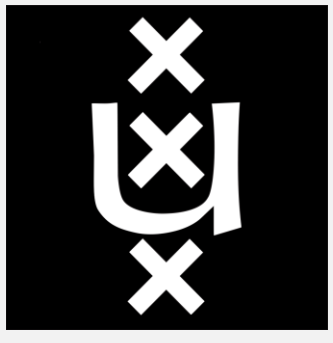




Integrating literature in Arabic language education: Engaging the whole student

Mona Hegazy

Humanities, Middle Eastern Studies, Arabic Studies

Introduction

Literature education goes beyond simple language acquisition. It nurtures students as **whole individuals** by exploring diverse perspectives and rich human experiences. Through stories, students develop **empathy**, **critical thinking**, and **personal insight**. Literature invites them to reflect on their own identity and reality, fostering better understanding of both themselves and others. With thoughtful teaching, literature not only strengthens **language skills** but also enhances **social awareness** and **emotional intelligence**. Ultimately, literature can serve as a powerful tool for intellectual, emotional, and social growth.

Research questions

- How can literature be effectively integrated in Arabic language education to enhance the learning experience of both language acquisition and intercultural competences?
- What teaching methods can be implemented to integrate cultural and societal contexts in literature classes?

Methods

- Second year class: Modern Arabic Literary Discourse
- 10 students; 21 two-hour classes
- Literature review
- Student questionnaires conducted at three moments (pre-, mid- & post-course)
- Group discussions with students
- Reflection journal

Results

- Students' **main initial motivations** for taking the course were to improve their Arabic language skills (100%) and learn more about cultural traditions (78%) and the historical context (78%).
- Half-way through the course 75% of students indicated **feeling comfortable** sharing their personal responses (in Arabic) to literary texts during classroom discussions.
- Students reported **feeling more confident** on average about reading and analyzing Arabic literature at the end of the course ($M = 3.22$; $sd = 0.44$) than at the beginning ($M = 0.83$, $sd = .61$) (5-point Likert scale).
- *Examples*
- *"By reading a lot, I have become accustomed to it. As a result, I now feel more confident in this skill"*
- *"Each text provided me with a different and new perspective on a certain issue from an Arab writer. This taught me a lot."*

Future

- More discussions in class. Let students lead their discussions and only interfere to add information or correct "real" mistakes.
- More written assignments in class focused on personal and in-depth content reflections.
- Further research on effective assessment methods for this type of classes.