as films, literature, and real-life scenarios, can significantly enhance students’ learning experiences (Porto, 2021). As a result, cultural competence not only supports cognitive development but also fosters positive attitudes toward language learning, making the process more engaging and effective.

The study also finds that cultural competence enhances learners’ ability to interpret and use language appropriately in different social contexts. Pragmatic competence, which involves understanding how language is used in specific situations, is closely مرتبط dengan cultural knowledge (Baker, 2022; Liddicoat, 2021; Risager, 2021). Learners who are aware of cultural norms and values can adjust their language use according to the context, such as formal and informal settings, social hierarchies, and cultural expectations. This adaptability is particularly important in Arabic, where language use is often influenced by cultural and religious factors (Abdelhadi et al., 2021). Furthermore, the findings indicate that cultural competence helps learners develop sensitivity toward cultural differences, enabling them to communicate more effectively and respectfully (Sanusi et al., 2024). Therefore, integrating cultural competence into Arabic language teaching is essential for developing learners’ pragmatic and sociolinguistic abilities.

In addition, the findings show that cultural competence plays a crucial role in developing intercultural awareness among learners (Porto & Houghton, 2022). Intercultural awareness involves understanding and appreciating cultural diversity, as well as recognizing the similarities and differences between cultures (Byram, 2021; Baker, 2022). Through exposure to cultural content, learners become more open-minded and develop a deeper understanding of global perspectives. This awareness is particularly important in today’s interconnected world, where individuals frequently interact with people from diverse cultural backgrounds (Risager, 2021). The study also highlights that intercultural awareness helps reduce stereotypes and prejudices, promoting mutual respect and tolerance. As a result, cultural competence not only enhances language learning but also contributes to the development of socially responsible individuals who can navigate multicultural environments effectively.

The findings further indicate that teachers play a pivotal role in integrating cultural competence into Arabic language teaching. Educators are responsible for selecting appropriate materials, designing culturally relevant activities, and facilitating discussions that promote cultural understanding (Liddicoat, 2021). However, the study reveals that many teachers face challenges in implementing culturally responsive teaching due to limited resources and training. Despite these challenges, teachers who actively incorporate cultural elements into their instruction can create more engaging and meaningful learning experiences (Sercu, 2022). The findings also suggest that teacher awareness and sensitivity toward cultural issues are essential for fostering an inclusive classroom environment (Baker, 2022). Therefore, professional development programs that focus on cultural competence are necessary to support teachers in effectively integrating cultural elements into their teaching practices.

Another significant finding is the importance of using authentic cultural materials in Arabic language teaching. Authentic materials, such as newspapers, films, music, and literature, provide learners with real-life examples of language use in cultural contexts (Risager, 2021; Baker, 2022). These materials expose learners to diverse cultural perspectives and help them develop a deeper understanding of the target culture. The study also finds that authentic materials can improve learners’ listening, reading, and speaking skills by providing

contextualized language input (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2021). Additionally, the use of authentic materials encourages critical thinking and reflection, as learners analyze cultural differences and similarities. Therefore, incorporating authentic cultural resources into teaching practices is an effective strategy for enhancing both linguistic and cultural competence in Arabic language learning.

The findings also reveal that curriculum design plays a crucial role in integrating cultural competence into language teaching. A well-designed curriculum should include clear objectives related to cultural learning, as well as appropriate assessment methods to evaluate learners' cultural competence (Baker, 2022; Byram, 2021; Risager, 2021). However, the study indicates that many existing curricula still focus primarily on linguistic aspects, with limited attention to cultural content. This imbalance can hinder the development of learners' intercultural competence and reduce the effectiveness of language instruction (Liddicoat, 2021). Furthermore, the integration of cultural competence requires a holistic approach that connects language learning with social and cultural contexts (Spathopoulou & Pitychoutis, 2025). Therefore, curriculum developers must consider the importance of cultural competence and incorporate it into all aspects of language teaching, including objectives, materials, and assessment.

Another key finding is the social impact of integrating cultural competence into Arabic language teaching. Cultural competence not only benefits individual learners but also contributes to social cohesion and mutual understanding within diverse communities (Baker, 2022; Risager, 2021). Learners who develop intercultural competence are more likely to engage in positive interactions with people from different cultural backgrounds, thereby reducing cultural barriers and promoting social harmony (Rodríguez, 2021). The study also highlights that culturally informed language teaching can play a role in addressing social issues such as discrimination and prejudice (Alghamdi & Alrashidi, 2022). By fostering empathy and understanding, cultural competence helps create a more inclusive and tolerant society. Therefore, the integration of cultural competence in Arabic language teaching has significant implications not only for education but also for broader social development.

Finally, the findings emphasize that the integration of cultural competence in Arabic language teaching requires a systematic and collaborative effort (Sulton & Kabir, 2025). This includes the involvement of teachers, curriculum developers, policymakers, and educational institutions in promoting culturally responsive teaching practices (Byram, 2021; Liddicoat, 2021; Baker, 2022). The study suggests that successful integration depends on the alignment of various factors, such as teacher training, curriculum design, and the availability of resources. Additionally, ongoing research and evaluation are necessary to assess the effectiveness of cultural competence in language teaching and identify areas for improvement (Al Lily et al., 2021). Therefore, a comprehensive and coordinated approach is essential to ensure that cultural competence is effectively integrated into Arabic language education, ultimately enhancing both learning outcomes and social interaction.

Discussion

The discussion of this study confirms that cultural competence is not merely a supplementary aspect of language teaching but a foundational element that shapes meaningful communication (Tran & Seepho, 2021). The findings align with previous theories emphasizing that language and culture are inseparable, as cultural context determines how meaning is constructed and interpreted (Byram, 2021; Baker, 2022). Without cultural competence, learners may possess linguistic knowledge but still fail to communicate effectively in real-life situations. This highlights the necessity of shifting from a purely structural approach to a more holistic model that integrates cultural understanding into language instruction (Isa et al., 2025). Furthermore, cultural competence enables learners to interpret implicit meanings, such as politeness strategies and social norms, which are often not explicitly taught in traditional

classrooms (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2021). Therefore, the integration of cultural competence is essential for achieving communicative competence in Arabic language learning.

The role of cultural competence in enhancing learner motivation also emerges as a critical point of discussion. The findings suggest that culturally enriched learning environments foster greater engagement by making learning more relevant and meaningful to students' lives (Fantini, 2021). This supports the idea that motivation in language learning is closely linked to the learners' emotional and cognitive connection to the subject matter. When students are exposed to authentic cultural content, they are more likely to develop curiosity and interest in the language (Baker, 2022). Moreover, cultural competence encourages learners to see language learning as a tool for real-world communication rather than a purely academic exercise (Kustina et al., 2024). This shift in perspective can significantly improve learning outcomes and sustain long-term engagement. Thus, integrating cultural competence into Arabic language teaching is not only pedagogically beneficial but also motivationally impactful.

Another important aspect discussed in this study is the role of cultural competence in developing intercultural awareness and sensitivity (Yuen, 2024). The findings indicate that learners who are exposed to cultural diversity through language education are more likely to develop open-minded attitudes and empathy toward others (Byram, 2021; Risager, 2021). This aligns with the broader educational goal of preparing students to function effectively in multicultural societies (Tran, & Duong, 2023). Intercultural awareness also helps learners critically reflect on their own cultural assumptions, which can lead to a deeper understanding of both their own and others' cultures (Baker, 2022). In the context of Arabic language teaching, this is particularly significant due to the diversity of cultural practices across Arabic-speaking communities. Therefore, cultural competence contributes not only to language proficiency but also to the development of socially responsible individuals.

Despite its importance, the integration of cultural competence in Arabic language teaching presents several practical challenges that must be addressed (Murtadho et al., 2025). The discussion highlights issues such as limited access to culturally relevant materials, insufficient teacher training, and the dominance of traditional teaching methods that prioritize linguistic accuracy over cultural understanding (Holliday, 2021; Liddicoat, 2021). These challenges can hinder the effective implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices. Additionally, teachers may feel unprepared to address sensitive cultural topics, which can lead to avoidance of cultural discussions in the classroom (Annova et al., 2025). To overcome these challenges, it is necessary to provide teachers with adequate training and resources that support the integration of cultural competence (Al-Khatib, 2025). This includes professional development programs, access to authentic materials, and institutional support for innovative teaching practices.

The discussion also emphasizes the importance of curriculum design in supporting the integration of cultural competence into language teaching (Zhou & Pilcher, 2023). A curriculum that incorporates cultural objectives alongside linguistic goals can provide a more balanced and comprehensive approach to language education (Baker, 2022; Byram, 2021; Risager, 2021). Such a curriculum should include culturally relevant content, interactive learning activities, and assessment methods that evaluate both linguistic and cultural competencies. Furthermore, curriculum design should reflect the social realities of language use, ensuring that learners are prepared to engage in real-world communication (Liddicoat, 2021). The findings suggest that a well-designed curriculum can serve as a framework for integrating cultural competence systematically into teaching practices. Therefore, curriculum development plays a crucial role in enhancing the effectiveness of Arabic language instruction.

Finally, this study highlights the broader social implications of integrating cultural competence into Arabic language teaching (Zulhannan et al., 2025). The findings suggest that culturally informed language education can contribute to social cohesion by promoting mutual understanding and reducing cultural barriers (Baker, 2022; Risager, 2021). In increasingly

diverse societies, the ability to communicate across cultures is essential for fostering harmony and cooperation. Cultural competence also plays a role in addressing social issues such as prejudice and discrimination by encouraging empathy and respect for diversity (Cherkaoui, 2025). Therefore, the integration of cultural competence is not only an educational concern but also a social necessity. By preparing learners to navigate intercultural interactions effectively, Arabic language teaching can contribute to the development of more inclusive and harmonious societies.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that cultural competence is an indispensable component in the teaching of Arabic as a foreign language. The integration of cultural knowledge into language instruction enhances learners' ability to understand meaning beyond linguistic structures, enabling them to communicate effectively in real-life contexts. Cultural competence not only strengthens communicative skills but also supports the development of pragmatic and sociolinguistic awareness, which are essential for meaningful interaction. Furthermore, learners who are equipped with cultural competence are more capable of navigating diverse social situations and interpreting cultural nuances accurately. Therefore, the study confirms that language learning cannot be separated from its cultural dimension, and both must be integrated to achieve comprehensive language proficiency.

Additionally, this study highlights the significant role of cultural competence in fostering learner motivation, engagement, and intercultural awareness. The inclusion of cultural elements in teaching practices creates meaningful learning experiences that connect language with real-world contexts. As a result, learners become more interested and actively involved in the learning process, which positively impacts their overall achievement. Moreover, cultural competence contributes to the development of open-mindedness, empathy, and respect for diversity, which are essential qualities in today's globalized society. These findings suggest that integrating cultural competence into Arabic language teaching not only benefits individual learners but also supports broader social goals, such as promoting intercultural understanding and reducing cultural barriers.

Finally, the study emphasizes the need for a systematic and collaborative approach to integrating cultural competence into Arabic language education. Teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers must work together to design instructional strategies, learning materials, and curricula that incorporate cultural elements effectively. Professional development programs should also be provided to equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to implement culturally responsive teaching practices. In addition, further research is needed to explore innovative approaches and evaluate the effectiveness of cultural competence in different educational contexts. Ultimately, strengthening cultural competence in Arabic language teaching is essential for developing learners who are not only linguistically proficient but also culturally aware and socially responsible.

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