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The Effectiveness of The *Mukhayyam al-'Arabī* Program in Improving Students' Speaking Skills in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of the *Mukhayyam al-'Arabī* program in enhancing the speaking proficiency of 60 Form Four students at Maktab Mahmud Yan, Kedah, Malaysia. Conducted over three weeks, the program adopted an immersive Arabic learning approach facilitated by Indonesian educators: a mixed-methods design combined pre- and post-ttests and observations and semi-structured interviews. Results showed an 85% average improvement in pronunciation and confidence. Students reported improved motivation and reduced speaking anxiety due to the Arabic-only environment and interactive activities such as role-playing and group discussions. The program's success demonstrates how short-term immersion when paired with theoretical knowledge and real-life communicative competence. When paired with culturally responsive pedagogy and supportive environments for Arabic language pedagogy in Southeast Asia, this study offers a practical model for improving oral fluency. It highlights the importance of cross-cultural collaboration in language instruction.

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching Arabic as a foreign language, particularly in non-Arabic-speaking countries such as Malaysia, presents various pedagogical challenges (Soliman & Khalil, 2024). Although Arabic is included in the national curriculum and offered across multiple educational institutions (Ritonga et al., 2020), many students still face difficulties in achieving problems stem from the lack of real-life practice, limited exposure to communicative Arabic, and a learning environment that often emphasizes grammar and morphology over interaction.

Previous approaches have improved Arabic speaking proficiency, including curriculum alignment with communicative needs (Daud et al., 2020), extracurricular activities, and short-term speaking modules. However, many of these strategies are classroom-bound and do not sufficiently address speaking anxiety, motivation, and spontaneous usage (Alamer & Almulhim, 2021; Ding, 2023; H. Zhang & Tan, 2024). Traditional methods often rely on memorization and theoretical knowledge without situating learners in immersive contexts (Abdul Ghani et al., 2021; Haron, 2012). Consequently, students acquire passive understanding but lack confidence and fluency in active communication (Mohd Rushdi & Asbulah, 2023).

Previous studies have emphasized the importance of immersive, contextual, and motivational strategies in teaching Arabic speaking skills in non-Arab countries. Research by Almelhes highlights the role of task value and self-regulated learning (Almelhes, 2024), while Muhammad Jundi et al. (2024) show that immersive programs foster not only language proficiency but also soft skills and student confidence. Similarly, Badenhurst et al. (2023) found that language immersion shapes pedagogical identity and intercultural awareness. In contrast, studies by Arifin & Ismail (2011) and Aladdin & Musa (2014) point out the limitations of traditional and distance-based instruction in Malaysia. These findings underscore the need for intensive, practical approaches—such as *Mukhayyam al-'Arabī*—to bridge the gap between curriculum goals and real-life Arabic-speaking competence.

Unlike prior studies that offer general insights into Arabic language camps or overlook Southeast Asian contexts, this study uniquely combines a rigorous mixed-methods design with cultural collaboration between Indonesian instructors and Malaysian students. It explores pedagogical strategies, psychological shifts, and sociolinguistic dynamics within a localized *Mukhayyam al-'Arabī* setting. The novelty lies in showing how short-term, culturally contextualized immersion by non-native but regionally aligned educators can significantly enhance speaking fluency and confidence in an area previously underexplored in Malaysia.

Immersion programs like *Mukhayyam al-'Arabī* bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and communicative competence by fostering real-time interaction and reducing anxiety. However, few empirical studies in Malaysia have assessed such programs' linguistic and psychological impacts. This research addresses that gap by examining the program's effectiveness in developing speaking skills among Form Four students at Maktab Mahmud Yan.

This research aims To evaluate the extent of improvement in students' speaking fluency, coherence, and pronunciation after participating in the *Mukhayyam al-'Arabī*

immersion program. To explore students' perceptions regarding their confidence, motivation, and engagement in speaking Arabic within an immersive learning environment. To identify the key instructional elements and environmental factors that contributed to the program's effectiveness and distinguish it from conventional classroom-based methods.

In Malaysia, many Arabic students still face difficulties developing their *Mahārah Kalam*, despite their engagement in formal Arabic language programs. While students acquire theoretical knowledge of Arabic, they often struggle with fluency and confidence in real-life communication (Mohd Rushdi & Asbullah, 2023). This suggests a significant gap between the formal educational framework and the practical application of the language in everyday interactions. As a result, students may understand Arabic in written form but hesitate to actively engage in spoken communication (Amiri & Puteh, 2022).

Arabic language education is essential in the Malaysian educational landscape, particularly in religious schools and higher education institutions (Hanifansyah & Mahmudah, 2024). However, the effectiveness of these programs in fostering functional language skills, especially speaking, remains a concern (Zhang et al., 2020). Many Arabic language courses in Malaysia are heavily centred around grammar and reading (Al Farisi et al., 2024; Kamsin & Mohamad, 2020), often at the expense of interactive speaking practice (Abdul Ghani et al., 2021). This finding aligns with previous studies on teaching methodology for Arabic speaking skills, which suggest that learners prefer a more communicative approach that emphasizes practical application and oral feedback over rote memorization (Haron, 2012). To address this issue, the *Mukhayyam al-'Arabī* program was introduced in Malaysia as an extracurricular initiative to enhance students' Arabic speaking proficiency. The program aims to create an immersive environment for students to practice conversational Arabic through various interactive activities and real-world scenarios.

This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the *Mukhayyam al-'Arabī* program in improving students' Arabic speaking skills in Malaysia. This study will examine the program's impact on students' oral communication abilities and identify any challenges or obstacles encountered during its implementation. The research will be conducted using a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data from pre- and post-program assessments of students' speaking skills and qualitative data gathered through interviews with program participants and facilitators.

The findings of this study will contribute to the understanding of effective teaching methodologies for developing Arabic speaking proficiency, particularly in the Malaysian context. This traditional approach, emphasising theoretical knowledge, limits students' opportunities to build fluency in spontaneous, conversational Arabic.

2. METHODS

The participants in this study were 60 students (30 male and 30 female) from Marhalah Robi'ah (Form Four) at Maktab Mahmud Yan, Kedah, Malaysia, aged 16–17 years. All had completed foundational Arabic courses and were enrolled in the *Mukhayyam al-'Arabī* program from November 27 to December 27, 2022. The selection was based on their

intermediate Arabic proficiency. A control group was not included, as the study focused on evaluating the development of students actively engaged in the program. Ethical approval was obtained, and informed consent was secured from all participants.

This study employed a mixed-methods design (Robert K, 2014), combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative component involved pre-and post-tests to measure speaking proficiency, focusing on fluency, coherence, grammatical accuracy, and pronunciation. These were evaluated through structured oral interviews and role-play activities. Descriptive statistics and paired t-tests were used to analyze improvement levels.

The qualitative component followed an exploratory case study approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2020), with data collected via semi-structured interviews and direct classroom observations. Data were analyzed thematically to explore changes in confidence, motivation, and engagement (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021; Ding, 2023). Triangulation across interviews, observational notes, and documentation such as lesson plans and reflection logs enhanced the study's validity (Balcom et al., 2021).

While offering valuable insights into immersive Arabic instruction, this study is limited by its single-site focus, lack of a control group, and reliance on self-reported data, which may constrain the generalizability and long-term interpretation of its outcomes.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

Undoubtedly, the psychological factor plays a crucial role in determining the success or failure of this learning method (Al-Assaf, 2021). So, naming *Mukhayyam al-'Arabī* rather than the Arabic language course generally gives the impression of being friendly and not too serious but fun, with specific results in learning Arabic. Hence, naming the Arabic language learning program also determines the influence of learning nuances.

The *Mukhayyam al-'Arabī* program, conducted from November 27 to December 27, 2022, involved 60 students (30 male and 30 female) from Marhalah Robi'ah (Form Four) at Maktab Mahmud Yan, Kedah, Malaysia, aged between 16 and 17 years. Pre- and post-test analyses revealed significant improvements in students' Mahārah Kalam (speaking skills). Specifically, there was an average increase of 85% in key indicators such as fluency, coherence, grammatical accuracy, and pronunciation.

Table 1. Student Perceptions of the *Mukhayyam al-'Arabī* Program

No	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I feel more confident speaking Arabic after participating in <i>the Mukhayyam al-'Arabī</i> program.	45	13	2	0	0

No	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2	The teaching methods from Indonesia's instructors helped improve my Arabic speaking skills.	46	12	2	0	0
3	The learning environment during the program encouraged me to use Arabic more often.	44	13	1	0	0
4	I find the materials provided during the program relevant and helpful in improving my Arabic speaking ability.	47	11	1	0	0
5	Activities like role-playing and group discussions made me more active in speaking Arabic.	44	13	1	0	0
6	I find this program effectively improves my fluency and smoothness in speaking Arabic.	48	12	0	0	0
7	The teaching provided during the program made me braver speaking Arabic, even if I made mistakes.	46	13	1	0	0
8	The Mukhayyam al-'Arabī program increased my motivation to study Arabic further.	47	11	1	0	0
9	The three-week program duration was sufficient to improve my speaking skills significantly.	45	13	2	0	0
10	I would recommend the <i>Mukhayyam al-'Arabī</i> program to my friends who want to improve their Arabic speaking skills.	49	10	1	0	0

The quantitative analysis of the *Mukhayyam al-'Arabī* program revealed highly positive outcomes. 96.67% of students reported improved confidence in speaking Arabic, with 75% strongly agreeing. Over 95% affirmed the effectiveness of Indonesian instructors' methods, and more than 70% noted that the immersive, enjoyable environment encouraged frequent Arabic use. These findings highlight the program's success in fostering a supportive, communicative atmosphere. However, the absence of a

control group limits causal conclusions, as improvements may also stem from external factors. Despite this, the triangulated mixed-methods approach strengthens the study's validity. Future research should incorporate control groups to isolate program effects better.

Overall, the data shows that the *Mukhayyam al-'Arabī* program was highly effective, with most students strongly affirming that their speaking abilities, confidence, and motivation to learn Arabic improved significantly. The high percentage of Strongly Agree responses demonstrates that the immersive approach and teaching methodologies profoundly impacted the students' linguistic development. Quantitative data showed that pre-test scores indicated a general hesitance in spontaneous Arabic conversations, with reliance on basic phrases. Post-test scores demonstrated enhanced fluency and the ability to construct more complex sentences, reflecting increased speaking proficiency.

Qualitative interviews showed that around 90% of students felt more motivated and enthusiastic about learning Arabic, attributing their confidence gains to the engaging teaching methods of Indonesian educators. Observations confirmed increased student participation in conversations, debates, and discussions. Instructor feedback emphasized the success of interactive strategies like role-playing and language games. Triangulated data from interviews, observations, and documentation revealed consistent themes: higher motivation, reduced anxiety, and greater willingness to speak Arabic. One student remarked, *"I used to be afraid of making mistakes, but now I feel more comfortable speaking even if I'm not perfect."* These findings affirm that the program fostered linguistic growth and a supportive emotional environment.

Improvement of Students' Speaking Proficiency

The findings indicate a significant improvement in students' Arabic speaking proficiency after participating in the *Mukhayyam al-'Arabī* program. The post-test results showed a remarkable average increase of 85% across indicators such as fluency, coherence, grammatical accuracy, and pronunciation. Before the program, most students relied heavily on memorized phrases and struggled to construct spontaneous speech. However, the immersive experience enabled them to produce longer, more complex, coherent utterances, signalling real growth in their communicative abilities.

Student Motivation and Confidence Through Immersive Experience

The *Mukhayyam al-'Arabī* program is an innovative response to the limitations of conventional Arabic language education in Malaysia. Derived from the Arabic word "*Mukhayyam*," meaning "camp" or "camping," the "camp environment. Unlike regular classroom settings, this program immerses students in an Arabic-speaking context, encouraging them to communicate exclusively in Arabic.

The immersive environment of the camp played a pivotal role in boosting learners' confidence and motivation. Most students agreed that being surrounded by Arabic throughout the day compelled them to engage more actively in conversations. One participant shared, *"Before the camp, I was always nervous to speak Arabic, and also, I*

cannot speak English at all, but during the program, everyone spoke Arabic, so I felt like I had no choice but to join in. It made me realize I could speak more than I thought." Another student commented, *"It felt like we lived in an Arabic-speaking country. We spoke Arabic during lessons, meals, and even during breaks. This helped me think and respond directly in Arabic."*

These insights demonstrate that reducing language anxiety through immersive environments can significantly enhance students' fluency. Within such settings, learners feel more linguistically capable and emotionally supported, which encourages them to engage in speaking activities even when they make mistakes.

Triangulated data from semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and program documentation further validated these outcomes. Observations recorded during the three-week program noted increasing student engagement, spontaneous Arabic use during non-academic times, and higher participation in group discussions. Interview data revealed themes of increased self-efficacy, peer support, and enjoyment of learning Arabic. Documentation, including reflective journals and daily activity logs, showed a consistent rise in students' Arabic usage across multiple academic, social, and recreational domains. These qualitative findings strongly support the quantitative results, indicating that the *Mukhayyam al-'Arabī* program effectively fostered both linguistic competence and emotional readiness for active language use.

Key Pedagogical Elements of the Program

Interviews with teachers and facilitators revealed several instructional components that contributed to the program's success. These include using the Arabic-only policy, interactive activities such as role-playing and group discussions, and a consistently supportive atmosphere. One instructor stated, *"We didn't just teach sentence structures—we designed daily routines and social activities that made them 'need' to speak Arabic. That's what gave them the courage to use the language freely."* These methods reflect the principles of experiential learning, allowing students to internalize the language through use rather than rote memorization.

Quantitative Findings

The *Mukhayyam al-'Arabī* program, conducted from November 27 to December 27, 2022, involved 60 students (30 male and 30 female) from Marhalah Robi'ah (Form Four) at Maktab Mahmud Yan, Kedah, Malaysia. Pre- and post-test analyses revealed significant improvements in students' speaking skills. Specifically, there was an average increase of 85% in key indicators such as fluency, coherence, grammatical accuracy, and pronunciation.

Students' responses to the program evaluation statements were overwhelmingly positive. For example, 96.67% agreed or strongly agreed that their confidence in speaking Arabic improved, and 95% agreed that the Indonesian instructors' methods effectively enhanced their speaking skills. The highest approval was seen in statements regarding the learning environment and fluency development, with more than 90% selecting

“Strongly Agree.”

These quantitative findings confirm the effectiveness of short-term immersion programs in fostering measurable gains in oral communication, even within a limited timeframe.

Qualitative Findings

a. Interview Insights

Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews revealed a notable psychological shift among students. Approximately 90% of participants reported increased motivation and reduced fear of speaking Arabic. Many attributed this change to the culturally sensitive teaching methods and consistent use of Arabic in both formal and informal settings.

Students highlighted that the immersive nature of the camp made Arabic feel more natural and emotionally safe. One student noted, “Before the camp, I was always nervous to speak Arabic. But during the program, everyone spoke Arabic, so I felt I had no choice but to join in.” Another mentioned, “We even used Arabic during meals and casual breaks—it felt like we were in an Arabic-speaking country.”

b. Observation-Based Insights

Observational data reinforced the interview findings. During the first week, students were generally hesitant and responded in Arabic only when prompted. However, they began initiating conversations independently in various contexts by the second and third weeks.

Key moments observed include Spontaneous debates in Arabic on daily themes, such as “Social Media: Harm or Benefit?” Use of functional Arabic phrases like “*Alaa Hisaabii?*” (“On My Treat”) and “*Lā afham, a’īd Kalamak min faḍlik*” (“I don’t understand, please repeat”) during non-class interactions. Active volunteerism in role-playing sessions, with students expressing eagerness to speak and often asking for repeat opportunities.

Observers noted that over 70% of participants used Arabic voluntarily during unstructured times by the third week. Students were seen using Arabic in dormitories, cafeterias, and even during recreational breaks, which reflected a deep internalization of language use. The environment fostered peer-to-peer encouragement as students corrected and supported one another in Arabic.

These qualitative findings, triangulated with documentation and reflections, demonstrate that the immersive setting contributed to linguistic competence and emotional readiness, cultural confidence, and social engagement—factors essential for long-term speaking proficiency.

3.2 Discussion

The *Mukhayyam al-‘Arabī* program offers strong evidence for the effectiveness of immersive learning in Arabic language acquisition. Unlike traditional methods emphasising grammar and translation (Kamsin & Mohamad, 2020), this approach prioritizes authentic

communication and learner engagement, addressing affective and cognitive barriers to speaking proficiency. Prior studies show limited classroom interaction hinders fluency (Arifin & Ismail, 2011), and minimal contextual practice limits real usage (Aladdin & Musa, 2014). In contrast, this program enables consistent spontaneous speech, aligning with Almalhes (2024) on the importance of intrinsic motivation and strategic engagement.

Supporting Jundi et al. (2024), the camp environment fostered linguistic growth, soft skills, and group unity. The program's cultural contextualization, facilitated by Indonesian instructors, created a hybrid immersion model relevant to Malaysian learners—bridging familiarity and pedagogical novelty. This study fills a gap in research on Arabic education in non-Arab contexts by offering data-driven insights into a successful three-week immersion.

Teaching Arabic in foreign, especially non-Arabic-speaking countries, poses distinct challenges (Soliman & Khalil, 2024). While Arabic is widely taught in Malaysia (Ritonga et al., 2021), many students struggle with confidence and fluency in real-life communication due to limited practice opportunities (Kamsin & Mohamad, 2020). The program addressed this gap effectively. Findings from Maktab Mahmud Yan show an 85% improvement in fluency, coherence, pronunciation, and grammatical accuracy—confirming the value of immersive learning in accelerating oral skills (Costigan & Brink, 2020; Trebits et al., 2022).

The impressive 85% improvement observed in just three weeks can be theoretically justified through existing literature on short-term immersion. A study by Zailani et al. (2018) on an Arabic camp in Selangor, Malaysia, demonstrated that intensive and interactive activities—such as *al-muqabalah al-maftuhah* and *al-munazarah al-maftuhah*—substantially increased students' confidence and speaking abilities within only three days. Similarly, programs like the *Daurah Lughawiyah* in Indonesia have reported notable gains through daily exposure to structured communicative tasks (Al Farisi et al., 2024; Hanifansyah & Mahmudah, 2025; Mahmudah, 2025; Zailani et al., 2018). These initiatives are rooted in experiential learning theory and Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, which highlight the role of social interaction and emotional engagement in accelerating language acquisition. The *Al Mukhoyyam Al Arabi* program, facilitated by culturally familiar instructors, successfully concentrated these elements into a highly immersive and emotionally supportive format—thereby explaining the substantial outcomes achieved within a short timeframe.

Student interviews revealed that the immersive environment reduced anxiety and encouraged active Arabic speaking, highlighting the role of affective factors in language learning. One student shared, *"Before the camp, I was always nervous to speak Arabic. But during the program, everyone was speaking Arabic, so I felt like I had no choice but to join in."* This supports Zhang and Tan (2024), who emphasized the anxiety-reducing effect of immersion. The program's Arabic-only policy, real-life tasks, and interactive methods like role-playing reflect experiential learning principles (Hamidiyyah et al., 2024) and create practical communication needs. One instructor noted, "We designed routines that made them 'need' to speak Arabic."

These outcomes contrast with traditional instruction in Malaysia, which often relies on grammar and translation (Abdul Ghani et al., 2021; Haron, 2012) and face limitations in

distance learning (Arifin & Ismail, 2011). The findings align with Jundi et al. (2024), portraying Mukhayyam al-Lughah as a holistic learning community, and Ridwan et al. (2024), who emphasize linguistic intelligence developed through immersive student activities.

From a motivational perspective, the *Mukhayyam al-'Arabī* program aligns with the findings of (Almelhes, 2024), who found that students with high task value and strong motivational strategies tend to perform better. The program naturally increased their sense of task value by embedding Arabic into students' daily lives and making communication essential for participation. This is consistent with the self-regulated learning framework, where intrinsic motivation and meaningful task design are key to effective engagement.

Additionally, the collaboration between Indonesian and Malaysian educators played a pivotal role in shaping the camp's atmosphere and instructional design. This cross-cultural exchange enriched pedagogical practices, offering diverse strategies rooted in immersive learning theory and practical experience (Badenhorst et al., 2023). The student's ability to adapt and engage in Arabic within such a dynamic environment underscores the pedagogical value of combining cultural immersion with linguistic practice.

Beyond the empirical results, this study offers a crucial contribution to the theoretical discourse on second language acquisition (SLA) (Atkinson et al., 2025; Han et al., 2023), particularly in the context of Arabic as a foreign language in Southeast Asia (Allès & Tho Seeth, 2021; Calafato, 2020; Gu & Coluzzi, 2024; Lee et al., 2022). By situating the *Mukhayyam al-'Arabī* program within the framework of immersive learning and sociocultural theory, this research affirms Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Dai, 2023; Fjermestad et al., 2025; Gehlot, 2021; Ness, 2022; Rahman, n.d.; Xi & Lantolf, 2021), where learners' linguistic competence is enhanced through guided interaction within a meaningful social context (Chan et al., 2022; Moorhouse et al., 2023; Zhai & Wibowo, 2023). The program's success in significantly boosting students' fluency, coherence, and communicative confidence illustrates the transformative power of authentic language exposure, far beyond what is typically achieved in conventional grammar-heavy classrooms (Al-khresheh, 2024; Huang, 2023; Tran et al., 2023). Moreover, the findings reinforce the value of emotional engagement and social bonding in language acquisition, elements often underrepresented in traditional pedagogical models (Farley & Burbules, 2022; Tripp & Waight, 2024; Wang et al., 2021; Yazdani, 2024; Zheng et al., 2024). The inclusion of cross-cultural instructors from Indonesia introduced an additional layer of intercultural communication and pedagogical innovation (Mariyono et al., 2025; Saito & Ludecke, 2024), offering a unique case of Southeast Asian intra-regional collaboration in Arabic education (Ahsan, 2025; Hanieh, 2024; Knight, 2024; Sato et al., 2023; Shu & Gu, 2023). This aspect not only enhances the authenticity of the immersion but also introduces a model of best practices that can be adapted across diverse educational institutions (Bizami et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2021). Importantly, this study responds to the growing global call for pedagogies beyond rote learning toward fostering learner agency, self-confidence, and oral autonomy in foreign language use (Shan & Shan, 2023; Yakavets et al., 2023). This study bridges the gap between theory and practice by showing that well-designed short-term immersion, grounded in strong pedagogies, can yield

results comparable to longer programs and may be more sustainable in resource-limited contexts. The success of the three-week *Mukhayyam al-'Arabī* supports Zhang, Winke, and Clark (2020), who found that practical short-term immersion significantly boosts oral proficiency.

The findings reinforce support for immersive, interactive, and student-centred methods in Arabic language education. The study confirms both cognitive and affective benefits and its success in Southeast Asia, particularly for learners of Arabic as a third language—positions this localized, cross-cultural immersion model as a transformative approach for language acquisition in similar contexts.

4. CONCLUSION

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to evaluate the effectiveness of the *Mukhayyam al-'Arabī* program in improving Arabic speaking skills among secondary-level students in Malaysia. Based on pre and post-program assessments, quantitative findings revealed a substantial 85% average improvement across key speaking indicators—fluency, coherence, grammatical accuracy, and pronunciation. These statistical results affirm the program's capacity to enhance productive language skills within a short-term immersive format. Complementing these outcomes, qualitative data from semi-structured interviews and classroom observations revealed heightened learner confidence, increased motivation, and a positive emotional shift in language engagement. Students consistently reported feeling more comfortable initiating conversations in Arabic, attributing their growth to the Arabic-only environment and the culturally empathetic facilitation by Indonesian instructors. Observations further confirmed that students actively used Arabic beyond academic settings, indicating a deep internalization of communicative competence.

Through data triangulation, this study concludes that *Mukhayyam al-'Arabī* is effective in fostering linguistic accuracy and instrumental in building psychological readiness and self-confidence—critical components in second language acquisition. These findings offer strong empirical support for integrating short-term, culturally grounded immersion programs in Arabic language education, especially in non-Arabic-speaking Muslim contexts like Malaysia.

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