

Arabic Culture Deck (ACD): An Interactive Teaching Aid Innovation for Enhancing the Teaching and Learning of Arab Culture

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ABSTRACT

The Arabic Culture Deck (ACD) is a pedagogical innovation aimed at restoring life to the teaching and learning of the Arab culture in the language classrooms. Going beyond textbook explanations, the ACD turns cultural learning to be an interactive process, fun-fulfilling and meaningful. Based on 100 cards arranged into ten cultural themes, such as greetings and non-verbal communication, cuisine, clothing, and celebrations, the deck enables learners to discover the aspects of culture by discussing, collaborating, and practicing in the real-life context. To study the viability and effects of this innovation, a pilot study among 143 Arabic undergraduate learners was carried out. The development process was systematic in nature and guided by a modified ADDIE model, and involved systematic stages of analysis, design, development, implementation and evaluation. A 20 item Likert scale questionnaire was used in order to gather the data by measuring the engagement, motivation and cultural understanding of the learners. Descriptive analysis showed that there was a great extent of learner acceptance ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.14$). The highest rated element ($M = 3.54$) was that ACD activities facilitated more enjoyable lessons and the lowest rated element ($M = 2.87$) stated the necessity of more extensive cultural integration. The results indicate that the students were positive about the interactive learning experience, which made them more motivated and interested in the process of implementation. These findings confirm that innovations like the ACD can make Arabic cultural education an active, learner-oriented experience. The integration of cultural knowledge into the fun of interaction that is ACD, not only informs the classroom learning but also develops the intercultural sensitivity that is needed to be effective in the globalised world.

Keywords: Arabic language, cultural learning, gamification, experiential learning, intercultural communication

INTRODUCTION

Culture and language cannot be separated, as one can not be fully understood without the other. Cultural competence is a part of communicative proficiency that becomes necessary (Byram, 2021). However, in most Arabic language classrooms, cultural training usually is limited to classes and theoretical explanations. These traditional approaches, though informative, seldom encourage genuine appreciation or internalisation of Arab values and social practices. Experiential learning theory emphasises that meaningful understanding arises through active participation and reflection rather than passive reception of knowledge (Kolb, 2015). The Arabic Culture Deck (ACD) was conceived as a creative response to this methodological shortcoming. It was designed to merge foreign-language learning with cultural immersion by combining play, discussion, and experiential classroom tasks. Through this interactive platform, learners do not merely receive cultural knowledge, but they actively participate in cultural exploration.

Problem Statement

Although the role of culture in learning a language is acknowledged, Arabic as a foreign language students find it difficult to recognise and use the cultural issues in the actual communication. When studying is limited to

lectures or reading about something, the student is not able to comprehend and grasp the subject matter in a detached manner. This deficiency in the experience is not only a barrier to intercultural competence but also reduces motivation and interest (Alharbi, 2022; Mahboob and Elyas, 2023). The instructors, in their turn, find it challenging to evaluate the cultural understanding accordingly because of the lack of interactive and practical instructional resources. The Arabic Culture Deck was hence created as a new way of addressing these issues. It will incorporate the elements of gamification, discussion and role-play in order to develop a more active and participatory version of cultural learning- one that will enable students to practise and reflect on Arab values in real classroom situations.

Objectives

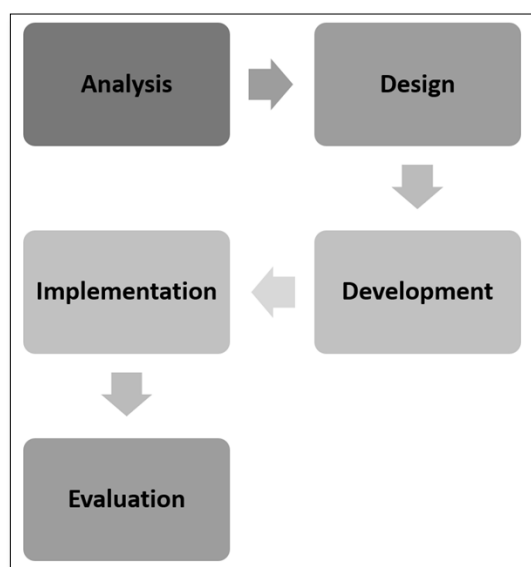
The four major objectives in directing the project were:

1. To improve the knowledge of students on Arab cultural norms, values and traditions.
2. To encourage intercultural communication and interaction in the learners.
3. To advance experiential and gamified methods of teaching the Arabic culture.
4. To enhance teamwork and collaboration using group learning activities.

METHODOLOGY

The ACD design and implementation was guided by a modified version of the ADDIE model, which is a systematic approach that is usually used in educational innovation (Molenda, 2003). The development of every stage was well adjusted to make the deck pedagogically meaningful and engaging, and practical in classroom use.

Figure 1: ADDIE Framework Applied in the Development of the Arabic Culture Deck (ACD)



- **Analysis:** Classroom observations and interviews with Arabic instructors demonstrated that students had a hard time understanding the Arab culture not just at the surface.
- **Design & Development:** In reply, 100 cards were designed, organized in ten large cultural themes, such as, countries, greetings, titles, non-verbal communication, food, clothing, games, traditional events, festivals, and arts. Prompts, scenario and discussion triggers were included in each card to stimulate discussions and reflection.
- **Implementation:** The deck was tested on 143 undergraduate Arabic students. Students participated in various activities such as individual card draws, pair discussions, and small-group challenges that transformed cultural learning into a participatory game.
- **Evaluation:** A 20-question Likert-scale questionnaire was conducted to evaluate the engagement and motivation of learners as well as perceived cultural learning. The questionnaire was reviewed by two

subject-matter experts to ensure content validity and clarity of items. The quantitative information was evaluated descriptively to identify general acceptance of the learners and consistency of responses. This systematic methodology allowed the analysis of both the impact and planning of the innovation both at its inception and in the classroom.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The pilot implementation results were encouraging and enlightening. The level of overall learner acceptance was also high ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.14$) which means that learners accepted the ACD as a cultural learning instrument in a positive manner. The most rated ($M = 3.54$) term was the enjoyment of ACD-based activities by students, which demonstrates the motivational force of the gamified learning. At the same time, the least-rated object ($M = 2.87$) indicated the wish to have more and more culturally-based content in later versions.

The descriptive findings also revealed that students were more motivated to attend, more assured to share their views and more engaged in cultural learning sessions. These are consistent with the earlier studies that observed that gamification facilitates enjoyment and active learning (Saeed and Kabilan 2023). In the same vein, the results are indicative of the model of intercultural communicative competence presented by Byram (2021) wherein the understanding of information is not only possible but also through interaction and reflection. Through this, the ACD is able to turn cultural teaching into a process of passive acceptance of facts to an experience of learning.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Arabic Culture Deck (ACD) has potentials of being a revolutionary teaching tool that can be utilized in incorporating culture into Arabic language learning. It is not only a highly engaging and motivating game-based and experiential approach but creates a gap between cultural theory and lived practice.

Future studies and development may consider the idea of expanding the ACD to digital and multimedia utilities- e.g. interactive e-cards or mobile applications- to enhance accessibility in blended and online learning settings. It would also benefit by working closely with educational technologists and content designers in order to increase its flexibility and outreach. Moreover, it is possible to incorporate qualitative methods as well as control-group comparisons in the future to gain more information about the effectiveness and long-term outcome of the ACD.

Finally, the ACD restates the fact that cultural learning flourishes when the students are provided with a chance to experience instead of observing.

Commercialisation Potential

Acd Has a Clear Commercial Potential Both in the Physical and Digitized Versions. It Can Be Easily Customized to Suit Other Linguistic and Cultural Environments, and is Therefore a Appealing Tool to Universities, Cultural Institutions and Language Centres. This Would Increase Its Marketability Further as the Interactive Online Version Could be Expanded to Take Advantage of Both Official Education and Cultural Exchange Programmes Throughout the World.

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