

English-Mediated Arabic Comprehension: A Systematic Review of Contrastive Grammar, Translanguaging, and Metalinguistic Awareness in Arabic as a Foreign Language Learning

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Muhamad Maulana¹

¹Hartford International University for Religion and Peace, Hartford, United States

E-mail: muhamad.maulana@stu.hartfordinternational.edu¹

Abstract

This study examines English-mediated Arabic comprehension through a systematic literature review of contrastive grammar, translanguaging, and metalinguistic awareness in Arabic as a foreign language learning. The review responds to the growing reality that Arabic is increasingly learned in multilingual, transnational, digital, and English-mediated academic environments, where learners often encounter Arabic through English-based textbooks, dictionaries, grammar explanations, online platforms, and scholarly resources. Although English is sometimes viewed as a source of dependency in Arabic learning, this study argues that English can function as a strategic cognitive and pedagogical bridge when it is used selectively to support Arabic comprehension. The review analyzed recent literature published between 2022 and 2026, focusing on Arabic-English contrastive grammar, translanguaging practices, English-medium instruction, Arabic learning trends, and metalinguistic awareness. The findings reveal four major themes: English as a mediating language, contrastive grammar as a pathway to Arabic understanding, translanguaging as pedagogical support, and metalinguistic awareness as the core cognitive outcome. The study proposes a four-stage model of English-mediated Arabic comprehension consisting of access, comparison, negotiation, and internalization. This model positions English not as a replacement for Arabic, but as a temporary scaffold that helps learners move toward deeper Arabic-based understanding. The study contributes to Arabic language pedagogy by offering a conceptual framework for using English responsibly, critically, and strategically in multilingual Arabic learning contexts.

Keywords: *arabic as a foreign language, contrastive grammar, english-mediated learning, metalinguistic awareness, translanguaging.*

Introduction

Arabic as a foreign language has increasingly become a significant field of inquiry within global language education, particularly as Arabic learning now takes place in multilingual, transnational, digital, and English-mediated academic

environments. In many Islamic and non-Arabic-speaking contexts, Arabic is learned through local languages, religious traditions, and classroom-based grammatical instruction. However, in international higher education and global academic contexts, Arabic is frequently accessed, explained, and discussed through English. This creates an important pedagogical phenomenon: learners may not approach Arabic comprehension through Arabic alone, but through English as a mediating language that helps them interpret grammatical categories, lexical meanings, syntactic patterns, and academic explanations. Recent studies on English-medium instruction in the Arab world and multilingual Arabic learning contexts show that English has become deeply embedded in educational policy, academic discourse, and classroom interaction, even in contexts where Arabic remains culturally, religiously, and institutionally central (Alhamami, 2024; Al-Kahtany & Alhamami, 2022; Al-Shboul, 2022; Hopkyns, 2022).

The use of English in Arabic learning should not be reduced to translation or linguistic dependency. Rather, English may function as a cognitive and pedagogical bridge that enables learners to compare linguistic systems, organize grammatical understanding, and develop metalinguistic awareness. For learners who are familiar with English grammatical terminology, concepts such as subject, predicate, object, noun, verb, adjective, preposition, tense, and clause may become entry points for understanding Arabic structures such as *fā'il*, *mubtada'*, *khobar*, *maf'ul bih*, *ṣifah*, *ḥarf jarr*, *jumlaḥ ismiyyah*, and *jumlaḥ fi'liyyah*. Nevertheless, this mediation must be used carefully because Arabic and English differ significantly in morphology, syntax, word order, agreement, gender, derivation, and inflectional marking. Recent contrastive studies of Arabic and English grammar suggest that comparison between the two languages can reveal areas of transfer, difficulty, and instructional scaffolding, especially when learners attempt to understand one language through the grammatical categories of another (Md Zolkapli et al., 2026; Sainulabdeen et al., 2022; Supardi & Jabal, 2023).

This issue is particularly relevant because Arabic comprehension involves more than vocabulary recognition. It requires learners to understand how words function within sentences, how meaning is shaped by grammatical position, how morphological patterns generate related meanings, and how context influences interpretation. In Arabic, comprehension is closely connected to structural awareness, including the ability to identify verbal and nominal sentences, understand the function of case endings, recognize root-and-pattern morphology, and distinguish between literal and contextual meanings. English-based explanations may assist learners at the early stage of comprehension by providing familiar analytical categories. However, if English is used uncritically, it may also create oversimplification, especially when Arabic linguistic features have no direct equivalent in English. Therefore, English-mediated Arabic comprehension requires a balanced approach that treats English not as a replacement for Arabic, but as a temporary scaffold for deeper Arabic understanding.

Translanguaging offers a strong theoretical and pedagogical framework for understanding this phenomenon. In multilingual education, translanguaging views learners' full linguistic repertoires as resources for meaning-making, participation, comprehension, and identity construction. Recent research has shown that

translanguaging can support learners in negotiating meaning, clarifying difficult concepts, and participating more confidently in classroom interaction. In Arabic language classrooms, translanguaging may involve movement among Arabic, English, Indonesian, local languages, or Arabic dialects, depending on the learning context. Studies in Arabic language education have found that translanguaging helps students understand vocabulary, grammatical structures, religious texts, and academic meanings while reducing anxiety and supporting classroom engagement (Abourehab & Azaz, 2023; Amro & Iversen, 2025; Nurseha, 2025; Rostandi et al., 2025; Sari et al., 2024; Uddin, 2024).

The relevance of translanguaging becomes stronger when Arabic is learned in English-speaking or English-mediated academic environments. In such contexts, learners often encounter Arabic through textbooks, dictionaries, online platforms, academic articles, grammar explanations, and teacher instruction written or delivered in English. This means that English is not merely an additional language in the classroom, but a key academic resource that shapes how learners conceptualize Arabic. Studies on English-medium instruction and bilingual education in Arab and Muslim contexts show that English can support academic access, but it may also create linguistic hierarchy if it is positioned as superior to Arabic or local languages (Alhamami, 2024; Alasmari et al., 2022; Hopkyns, 2022). Therefore, English-mediated Arabic learning should be examined critically, especially in relation to how English supports comprehension without weakening learners' direct engagement with Arabic.

Metalinguistic awareness is another crucial concept in this discussion. It refers to learners' ability to reflect on language as a system, including its forms, functions, structures, and cross-linguistic relationships. In Arabic learning, metalinguistic awareness allows learners to ask why a word changes its ending, how a root produces multiple derived forms, why adjective-noun agreement matters, and how sentence structure affects meaning. Recent studies have shown that translanguaging pedagogies and cross-linguistic comparison can strengthen learners' metalinguistic awareness because they encourage students to notice similarities and differences across languages, analyze grammatical patterns, and use their multilingual resources strategically (Gaspar, 2025; Gaspar & van der Worp, 2026; Ke et al., 2023; Roehr-Brackin, 2025; Torregrossa & Carbonara, 2026).

Despite the growing body of research on Arabic language education, translanguaging, contrastive grammar, English-medium instruction, and metalinguistic awareness, these areas are still often discussed separately. Some studies examine Arabic learning trends through bibliometric or systematic review methods; others focus on Arabic-English contrastive grammar; several investigate translanguaging in Arabic classrooms, heritage language contexts, or pesantren-based bilingual education; and others examine metalinguistic awareness in multilingual language learning. However, there remains a need for a systematic synthesis that connects these strands into one focused inquiry: how English functions as a mediating language in Arabic comprehension, how Arabic-English contrastive grammar supports or limits understanding, and how translanguaging contributes to metalinguistic awareness in Arabic as a foreign language learning

(Khusnadin et al., 2025; Safrudin et al., 2024; Sapawi & Nik Yusoff, 2025; Zikriah & Mauludiyah, 2024).

This gap is important for both theoretical and pedagogical reasons. Theoretically, the topic can extend Arabic as a foreign language research by integrating contrastive grammar, translanguaging, and metalinguistic awareness within a single conceptual frame. Pedagogically, it can guide Arabic teachers, curriculum designers, and material developers in deciding when English should be used as a scaffold, when direct Arabic exposure should be prioritized, and how bilingual explanations can be designed without reducing Arabic learning to translation. This is especially relevant for Indonesian, Southeast Asian, and Muslim students who study in English-speaking academic contexts or use English-language Arabic learning materials. In such contexts, English may become a bridge toward Arabic comprehension, but it must be used selectively, critically, and pedagogically.

The theoretical novelty of this review lies in its attempt to conceptualize English-mediated Arabic comprehension as an integrated framework that connects contrastive grammar, translanguaging, and metalinguistic awareness. Rather than treating English merely as a translation tool or a source of dependency, this review positions English as a temporary cognitive scaffold that can support learners' movement from initial access to Arabic meaning toward deeper structural understanding. This perspective offers a new conceptual contribution by framing English-mediated Arabic learning as a staged process of access, comparison, negotiation, and internalization.

Therefore, this study aims to conduct a systematic literature review of English-mediated Arabic comprehension by examining the intersections of contrastive grammar, translanguaging, and metalinguistic awareness in Arabic as a foreign language learning. The study is guided by three research questions. First, how has English been used as a mediating language in Arabic as a foreign language learning? Second, what aspects of Arabic grammar and comprehension are most frequently explained through English-based contrastive approaches? Third, how do contrastive grammar, translanguaging, and metalinguistic awareness contribute to Arabic comprehension among foreign language learners? By addressing these questions, this review seeks to provide a structured synthesis of current scholarship and propose a conceptual basis for understanding English not as a replacement for Arabic, but as a strategic cognitive and pedagogical bridge in multilingual Arabic learning.

Method

This study employed a systematic literature review design to examine English-mediated Arabic comprehension through the perspectives of contrastive grammar, translanguaging, and metalinguistic awareness in Arabic as a foreign language learning. This design was selected because the study aimed to identify, classify, and synthesize recent scholarly works rather than collect primary classroom data. The review focused on publications from 2022 to 2026 and used Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis Online, Wiley Online Library, and Google Scholar as the main search sources. The search

strings included “Arabic as a foreign language” AND “English,” “English-mediated Arabic learning,” “Arabic comprehension” AND “English,” “contrastive grammar” AND “Arabic,” “contrastive analysis” AND “Arabic” AND “English,” “translanguaging” AND “Arabic language classroom,” and “metalinguistic awareness” AND “translanguaging.” The procedure followed recent systematic review guidelines emphasizing transparent search strategies, inclusion and exclusion criteria, screening procedures, and thematic synthesis (Ghamrawi et al., 2025; Randles & Finnegan, 2023).

The screening process followed a PRISMA-based flow consisting of identification, duplicate removal, title and abstract screening, full-text eligibility assessment, and final inclusion. The initial search identified 412 records from the selected databases and supplementary searches. After removing 74 duplicate records, 338 studies remained for title and abstract screening. From this stage, 227 records were excluded because they were unrelated to Arabic learning, English mediation, contrastive grammar, translanguaging, metalinguistic awareness, or language pedagogy. The remaining 111 full-text articles were assessed for eligibility, and 75 studies were excluded because they did not meet the inclusion criteria, lacked sufficient methodological relevance, focused only on general language policy without connection to Arabic learning, or did not provide accessible bibliographic information. Finally, 36 studies were included in the thematic synthesis.

Studies were included if they were published between 2022 and 2026, written in English, Arabic, or Indonesian, peer-reviewed, and directly related to Arabic as a foreign language, Arabic-English contrastive grammar, translanguaging in Arabic or multilingual classrooms, English-medium instruction, Arabic learning trends, technology-supported Arabic learning, or metalinguistic awareness in language learning. Studies were excluded if they were outside the selected period, unrelated to the topic, focused only on literary analysis without pedagogical relevance, lacked accessible bibliographic information, or appeared as non-academic materials such as blogs, opinion pieces, and informal online content.

Data were extracted using a structured matrix covering author, year, publication type, country or learning context, research design, theoretical framework, role of English or other mediating languages, Arabic linguistic domain discussed, key findings, and relevance to the research questions. The selected studies were then analyzed thematically. Four major themes were developed: English as a mediating language in Arabic learning, Arabic-English contrastive grammar, translanguaging as pedagogical support, and metalinguistic awareness as the core cognitive outcome. These themes were interpreted in relation to recent studies on English-medium instruction, Arabic-English contrastive grammar, translanguaging in Arabic classrooms, and Arabic learning research trends (Alhamami, 2024; Md Zolkapli et al., 2026; Sari et al., 2024; Supardi & Jabal, 2023; Zikriah & Mauludiyah, 2024). Since this study used only publicly available academic publications and did not involve human participants, formal ethical clearance was not required. Nevertheless, ethical principles were maintained through accurate citation, responsible source use, and careful representation of previous studies.

Result and Discussion

The synthesis of the reviewed literature indicates that English-mediated Arabic comprehension is not a single instructional practice, but a multidimensional process involving linguistic comparison, classroom mediation, academic access, and metalinguistic reflection. Across the reviewed studies, English appeared in several interrelated roles: as a language of explanation, a comparative grammatical reference, a translanguaging resource, a medium of academic access, and a scaffold for developing learners' awareness of Arabic linguistic structures. These roles show that English can support Arabic comprehension when it is used strategically, but it can also create conceptual limitations when English grammatical categories are treated as fully equivalent to Arabic structures. The findings are organized into four major themes: English as a mediating language, Arabic-English contrastive grammar, translanguaging as pedagogical support, and metalinguistic awareness as the cognitive outcome of cross-linguistic mediation.

English as a Mediating Language in Arabic Comprehension

The first theme shows that English often functions as a mediating language in Arabic learning, particularly in international, multilingual, and higher education contexts. In this role, English is used to explain Arabic grammar, translate difficult vocabulary, clarify sentence meaning, introduce linguistic terminology, and provide academic access to Arabic-related scholarship. This finding is consistent with recent research on English-medium instruction in the Arab world, which shows that English has become an important language of academic communication and institutional policy, even in contexts where Arabic remains culturally and religiously central (Alhamami, 2024; Al-Kahtany & Alhamami, 2022; Al-Shboul, 2022). In Arabic learning, this condition allows English to serve as a bridge between learners' prior linguistic knowledge and the unfamiliar structures of Arabic.

However, the mediating role of English is pedagogically productive only when it is used as a scaffold rather than as a substitute for Arabic. English can help learners understand initial concepts such as subject, object, adjective, preposition, noun, and verb, but these concepts cannot fully represent Arabic categories such as *fā'il*, *ma'fūl bih*, *na't*, *ḥarf jarr*, *ism*, *fi'l*, *mubtada'*, and *khabar*. The relationship between English and Arabic is therefore not a simple one-to-one correspondence. Instead, English provides learners with an entry point for analysis, while Arabic requires further internal understanding based on its own grammatical system.

This finding suggests that English mediation should be positioned as a transitional pedagogical tool. At the early stage of learning, English explanations can reduce cognitive load, support vocabulary access, and help learners identify basic grammatical functions. At the intermediate and advanced stages, however, learners need to move beyond English-based explanations toward more direct Arabic comprehension. This gradual movement is important because overdependence on English may prevent learners from developing sensitivity to Arabic-specific features such as *i'rāb*, root-and-pattern morphology, agreement, gender, definiteness, and flexible word order.

Contrastive Grammar as a Pathway to Arabic Understanding

The second theme concerns the role of contrastive grammar in supporting Arabic comprehension. Recent contrastive studies indicate that Arabic and English differ significantly in sentence structure, grammatical agreement, word order,

morphology, tense-aspect systems, and nominal-verbal sentence patterns (Md Zolkapli et al., 2026; Sainulabdeen et al., 2022; Supardi & Jabal, 2023). These differences create both learning opportunities and learning challenges. On the one hand, comparison allows learners to recognize structural patterns across languages. On the other hand, it may cause negative transfer when learners impose English grammatical logic on Arabic.

A key example is sentence structure. English commonly follows a subject-verb-object pattern, while Arabic may use both verbal sentences and nominal sentences. In a verbal sentence such as *qara'a al-ṭālibu al-kitāba*, the sentence begins with a verb, followed by the subject and object. In a nominal sentence such as *al-ṭālibu mujtahidun*, the sentence begins with a noun and does not require an equivalent of the English verb “to be” in the present tense. English-mediated explanation can help learners notice these differences, but it must also clarify that Arabic sentence logic is not simply an alternative version of English syntax.

Another important area is morphology. English word formation may help learners understand the general idea that words can be derived from other words, but Arabic morphology is built on a more systematic root-and-pattern structure. A learner may compare English forms such as *teach*, *teacher*, and *teaching* with Arabic forms such as *‘alima*, *‘ilm*, *‘ālim*, *ma‘lūm*, and *ta‘līm*. Such comparison can strengthen awareness of derivational relationships, but it must also show that Arabic morphology operates through patterns that are not identical to English affixation.

The reviewed literature therefore supports the idea that contrastive grammar is valuable when it is used diagnostically and pedagogically. It is diagnostic because it helps teachers predict areas of difficulty. It is pedagogical because it helps learners notice how meaning is organized differently across languages. However, contrastive grammar should not be reduced to listing similarities and differences. For Arabic comprehension, it should be used to guide learners from comparison to internalization. The final goal is not to understand Arabic through English forever, but to use English comparison as a temporary bridge toward independent Arabic understanding.

Translanguaging as Pedagogical Support in Arabic Learning

The third theme shows that translanguaging provides a relevant framework for understanding multilingual Arabic learning. Recent studies have found that translanguaging practices can support learners’ understanding, classroom participation, and metalinguistic reflection in Arabic language education (Abourehab & Azaz, 2023; Sari et al., 2024; Uddin, 2024). In Arabic classrooms, translanguaging may involve Arabic, English, Indonesian, local languages, or dialectal varieties, depending on the learners’ linguistic background and the institutional context. This practice allows learners to use their full linguistic repertoire to negotiate meaning and build comprehension.

In the context of English-mediated Arabic comprehension, translanguaging helps explain why English can be pedagogically useful without necessarily weakening Arabic learning. When English is used to clarify a difficult Arabic structure, it does not automatically mean that learners are abandoning Arabic. Instead, they may be using English as part of a broader multilingual strategy to

understand Arabic more deeply. For example, a teacher may introduce an Arabic sentence, ask students to identify its grammatical components using English terminology, compare it with an English equivalent, and then return to the Arabic sentence to analyze its original structure. This movement across languages can support comprehension when it remains directed toward Arabic learning.

Nevertheless, translanguaging requires careful pedagogical management. If the classroom relies too heavily on English, Arabic may become passive content rather than an active language of thought and communication. Conversely, if Arabic-only instruction is imposed too early, learners may experience confusion, anxiety, and limited participation. The reviewed literature suggests that effective translanguaging is not random language mixing, but purposeful language movement. It allows learners to use English when it clarifies meaning, while gradually increasing their ability to process Arabic directly.

This finding is especially relevant for learners in English-speaking academic environments. Students who study in the United States or other English-dominant contexts often encounter Arabic through English-language textbooks, academic discussions, digital platforms, and dictionaries. For these learners, English is not simply a foreign language; it is the academic language through which Arabic is often introduced. Translanguaging therefore offers a more realistic model of Arabic learning in global contexts because it recognizes the multilingual reality of learners rather than forcing an artificial separation between languages.

Metalinguistic Awareness as the Core Cognitive Outcome

The fourth theme indicates that the most important contribution of English-mediated Arabic comprehension is the development of metalinguistic awareness. Metalinguistic awareness refers to learners' ability to think about language as a system, notice grammatical patterns, compare structures across languages, and reflect on how meaning is produced. Recent studies have emphasized that metalinguistic awareness is important in second and foreign language learning because it supports learners' ability to analyze forms, identify patterns, and transfer linguistic knowledge across languages (Gaspar, 2025; Roehr-Brackin, 2025; Torregrossa & Carbonara, 2026; Ke et al., 2023).

In Arabic learning, metalinguistic awareness is particularly important because Arabic comprehension depends heavily on grammatical and morphological sensitivity. Learners need to understand not only what a word means, but also how it functions in a sentence. They need to recognize whether a word is a subject, object, predicate, adjective, genitive construction, or prepositional phrase. They also need to understand how case endings, word order, agreement, and derivational forms contribute to meaning. English-mediated comparison can support this process by giving learners familiar analytical tools, but the deeper outcome is the ability to analyze Arabic on its own terms.

The reviewed literature suggests that translanguaging and contrastive grammar can both contribute to metalinguistic awareness. Contrastive grammar helps learners notice differences between Arabic and English, while translanguaging allows learners to use their linguistic resources flexibly to discuss and understand those differences. For example, when learners compare the English phrase "the diligent student" with the Arabic phrase *al-ṭālibu al-mujtahidu*, they begin to notice

that definiteness and adjective agreement operate differently in Arabic. When they compare “the student is diligent” with al-ṭālibu mujtahidun, they notice that Arabic nominal sentences can express present meaning without an overt equivalent of “is.” These moments of comparison can strengthen learners’ awareness of how Arabic structures meaning.

Therefore, English-mediated Arabic comprehension should be understood not merely as bilingual explanation, but as a metalinguistic process. Its value lies not in making learners dependent on English, but in helping them become more conscious of Arabic linguistic structure. When properly designed, English mediation can help learners ask analytical questions: What is the function of this word? Why does this form change? How does this sentence produce meaning? Why is the Arabic structure different from the English structure? These questions move learners from passive reception to active grammatical reasoning.

The synthesis of the four themes shows that English-mediated Arabic comprehension operates through a layered process. First, English provides initial access to Arabic concepts. Second, contrastive grammar helps learners identify similarities and differences between Arabic and English. Third, translanguaging allows learners to move flexibly across linguistic resources during meaning-making. Fourth, metalinguistic awareness emerges when learners begin to reflect consciously on Arabic structure and meaning.

Table 1. Thematic synthesis of English-mediated Arabic comprehension

Theme	Main finding	Pedagogical function	Possible limitation
English mediation	English helps learners access Arabic grammar, vocabulary, and explanation	Reduces cognitive load and supports initial comprehension	May create dependency if used excessively
Contrastive grammar	Arabic-English comparison reveals structural similarities and differences	Helps learners notice grammar, syntax, morphology, and meaning relations	May oversimplify Arabic if English categories are treated as equivalent
Translanguaging	Learners use multiple languages to negotiate meaning	Supports participation, Arabic clarification, and multilingual learning	May weaken Arabic exposure if not managed purposefully
Metalinguistic awareness	Cross-linguistic reflection develops conscious understanding of Arabic	Strengthens analytical ability and deeper comprehension	Requires teacher guidance and carefully designed tasks

This synthesis indicates that English-mediated Arabic comprehension is best understood as a controlled and purposeful pedagogical strategy. English should not

dominate Arabic learning, but it should not be excluded when it can help learners understand difficult structures. The most productive model is not English-only, Arabic-only, or translation-only. Rather, it is a staged model in which English is used selectively to support Arabic comprehension, contrastive analysis is used to clarify structural differences, translanguaging is used to activate learners' multilingual resources, and metalinguistic awareness is developed as the final cognitive outcome.

Reframing English-Mediated Arabic Learning

The results of this review challenge the assumption that the use of English in Arabic learning is always a sign of weakness, dependency, or pedagogical failure. In many global academic contexts, English is already part of the learning ecology through textbooks, dictionaries, grammar manuals, academic articles, digital platforms, and classroom explanation. This condition is particularly visible in English-medium and multilingual higher education environments, where English often functions as a language of academic access, institutional policy, and scholarly communication (Alhamami, 2024; Al-Kahtany & Alhamami, 2022; Alqarni, 2024). Therefore, the relevant question is not whether English should be used in Arabic learning, but how it should be used responsibly, selectively, and pedagogically. The findings suggest that English is valuable when it supports learners' movement toward Arabic comprehension, but problematic when it replaces direct engagement with Arabic structures, Arabic texts, and Arabic meaning-making.

This discussion also highlights the need to distinguish between translation and mediation. Translation often focuses on replacing a word, phrase, or sentence in one language with an equivalent in another language. Mediation, however, involves using one language to help learners understand how another language works. In English-mediated Arabic comprehension, the goal is not simply to translate Arabic into English, but to use English to explain, compare, question, analyze, and gradually internalize Arabic structures. This distinction is important because it prevents the learning process from becoming mechanically bilingual. Instead, it positions English as a temporary cognitive tool that helps learners notice Arabic grammatical functions, lexical relations, sentence patterns, and morphological systems. In this sense, English mediation becomes pedagogically meaningful when it leads learners back to Arabic rather than keeping them dependent on English.

The findings also extend current discussions on Arabic as a foreign language by connecting contrastive grammar with translanguaging and metalinguistic awareness. Contrastive grammar provides structural comparison, translanguaging provides multilingual classroom practice, and metalinguistic awareness provides the cognitive goal of learning. These three concepts complement one another. Without contrastive grammar, English mediation may remain superficial because learners may use English only for translation without understanding structural differences between Arabic and English. Without translanguaging, multilingual learners' actual language practices may be ignored, even though learners often rely on their full linguistic repertoires to negotiate meaning. Without metalinguistic awareness, learners may compare languages without developing deeper grammatical understanding. Recent studies on pedagogical translanguaging emphasize that the movement between languages should be planned, purposeful,

and connected to learning goals rather than treated as random code-mixing (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022; Gaspar, 2025; Torregrossa & Carbonara, 2026).

For Arabic teachers, the findings imply that English can be used in carefully selected moments. It may be helpful when introducing new grammatical terminology, explaining difficult sentence structures, comparing Arabic and English word order, clarifying abstract meanings, or helping learners understand morphological patterns. For example, English grammatical terms such as subject, object, adjective, preposition, and clause can help learners enter Arabic categories such as *fā'il*, *maf'ul bih*, *na't*, *ḥarf jarr*, *jumlah ismiyyah*, and *jumlah fi'liyyah*. However, teachers should also clarify that these terms are not always equivalent. Arabic has its own internal grammatical logic, particularly in relation to *i'rāb*, root-and-pattern morphology, gender agreement, definiteness, and nominal-verbal sentence structures. Contrastive studies on Arabic, English, and Indonesian confirm that grammatical comparison can help identify similarities and difficulties, but it must be used critically to avoid oversimplifying Arabic categories through English grammar (Md Zolkapli et al., 2026; Sainulabdeen et al., 2022; Supardi & Jabal, 2023).

At the classroom level, English-mediated Arabic comprehension should be designed as a gradual scaffold. In the early stage, English can reduce cognitive load by helping learners access meaning, identify grammatical functions, and understand basic syntactic relations. In the middle stage, teachers can use English and Arabic comparatively, asking learners to notice where Arabic follows a different logic from English. In the advanced stage, English support should gradually be reduced so learners can process Arabic more directly. This gradual reduction is important because excessive reliance on English may limit learners' ability to think through Arabic. In contrast, strategic and temporary English mediation can support learners' confidence, participation, and structural awareness without making English the final destination of Arabic learning.

For curriculum designers, the findings suggest the need for bilingual or multilingual Arabic learning materials that are not merely translation-based. Effective materials should include contrastive grammar notes, guided comparison tasks, metalinguistic questions, Arabic-focused practice, and reflection activities. A lesson on Arabic nominal sentences, for instance, may begin with a comparison between "the student is diligent" and *al-ṭālibu mujtahidun*, but it should end with learners analyzing Arabic nominal sentences independently. Similarly, a lesson on Arabic morphology may use English word formation as an entry point, but it should ultimately guide learners to understand Arabic root-and-pattern systems such as *'alima*, *'ilm*, *'ālim*, *ma'lūm*, and *ta'līm*. This type of material design is consistent with recent research showing that Arabic learning is increasingly shaped by multilingual classrooms, digital resources, and technology-supported learning environments (Amro & Iversen, 2025; Khusnadin et al., 2025; Sapawi & Nik Yusoff, 2025; Zikriah & Mauludiyah, 2024).

The relevance of this pedagogical direction can also be supported by recent studies published in *Farasyah: Journal of Linguistics and Language Education*. Research on an Arabic-Islamic immersive festival at Dalwa Islamic Boarding School shows that culturally grounded learning environments, Arabic-speaking zones, rhetorical performances, dramatic enactments, and calligraphy exhibitions can increase students' behavioral engagement, communicative confidence, willingness

to speak Arabic, and perceived immersion (Mukhasibi & Wahyudi, 2025). This finding suggests that Arabic comprehension should not rely solely on grammatical explanation or translation, but should also be supported by affective, cultural, and communicative learning experiences. Similarly, gamified instruction in Nahwu-Sharaf education has been shown to improve learners' motivation, classroom engagement, persistence, enjoyment, and confidence in dealing with Arabic morphosyntax (Kasmaluddin et al., 2026). These local studies strengthen the argument that English-mediated Arabic comprehension should be integrated with Arabic-focused practice, learner engagement, and contextual pedagogy, so that English remains a scaffold while Arabic remains the center of linguistic experience.

For learners such as Indonesian students studying in English-speaking academic environments, English-mediated Arabic comprehension may provide a realistic pathway into Arabic. These learners may already possess English academic vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, even if English is not their first language. Rather than ignoring this resource, teachers and researchers can use it to support Arabic learning. This is particularly relevant in multilingual Indonesian and Islamic education contexts, where Arabic, Indonesian, English, and local languages frequently interact in classroom and religious learning practices (Nurseha, 2025; Rostandi et al., 2025; Sari et al., 2024). However, learners should also be trained to recognize the limits of English comparison. They need to understand that Arabic has its own internal logic and that English can only function as a bridge, not as the destination.

This argument can be further strengthened by recognizing that English-mediated Arabic comprehension is not only a matter of language choice, but also a matter of meaning-making, transfer, and learning ecology. Translanguaging research shows that learners use multiple languages to construct meaning, clarify concepts, and participate more actively in classroom interaction (Ahmad, 2024). Lexical transfer can also become a productive resource when teachers intentionally guide learners to compare vocabulary, form, and meaning across languages rather than treating transfer only as interference (Fuster, 2024). In the Indonesian context, multilingual classroom practices demonstrate that English, Indonesian, and local languages may interact as complementary resources for learning, especially when learners need conceptual access before developing more independent target-language competence (Liando et al., 2023). At the same time, pesantren-based Arabic learning traditions show that mediation has long existed through symbolic, grammatical, and translation practices, indicating that Arabic comprehension is often built through layered linguistic support rather than through direct exposure alone (Ammar et al., 2022). This broader perspective is important because EMI research in Gulf higher education also shows that English can support academic access, but may influence language identity and learning outcomes if its role is not critically managed (Aljehani & Modiano, 2025).

The translanguaging perspective deepens this argument because it views learners' multilingual repertoires as resources for learning rather than as obstacles. Studies on Arabic heritage, Arabic foreign language classrooms, and multilingual Islamic education show that translanguaging can support comprehension, participation, identity negotiation, and literacy development in Arabic-related learning spaces (Abourehab & Azaz, 2023; Amro & Iversen, 2025; Sari et al., 2024;

Uddin, 2024). In English-mediated Arabic learning, translanguaging allows learners to move between Arabic and English to clarify meaning, compare structures, and test their understanding. However, effective translanguaging requires pedagogical control. It should not result in the marginalization of Arabic exposure, but should guide learners toward stronger Arabic comprehension and more independent Arabic use.

The deepest contribution of English-mediated Arabic comprehension lies in its relationship with metalinguistic awareness. Metalinguistic awareness enables learners to reflect on language as a system, notice grammatical patterns, compare structures across languages, and understand how meaning is produced through form. This is especially important in Arabic learning because comprehension depends not only on knowing vocabulary, but also on recognizing grammatical function, morphological derivation, agreement, case marking, sentence type, and contextual meaning. Recent studies on metalinguistic awareness and translanguaging show that planned cross-linguistic comparison can strengthen learners' ability to analyze language more consciously (Gaspar, 2025; Gaspar & van der Worp, 2026; Ke et al., 2023; Roehr-Brackin, 2025; Torregrossa & Carbonara, 2026; Ke et al., 2023). Therefore, English mediation should be evaluated not by how much English is used, but by whether it helps learners become more aware of how Arabic works.

The theoretical novelty of this review lies in the proposed four-stage model of English-mediated Arabic comprehension: access, comparison, negotiation, and internalization. In the access stage, English helps learners enter Arabic meaning by reducing initial difficulty and providing familiar grammatical terminology. In the comparison stage, learners identify similarities and differences between Arabic and English structures. In the negotiation stage, learners use translanguaging to clarify meaning, participate in classroom interaction, and connect Arabic with their wider linguistic repertoire. In the internalization stage, learners develop metalinguistic awareness and begin to understand Arabic more independently. This model offers a balanced view that recognizes both the usefulness and the limitations of English in Arabic learning.

This four-stage model also helps avoid two extremes in Arabic pedagogy. The first extreme is English dependency, in which Arabic is understood only through English translation and learners do not develop direct Arabic comprehension. The second extreme is premature Arabic-only instruction, in which learners are expected to process complex Arabic structures without adequate scaffolding. Both extremes can limit comprehension. A more balanced approach recognizes that English may be useful at particular moments, especially when learners need conceptual access, but that Arabic must remain the central object and destination of learning. In this model, English is not a rival to Arabic, but a temporary bridge toward Arabic-based understanding.

The review also reveals several gaps for future research. First, more empirical studies are needed on how learners actually use English to understand Arabic grammar in classroom interaction. Second, more research is needed on Arabic learners in English-speaking countries, particularly students who study Arabic through English-based academic materials. Third, future studies should examine which Arabic grammatical domains benefit most from English-mediated explanation

and which domains require more direct Arabic immersion. Fourth, classroom-based or experimental studies could investigate whether contrastive and translanguaging-based instruction improves learners' metalinguistic awareness and Arabic comprehension more effectively than monolingual or translation-only approaches. Fifth, future studies should explore how digital tools, online dictionaries, artificial intelligence, and English-based Arabic platforms shape learners' comprehension of Arabic in transnational learning environments (Amro & Iversen, 2025; Laudza'i et al., 2026; Sapawi & Nik Yusoff, 2025; Zainuddin et al., 2026).

Overall, the results show that English-mediated Arabic comprehension is a promising but complex area of Arabic language education. English can support Arabic learning when it is used as a cognitive bridge, a contrastive reference, and a translanguaging resource. However, its use must be critically managed to avoid dependency, oversimplification, and linguistic hierarchy. The strongest contribution of English mediation lies in its ability to support metalinguistic awareness, enabling learners to notice, compare, analyze, and eventually internalize Arabic structures. In this sense, English-mediated Arabic comprehension should be understood not as learning Arabic through English permanently, but as using English strategically to arrive at deeper Arabic understanding.

Conclusion

This systematic literature review concludes that English-mediated Arabic comprehension is not merely a form of translation dependency, but a strategic pedagogical process that can support Arabic as a foreign language learning when used selectively and critically. The synthesis shows that English can function as a cognitive bridge for accessing Arabic meaning, comparing Arabic-English grammatical structures, supporting translanguaging practices, and developing learners' metalinguistic awareness. The theoretical novelty of this study lies in integrating contrastive grammar, translanguaging, and metalinguistic awareness into a four-stage model of access, comparison, negotiation, and internalization. This model reframes English not as a replacement for Arabic, but as a temporary scaffold that guides learners toward deeper Arabic-based comprehension.

The contextual contribution of this review is its relevance for multilingual learners, especially those in Indonesian, Southeast Asian, Islamic, and English-mediated academic environments, where Arabic is often learned through multiple linguistic resources. Practically, the findings suggest that Arabic teachers and curriculum designers should use English only at selected moments, combine it with Arabic-focused practice, and design learning materials that include guided comparison, metalinguistic reflection, and gradual reduction of English support. This review is limited by its reliance on published literature rather than classroom-based data; therefore, future studies should empirically examine how learners use English to understand Arabic grammar in real learning interactions. Moving forward, English-mediated Arabic pedagogy should be developed as a balanced, multilingual, and reflective approach that helps learners move beyond translation toward independent, confident, and meaningful Arabic understanding.

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