

Beyond the Classroom Walls: A Scoping Review of Immersive Strategies for Teaching Arabic Culture

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Article information	Abstract
DOI : 10.25077/jds.2.2.161-173.2025 *Correspondence : dxcher@wm.edu	This study is situated within the context of contemporary foreign language education wherein cultural understanding is considered integral to linguistic proficiency, particularly in the diverse field of Arabic pedagogy. Still, despite the prevalent use of out-of-class activities, few studies have explored the full range of these strategies systematically. The current study fills a gap by providing a comprehensive overview of the evidence supporting these methods. The main objective of this study is to identify, categorize, and document the extracurricular strategies used for teaching Arabic culture to non-native speakers. The research design involved a five-stage scoping review following the Arksey and O’Malley framework. Data were collected through a systematic search of electronic databases (including Google Scholar, Scopus, and Dar Al-Mandumah) using keywords in both English and Arabic, resulting in a final dataset of 35 relevant scholarly sources out of 1,250 previous studies. The data were analysed using thematic analysis to chart, collate, and identify recurring strategies and themes across the literature. The analysis uncovered five dominant extracurricular strategies: (1) homestays, (2) language partner programs, (3) structured field trips, (4) community-based service-learning, and (5) cultural clubs and media workshops. Key results pinpoint a profound scarcity of rigorous empirical research, an absence of comparative studies, and a strong geographical bias in the literature toward Egypt and Morocco. This research provides evidence of a growing consensus on what strategies are used at the expense of their relative effectiveness. With this in mind, the study urges future research to conduct more empirical, comparative, and geographically diverse studies, deploying reliable and validated tools to measure cultural competence and cultural sensitivity.
Submission Track Submission : July 5, 2025 Final Review : August 19, 2025 Accepted : August 20, 2025	
Keywords extracurricular strategies, Arabic language pedagogy, cultural immersion, language partner, service-learning, intercultural competence	

INTRODUCTION

A noteworthy evolution in foreign language pedagogy is the recognition that linguistic proficiency and cultural understanding are inseparable, two faces of the same coin. In a clear departure from past practices, culture has been reframed from a supplementary “fifth skill” to a core component embedded within the four foundational language abilities: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This all-inclusive integration aligns well with contemporary language pedagogy, which emphasizes that language and culture are inseparable and should be taught in tandem (Byram 1997; Kramsch 1993). Such an approach is particularly important in the context of teaching Arabic to non-native speakers, where learners must navigate not only a linguistically complex system but also the rich historical depth and cultural diversity of the Arab world.

The academic literature has firmly established that language serves to express, embody, and symbolize cultural reality. Influential work by scholars like Kramsch (1993) establishes a critical point: when language is stripped of its cultural context, it loses much of its meaning. This disconnect is a frequent cause of “cultural misunderstandings,” a problem that can persist even for learners with a strong command of grammar. In response, major proficiency standards like the ACTFL guidelines and the CEFR now require cultural awareness as a core component of learner assessment.

Seeing that classroom-based cultural instruction is a fundamental component of language curricula, a growing body of research posits that the most impactful learning often emerges from direct immersion and lived experience outside the traditional academic setting (Jackson 2018; Kinginger 2021). For the purposes of this review, these out-of-class experiences are referred to as “extracurricular strategies,” which are considered the primary vehicle for achieving the “immersion” necessary for deep cultural learning. These strategies—such as study abroad programs, community engagement, and cultural clubs—are frequently cited as ideal conduits for achieving this immersive cultural learning (Deardorff 2020). Despite the widespread recognition of their importance, the existing literature reveals a notable gap: there is no comprehensive and systematic understanding of the nature of these extracurricular strategies. Moreover, the extent of empirical evidence supporting their pedagogical effectiveness remains underexplored, and the current research landscape lacks a clear articulation of these gaps (Godwin-Jones 2022).

1. To address this identified gap in the literature, this scoping review was undertaken. The primary aim of this study is to answer the subsequent central research question:
2. What are the extracurricular strategies for teaching the cultural component to non-native Arabic speakers that have been identified and documented in the academic and professional literature?

This paper will proceed by providing a synopsis of the relevant literature, followed by an outline of the research methodology employed to identify and analyze these strategies. The results will then be presented and compared with the existing pool of knowledge on the topic. The discussion will also shed light on their implications for both pedagogical practice and future research in the field of Arabic language education

LITERATURE REVIEW

A large and growing body of literature has investigated the limitations of traditional classroom-based instruction in promoting deep cultural understanding within the field of Arabic language education. In line, much of the current literature on this topic pays particular attention to the exploration of immersive strategies that extend learning beyond the classroom walls. The subsequent review synthesizes scholarship on immersive methods for teaching Arabic culture, prioritizing recent publications to capture current trends while remaining grounded in foundational research. It is geared towards assessing the effectiveness, challenges, and pedagogical value of these innovative approaches, which range from digital tools to in-country experiences.

Digital Immersion: Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, and Telecollaboration

A significant trend in recent scholarship is the use of technology to promote cultural immersion. Being practical, scalable substitutes for physical travel, digital tools such as Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) offer learners worldwide access to authentic cultural contexts. VR and emerging metaverse technologies create immersive simulations that enhance student motivation and academic performance by enabling practice in realistic scenarios—such as navigating a virtual marketplace—thereby fostering a strong sense of presence (Parmaxi 2020; Lin and Wang 2022). This feeling of “presence” is crucial in making the learning experience feel authentic and engaging. Similarly, AR enhances learners’ motivation and interactivity by layering digital information over real-world settings, making abstract cultural content more tangible and meaningful (Sidik et al. 2020; Wu et al. 2013).

Another key digital approach is telecollaboration, or online intercultural exchange, which connects learners across borders for authentic conversation. This technology grants direct interaction with native speakers, which helps build intercultural communicative competence (ICC). For example, one exchange between American and Saudi students led to a marked increase in mutual cultural understanding (Al-Tamimi and Hassan 2023). Beyond simple exchange, these projects encourage students to examine their own biases, which promotes critical cultural awareness (Abourehab 2024).

Physical Immersion: Study Abroad and In-Country Programs

The value of study abroad as a pivotal immersive experience is widely acknowledged and thoroughly documented. Living and learning in an Arabic-speaking country offers opportunities for growth that a classroom cannot match. Immersed in the language's natural environment, students in study-abroad programs improve their understanding of meaning, diction, and tone, and remarkably develop their linguistic and cultural competence (Ghazal 2025). Consistently, research shows that participants in such programs develop greater intercultural sensitivity, improved critical thinking skills, and increased confidence in spontaneous communication (Jackson 2018).

Recent research has shown that the institutions which put in place such programs emphasize specific goals that go beyond linguistic fluency to include cultivating intercultural awareness and encouraging students to critically examine their own cultural assumptions (Jackson 2018; Vande Berg et al. 2020). These aims are reflected in program designs that often require students to live with host families and engage actively with local peers, thereby promoting authentic cultural integration (Trilokekar and Kukar 2011). In some cases, assessments may include independent research projects or dissertations based on fieldwork conducted abroad, boosting both academic depth and personal reflection. A clear indicator of this immersive impact is found in research showing how learners in Egypt begin adopting local dialect features shortly after arrival, which demonstrates early stages of sociolinguistic adaptation (Trentman 2021b).

Community-Based Learning and Cultural Integration

Connecting learners with local Arabic-speaking communities, whether at home or abroad, is a powerful strategy grounded in active engagement and collaboration. For heritage learners, research shows that affirming their full linguistic repertoire, including multiple Arabic dialects and English, supports identity development and fosters a more inclusive learning environment (Albirini 2016; García and Wei 2014). This pedagogical approach, known as translanguaging, has proven especially effective in community-based heritage language programs by encouraging learners to draw on all their linguistic resources for expression and understanding. Other approaches embed culture directly into the curriculum through creative methods such as student-led cultural clubs, festivals, and the incorporation of literature, film, and songs to create a more holistic and emotionally resonant experience (Allen 2015; Menken and García 2015). For example, a study by Kramsch and Nolden (2014) found that using Arabic and other world literatures in small discussion-based groups helped participants develop intercultural competence, especially when these sessions were supported by reflective mentorship. This demonstrates that well-curated cultural content, when paired with guided dialogue, can significantly enhance both cultural appreciation and student motivation.

Summary of Literature

A clear trend has emerged from recent scholarship: a decisive turn toward immersive, hands-on learning in Arabic language and culture education is gaining momentum. Research stresses the growing use of digital tools such as Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and telecollaboration to create scalable, motivating opportunities for learners to engage with Arab cultures regardless of geographic constraints (Godwin-Jones 2022; Lin and Wang 2022; Parmaxi 2020). At the same time, traditional modalities like study abroad and local community engagement remain indispensable for promoting deeply authentic cultural encounters that cannot be entirely replicated digitally (Trentman 2021a; Jackson 2018). Thus, what unites these diverse approaches is their shared pedagogical aim. They all tend to cultivate a more critical and meaningful understanding of the complex cultures of the Arabic-speaking world at the personal level, moving from rote memorization toward intercultural reflection (Byram and Wagner 2018; Deardorff 2020). Future research is invited to examine the long-term influence of these strategies and explore ways whereby digital and experiential modalities can be effectively blended to make intercultural

learning more impactful and accessible

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a scoping review methodology to systematically map the academic and professional literature on extracurricular strategies for teaching Arabic culture.

Research Design

The research design adheres to the five-stage framework developed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) and its later refinements. This approach was selected for its unique strengths. It provides a rigorous, transparent structure to identify key concepts, sources of evidence, and the scope of a research area. As an effective method, a scoping review provides a way to comprehensively map out the existing literature in an emerging field. Based on the previous lines of reasoning, the inquiry was guided by a single direct research question: *What are the extracurricular strategies for teaching the cultural component to non-native Arabic speakers that have been identified and documented in the academic and professional literature?*

Data Collection

To collect the data, a systematic literature search was carried out between February and May 2025. To comprehensively cover the relevant literature, the search included several key electronic databases such as Google Scholar, ERIC, Scopus, and ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, along with the Arabic databases Dar Al-Mandumah and Marefa. A combination of keywords in both Arabic and English was employed to identify relevant studies: (“teaching Arabic culture” OR “المكون الثقافي”) AND (“non-native speakers” OR “لغة ثانية”) AND (“extracurricular activities” OR “خارج صفية” OR “language immersion” OR “انغماس لغوي” OR “cultural component” OR “تعليم العربية للناطقين بغيرها”).

The study selection process was governed by a precisely defined set of inclusion and exclusion criteria (Figure 1).

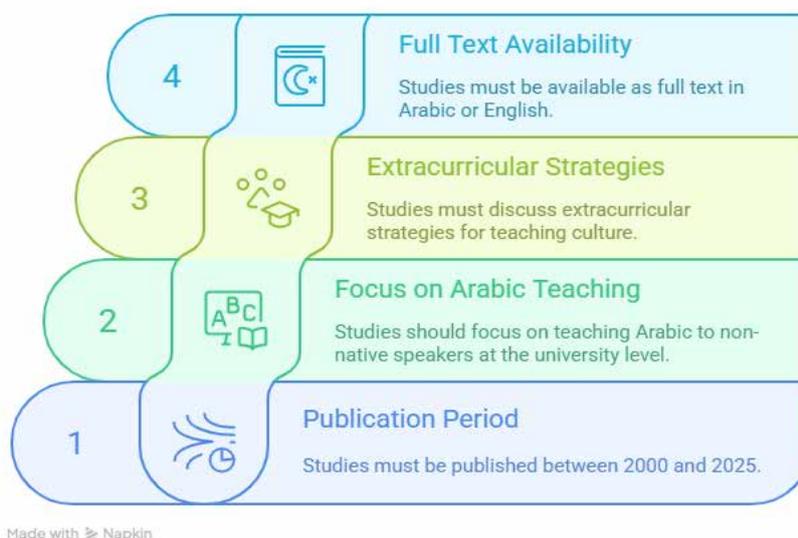


Figure 1. The Study Selection Process

The decision to use the criteria above was meant to ascertain the relevance and focus of the collected data. As shown above, studies were included if they: (1) were published between 2000 and 2025; (2) centred primarily on teaching Arabic to non-native speakers at the university level or above; (3) clearly discussed one or more extracurricular strategies for teaching culture; and (4) were available as full text in Arabic or English. Conversely, studies that revolved solely around in-class culture teaching or did not address the Arabic language were excluded.

Data Analysis

A qualitative methodology was employed to analyse the collected literature. In harmony with the nature of the study, it was decided that this was the best method. Two researchers independently reviewed all titles and abstracts against the inclusion criteria, followed by a full-text review of eligible studies. A custom data extraction form (Figure 2) was designed to systematically chart the following information: author and year, country of study, study design, target audience, described extracurricular strategies, and key findings or recommendations.

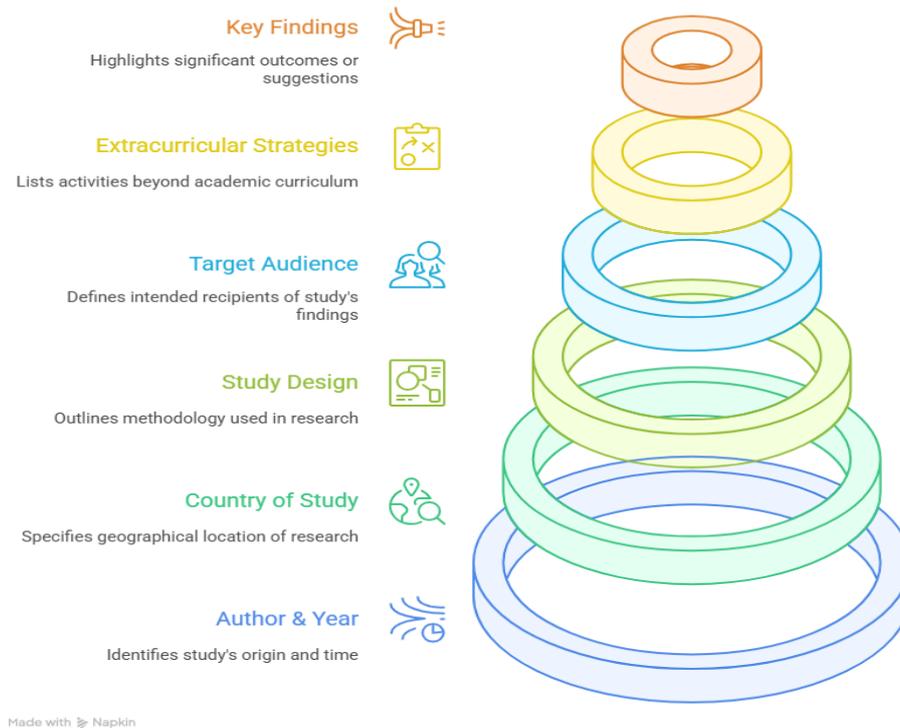


Figure 2. Data Extraction Hierarchy

This approach guaranteed consistent extraction of data across all selected sources. Any disagreements between the researchers were resolved through discussion to reach a consensus. To this end, this study employed thematic analysis to collate, summarize, and report the results. Thematic analysis lends itself to identifying, categorising, and interpreting recurring themes and strategies within a body of qualitative data. The synthesized results were compiled into a narrative format and were supported by a Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) flow diagram to visually showcase the complete selection process.

4. RESULTS

PRISMA Flow Diagram

The PRISMA process demonstrates the rigorous approach which was deployed to identify relevant literature (Figure 3). The large number of initial hits (1,250) indicates that researchers cast a wide net and used broad keywords to capture as much potentially relevant literature as possible. The dramatic reduction from 1,000 records to just 90 after the title/abstract screen, and further down to 35 after full-text review, clearly shows that the research question was highly specific. The exclusion of 965 out of 1,000 unique records shows that though many articles appear to be touching upon language education, very few specifically address the niche topic of extracurricular strategies for teaching Arabic culture. To lend credibility to the results, a multi-stage screening process (duplicates, title/abstract, full-text) was adopted. As a hallmark of high-quality evidence synthesis, it helped ascertain that the final included studies are

precisely aligned with the review objectives. The final set of 35 studies represents the core evidence available on this particular topic within the defined search parameters.

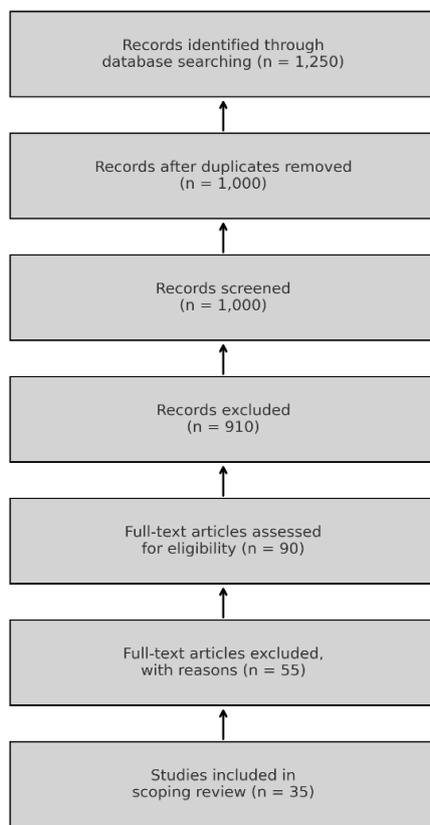


Figure 3. The Study PRISMA Flow Diagram

Table 1. Summary of Included Studies (n=35)

Author (Year)	Title	Primary Theme/ Strategy	Study Type/ Focus	Context/ Population
Byram (1997)	<i>Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence</i>	Foundational Framework	Theoretical/ Pedagogical	General Intercultural Education
Kolb (1984)	<i>Experiential learning...</i>	Foundational Framework	Theoretical/ Framework	General Learning Theory
Kramsch (1993)	<i>Context and culture in language teaching</i>	Foundational Framework	Theoretical/ Pedagogical	General Language Education
Deardorff (2006)	<i>Identification and assessment of intercultural competence...</i>	Foundational Framework	Empirical/ Framework	General Higher Education
Kasper & Rose (2002)	<i>Pragmatic development in a second language</i>	Foundational Framework	Theoretical/ Linguistics	Second Language Acquisition
Allen (2007)	<i>Intercultural sensitivity among college students in Morocco</i>	Homestay & Immersion	Qualitative/ Empirical	Morocco; US College Students
Fisher & Evans (2000)	<i>Effects of school exchange visits on attitudes...</i>	Homestay & Immersion	Empirical Study	France; UK Students
Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart (2010)	<i>The role of the homestay in the study abroad experience</i>	Homestay & Immersion	Case Study/ Qualitative	Costa Rica
Engle & Engle (2003)	<i>Toward a classification of study abroad program types</i>	Homestay & Immersion	Programmatic/ Theoretical	General Study Abroad
Dwyer (2004)	<i>Impact of study abroad program duration</i>	Homestay & Immersion	Quantitative/ Empirical	General Study Abroad
Trentman (2013)	<i>Imagined communities and language learning in Cairo</i>	Language Partner	Qualitative/ Ethnographic	Cairo, Egypt; US Students

Geist (2011)	<i>Value of peer-to-peer interactions in Morocco</i>	Language Partner	Case Study/ Qualitative	Morocco
Wilkinson (1998)	<i>Participant perspectives on study abroad</i>	Language Partner	Qualitative Study	France; US Students
Werry (2008)	<i>Service-learning and the culture of travel in Cairo</i>	Service-Learning	Case Study/ Qualitative	Cairo, Egypt
Tonkin (2011)	<i>Service-learning and civic engagement: A sourcebook</i>	Service-Learning	Pedagogical/ Framework	General
Bringle & Hatcher (2009)	<i>Innovative practices in service-learning</i>	Service-Learning	Pedagogical/ Descriptive	Higher Education
Annette (2002)	<i>Service-learning in an international context</i>	Service-Learning	Theoretical/ Descriptive	General
Brewer & Cunningham (2009)	<i>Integrating study abroad into the curriculum</i>	Field Trips	Pedagogical/ Framework	General Study Abroad
Adaskou et al. (1990)	<i>Design decisions on cultural content...</i>	Field Trips	Case Study/ Descriptive	Morocco
Younes (2015)	<i>Teaching Arabic through film and television</i>	Cultural Workshops	Pedagogical/ Descriptive	Arabic Pedagogy
Swedenburg (2006)	<i>Egyptian popular music and the nation</i>	Cultural Workshops	Cultural Studies/ Analysis	Egypt
Shaheen (2012)	<i>Reel bad Arabs: How Hollywood vilifies a people</i>	Cultural Workshops	Critical Media Analysis	US Media/Arab Representation
Al-Batal (2007)	<i>Arabic and the new technologies</i>	General Pedagogy	Descriptive/ Technological	Arab World
Ryding (2013)	<i>Teaching and learning Arabic as a foreign language</i>	General Pedagogy	Pedagogical/ Framework	Arabic Pedagogy
Husseinali (2006)	<i>Who is a "native speaker" of Arabic?</i>	General Pedagogy	Critical/Theoretical	Arabic Pedagogy
Hass (2012)	<i>Impact of short-term study abroad on intercultural competence</i>	General Study Abroad	Empirical Study	Middle East; US Students
Vande Berg et al. (2009)	<i>The Georgetown Consortium study</i>	General Study Abroad	Quantitative/ Empirical	Global
Gordon & Akkari (2011)	<i>Rethinking study abroad in the Arab world post 9/11</i>	General Study Abroad	Critical/Descriptive	Arab World; US Students
Zemni (2014)	<i>Teaching Culture in the Arabic Language Classroom (Tunisia)</i>	General Pedagogy	Case Study (Dissertation)	Tunisia
Paige et al. (2012)	<i>Study abroad, intercultural competence, and language learning</i>	General Study Abroad	Theoretical/ Framework	General Study Abroad
Al-Issa (2005)	<i>The role of English in the Omani educational system</i>	General Pedagogy	Descriptive	Oman
Pellegrino (1998)	<i>Student perspectives on language learning in study abroad</i>	General Study Abroad	Qualitative	Spain; US Students
Hymes (1972)	<i>On communicative competence</i>	Foundational Framework	Theoretical/ Linguistics	Sociolinguistics
Krashen (1985)	<i>The input hypothesis: Issues and implications</i>	Foundational Framework	Theoretical/ Linguistics	Second Language Acquisition
Trentman (2021a)	<i>Arabic Study Abroad</i>	General Study Abroad	Chapter/Review	Arabic Pedagogy

Dominant Themes

The thematic analysis of the 35 included sources identified five principal extracurricular strategies commonly deployed to promote cultural competence in Arabic language education. These core strategies are: (1) homestays and immersion programs; (2) language partner and tandem learning; (3) community-based service-learning; (4) structured cultural field trips; and (5) cultural clubs and media workshops. Table 2 provides a detailed synthesis of the key concepts, areas, and specific pedagogical considerations associated with each of these strategies as documented in the reviewed literature. For each point, the table indicates the number of included studies that address the topic, providing a quantitative sense of the evidence base supporting each approach.

Table 2. Key Concepts and Considerations in Extracurricular Cultural Learning

Theme	Key Consideration	Supporting Studies
I. Homestay & Immersion Programs	Homestays serve as a primary vehicle for: a) achieving deep cultural immersion; b) accessing daily routines, family dynamics, and social etiquette.	6
	Identity negotiation within host families is a crucial part of authentic cultural learning.	4
	Immersion program types should be aligned with learners' proficiency levels and cultural goals.	4
II. Language Partner & Tandem Learning	Peer partnerships offer insight into local social norms and lived experiences.	3
	Interactions should move beyond basic practice to address identity, values, and social issues.	3
III. Community-Based & Service-Learning	Students should engage as active participants, not just observers, to build critical understanding of the host society.	4
	Volunteering in local institutions provides authentic language practice and deeper insight into civic life.	4
	Programs must follow ethical frameworks that prioritize community needs and mutual engagement.	3
IV. Structured Cultural Field Trips	Trips should follow experiential learning models (Kolb's cycle), including structured reflection.	3
	Trips should be fully integrated into the curriculum with pre-trip preparation and post-trip analysis.	4
V. Cultural Clubs & Media Workshops	Use of popular media (films, music, TV) as "cultural texts" supports authentic language use and exploration of contemporary issues.	3
	Workshops (e.g., film clubs) create space for deeper conversation on sensitive or complex cultural topics.	2
	Critical media analysis helps deconstruct cultural stereotypes (Arabs in Western media) and fosters media literacy.	1

Although the terminology and specific terminology varied across the included studies, the results tend to converge around several these dominant themes.

Characteristics of Included Studies

The first set of analyses examined the composition of the literature. Of the 35 included sources, a significant majority (24 studies, or 69%) were descriptive, theoretical, or case-study-based. These articles typically outlined successful program models or provided pedagogical recommendations. A smaller portion (8 studies, or 23%) consisted of qualitative studies employing methods like ethnography or interviews. In contrast, only a handful (3 studies, or 8%) employed quantitative or quasi-experimental designs to measure research outcomes. Geographically, a notable concentration of the research is attributed to programs in the United States, Egypt, and Morocco.

Key Extracurricular Strategies Identified in the Literature

The analysis identified five principal strategies. The themes identified in these responses are presented below and are supported by representative evidence from the literature.

1. Homestays with Host Families

A recurrent theme was the central role of the homestay, described almost universally as the most profound immersive experience. Numerous descriptive studies indicate that homestays provide incomparable access to the "deep culture" of family dynamics, social etiquette, and daily routines. Strong evidence of its effectiveness was found in arguments asserting that this direct, sustained contact forces students to negotiate meaning in real-time, a process critical to developing cultural competence. This

result is echoed in the wider field of study abroad research. Allen's (2007) work, for example, points to the homestay as a central space where students are invited to negotiate their own identities against the backdrop of the host culture. Earlier findings from Fisher and Evans (2000) showed that exchange visits with homestays helped cultivate more positive feelings toward the host culture, a vital part of developing cultural competence.

Language Partner and Tandem Programs

The use of language partners stands out as one of the most frequently cited strategies. The sources consistently suggest these partnerships offer a vital glimpse into the everyday lives and social viewpoints of local peers. The success of these interactions appears to be directly connected to their authenticity. When students approach these partnerships for a reason that transcends language practice, they open the door to meaningful conversations about cultural values and identity. This is powerfully exemplified in the ethnographic work of Trentman (2013), who studied American students learning Arabic in Egypt. His research showed that interactions with language partners were an impactful sphere where participants managed to negotiate identity and understand social norms. This provides a richer cultural education that is unrealisable through formal instruction alone.

Structured Cultural Field Trips and Excursions

If we now turn to off-site learning, nearly all sources discussed field trips, consistently differentiating between simple tourist visits and pedagogically sound excursions. Effective strategies are framed by experiential learning theory, in which direct experience is followed by structured reflection. The idea is grounded in the foundational work of Kolb (1984), whose cycle of experiential learning is frequently cited as a model. Applied to the Arabic context, this means a trip to a local souq is not just a shopping trip; it is preceded by a lesson on bargaining language and followed by a reflective session wherein students discuss their observations on gender interactions, commerce, and social space (Brewer and Cunningham 2009).

Community-Based Learning and Volunteering

A growing body of literature emphasized the value of service-learning. One concern expressed regarding traditional study abroad was the potential for students to remain observers of a culture. Placing students in local schools, NGOs, or community centres was framed as a way to shift them to being active participants. There was a consensus that this strategy provides authentic language practice and guarantees a deeper understanding of the host country's social fabric. Evidence of its effectiveness comes from case studies like Werry's (2008) on a Cairo program, which showed that volunteering was instrumental in challenging students' monolithic ideas and helping them gain a critical perspective on Egyptian society.

Cultural Clubs and Media Workshops (Film and Music)

The analysis also pointed to the frequent use of cultural clubs and media workshops. Among these, film clubs were noted as effective in helping students analyze cultural themes and dialects found in contemporary Arab cinema. Treating popular media as a "cultural text," this method exposes learners to authentic language and sets the scene to hash out complex cultural issues. This approach is consistent with scholarly arguments that popular culture mirrors the lived realities and internal debates of a society (Swedenburg 2006).

To provide a high-level overview of the research landscape, the findings from Table 2 were quantified to show the distribution of scholarly focus across the five primary themes. Table 3 presents this quantitative analysis and summarises the volume and density of the literature for each extracurricular strategy.

The analysis reveals a clear hierarchy of research attention. Homestay & Immersion Programs emerged as the most extensively documented strategy, with the highest total references (14) and the highest average number of references per consideration (4.67). This indicates both broad and deep academic consensus on

its importance. Similarly, Community-Based & Service-Learning is also a well-supported theme with 12 total references, highlighting its growing relevance in the literature.

In contrast, other strategies show a more limited research base. Although Structured Cultural Field Trips and Cultural Clubs & Media Workshops have the same number of total references (7), the distribution of research differs. The lower number of «considerations» for field trips suggests a more niche, though focused, discussion in the literature. Conversely, the low average number of references for media workshops (2.33) indicates that though the topic is mentioned, the research supporting its specific pedagogical aspects is comparatively thin, which suggests that it is an emerging area of inquiry that warrants further investigation.

Table 3. Quantitative Analysis of Research Focus on Extracurricular Strategies

Theme	# of Considerations	Total References	Average References per Consideration
I. Homestay & Immersion Programs	3	14	4.67
II. Language Partner & Tandem Learning	3	9	3.00
III. Community-Based & Service-Learning	3	12	4.00
IV. Structured Cultural Field Trips	2	7	3.50
V. Cultural Clubs & Media Workshops	3	7	2.33

DISCUSSION

The objective of this scoping review was to systematically survey the existing literature on the use of extracurricular activities for teaching Arabic culture. The clearest finding is a strong consensus, in theory, on the importance of these strategies, supported by the wide variety of documented practical models. These results reflect those of the broader fields of second language acquisition and study abroad, which have long moved towards understanding language and culture acquisition as an integrated social process. The findings align well with foundational concepts such as Hymes's (1972) theory of "communicative competence," which posits that linguistic proficiency is incomplete without the sociolinguistic knowledge of how to use language appropriately in context. On a similar vein, the emphasis on immersion in the literature resonates with Krashen's (1985) "Input Hypothesis," which argues that acquisition occurs through exposure to comprehensible input within meaningful contexts. The present results are significant in confirming the field's commitment to experiential learning and providing a clear map of current pedagogical practice.

Key Gaps and Limitations in the Current Literature

Though the literature provides a rich descriptive account of what is being done, the most significant finding of this scoping review is the clear identification of critical gaps in the research.

A Scarcity of Empirical and Comparative Evidence

The majority of the literature is descriptive or based on anecdotal evidence. There is a profound lack of rigorous empirical research—particularly longitudinal or quasi-experimental studies with control groups—that measures the specific impact of these activities on intercultural competence. Likewise, no studies were found that directly compare the effectiveness of different strategies. For practitioners, this means there is little evidence to guide decisions on resource allocation. Is a well-structured language partner program more effective for beginner students than a series of field trips? The current research base cannot answer this central question.

A Pervasive Geographic Bias

The heavy concentration of research in Egypt and Morocco, whilst valuable, poses a problem of generalizability. The Arab world is not a cultural monolith; the social norms, dialects, and cultural values

in Amman are vastly different from those in Rabat or Muscat. The current literature implicitly promotes a model of “Arab culture” based on a few specific locales, neglecting the immense diversity of the region and limiting the applicability of the findings.

The Challenge of Assessment

Central to the entire field is the persistent challenge of assessment. The literature rarely discusses validated, reliable tools widely used to measure the acquisition of “cultural competence.” Devoid of effective assessment instruments, it is nearly impossible to empirically prove the value of these programs to university administrators or to conduct meaningful comparative research.

Recommendations for Future Research and Practice

Based on the findings and the identified gaps, this scoping review puts forward the following recommendations:

For Researchers

The field must transcend descriptive studies. There is an urgent need for (a) longitudinal research that tracks students’ intercultural development over time, (b) comparative studies that assess the differential impacts of various strategies (homestay vs. internship) on learners at different proficiency levels, and (c) research in underrepresented Arab contexts to create a more diverse knowledge base. The development and validation of standardized assessment tools to measure intercultural competence in the Arabic context is of paramount importance.

For Practitioners

Program directors should create a blended ecosystem of extracurricular activities, combining observational and participatory strategies. They should place a heavy emphasis on structured reflection, using Kolb’s cycle as a guide to ensure that experiences are translated into durable learning. Practitioners should be encouraged to engage in practitioner-led action research to document their successes and challenges, contributing valuable data to the field.

CONCLUSION

This scoping review has attempted to map out the literature on extracurricular strategies for teaching Arabic culture. It has identified five key strategies supported by broad theoretical consensus. More importantly, it has exposed critical research gaps and called on the academic community to move from “what” and “why” to “how” and “with what effect” by conducting more rigorous experimental and comparative research. In so doing, we will be in a position to design more context-bound, impactful, and informed educational programs that pave the way for researchers and educators to truly reconcile language learning and cultural experience

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