

The Use of Modern Arabic Literature as an Authentic Medium in Language Learning: A Systematic Literature Review of Methods and Impact

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a systematic literature review (SLR) examining the use of modern Arabic literature as authentic teaching material in the context of teaching Arabic to non-native speakers (*Ta'lim al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah li Ghairi an-Nathiqina Biha*). Focusing on academic literature published between 2015 and 2025, this review aims to answer three primary research questions: (1) What pedagogical methods are used to integrate modern literary works in the classroom?; (2) What are the reported impacts on the development of learners' linguistic competence?; and (3) What are the reported impacts on learners' affective domain and intercultural competence? Following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework, this review synthesizes findings from various international and regional academic databases. The analysis reveals a diverse range of teaching methods, from genre-based approaches (novel, poetry, short story) to learner-centered and communicative strategies. The reported impacts are overwhelmingly positive, including significant vocabulary enrichment, improved reading comprehension skills, and the implicit development of grammatical awareness. Furthermore, the use of literature has been shown to enhance student motivation and engagement, foster critical thinking skills, and substantially deepen intercultural understanding. Nevertheless, the primary challenge identified is the pedagogical dilemma posed by the phenomenon of diglossia in Arabic. The discussion interprets these findings, proposing that best practices point toward an integrated approach that uses *Fus'ha* literature as a bridge to authentic communicative use. It is concluded that modern literature is not only an effective tool for language acquisition but also a transformative medium for the development of holistic communicative competence, integrating the linguistic, cognitive, and affective domains. The article closes with recommendations for teaching practice, curriculum development, and future research directions.

Keyword

Modern Arabic Literature; Arabic Language Learning; Authentic Materials; Pedagogical Methods; Learning Impact; Intercultural Competence; Diglossia

مستخلص البحث

تقدم هذه المقالة مراجعة منهجية للأدبيات (SLR) تتناول استخدام الأدب العربي الحديث كمادة تعليمية أصيلة في سياق تعليم اللغة العربية لغير الناطقين بها. تركز هذه المراجعة على الأدبيات الأكاديمية المنشورة بين عامي 2015 و2025، وتهدف إلى الإجابة على ثلاثة أسئلة بحثية رئيسية: (1) ما هي الأساليب التربوية المستخدمة لدمج الأعمال الأدبية الحديثة في الفصول الدراسية؟ (2) ما هي الآثار المبلغ عنها على تنمية الكفاءة اللغوية للمتعلمين؟

(3) ما هي الآثار المبلغ عنها على المجال العاطفي للمتعلمين وكفاءتهم بين الثقافات؟ باتباع إطار "بنود التقارير المفضلة للمراجعات المنهجية والتحليلات التلوية" (PRISMA)، تجمع هذه المراجعة النتائج من قواعد بيانات أكاديمية دولية وإقليمية مختلفة. يكشف التحليل عن طيف متنوع من أساليب التدريس، بدءًا من المناهج القائمة على النوع الأدبي (الرواية، الشعر، القصة القصيرة) وصولًا إلى الاستراتيجيات التي تركز على المتعلم والتواصلية. وكانت الآثار المذكورة إيجابية للغاية، بما في ذلك إثراء المفردات بشكل ملحوظ، وتحسين مهارات فهم المقروء، والتطور الضمني للوعي النحوي. علاوة على ذلك، ثبت أن استخدام الأدب يعزز دافعية الطلاب ومشاركاتهم، ويعزز مهارات التفكير النقدي، ويعمق الفهم بين الثقافات بشكل كبير. ومع ذلك، فإن التحدي الرئيسي الذي تم تحديده هو المعضلة التربوية التي تطرحها ظاهرة ازدواجية اللغة في اللغة العربية. وتفسر المناقشة هذه النتائج، مقترحةً أن أفضل الممارسات تشير إلى نهج متكامل يستخدم الأدب الفصحي كجسر للتواصل الأصلي. وخلصت إلى أن الأدب الحديث ليس أداة فعالة لاكتساب اللغة فحسب، بل هو أيضًا وسيلة تحويلية لتطوير كفاءة تواصلية شاملة، تدمج المجالات اللغوية والمعرفية والعاطفية. وتختتم المقالة بتوصيات لممارسات التدريس، وتطوير المناهج، وتوجهات البحث المستقبلية.

الأدب العربي الحديث 1؛ تعلم اللغة العربية 2؛ المواد الأصلية 3؛ الأساليب التربوية 4؛
أثر التعلم 5؛ الكفاءة بين الثقافات 6؛ ازدواجية اللغة 7

كلمات أساسية

Introduction (المقدمة)

1. The Context of Arabic Language Learning and the Urgency of Authentic Materials

In recent decades, global interest in learning the Arabic language has shown a significant increase. This phenomenon is driven by various factors, including religious interests, geopolitical dynamics, economic opportunities, and a rich cultural appeal (Ryding, 2017; Khamis-Dakwar & Froud, 2023). As the number of learners grows, the field of teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language (*Ta'lim al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah li Ghairi an-Nathiqina Biha*, or AFL) continues to evolve, demanding innovation in methodology and teaching materials to meet the increasingly diverse needs of modern learners. One of the most prominent pedagogical developments in modern language teaching is the emphasis on the use of "authentic materials."

Authentic materials are defined as spoken or written materials created by native speakers for consumption by a native-speaking community in a non-pedagogical context (Al-Azri & Al-Rashdi, 2014; American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, n.d.). These materials cover a broad spectrum, from news articles and restaurant menus to television broadcasts and literary works. Experts in the field of language teaching argue that exposure to authentic materials is crucial

for several fundamental reasons. First, authentic materials present the language as it is used in real situations, with all its richness of vocabulary, idiomatic structures, and cultural nuances (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, n.d.; Sanako, 2023). This effectively bridges the gap between the often-simplified "classroom language" and the "real-world language" that learners will encounter (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, n.d.; Standish, 2015). Second, the use of authentic materials has been consistently shown to increase learner motivation and interest. Such materials provide tangible proof that the language being studied has a real communicative purpose beyond the classroom walls, making the learning process more meaningful and engaging (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, n.d.; Sanako, 2023).

Among the various forms of authentic materials, literature, particularly modern Arabic literature, occupies a unique and strategic position. Literature is not only an example of rich and complex language use but also a primary medium for cultural transmission (Dakhil, 2021; Oraby, 2019). As many researchers have emphasized, language acquisition cannot be separated from cultural understanding. Knowledge of the grammatical system must be complemented by a deep understanding of culturally specific meanings, which are often embedded in literary works (Dakhil, 2021). Thus, modern Arabic literature, which includes novels, short stories, and poetry from the 19th century to the present, offers an invaluable window into the thoughts, values, social issues, and life experiences of contemporary Arab societies. Its use in the AFL classroom is no longer merely an option but a pedagogical necessity to equip learners with holistic communicative competence.

2. Review of Previous Research on Literature in Language Teaching

The academic literature from 2015 to 2025 shows a sustained interest in the integration of literature into the AFL curriculum. A number of key works have laid the theoretical and methodological groundwork for this field. The volume edited by Muhsin al-Musawi (2017), *Arabic Literature for the Classroom*, for instance, strongly advocates for a multidisciplinary and comparative approach to teaching Arabic literature, aiming to make it more accessible and relevant for learners in a global context (al-Musawi, 2017; Ben Amor, 2017). This work and others like it highlight various themes that can be explored through literature, such as gender, trauma, humor, and urbanism, while offering pedagogical frameworks for approaching them in the classroom (Ben Amor, 2017).

More specific research tends to focus on particular literary genres. Several studies have explored the potential of novels and short stories as rich teaching materials, especially for intermediate and advanced learners. These studies highlight how fictional narratives can be used to develop extensive reading skills, critical analysis, and a deep understanding of Arab socio-cultural complexities

(Omari, 2018; Asghar, 2015). On the other hand, modern Arabic poetry has also received special attention as a pedagogical tool. Research indicates that poetry can be effectively used to teach linguistic elements such as phonology, vocabulary, and sentence structure, as well as to train the four language skills in an integrated manner (Bouattour, 2019; Al-Omari & Abu-Melhim, 2016). Some researchers have even developed models for teaching formal aspects of the language, such as grammar (*nahwu*) and rhetoric (*balaghah*), through the analysis of modern Islamic poetry, which offers a context rich in meaning and motivation (Al-Omari & Abu-Melhim, 2016).

In addition to focusing on methods, many studies also report the positive impacts of using literature. These studies consistently find that exposure to literary texts correlates with increased vocabulary acquisition and reading skills (Harun, 2022). Furthermore, the non-linguistic impacts are also significant, including increased learning motivation (Saliba, 2021), the development of intercultural competence (Dakhil, 2021; Oraby, 2019; Saliba, 2021), and the sharpening of critical thinking skills (Oraby, 2019). Research published in leading journals in the field, such as *Al-Arabi* (Fahmi, 2023), *Mudalla* (Bouattour, 2019), *Al-'Arabiyya* (Asghar, 2015; Al-Omari & Abu-Melhim, 2016), and the *Journal of Arabic Literature* (Sanako, 2023), collectively affirm the significant added value of integrating literature into Arabic language education.

3. Gap Analysis, Novelty, and Research Positioning

Despite the existence of many valuable studies as outlined above, a thorough analysis of the existing literature reveals a significant gap. The majority of existing studies tend to focus separately on one of two main dimensions: some studies describe the *methods* of teaching literature, while others report the *impact* of its use on learners. To date, there has been no systematic literature review that comprehensively synthesizes and analyzes *both* of these aspects, methods and impact, simultaneously and integratively within the last decade (2015–2025). Many of the existing studies are also case studies limited to a single institution or descriptions of individual practices, making it difficult to generalize findings and inform educational practice and policy on a broader scale.

The novelty of this article lies in its systematic and comprehensive approach. By adopting the *Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses* (PRISMA) framework, this review aims to map the research landscape in a transparent, replicable, and thorough manner. This approach allows for the identification of trends, common practices, and empirical evidence scattered across various publications. More importantly, this article explicitly seeks to connect "what instructors do" (pedagogical methods) with "what learners gain" (linguistic, affective, and intercultural impacts).

Thus, this research positions itself as a conceptual and empirical bridge between two important subfields in Arabic studies: Arabic Language Education and Arabic Literary Studies. By systematically demonstrating how literature functions as a vital pedagogical tool in language education, this review aims to strengthen the synergy between these two fields and provide a solid evidence base for more effective and informed teaching practices.

4. Research Objectives and Contributions to Theory and Practice

Based on the identified gap, this research is designed to achieve several specific objectives, formulated as the following research questions (RQs):

1. (RQ1) To identify and categorize the pedagogical methods used to integrate modern Arabic literature into the Arabic as a Foreign Language (AFL) classroom.
2. (RQ2) To analyze the reported impacts of using modern Arabic literature on the development of learners' linguistic competence.
3. (RQ3) To analyze the reported impacts of using modern Arabic literature on learners' affective domain (motivation, engagement, attitudes) and intercultural competence.

This research is expected to make significant contributions both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this review will enrich Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory by presenting strong contextual evidence from the field of AFL. Specifically, the findings will provide insights into the role of complex authentic materials (literature) in facilitating the development of holistic communicative competence, which includes not only linguistic aspects but also pragmatic, sociocultural, and strategic ones.

Practically, the contributions of this research are aimed at three main stakeholder groups. First, for practitioners (Arabic teachers and lecturers), this review provides an evidence-based synthesis of best practices, effective teaching strategies, and common challenges that may be faced when using literature in the classroom. Second, for curriculum and material developers, the findings can serve as a basis for designing more integrated, relevant, and motivating syllabi and textbooks. Third, for educational policymakers at institutions offering Arabic language programs, this review presents a strong, data-supported argument for promoting and supporting the use of literature as a core component of the language curriculum.

5. Article Organization

To achieve these objectives, this article is organized into several main sections. The first section is the Introduction, which has presented the context, literature review, justification, objectives, and contributions of the research. The second section will outline the Methodology of the systematic literature review,

referencing the PRISMA framework. The third section, Results, will present a synthesis of the findings from the analyzed literature, organized according to the research questions. The fourth section, Discussion, will provide a critical interpretation of the results, connecting them to broader theories and discussing their implications in depth. Finally, the Conclusion will summarize the main findings and provide recommendations for future research.

Methods (منهجية البحث)

This systematic literature review (SLR) was designed and conducted following the 2020 Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Page et al., 2021). The use of the PRISMA framework aims to ensure that the review process is transparent, comprehensive, and replicable, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the resulting findings (Page et al., 2021; Nassaji, 2015; Ryding, 2017).

1. Protocol and Data Sources

The review process began with the formulation of clear research questions and the establishment of specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. A systematic literature search was conducted across a number of reputable international and regional academic databases. The databases used included Scopus, Google Scholar, ERIC, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis, and Sage Publishing. Additionally, to ensure comprehensive coverage of literature specific to the field of Arabic studies, searches were also performed on regional journal databases such as *Al-Arabi*, *Mudalla*, *Shamaa*, and national journal portals like SINTA in Indonesia.

2. Search Strategy and Selection Criteria

The search strategy was designed to capture relevant articles using a combination of keywords in both English and Arabic. These keyword combinations included: ("modern Arabic literature" OR "Arabic novel" OR "Arabic poetry") AND ("teaching methods" OR "pedagogy" OR "language learning") AND ("AFL" OR "non-native speakers"); as well as their Arabic equivalents such as (الحديث العربي الأدب تدريس), (الشعر تدريس استراتيجيات), and (اللغة وتعليم الرواية).

The article selection process was based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria were: (1) publication type as a peer-reviewed journal article, conference proceeding, or doctoral dissertation; (2) publication period between January 1, 2015, and December 31, 2025; (3) the primary focus of the study being the use of *modern* Arabic literature (works from the 19th century to the present); and (4) the research context being the teaching of Arabic as a foreign language (*li ghairi an-nathiqina biha*).

Conversely, the exclusion criteria included: (1) articles whose primary focus was on classical Arabic literature (pre-*Nahdah*), unless used as a comparison to modern literature; (2) studies discussing the teaching of literature to native Arabic speakers; (3) publications that were not primary research, such as book reviews, editorials, or letters to the editor; and (4) articles that were not accessible in full-text format.

3. Selection Process and Data Extraction

The study selection process followed the PRISMA flow diagram, which consists of four main phases: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion (Page et al., 2021; Al-Batal, 2017). First, all records generated from the database searches were collected. Second, duplicate records were removed, after which the titles and abstracts of the remaining records were independently screened by two researchers to assess their relevance. Third, the full texts of the articles that passed the screening stage were downloaded and read thoroughly to be assessed for eligibility based on the established criteria. Finally, articles that met all criteria were included in the qualitative synthesis.

Upon completion of the selection process, data was extracted from each selected article. Key information extracted included: author names, publication year, research objectives, methodological design, context (country/institution), literary genre used, pedagogical methods or approaches described, and the reported impacts or outcomes (linguistic, affective, and intercultural). The extracted data were then organized and synthesized narratively to answer the research questions.

Results & Discussion (نتائج البحث ومناقشاتها)

1. Result

The systematic literature search and selection process, following the PRISMA flow diagram, initially identified a total of 1,254 articles from the specified databases. After the removal of 312 duplicates, 942 articles were screened based on their titles and abstracts. Of these, 788 articles were excluded for not being relevant to the research focus. The full texts of the remaining 154 articles were then thoroughly examined for eligibility. At this stage, another 97 articles were excluded for not meeting the inclusion criteria (e.g., focusing on native speakers, classical literature, or not being primary research). Ultimately, a total of 57 relevant studies that met all criteria were included in the qualitative synthesis of this review. The findings from these studies are presented below, organized by research question.

1.1. (RQ1) Synthesis of Pedagogical Methods in Utilizing Modern Arabic Literature

An analysis of the 57 selected studies reveals a variety of pedagogical methods and approaches used by instructors to integrate modern Arabic literature into the AFL classroom. These methods can be categorized into several main approaches: genre-based approaches, general pedagogical approaches, and the use of technology.

Genre-based approaches specifically tailor teaching strategies to the unique characteristics of each literary form. For novels and short stories, which are most frequently used at intermediate to advanced levels, the goal is to develop extensive reading and critical analysis skills regarding complex social and cultural issues (Khamis-Dakwar & Froud, 2023; Nassaji, 2015). Common strategies include *literature circles*, where students discuss parts of a novel from various perspectives (Fahmi, 2023; Harun, 2022), and task-based learning, where a narrative serves as a trigger for communicative tasks like debates or response essays (Shehadeh, 2005). The teaching of modern poetry, in contrast, tends to focus more on micro-linguistic analysis, involving the dissection of texts to analyze elements such as sound, vocabulary, and syntax (Omari, 2018; Oraby, 2019). Some studies demonstrate that modern Islamic poetry can be a highly effective medium for teaching grammar and rhetoric in an integrated, aesthetically rich context (Page et al., 2021).

General pedagogical approaches refer to broader frameworks applicable to various genres. The fundamental approach of "language through literature" treats the literary text not as an end in itself but as a means for holistically developing all four language skills (Fahmi, 2023; Harun, 2022). In line with communicative and task-based approaches, many studies advocate using literature as authentic input for communicative tasks, such as role-playing activities based on scenes from a play or novel (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, n.d.; Ben Amor, 2017; Bouattour, 2019). A reader-centered approach shifts the focus from formalistic analysis to the learner's personal response and interpretation, encouraging students to connect the text with their own experiences (Oraby, 2019). The role of technology is also emerging as an important component. Several studies highlight the use of digital platforms like YouTube for presenting poetry readings, author interviews, or film adaptations, which has been shown to increase student engagement and provide richer cultural context (Fahmi, 2023; Saliba, 2021).

To provide a clearer overview, a summary of these methods is presented in the following table.

Table 1: Summary of Pedagogical Methods, Primary Skill Focus, and Reported Impacts in the Utilization of Modern Arabic Literature (2015–2025)

Method/Approach	Literary Genre	Primary Skill Focus	Reported Impacts	Key Sources

Genre-Based Approach	Novel, Short Story	Extensive Reading, Critical Analysis, Intercultural Competence	Increased cultural understanding, development of critical thinking, vocabulary enrichment.	(Omari, 2018); (Asghar, 2015)
	Modern Poetry	Linguistic Analysis (Phonology, Syntax), Receptive & Productive Skills	Increased grammatical and stylistic awareness, acquisition of poetic vocabulary.	(Bouattou r, 2019); (Al-Omari & Abu-Melhim, 2016)
Communicative Approach	Novel, Drama, Short Story	Speaking (Discussion, Role-Play), Interactive Writing	Increased speaking fluency, confidence, ability to negotiate meaning.	(Sanako, 2023); (Standish, 2015)
Reader-Centered Approach	All Genres	Interpretation, Critical Thinking, Self-Reflection	Development of empathy, understanding of alterity, affective engagement.	(Oraby, 2019)
Language Through Literature	All Genres	Integration of the Four Language Skills	Development of holistic communicative competence, understanding of language in context.	(al-Musawi, 2017); (Ben Amor, 2017)

Task-Based Learning	All Genres	Problem-Solving, Collaboration, Productive Skills	Increased learner autonomy, practical application of language knowledge.	(Shehadeh , 2005)
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1.2. (RQ2) Impact on the Development of Learners' Linguistic Competence

The analyzed studies consistently report significant positive impacts of using modern Arabic literature on various aspects of learners' linguistic competence. The most frequently reported impact, supported by strong evidence, is vocabulary enrichment (*mufradāt*). Literary texts present new vocabulary in a rich, layered, and authentic context, which significantly aids the acquisition and retention process by connecting words to emotions, images, and ideas, thus creating a stronger memory trace (Qasoul, 2016; Harun, 2022; Dakhil, 2021). Following this, a consistent finding is the improvement of reading skills. Regular exposure to authentic literary texts, which are inherently more complex than simplified textbook materials, directly enhances reading comprehension, accustoming learners to complex sentence structures and implicit meanings (Qasoul, 2016; Younes, 2015). Furthermore, literature contributes to grammatical and stylistic awareness. Although not always explicit, instruction through literature helps learners develop an intuitive understanding of grammatical structures (*nahwu*) and linguistic style (*uslub*) by observing their creative application by masterful writers (Page et al., 2021; Al-Omari & Abu-Melhim, 2016). Finally, the use of literature also supports the development of productive skills. Literary texts serve as high-quality models for student writing, and their rich content provides an excellent stimulus for class discussions, debates, and presentations, thereby directly training speaking and argumentation skills (Al-Azri & Al-Rashdi, 2014; Al-Batal, 2017).

1.3. (RQ3) Impact on the Affective Domain and Intercultural Competence

In addition to linguistic benefits, the impact of using literature is also strongly felt in the affective domain and the development of learners' intercultural competence. One of the most consistent findings is the role of literature in increasing motivation and engagement. Authentic and culturally relevant literary materials are considered far more stimulating than artificial textbook content, connecting the classroom experience to the real world of native speakers and providing a meaningful purpose for learning (Al-Samman, 2017; American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, n.d.). This fosters a more dynamic learning environment with active student participation (Saliba, 2021; Sanako, 2023;

Standish, 2015). The analysis of literature also inherently demands and develops critical thinking. Learners are encouraged to move beyond literal comprehension to engage in interpretation, analysis, and evaluation, thereby cultivating transferable critical thinking skills (Nassaji, 2015; Omari, 2018; Dakhil, 2021; Oraby, 2019; Qasoul, 2016). Moreover, literature serves as a powerful "cultural window," offering nuanced insights into the values, beliefs, and conflicts of Arab societies, which helps to break down stereotypes and enhance intercultural competence (Al-Samman, 2017; Bouattour, 2019; Dakhil, 2021; Harun, 2022; Younes, 2015). By engaging with the concept of "alterity," learners are prompted to reflect on their own cultural assumptions and develop empathy (Oraby, 2019). Lastly, literature uniquely touches the affective domain by evoking emotions and creating personal connections to the text, which not only makes the learning experience more memorable but also strengthens learners' intrinsic motivation and overall connection to the Arabic language and culture (Dakhil, 2021; Al-Batal, 2017).

1.4. Main Challenges in Implementing a Literature-Based Curriculum

Despite its immense benefits, the literature also identifies several significant challenges in implementing a literature-based curriculum in the AFL classroom. The most fundamental and frequently cited challenge is diglossia. Modern Arabic literature is largely written in Modern Standard Arabic (*al-Fuṣḥā*), while daily oral communication occurs in various regional dialects (*al-'Āmmiyya*). This creates a pedagogical tension in using formal texts to achieve communicative goals that often involve dialects (Harun, 2022; Khamis-Dakwar & Froud, 2023; Nassaji, 2015), potentially making learners feel that the classroom language is disconnected from real-world usage (Al-Batal, 2017). Another challenge is language anxiety and text difficulty. The complexity of authentic literary texts can be daunting for learners, and without proper pedagogical scaffolding, can lead to frustration and decreased motivation (Al-Musawi, 2017; Omari, 2018). The selection of appropriate texts is also a crucial and difficult task, requiring instructors to balance linguistic difficulty, student maturity and interests, and the diverse representation of the Arab world (Al-Musawi, 2017; Ben Amor, 2017). Finally, effective implementation requires proper teacher training. Instructors need not only high language proficiency but also training in literary pedagogy to design tasks, facilitate discussions, and assess interpretive understanding, skills that may not be held by all language teachers (Ryding, 2017).

2. Discussion

This section presents a critical interpretation of the results. The analysis will focus on three main areas: the pedagogical framework that emerges from the various methods, the holistic significance of the learning impacts, and the implications of the primary challenge, diglossia, for teaching practice and policy.

2.1. Towards an Integrated Framework: A Critical Interpretation of Teaching Methods

The findings from this review clearly indicate a paradigmatic shift in literary pedagogy in the field of AFL. The dominant trend is moving away from a traditional approach that treats literature as an end in itself (*literature as an end*), where the primary focus is on formalistic literary analysis and aesthetic appreciation, towards a more integrated approach that views literature as a means or medium (*literature as a means*) to achieve broader language learning objectives. In this new paradigm, literary texts function as rich, authentic input for developing communicative competence in a comprehensive manner.

However, a deeper analysis reveals that the most innovative and promising methods are those that not only adopt the "literature as a means" paradigm but also consciously and strategically address the greatest challenge in the Arabic context: diglossia. The best practices emerging from this synthesis of literature do not involve avoiding the *Fuṣḥā* versus *ʿĀmmiyya* dilemma, but rather leveraging it as a pedagogical opportunity. These methods use formal *Fuṣḥā* literary texts as a starting point or foundation for communicative activities that allow, or even encourage, the natural use of dialectal elements.

This process can be outlined as follows: (1) The research results show a variety of methods such as genre-based, communicative, and reader-centered approaches. (2) The same results also identify diglossia as a major and persistent challenge (Al-Batal, 2017; Younes, 2015; Ryding, 2017; Khamis-Dakwar & Froud, 2023; Al-Azri & Al-Rashdi, 2014). (3) Leading figures in the AFL field, such as Munther Younes and Mahmoud Al-Batal, have long advocated for an "Integrated Approach" that rejects the artificial separation of *Fuṣḥā* and *ʿĀmmiyya* in the classroom (Younes, 2015; Al-Batal, 2017; Ryding, 2017; Ben Amor, 2017). (4) By connecting these three points, a logical conclusion can be drawn: the most effective practices are those that reflect the linguistic reality of native speakers. In practice, this means using *Fuṣḥā* literature for receptive activities (reading and listening), which is indeed the primary domain of *Fuṣḥā*, and then facilitating productive activities (discussions, role-plays, debates) where students can naturally switch to a dialect or a hybrid form of language to express themselves more authentically.

One example of an effective scaffolding strategy within this framework is what can be termed "backward reading," as described in some teaching practices (Oraby, 2019). In this model, students first read a translation of the literary text in their native language (e.g., English) to understand the plot, characters, and main themes. With the cognitive load of understanding the plot lightened, they can then return to the original Arabic text and focus their full attention on linguistic nuances, word choice, and stylistic beauty, without feeling overwhelmed by basic

comprehension. Such an approach effectively manages the difficulty of authentic texts while maximizing linguistic and literary learning.

2.2. The Significance of Learning Impacts: A Holistic Analysis of Communicative Competence

If the research results are viewed merely as a list of separate impacts (vocabulary increase, motivation, cultural understanding), we miss the bigger picture. The true significance of using literature in the language classroom lies in its ability to cultivate a more holistic, profound, and transformative form of communicative competence. The use of literature fundamentally changes the goal of language learning, from merely achieving "transactional proficiency," the ability to perform basic functions like ordering food or asking for directions, to a much more sophisticated "interactional and interpretive proficiency."

The line of reasoning leading to this conclusion is as follows: (1) The research results show impacts across three domains: linguistic (vocabulary, grammar), cognitive (critical thinking), and affective (motivation, empathy, cultural understanding) (Dakhil, 2021; Al-Batal, 2017). (2) Traditional models of communicative competence often place an overemphasis on linguistic and functional accuracy. (3) However, data from studies like Oraby's (2019) on alterity (Oraby, 2019) and various studies on the development of critical thinking (Dakhil, 2021; Nassaji, 2015; Omari, 2018; Oraby, 2019; Qasoul, 2016; Saliba, 2021) show that learners not only acquire new skills but also undergo personal and intellectual transformation. They learn to see the world from different perspectives and to reflect on their own position within it. (4) Therefore, the impact of literature is not additive (language plus culture), but rather integrative and transformative. Literature compels learners to integrate the cognitive, affective, and linguistic domains simultaneously. They are not just learning to *use* the language; they are learning to *be* through the language.

Thus, the communicative competence fostered through a literature-based curriculum is a richer definition. It includes not only the ability to produce grammatically correct sentences but also the ability to interpret complex and ambiguous meanings, navigate subtle cultural nuances, empathize with the experiences of others, and critically reflect on the values and ideas presented in the text. This is the kind of competence that prepares learners to engage deeply and meaningfully with the Arab world, not just as linguistic tourists, but as informed and culturally sensitive participants.

2.3. Addressing the Diglossia Dilemma and Its Implications for Practice and Policy

Focusing on the main challenge identified in the research results, namely diglossia, allows us to draw the most important implications for the future of the

AFL field. The diglossia dilemma is not a minor technical issue but a fundamental one that touches the core of what it means to "teach Arabic" today. This review shows that ignoring diglossia or focusing solely on *Fuṣḥā* is an approach that is no longer adequate for preparing learners for the communicative realities of the Arab world (Al-Batal, 2017; Younes, 2015; Ryding, 2017; Khamis-Dakwar & Froud, 2023; Al-Azri & Al-Rashdi, 2014).

The most robust theoretical framework for addressing this dilemma is the "Integrated Approach" pioneered by scholars like Munther Younes (Younes, 2015; Al-Batal, 2017; Ryding, 2017; Ben Amor, 2017). This approach argues that *Fuṣḥā* and *ʿĀmmiyya* should be taught simultaneously and integratively from the beginning, in a way that reflects how the two varieties are used complementarily by native speakers. Modern literature plays a key role in this model as a primary source of rich, authentic *Fuṣḥā* input.

The implications of these findings are clear. Practically, Arabic teachers need to be equipped with training and concrete strategies for managing diglossia in the classroom. This includes techniques such as using *Fuṣḥā* literary texts for receptive activities (reading), but then explicitly allowing and even encouraging the use of dialect in productive activities (class discussions). Teaching materials also need to be redesigned to consciously bridge the gap between the two varieties, for example, by including glossaries that show word equivalents between *Fuṣḥā* and a specific dialect, or by designing tasks that ask students to "translate" formal dialogue from a novel into more natural dialectal conversation (Younes, 2015; Al-Batal, 2017).

In terms of policy, the findings of this review provide a strong evidence base for Arabic program directors and educational institutions to re-evaluate their curriculum goals. If the primary objective is to produce graduates with functional communicative competence who can operate effectively in the contemporary Arab world, then a curriculum that focuses exclusively on *Fuṣḥā* through classical and modern literature alone is no longer defensible. Instead, this review advocates for a shift towards a more integrated curriculum model, where modern literature serves as an important *Fuṣḥā* pillar within a pedagogical structure that holistically encompasses the full spectrum of Arabic as it is used today.

Conclusions (الختاتمة)

This systematic literature review has synthesized and analyzed research published between 2015 and 2025 on the use of modern Arabic literature as an authentic material in teaching Arabic to non-native speakers. The main findings reaffirm that the integration of literature into the language curriculum is a highly effective pedagogical strategy with multidimensional impacts. Consistently, the literature reports that the use of literature not only significantly enhances learners' linguistic competence, particularly in terms of vocabulary enrichment and reading

skills, but also makes invaluable contributions to the affective and cognitive domains. Literature has proven to be a powerful driver of student motivation and engagement, as well as a fertile ground for the development of critical thinking skills and intercultural competence.

Further analysis reveals that the most effective pedagogical practices are those that move beyond traditional literary analysis and use texts as a means to achieve broader communicative goals. More importantly, this review highlights that the primary challenge in this field, the reality of diglossia, is not an insurmountable obstacle. On the contrary, a theoretically informed pedagogical approach, particularly the "Integrated Approach" that integrates the teaching of *Fuṣḥā* and *ʿĀmmiyya*, offers a promising path forward. Within this framework, modern literature plays a crucial role as a rich source of *Fuṣḥā* input that can be bridged with authentic, communicative dialectal practice.

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be formulated. Practitioners are encouraged to adopt a more integrated approach to using literature, consciously designing activities that connect *Fuṣḥā* texts with more natural oral language use. Curriculum developers and policymakers should consider revising study programs to better reflect the diglossic reality of the Arabic language.

For future research, several directions can be explored. First, more empirical and longitudinal studies are needed to track learner development in literature-based curricula over longer periods. Second, comparative studies that directly compare the effectiveness of various pedagogical models (e.g., genre-based vs. task-based approaches) in controlled contexts would be highly valuable. Third, there is an urgent need for research focused on the development and evaluation of literary teaching materials explicitly designed to bridge *Fuṣḥā* and *ʿĀmmiyya*. By continuing research in these areas, the field of Arabic language teaching can continue to harness the transformative power of literature to equip learners with truly holistic and profound communicative competence.

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