
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Systematic Self-Review of Studies on Cultural Learning, Global Issues, and Pedagogical Practices in Second Language Contexts (2003–2025)

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| ABSTRACT

This study aimed to conduct a systematic review (SR) of the author's research program on cultural themes and global issues that have been integrated into second language (L2) courses. It classified 31 studies published between 2003 and 2025 into the following clusters: Integrating culture and global issues in the L2 curriculum, textbooks and skills, teaching strategies, correlates and predictors of culture acquisition, cross cultural collaboration, heritage language and cultural identity maintenance and cross-cutting methodological cluster on teaching culture with technology using blogs, social media, podcasts, wikis, LMS, online discussion forums, and distance learning platforms as Zoom. The integration studies were based on the same framework synthesized from the literature, consisting of four pillars: global systems, diverse human values, current global events, and world history. Findings demonstrate that integrating culture, global issues, and technology mediated tasks into L2 instruction consistently enhances learners' linguistic proficiency, cultural awareness, global understanding, and engagement. Whether through global theme speaking, reading and writing tasks, multicultural literature, linguistic landscapes, cultural podcasts, blogs, wikis, mobile fiction apps, or cross national online collaboration, the studies converge on a central conclusion: L2 learning becomes deeper, more meaningful, and more transferable when cultural and global content is embedded in authentic, interactive, and cognitively rich tasks. The corpus also shows that students benefit most when instruction combines explicit cultural knowledge, experiential exposure, collaborative activities and reflective engagement, supported by technologies that expand access to real world cultural input. Additionally, the studies confirm that cultural and global integration is not an optional enrichment but a pedagogical necessity for preparing learners to participate in an interconnected world. Digital tools amplify these benefits by expanding access to multimodal cultural resources and enabling interaction with global peers. The studies affirm that - nowadays - cultural and global integration is not an optional enrichment but a pedagogical necessity for preparing learners to participate effectively in an interconnected world. This SR offers the first longitudinal, author based synthesis that traces how cultural and global themes were operationalized across multiple skills, platforms, and instructional designs.

| KEYWORDS

Systematic review (SR); Al-Jarf research program; cultural learning, global issues, second language contexts, cross-cultural collaboration, intercultural communication, pedagogical practices, technology enhanced learning

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Learning a second language (L2) extends beyond vocabulary and grammar. It requires understanding the local and global contexts in which the language operates. Nowadays, culture is increasingly linked to global issues, international awareness, and cross-cultural communication, rather than to traditional notions of food, festivals, or national customs. This shift reflects the demands of a globalized world in which learners must interpret world events, navigate intercultural encounters, and critically evaluate global information flows. As Hermessi (2015) notes, cultural competence in L2 learning enables students to avoid misunderstandings, develop empathy, and participate meaningfully in international communication.

Nowadays, culture teaching in both L1 and L2 contexts emphasizes global awareness, defined as the ability to understand worldwide events, international organizations, global challenges, and the interconnectedness of societies. For native-speaking students (L1), global culture is introduced through school curricula, social studies textbooks, and national reading programs that integrate themes such as global history, environmental issues, and international cooperation. For EFL learners (L2), global issues are embedded in reading, writing, speaking, and interpreting tasks through authentic materials such as news reports, blogs, social media content, and digital storytelling. This approach aligns with Reimers (2020), who argues that education must balance local identity with global citizenship to prepare students for international collaboration.

The intersection of local and global culture—often described as “glocal” education—allows learners to remain rooted in their cultural heritage while engaging with global perspectives. In practice, this includes comparing local and international events, analyzing global crises through culturally relevant examples, and participating in digital exchanges that connect students across countries. Such practices foster intercultural communicative competence, reduce stereotyping, and promote critical cultural awareness (Lessard-Clouston, 1997).

Recent research highlights the pedagogical value of integrating global issues into both L1 and L2 instruction. Studies show that exposure to global themes increases motivation, enhances critical thinking, and strengthens students’ ability to interpret international news and cross-cultural messages. In EFL contexts, digital platforms—blogs, social media networks, podcasts, and wikis—provide authentic spaces for students to engage with global events, develop cultural literacy, and communicate with peers worldwide. In L1 contexts, curriculum analyses reveal growing efforts to embed global dimensions into national textbooks, ensuring that students understand their place within a broader international landscape.

The first group of SRs examined intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and cross-cultural communication. These studies focused on ICC development, intercultural skills, teacher beliefs, and cross-cultural interaction. Examples include: *intercultural communicative competence in EFL education and global business* (Xu et al., 2025), *in EFL teaching in China* (Zhou et al., 2024), and *Asian EFL context* (Park, 2022); *cross-cultural collaborative learning from 2011 to 2020* (Gyasi et al., 2021); *language teachers’ intercultural knowledge, competencies, and beliefs* (Kidwell, 2025); and *teachers’ perception and practices of intercultural communicative competence integration in EFL classroom* (Nafisah et al., 2024). Reviews that incorporated digital tools, online exchanges, and technology-mediated cultural learning include *intercultural communicative competence and online exchanges* (Avgousti, 2018); *technology-supported cross-cultural learning* (Shadiev et al., 2024); and *integrating local culture into web-based ELT for young learners* (Heriyanto et al., 2025).

The second group of studies focused on the integration of local culture in EFL teaching and how local culture, local wisdom, indigenous identity, or Islamic perspectives are incorporated into English instruction. Examples include: Indonesian EFL teachers’ strategies for integrating character values and local culture (Agung et al., 2025); potentials and challenges of culture-based learning in Indonesia (Dwiputra & Sundawa, 2023); the implementation of the STEAM approach with Indonesia’s local culture in mathematics learning (Kartikaningtyas et al., 2025); integrating local culture into foreign language learning through humour (Al Arief, 2024); school-based Indigenous cultural programs and their impact on Australian Indigenous students (Lowe, et al., 2021); learning model based on local cultural wisdom and student learning outcomes (Pamungkas & Manaf, 2023); the integration of local culture into English language teaching in Southeast Asia (Ratri et al., 2024); the integration of Islamic perspectives in teaching English as a foreign language (Sidqurrahman, 2024); and teaching and learning culture on English language programs (Young et al., 2009).

The third group explored cultural representation in textbooks and teaching materials. These reviews examined how cultural elements appear in textbooks, literature, and instructional resources. Examples include: the representation of cultural elements in English as a foreign language textbooks (Karakuş, 2021); cultural representation in L2 Mandarin textbooks (Lin et al., 2021); conceptualisation of culture and research methods in studies of language teaching materials (Li et al., 2026); selecting potential instructional materials for literature teaching in the 21st century milieu (Bulusan, 2019); and using literature for the young learners in an EFL classroom (Al-Hajji & Shuqair, 2014); the integration and development of EFL classroom materials based on local culture (Tantri & Santosa, 2024); local literature in integrated skills for English teaching (Kicha, 2023).

The fourth group reviewed studies linking cultural content to language-skills development, including writing, reading, speaking, and literature-based instruction. Examples include: the role of culturally responsive teaching in improving EFL students’ writing skills (Ardhi & Dewi, 2025); incorporating cultural background in teaching EFL writing in Libyan context (Baresh, 2024); the effectiveness of using novels in learning process to improve the English language skills (Suoth et al., 2023); using short stories to boost EFL learners’ performance (Pardede, 2021); using children’s literature to teach the 4Cs of CLIL (Graham et al., 2020); integrating Chinese culture in college English teaching (Yujuan & Sandaran, 2023); and attitudes towards China English and implications for L2 teaching in China (Chen, 2021).

A final group of SRs addressed global–local culture, identity, and globalization, such as between the global and the local, there are regions, culture areas, and national states (Evans, 2002).

Despite the growing body of research on culture, global issues, and intercultural communicative competence in language education, prior culture SRs in the literature remain fragmented and do not provide an integrated understanding of how cultural and global themes are taught specifically in L2 contexts. Existing reviews tend to focus on single dimensions, such as ICC development, local-culture integration, textbook representation, or culture-based language skills, without examining how these strands collectively shape cultural learning in EFL and other L2 environments. In addition, prior reviews rarely address the full range of pedagogical practices now used to teach global issues in L2 classrooms, including blogging, digital storytelling, social media engagement, online collaboration, mobile apps, podcasts, and technology-mediated cultural exchanges. These innovations have expanded rapidly in the past decade, yet no SR has synthesized how they contribute to cultural awareness, global literacy, or cross-cultural communication in L2 learning. Another gap concerns the intersection of global issues with language skills. While individual studies explore reading, writing, speaking, interpreting, or multimodal tasks, there is no comprehensive synthesis showing how global themes are integrated across skills or how they influence learners' cultural competence.

To fill the gaps in the literature, this study aims to conduct a systematic review (SR) of the author's research studies on cultural themes and global issues that have been integrated into L2 teaching and learning over the past two decades. It aims to analyze a corpus of 31 studies published between 2003 and 2025 to: (i) Classify the corpus into thematic clusters based on instructional purpose, pedagogical focus, and cultural orientation; (ii) examine the curriculum design, teaching strategies, digital culture integration, technological tools, and cross-cultural communication networks within the author's research program; (iii) trace the development of cross-cultural communication, global awareness, and culturally oriented instructional practices across the 22-year period; and (iv) provide a comprehensive synthesis of how cultural and global issues have been conceptualized, taught, and technologically mediated in L2 education across two decades of research.

This SR is significant because it offers the first comprehensive synthesis of how cultural themes and global issues have been integrated, taught, and technologically mediated across a unified 22-year L2 research program. Unlike previous SRs that examined isolated dimensions, such as intercultural competence, local culture integration, textbook representation, or cultural ideology, this SR brings together curriculum design, pedagogical strategies, digital culture platforms, and cross-cultural communication networks within a single analytical framework. By classifying 31 studies into thematic clusters and tracing their longitudinal development, the SR provides a panoramic view of how L2 cultural pedagogy evolved from early web-based tools to contemporary mobile and social media environments, highlighting shifting forms of global awareness and learner engagement with worldwide events, digital cultures, and intercultural exchanges. In contrast to prior SRs that focused on abstract constructs or static representations of culture (e.g., textbook bias, indigenous identities, or teacher beliefs), the current body of work centers on dynamic, functional, and technology-driven interventions. It investigates how cross-border telecollaboration, authentic media reports, and discussions of current global issues directly influence language skills, translation accuracy, and real-time cultural awareness. By intentionally excluding textbook content analysis and purely theoretical ICC models, this SR establishes a distinct niche grounded in experiential, student-driven global interaction, revealing emerging patterns, pedagogical trajectories, and future directions essential for advancing culturally responsive and globally oriented language education.

Furthermore, this SR is significant because it is part of a broader series of SR/MA projects by the author, that has so far cover the following: *social media in EFL teaching and learning (2008–2025)* (Al-Jarf, 2026a); *teaching English for art education purposes to Ph.D. students* (Al-Jarf, 2026b); *EFL reading instruction: Themes, methods, and pedagogical insights* (Al-Jarf, 2026c); *educational evaluation domains* (Al-Jarf, 2026d); *students' errors in English–Arabic and Arabic–English translation* (Al-Jarf, 2026f); *Mobile apps for developing multiple language skills EFL* (Al-Jarf, 2026g); *adult reading practices, interests, habits and challenges* (Al-Jarf, 2026h); *pronunciation instruction and practice in L2 (2005–2025)* (Al-Jarf, 2026i); *teaching reading in Arabic to grades 1–12* (Al-Jarf, 2026j); *Electronic searching studies (2002–2021)* (Al-Jarf, 2026k); *EFL vocabulary Teaching, assessment, learning outcomes, and AI translation quality* (Al-Jarf, 2026l); *Principles and practices of specific-skill assessment studies:* (Al-Jarf, 2026m); *Arabic–English transliteration of personal names and public signages* (Al-Jarf, 2026n); *Children's language acquisition and development in Saudi Arabia* (Al-Jarf, 2026o); *Classroom practices, writing enhancement and creativity among EFL struggling students* (Al-Jarf, 2026p); *Collaborative learning and teaching in digital environments* (Al-Jarf, 2026q); *Distance learning in the COVID-19 era and beyond* (Al-Jarf, 2026r); *Effect of mind-mapping on multiple English language skills* (Al-Jarf, 2026s); *Inadequate staffing and large class sizes in Saudi EFL and translation programs* (Al-Jarf, 2026t); *Innovative word formation and pluralization processes in Arabic* (Al-Jarf, 2026w); *Online videos and podcasts for language learning in the Saudi context (2010–2025)* (Al-Jarf, 2026x); *AI Arabic translation, linguistics and pedagogy (2024–2025)* (Al-Jarf, 2026y); *ESP innovation across specialized and underexplored domains* (Al-Jarf, 2026z); *LMS-supported EFL instruction* (Al-Jarf, 2026aa); *studies on grammar teaching, technologies, and learning outcomes (2000–2025)* (Al-Jarf, 2026); *listening and speaking instruction, assessment and technologies* (Al-Jarf, 2026x); *spelling error types, strategies, sources, and instructional interventions among EFL students* (Al-Jarf, 2026), and *interpreting pedagogy, difficulties, technologies, and skill correlates in the Saudi context* (Al-Jarf, 2026).

2. Context

College students majoring in English-Arabic translation at the College of Languages and Translation (COLT) take 20 hours of English language courses (4 listening, speaking, reading and writing, 2 vocabulary building, 3 grammar and one dictionary skills course) in the first 4 semesters of the translation program. They also take a Language and Culture course in level 4, a Comparative Culture course in level 5 and a Readings in the Target Culture course in level 7. Starting from level 5 to level 10, they take specialized translation courses in 18 subject areas, 7 interpreting courses and a Translation Project. The author taught the first culture course to level 4 students only once. She designed her own material about British and American cultures and supplemented the material with pictures from her own visits to the UK and USA. The content of the course is described in some studies in the Results section.

3. Methodology

This SR is based on a corpus of 31 studies drawn from the author's longitudinal research program on cultural and global issues in L2 contexts. The corpus was compiled using explicit inclusion criteria: (a) studies must focus on L2 teaching or learning; (b) they must integrate cultural or global themes into instructional materials or learner engagement; (c) they must be empirical, classroom-based, or pedagogically oriented; and (d) fall within the publication period 2003–2025. The final set of 31 studies was then classified into 5 thematic clusters and a cross-cutting methodological cluster described below.

3.1 Study Corpus

Cluster 1: Integrating Culture and Global Issues in The L2 Curriculum, Textbooks and Language Skill Instruction

Studies in this cluster examine how global content is incorporated into speaking, reading, interpreting, and study-abroad materials, demonstrating how curriculum-level decisions shape learners' cultural awareness. The studies include:

- 1) *Developing global awareness in the EFL classroom (Al-Jarf, 2004f)*
- 2) *Integrating global culture in EFL college materials (Al-Jarf, 2007b)*
- 3) *Integrating global themes in EFL speaking instruction (Al-Jarf, 2008a)*
- 4) *Integrating global themes in writing instruction (Al-Jarf, 2011d)*
- 5) *Developing students' global awareness in EFL reading and speaking (Al-Jarf, 2022d)*
- 6) *Integrating current global events and technology in interpreting practice (Al-Jarf, 2022h)*
- 7) *Enhancing reading and speaking skills in EFL through multicultural children's short stories (Al-Jarf, 2015)*
- 8) *Integrating ethnic culture Facebook pages in EFL instruction (Al-Jarf, 2014b)*
- 9) *Integrating cultural podcasts in EFL college classrooms (Al-Jarf, 2011c)*
- 10) *Teaching English with linguistic landscapes to Saudi students studying abroad (Al-Jarf, 2021c)*

Cluster 2: Teaching Strategies in L2 (Tasks, Creative Interventions, Critical Literacy)

Studies in this cluster focus on pedagogical strategies that promote cultural understanding through classroom activities such as blogging, art-based reading, global-issue writing tasks, and anti-racism activities illustrate how instructional techniques can cultivate global awareness, critical thinking, and culturally responsive engagement. The studies include:

- 1) *Blogging about sustainable development in the EFL college classroom (Al-Jarf, 2025a)*
- 2) *Blogging about current global events in the EFL writing classroom: effects on skill improvement, global awareness and attitudes (Al-Jarf, 2022b)*
- 3) *Blogging about the covid-19 pandemic in EFL writing courses (Al-Jarf, 2022b)*
- 4) *Combating the covid-19 hate and racism speech on social media (Al-Jarf, 2021a)*
- 5) *Developing and testing reading skills through art texts (Al-Jarf, 2011b)*
- 6) *Enhancing EFL students' reading and appreciation skills with mobile fiction apps (Al-Jarf, 2022g)*

Cluster 3: Correlates and Predictors of Culture Acquisition

This cluster includes studies on **factors influencing cultural learning** such as the effects of background knowledge, online instruction, and collaborative learning environments on learners' cultural awareness. The studies include:

- 1) *Effect of background knowledge on auditory comprehension in interpreting courses (Al-Jarf, 2018b)*
- 2) *Teaching the target culture using a wiki (Al-Jarf, 2008b)*
- 3) *Teaching language and culture online (Al-Jarf, 2003b)*
- 4) *Impact of online instruction on EFL students' cultural awareness (Al-Jarf, 2006b)*
- 5) *Cultural Issues in Online Collaborative Instruction in EFL Classrooms (Al-Jarf, 2007a)*

Cluster 4: Cross-Cultural Collaboration & Communicative Networks (Telecollaboration)

This cluster encompasses studies that engage learners in cross-cultural interaction through online collaboration, and international communication networks. The studies document how digital exchanges and intercultural partnerships foster global understanding, reduce stereotyping, and build communicative competence across cultures. The studies include:

- 1) *The online writing collaboration project for EFL learners and instructors (Al-Jarf, 2005b)*
- 2) *Building cross-cultural communication through online collaboration (Al-Jarf, 2004b)*
- 3) *Developing cross-cultural understanding through online forums (Al-Jarf, 2004e)*
- 4) *Using online dialogue to develop cross-cultural understanding (Al-Jarf, 2006f)*
- 5) *Connecting the EFL classroom with local and global communities (Al-Jarf, 2009a)*
- 6) *Online collaboration in translation instruction among students and instructors (Al-Jarf, 2008d)*
- 7) *Cross-cultural communication: Saudi, Ukrainian, and Russian students online (Al-Jarf, 2004d)*
- 8) *Building cultural bridges through social media networks: a case study (Al-Jarf, 2020b)*
- 9) *Collaborative distance Arabic language learning between Russian and Arab students in Africa (Al-Jarf, 2025b)*

Cluster 5: Heritage Language and Cultural Identity Maintenance

This cluster includes studies addressing the teaching of Arabic and Islamic culture to children of Arab origin living in Europe, where Arabic functions as a second or heritage language. These studies focus on language maintenance, identity preservation, early literacy, and the intergenerational transmission of cultural and religious knowledge.

- 1) *The need for teaching the Arabic language and islamic culture to children of Arab communities living abroad (Al-Jarf, 2004h)*

Cross-Cutting Methodological Cluster: Teaching Culture with Technology in all studies

This is not a thematic cluster. It is a cross-cutting methodological cluster that shows which technologies were used, how they were distributed across the 31 studies and which platforms supported cultural learning. Although technology appears in multiple thematic clusters, this cluster isolates the technological dimension to provide a clear overview of the platforms, media, and applications that supported cultural learning. Each study appears once in its thematic cluster and again here when technology constituted a key component of the instructional design. The studies include:

Blogs

- 1) *Developing and testing reading skills through art texts (Al-Jarf, 2011b).*
- 2) *Blogging about sustainable development in the EFL college classroom (Al-Jarf, 2025a)*
- 3) *Blogging about current global events in the EFL writing classroom: effects on skill improvement, global awareness and attitudes (Al-Jarf, 2022b)*
- 4) *Blogging about the covid-19 pandemic in EFL writing courses (Al-Jarf, 2022b)*

Social media

- 5) *Integrating ethnic culture Facebook pages in EFL instruction (Al-Jarf, 2014b)*
- 6) *Building cultural bridges through social media networks: a case study (Al-Jarf, 2020b)*
- 7) *Combating the covid-19 hate and racism speech on social media (Al-Jarf, 2021a)*
- 8) *Enhancing EFL students' reading and appreciation skills with mobile fiction apps (Al-Jarf, 2022g)*

Online course Management System

- 9) *Cultural Issues in Online Collaborative Instruction in EFL Classrooms (Al-Jarf, 2007a)*
- 10) *Teaching language and culture online (Al-Jarf, 2003b)*
- 11) *Impact of online instruction on EFL students' cultural awareness (Al-Jarf, 2006b)*
- 12) *Cross-cultural communication: Saudi, Ukrainian, and Russian students online (Al-Jarf, 2004d)*

Online discussion Forums

- 13) *Using online dialogue to develop cross-cultural understanding (Al-Jarf, 2006f)*

- 14) *The online writing collaboration project for EFL learners and instructors (Al-Jarf, 2005b);*
- 15) *Building cross-cultural communication through online collaboration (Al-Jarf, 2004b);*
- 16) *Developing cross-cultural understanding through online forums (Al-Jarf, 2004e)*
- 17) *Online collaboration in translation instruction among students and instructors (Al-Jarf, 2008d).*
- 18) *Connecting the EFL classroom with local and global communities (Al-Jarf, 2009a)*

Podcasts

- 19) *Integrating cultural podcasts in EFL college classrooms (Al-Jarf, 2011c)*

Wiki

- 20) *Teaching the target culture using a wiki (Al-Jarf, 2008b)*

Distance Learning platforms (Zoom etc.)

- 21) *Collaborative distance Arabic language learning between Russian and Arab students in Africa (Al-Jarf, 2025b).*

Multiple Technologies

- 22) *Integrating current global events and technology in interpreting practice (Al-Jarf, 2022h);*

2.2 Eligibility (Inclusion & Exclusion) Criteria

The eligibility criteria were defined in section 2.1 to ensure that only studies directly addressing cultural and global issues in L2 teaching and learning were included in this SR. -Studies were excluded if they did not meet these criteria, fell outside the L2 scope, or addressed unrelated cultural, linguistic, or sociopolitical issues. The following types of studies were excluded.

- **Duplicate publications. These included** *building cultural bridges through social media networks (Al-Jarf, 2020c); effect of background knowledge on auditory comprehension in interpreting courses (Al-Jarf, 2018c); Intercultural communication: Saudi, Ukrainian, and Russian students online (Al-Jarf, 2004g) and what college students read in the globalization era (Al-Jarf, 2004h).*
- **Author's Studies where culture and global themes are Only a Partial Component.** Studies that contained a minor cultural component but did not focus on L2 cultural instruction were excluded, such as *Evaluation of Russian Arabic language teaching textbooks in the light of CEFR criteria (Al-Jarf & Mingazova (2020d); ESL teachers' online discussion forums (Al-Jarf, 2014a); and Teachers' online discussion forums in Saudi Arabia (Al-Jarf, 2006c; Al-Jarf, 2006d).*
- **The author's studies on Culture Course Materials (Non-Research / Non-L2) as:** Instructional materials, course descriptions, or culture-teaching resources, not tied to empirical L2 research were excluded because these items are pedagogical artifacts, not research studies. Examples are: *American and Arabic Cultures for Translation Students (Al-Jarf, 1994); American Culture for Translation Students (Al-Jarf, 1994b); Contrastive culture for translation students (Al-Jarf, 1994a); Culture for translation students (Al-Jarf, 1994) and Saudi Culture (Al-Jarf, 2017).*
- **The Author's Studies on Culture in L1 Contexts as in the following:** *a model for a global education course for Saudi junior and senior high schools (Al-Jarf, 2020a); The Saudi national reading curriculum: global issues (Al-Jarf, 2006e); Does the Saudi national curriculum teach global history (Al-Jarf, 2006a); The global dimension in Saudi history textbooks for grades 4-12 (Al-Jarf, 2003c); Global themes in Singaporean secondary social studies textbooks (Al-Jarf, 2003a); A model for global education course for Saudi schools (Al-Jarf, 2004a); Women, gender and national curricula: Gulf and Saudi Arabia (Al-Jarf, 2006g).*
- **The author's studies on equivalence problems in translating cultural metaphorical and fixed expressions such as** *ibn (son) and bint (daughter) fixed expressions (Al-Jarf, 2023a); Arabic and English dar (house) and bayt (home) expressions (Al-Jarf, 2022a); issues in translating Arabic om- and abu-expressions (Al-Jarf, 2016b); translation of English and Arabic binomials by advanced and novice translators (Al-Jarf, 2016c); Expressions of impossibility in Arabic and English: unveiling students' translation difficulties (Al-Jarf, 2024a); linguistic and cultural issues in translating English and Arabic plurals (Al-Jarf, 2019; Al-Jarf, 2020e)*

- **The author's studies on the local-global language dynamics (Intersection of English and Arabic)** such as *English language education at the elementary school level in Saudi Arabia: A parents' perspective* (Al-Jarf, 2022f); *Dominance of foreign shop names over Arabic names in Saudi Arabia: Promotional, sociocultural and globalization issues* (Al-Jarf, 2022d); *A linguistic-cultural investigation of hotel names in Saudi Arabia* (Al-Jarf, 2021b); *Marginalization of the Arabic language by educational institutions in the Arab World* (Al-Jarf, 2018d); *Arab preference for foreign words over Arabic equivalents* (Al-Jarf, 2016a); *The language of adult social networks* (Al-Jarf, 2011e); *Dominance of Foreign Words over Arabic Equivalents in Educated Arab Speech* (Al-Jarf, 2011b); *the impact of English as an international language (EIL) upon Arabic in Saudi Arabia* (Al-Jarf, 2008c); *College Students' Attitudes towards Using English and Arabic as a Medium of Instruction at the University Level* (Al-Jarf, 2004c); *The power of the English Language in the past, present and future* (Al-Jarf, 2005c).
- **The author's studies on local or global issues in sociopolitical discourse** as in: *Political (in)correctness and cancel-culture attitude* (Al-Jarf, 2023b); *Metaphorical political slurs in Arab social media discourse describing Middle East Conflicts* (Al-Jarf, 2025c); *Sectarian language after the Arab Spring* (Al-Jarf, 2022i); *Onomastic study of personal names* (Al-Jarf, 2023); *the interchange of personal names in Muslim communities* (Al-Jarf, 2023c); *The Gaza-Israel war terminology: implications for translation pedagogy* (Al-Jarf, 2024b).
- **The author's collaboration studies or gender-based education in non-second language contexts**, as: *Videoconferencing for segregated campuses* (Al-Jarf, 2005d); *Connecting students across universities in Saudi Arabia* (Al-Jarf, 2005a); and *electronic collaboration among Arab universities* (Al-Jarf, 2009b), *Connecting Graduate Students Across the World with Research Web-conferences* (Al-Jarf, 2018a).

3.2 Corpus Characteristics

The final corpus consists of 31 empirical and pedagogically oriented studies published between 2003 and 2025, all of which integrate cultural or global themes into L2 teaching and learning. The studies were produced within a single longitudinal research program, allowing for a coherent examination of how cultural pedagogy evolved over a 22-year period. To capture the breadth of instructional practices, the corpus was organized into five thematic clusters: (1) curriculum-level integration of culture and global issues; (2) strategy-based approaches to developing cultural awareness; (3) correlates and contextual factors influencing cultural acquisition; (4) cross-cultural collaboration and communication and a cross-cutting methodological cluster the focuses on teaching culture with technology showing the specific platforms, media & apps used in all the studies. Together, these clusters represent a comprehensive landscape of how global themes, cultural content, and intercultural engagement have been embedded in L2 environments across multiple skills, platforms, and instructional contexts.

3.3 Data Extraction and Synthesis

Data extraction followed a structured template designed to capture the pedagogical intent, instructional mode, technological tools, cultural focus, learner population, and reported findings of each study. For every article, key elements were recorded, including publication year, research purpose, instructional setting, cultural or global theme addressed, the specific L2 skill developed and/or technology involved. Studies were then grouped into thematic clusters through qualitative content analysis, allowing patterns to emerge across curriculum design, teaching strategies, digital tools, and cross-cultural communication practices. The synthesis emphasized longitudinal development, tracing how early web-based cultural instruction (e.g., wikis, online discussion forums) expanded into mobile applications, social media networks, and global-issue blogging. Rather than aggregating numerical outcomes, the review employed thematic synthesis to map conceptual progressions, identify recurring pedagogical principles, and highlight innovations in culturally oriented L2 instruction across the five clusters.

3.4 PRISMA Flow Description

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) process began with an initial pool of studies produced within the author's broader research program on culture, global issues, and language education. From this pool, studies were screened using predefined inclusion criteria requiring that each article: (a) address L2 teaching or learning; (b) integrate cultural or global themes; and (c) present empirical, instructional, or classroom-based evidence. Studies focusing solely on L1 contexts, bilingual policy, or non-instructional cultural analysis were excluded. After title-level and abstract-level screening, 31 studies met all eligibility criteria and were included in the final synthesis. These studies were subsequently organized into five thematic clusters reflecting their instructional intent and cultural orientation. The PRISMA flow therefore documents a transparent and replicable process of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and final inclusion, ensuring methodological rigor in constructing the L2 cultural-global corpus.

4. Results

4.1 Study Characteristics

The following sections include summaries of the studies in the study corpus.

Cluster 1: Integrating Culture and Global Issues in The L2 Curriculum, Textbooks and Language Skill instruction

1) **Developing Global Awareness in the EFL Classroom (Al-Jarf, 2004f)**

The study proposes a comprehensive model for integrating global themes into the EFL college classroom to develop students' global awareness, cultural understanding, and critical engagement with international issues. It outlines how EFL learners can explore the cultures and customs of other countries, analyze global problems, compare similarities and differences among world populations, examine international organizations, and recognize stereotypes while listening to multiple perspectives. The model organizes global content into four major areas—global systems, diverse human values, global problems and issues, and world history, each encompassing extensive subthemes such as cultural practices, ecological challenges, economic systems, political structures, health and educational systems, technological developments, social systems, and ideological frameworks. Current global issues including terrorism, war, poverty, refugees, natural disasters, sustainable development, and global inequality are highlighted as essential components of instruction. The model also specifies knowledge, skills, and value objectives, emphasizing critical thinking, problem-solving, reading and writing skills, oral communication, cooperation, respect for differences, and movement from self-centeredness to social engagement. To implement these themes, the study recommends collaborative international projects, portfolios, reports, oral presentations, film-based reactions, online forums, email exchanges, teleconferencing, and the use of online newspapers and multimedia resources like CNN, BBC, and NPR. Overall, the model provides a structured, multidimensional framework for embedding global awareness into EFL reading and writing instruction, enabling students to understand global interdependence, appreciate cultural diversity, and engage thoughtfully with worldwide issues.

2) **Integrating Global Culture in EFL College Materials (Al-Jarf, 2007b)**

This article proposes a model for integrating global culture in EFL college materials to help EFL students learn about the culture and customs of other countries; address global problems; compare the similarities and differences the world's peoples share; analyze international organizations; focus on the interrelatedness of human beings; recognize stereotypes of other cultures; learn about other cultures; and listen to multiple perspectives. The model proposes 4 areas of global themes that can be integrated in the reading and writing materials: (1) diverse human values; (2) global economic, political, ecological, and technological systems; (3) current global problems and issues; and (4) the history of contact and interdependence among peoples, cultures, and nations. Global studies, global problems, and global culture require 3 types of goals: (i) Knowledge objectives, (ii) Skills objectives, (iii) Value objectives, (iv) Participation goals.

3) **Integrating Global Themes in EFL Speaking Instruction (Al-Jarf, 2008a)**

The study proposes a model for integrating global cultural themes into EFL speaking instruction to help students develop socio-cultural awareness, cross-cultural communication skills, and a deeper understanding of global interdependence. Drawing on a framework synthesized by the author from prior studies, the model incorporates global systems, shared human values, current world events, and global history into speaking tasks. A wide range of cultural themes, such as literature, art, celebrations, stereotypes, cultural conflicts, gender norms, media, proverbs, folk traditions, and world history, are used to enrich oral activities. The model emphasizes knowledge, skills, values, and participation goals, encouraging students to analyze information, think critically, communicate effectively, and engage with global perspectives. Instruction relies on theme-based speaking tasks, group discussions, role-playing, project-based learning, videoconferencing, and digital resources such as online newspapers, videos, and cultural media. Selecting culturally relevant sub-themes and adjusting task complexity to students' proficiency levels can significantly enhance the effectiveness and engagement of EFL speaking instruction.

Together, the studies 3, 4, 5 & 6 form a coherent research program grounded in a unified conceptual framework for integrating global themes into EFL instruction. While the 2004 study establishes the comprehensive model and applies it to reading and writing, the 2007 study operationalizes the same framework in college-level materials, and the 2008 study extends it to speaking instruction and the 2022 study extends it to reading and speaking. Across all three studies, global systems, human values, world issues, and historical interconnections are consistently used as organizing principles, supported by knowledge, skills, values, and participation goals. The studies differ in skill focus and pedagogical techniques, yet they collectively demonstrate the flexibility, scalability, and robustness of the proposed conceptual framework."

4) **Integrating Global Themes in Writing Instruction (Al-Jarf, 2011d).**

This study proposes a model for integrating global cultural themes into EFL college writing instruction. It is based on a global education framework synthesized from Knip (1989), Johnson et al. (1994), and Collins, Czarra & Smith (1996), who identify four

major global dimensions suitable for curriculum integration: global systems, common human values, current global events, and world history. The model organizes instructional goals into knowledge objectives, skills objectives, value objectives, and participation goals. A wide range of global cultural themes is proposed for writing instruction, including literature, art, world history, cultural stereotypes, cultural conflicts, beliefs and prejudices, cultural diversity, gender, etiquette, proverbs, folk tales, ethnic food, religious intolerance, multiculturalism, major historical events, and the influence of Western culture. These themes aim to help students compare cultures, recognize stereotypes, and understand cultural diversity. The study also identifies numerous resources for global culture—websites, online newspapers, videos, and media platforms such as NPR, CNN, BBC, and Google Earth—and suggests sample activities such as videoconferencing, e-portfolios, movie reactions, news summaries, project-based tasks, and cooperative learning. The study recommends that cultural sub-themes should be selected based on students' interests and proficiency levels, ensuring that tasks are appropriate for the goals of the writing course.

5) *Developing Students' Global Awareness in EFL Reading and Speaking (Al-Jarf, 2022d)*

This article proposes a model for integrating global themes in the EFL college reading and speaking instruction. The model proposes 4 areas of global themes that can be integrated in EFL reading and speaking: (i) global systems (political, economic, cultural, ideological, ecological, health, social, technological, educational, ideological and judicial); (ii) diverse human values such as conflict resolution, cooperation and teamwork; (iii) current global issues (terrorism, fundamentalism, violence...etc); and (iv) the history of contact and interdependence among peoples. It also proposes the integration of 4 types of goals: knowledge, skills, values and participation goals. Examples of concepts, and types of objectives related to the global themes, resources for locating global themes; stages of teaching the global themes and instructor's role are provided.

6) *Integrating Current Global Events and Technology in Interpreting Practice (Al-Jarf, 2022h)*

This study proposes the integration of current global events such as themes related to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Olympic games, natural disasters, earthquakes in Japan, refugees, terrorism, racism, the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Palestinian-Israeli conflict, War on Gaza, human rights, women empowerment, global warming, and any other topic with which the students are familiar. The instructor can select English and Arabic online videos, TED Talks and podcasts from the BBC, CNN, RT, DW or Al-Jazeera websites to be interpreted by the students. The students practice interpreting with headsets on in a multimedia language lab. They watch a video or a TED Talk or listen to a podcast about a selected topic. They listen only once, whether in part or in full, then they interpret the spoken text orally without prior preparation, without checking the dictionary for meaning of difficult words. They practice interpreting from L2 to L1 and from L1 to L2 in the same class session. The students start interpreting short, easy texts with familiar topics. The texts increase in length, difficulty level and topic familiarity. The students should not take notes while listening, nor translate anything on paper and read it. They listen for meaning, not discrete words. To expand the students' lexical knowledge, the instructor gives terminology related to the global topic to be interpreted. To develop their world knowledge, the students watch, listen to, or read about a topic in L2 and L1 on their own out of class.

7) *Enhancing Reading and Speaking Skills in EFL Through Multicultural Children's Short Stories (Al-Jarf, 2015):*

This study presents a comprehensive model for integrating multicultural children's short stories into EFL reading and speaking courses to enhance students' language proficiency and cultural awareness. It explains the value of multicultural literature, outlines criteria for selecting appropriate stories, and provides examples of accessible online sources. The proposed instructional strategy includes pre-reading, reading, and post-reading phases in which students read stories, analyze elements such as theme, characters, plot, and cultural features, and engage in oral presentations, dramatizations, and online discussions. The instructor serves as a facilitator and recommends using pre- and post-tests, along with questionnaires, to measure gains in reading, speaking, and multicultural awareness. Prior research cited in the study shows that supplementary story reading and online cultural activities significantly improve students' comprehension and cultural understanding.

8) *Integrating Ethnic Culture Facebook Pages in EFL Instruction (Al-Jarf, 2014b)*

The study proposes a model for integrating ethnic culture Facebook pages in second/foreign language learning and teaching to help develop college students' proficiency level in EFL/ESL, i.e. their listening, speaking, reading, writing and vocabulary skills; to help the students explore, understand, compare and contrast ethnic cultures or sub-cultures of interest to them; accept and respect diversity; help the students create a sense of belonging to a particular ethnic group or ethnic culture; develop a sense of pride in their ethnic background; and develop a liking for traditional and social activities of "my ethnic group". Students in the same class, different classes, different schools, regions, countries, with the same or different ethnic backgrounds can join a Facebook culture page or create their own ethnic culture page on Facebook. They can use English to study several elements (themes) of the ethnic culture(s). They can post cultural information, photos, videos, and podcasts, and each student can keep a log of her/his contributions. They read, write, share and discuss information about an ethnic group. This introduces EFL students to different elements of ethnic culture, similarities and differences between the ethnic cultures of the country and an ethnic culture that exists in several regions.

9) *Integrating Cultural Podcasts in EFL College Classrooms (Al-Jarf, 2011c)*

Cultural podcasts can be integrated in the Languages and Culture courses as a supplement to in-class instruction. Students can download cultural podcasts about American and British customs, traditions, holidays, celebrations, architecture (houses, castles, palaces, churches, mosques), art, literature, music, costumes, museums, folk tales, sports, games, weddings, city life, rural life, food and drink, recreation, religion, museums and libraries, transportation, educational, health, political and economic systems ...etc from travel websites such as a “walking tour podcast”, “Nationalgeographic.com”, “Walks of a lifetime” and “Lonely planet” to their BlackBerry, mobile phone, iPods or MP3 players. Cultural awareness exercises that require the students to describe, summarize, analyze, compare or contrast aspects of Saudi and British/American cultures can be prepared by the instructor and used after listening to each cultural podcast. Students can listen to podcasts anywhere, anytime and as many times as they need. Classroom discussions can be performed in pairs, small groups or even the whole class. Cultural podcasts also serve as a basis for individual, interactive or collaborative theme-based projects. End-of-semester cultural awareness tests can be given to find out improvements in the students’ cultural awareness and knowledge as a result of integrating news podcasts in culture courses.

10) *Teaching English With Linguistic Landscapes to Saudi Students Studying Abroad (Al-Jarf, 2021c)*

LLs refer to the use of language in the environment, i.e., the words and images displayed in public spaces such as streets, airports, schools, government buildings, shopping centers, tourist attractions, and others. They contain announcements, directions, warnings, services, and commercial ads and cultural and historical information. They are characterized by brevity, use of authentic language, and specific structures such as commands and ellipted phrases. Since LLs differ in length and difficulty level, the English LLs selected for instruction should match the students' proficiency level. Instruction with LLs begins with selecting a Facebook page for posting LLs and discussions about them. The instructor introduces the LLs, gives pre-questions, and sets goals for working on them. The students practice LL text analysis, predict the topic, pay attention to specific vocabulary and grammatical structures, and use contextual clues and their background knowledge to infer the overall meaning and meanings of difficult words. At an advanced stage, students may identify the pragmatic, stylistic and sociocultural features of LLs. The students discuss their answers, summarize, retell, or paraphrase an LL, and discuss vocabulary and grammatical difficulties. They may identify the number of directions given in a single sign, infer its intention and purpose, give the pragmatic reasons for the way the sign is worded and connect them with its design, pictures, colors and fonts used.

Cluster 2: Teaching strategies in L2 (Tasks, Creative Interventions, Critical Literacy)

1) *Bloggng About Sustainable Development in The EFL College Classroom (Al-Jarf, 2025a)*

This study proposes a model for integrating topics related to SDGs using a class blog. Each week, a specific and tangible topic related to an SDG from a local or global perspective (no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation, and infrastructure, reduced inequality, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, climate action, life below water, life on land, peace, justice, and strong institutions) is posted by the instructor. Blogging about SDG topics goes through three stages: a pre-task, task and post-task phase. The students may search for videos, photos or articles related to the assigned SDG and write a blog post that describes the photo, summarizes the video or article content. Participation goals that require the students to suggest solutions to a problem are integrated. The students write their reactions to the goal, post comments, and provide feedback on their classmates’ blog posts. They work on their blog posts individually, in pairs, and in small group; synchronously or asynchronously; on a smartphone, tablet, iPad or laptop. In the blogging activity, the instructor serves as a facilitator while the students are blogging.

2) *Bloggng About Current Global Events In The EFL Writing Classroom: Effects On Skill Improvement, Global Awareness And Attitudes (Al-Jarf, 2022b)*

A class blog was created and used as a supplement to in-class EFL writing instruction for freshman students. Topics that focused on current global events such as Ramadan in Islamic countries, the Tsunami in Japan, the Royal wedding, and refugees in Europe, were posted by the instructor. The students looked for videos, photos or articles related to the assigned event and wrote a short paragraph (blog post) that describes the photo, summarizes the video and article content, or talks about the event in their own words. They also wrote their reaction to the event, and posted comments and feedback on their classmates' blog posts. The students worked on their blog posts individually, in pairs or in small group. Comparisons of the posttest scores of students who blogged about current global events and those who used paper-and-pencil assignments on the same topics showed significant differences in writing improvement in favor of the blog group. In addition, students in the blog group had positive attitudes towards the blogging activity. They enjoyed interacting and collaborating with their classmates and reflecting on their own writing in response to the feedback and comments they received from other blog members. Blogging about current global events proved to be effective in raising students' global awareness and enhancing their writing skills in EFL.

3) *Blogging About The Covid-19 Pandemic in EFL Writing Courses (Al-Jarf, 2022b)*

This study presents a model for blogging about the COVID-19 Pandemic in EFL writing courses. Topics about the COVID-19 Pandemic are characterized by being current, familiar, tangible, specific and widespread. The students will have no problem in generating ideas and will only need to focus on organizing ideas and linguistic aspects. A class blog is selected and used as a supplement to in-class EFL writing instruction for freshman students. The students search for articles, photos, or videos related to the COVID-19 topic assigned and write a short paragraph or a summary of the article or video and post it in the blog. They post questions, comments, reactions and feedback on their classmates' blogposts' form and content. The instructor serves as a facilitator. She encourages the students to write and interact.

4) *Combating The Covid-19 Hate and Racism Speech on Social Media (Al-Jarf, 2021a)*

The spread of Covid-19 worldwide was associated with hate and racism speech on social media which sometimes encourages violence and bullying in different communities. This study proposed a model for creating an anti-hate Twitter page to teach students tolerance rather than negative sentiment associated with Covid-19, to encourage dialogue, and teach students to accept others. Students and instructors from different backgrounds enter into dialogue with each other to gain knowledge of the reality of Covid-19, and to critically reflect on the pandemic. Students may use art and culture for creating counter narratives to counterbalance one-sided narratives and simplified overgeneralizations by hate speakers. Bringing the outside world to the students' realm through publishing and watching videos about Covid-19 around the world. Students can search for and tweet examples of pandemics that took place throughout history such as the Spanish flu, the plague in the Middle Ages and others. Students can search for and tweet examples of pandemics that took place throughout history such as the Spanish flu, the plague in the Middle Ages and others.

5) *Developing and Testing Reading Skills Through Art Texts (Al-Jarf, 2011b)*

Ten Ph.D. students majoring in art education took an ESP course for 1 semester. Based on a needs assessment questionnaire and an English Proficiency Test result, a reading course was especially designed to meet art education students' academic, professional and communication needs. At the end of the semester, the students were post-tested. T-Test results and Pearson correlation results showed that the ESP course was successful in developing the students' art reading, art vocabulary and art text translation skills. The students reported that they would continue to read specialized English material in art education after graduation.

6) *Enhancing EFL Students' Reading And Appreciation Skills With Mobile Fiction Apps (Al-Jarf, 2022g)*

The study proposes the integration of mobile fiction Apps (MFAs) in reading instruction to help EFL college students understand the form and content of literary works. It gives examples of fiction Apps, the advantages of using MFAs, literary appreciation skills that can be developed with MFAs and instructional stages with MFAs. The students download an MFA such as Harry Potter, Oliver Twist, Sherlock Holmes, Wuthering Heights, a novel by Agatha Christie, or a collection of stories. Both simplified and original versions can be used depending on the student's proficiency level, story/novel length and difficulty level. A story/novel video, app or ebook can be used online or offline. Some MFAs provide notes and tests. The instructor asks pre-questions to help the students identify the plot, setting, characters, main theme, point of view, symbolism, style, and tone of the narrative, and infer the meanings of figurative language and imagery in the story. students' answers, summaries, and comments on each other's' responses, can be posted in an online discussion forum, blog or social media page. They can discuss the elements of a literary work. The integration of fiction Apps showed improved reading comprehension, literary appreciation and text analysis skills among participating students and increased their engagement and literary analysis.

Cluster 3: Correlates and Predictors of culture acquisition

1) *Effect of Background Knowledge on Auditory Comprehension in Interpreting Courses (Al-Jarf, 2018b)*

The study investigates how background knowledge and unfamiliar vocabulary affect Saudi EFL interpreting students' auditory discrimination and comprehension of media reports in English and Arabic. Analysis of an interpreting test with 74 senior translation majors revealed that students struggled to discriminate phonemes and interpret unfamiliar foreign proper nouns—such as names of countries, cities, politicians, organizations, acronyms, chemicals, and diseases—leading to numerous auditory and semantic errors. The students often produced nonsense words, relied on sound analogy, used literal translation, overgeneralized Arabic terms, or selected incorrect meanings of polysemous words. Questionnaire-interviews confirmed that these difficulties stemmed from limited world knowledge, inadequate L1 and L2 vocabulary, and unfamiliarity with political and institutional terminology across countries. A significant correlation was found between vocabulary knowledge and interpreting accuracy. The study concludes that enriching students' background knowledge, through exposure to world news, note-taking, and summarizing activities—can significantly improve their auditory discrimination and interpreting performance.

2) *Teaching The Target Culture Using a Wiki (Al-Jarf, 2008b)*

A total of 70 female students were divided into an experimental group (wiki + in-class instruction) and a control group (in-class instruction only). Pretest results showed no significant differences between the two groups in their knowledge of the British culture. Both groups received the same six-week module on British culture through LCD-enhanced lectures supported by pictures and contextualized explanations of cultural terminology. The instructional content covered British history, government, daily life, education, economy, arts, geography, and communication systems. In addition, the experimental group used a culture-focused wiki, where students created and edited pages, selected subtopics, searched for information, summarized content, added images, linked related pages, cited references, and engaged in online discussions. Posttest results revealed significant improvement in both groups, but the experimental group outperformed the control group due to participation in the wiki. Positive correlations were found between the wiki usage frequency and the posttest scores, as well as between cultural terminology knowledge and cultural awareness. 90% of the students enjoyed the wiki. It was motivating, and helpful for learning and information sharing. The study concluded that wikis enhance cultural learning and recommended their integration into culture courses, along with instructor training and broader collaborative use across institutions.

3) *Teaching Language and Culture Online (Al-Jarf, 2003b)*

The study examined whether integrating an online course into the teaching of target-culture content would enhance EFL sophomore students' cultural terminology knowledge and cultural awareness. Eighty female students in Level 4, taking the *Readings in the Target Culture I* course, were assigned to an experimental group receiving both in-class and online instruction and a control group receiving in-class instruction only. Both groups studied identical cultural material drawn from the *World Book Encyclopedia* CD-ROM and 200 images about Britain, covering foundational cultural concepts—such as the definition of culture, enculturation, cultural traits, cultural patterns, multiculturalism, cultural anthropology, ethnography, and cross-cultural concepts—as British geography, political divisions, history, government, parliament, political parties, population, ancestry, language, daily life, food, recreation, religion, education, healthcare, arts, museums, libraries, land regions, climate, economy, manufacturing, agriculture, mining, fishing, energy resources, international trade, transportation, and communication systems. The experimental group additionally participated in a Nicenet-based online course where they accessed cultural links, contributed resources, engaged in weekly discussions, and interacted with the instructor. Pretest results showed no significant differences between groups, confirming significant differences between the experimental and control groups in their cultural knowledge. But on the posttest, the experimental group outperformed the control group, demonstrating the added value of online cultural instruction. Positive correlations were found between online usage frequency and posttest scores, and between terminology knowledge and cultural awareness. Students had positive attitudes toward the online component, reporting increased motivation, easier access to information, and richer opportunities for cultural engagement.

4) *Impact of Online Instruction on EFL Students' Cultural Awareness (Al-Jarf, 2006b)*

The study reports results of an experiment with two groups of sophomore students majoring in translation. The control group was taught British culture using in-class instruction only, and the experimental group was taught using a combination of online and in-class instruction. Experimental students used the online course from home as the internet was inaccessible from campus. Both groups were pre and post-tested. T-test showed no significant differences between the pretest mean scores of the experimental and control groups, indicating no significant differences in background knowledge of British culture at the beginning of the semester before online and in-class instruction began. Some websites (hyperlinks) about British culture were added in "Link Sharing". Each week, a question or a discussion topic about that aspect of British culture under study in class was posted in the "Conferencing" area including British ancestry, UK memories and experiences, famous British people, British educational system, British population, Sports in the UK, ancient civilizations, cities in the UK, well-known places in the UK, Windsor Castle, conflict in Northern Ireland, British Ministries, culture terms and their Arabic equivalents, and examples of multicultural societies and civilizations. The questions and topics provided additional information about cultural topics covered in the classroom. Throughout the six weeks, the students checked the links posted in the "Link Sharing" area. Some added their own links. They posted answers to and information about the cultural topics posted in the "Conferencing" area. They read the information posted under each topic. Posttest scores showed that the experimental group's posttest mean score was higher than that for the control group.

5) *Cultural Issues in Online Collaborative Instruction in EFL Classrooms (Al-Jarf, 2007a)*

Female freshman students from the College of Languages and Translation (COLT), King Saud University (KSU) shared an online grammar course with a group of male students and their male teacher from Umm Al-Qura University using the Moodle Makkah eLearning Learning Management System. The online collaborative project shared by UQU and KSU students proved to be a total failure. Despite the encouragement, extra credit given and messages sent to the students individually and as a group, only one student from UQU and 4 students from KSU registered in Makkah e-Learning and there was very little interaction in the discussion forums throughout the semester. Only five messages were posted by the KSU students throughout the semester and no messages

were posted by the UQU students. The author's students were shy, apprehensive and hesitant to register, as they were used to learning in a segregated environment (female students and female instructors only). Some wanted to conceal their identity by registering using a male's name, a nickname, their first name and initials, deleting their e-mails, or using "anonymous" instead of their real names. My students thought that sharing an online course with male students from other universities would be like a chatroom, where male and female students chat rather than study. Although I assured them that all course activities were monitored by both instructors and that UQU students were respectful and serious, they did not register. The author encouraged the students to register using their real names and gave them extra credit that, yet they declined.

In Saudi Arabia, male and female students study in a gender-based environment from first grade through graduate school. Male students are taught by male instructors and female students are taught by female instructors (with the exception of the College of Medicine). Male instructors may teach female students through closed-circuit T.V., but female instructors do not teach male students at all. My students did not want to be recognized by a male professor and male students and were afraid of making mistakes in public. They were afraid there might be critiques or negative comments. Since the Saudi society is conservative, direct contact between male and female teenagers is unacceptable to many families.

The COLT participants reported that the internet should be used for fun not for credit or as a proper course. As a result, they did not take it seriously. They were passive rather than active learners. They read and checked the websites and posts only.-They only work if activities are part of the course mark. Since participation was optional, and no portion of the course grade was allocated to use of the online course, many students were not motivated to participate as they felt it was not mandatory. Although extra credit was given, they did not seem to care. Since students were using the online course from home, I had no control over what they were doing. The rest of the instructors and students at COLT do not use online courses in language teaching at all. That made them feel at odds. Furthermore, freshman students are used to studying with the same group of students and the same sex throughout junior and senior high schools. Some of their classmates in college were their classmates in high school.

In conclusion, this study documents how cultural expectations, communication norms, and social constraints can impede online collaboration. Students' reluctance to interact publicly, fear of judgment, and discomfort with unfamiliar online environments limited their willingness to participate meaningfully in collaborative tasks.

Cluster 4: Cross-Cultural Collaboration and Communicative Networks (Telecollaboration)

1) The Online Writing Collaboration Project for EFL Learners and Instructors (Al-Jarf, 2005b)

The study introduces the Online Writing Collaboration Project (OWCP), a large-scale, free, global online writing platform created in 2001 and used by thousands of EFL/ESL learners and instructors from diverse countries, age groups, and cultural backgrounds. The project showcases OWCP's extensive components—including threaded discussion forums, live chat, live tutoring, peer-review tools, writing tutorials, creative-writing spaces, and Moodle-type e-courses—and demonstrates how these tools support collaborative writing, intercultural interaction, and skill development. With over 4,000 members, 4,455 discussion threads, and more than 21,000 posts, OWCP provides a rich environment where learners can write freely, share ideas, receive feedback, and engage in cultural exchange. The study highlights OWCP's advantages over platforms like Blackboard and WebCT, emphasizing its accessibility, volunteer-driven support system, and flexibility for both credit and non-credit use. Examples from the forums illustrate how students introduce themselves, discuss cultural topics, ask questions, and participate in collaborative writing tasks. Participants reported that OWCP enhanced their writing skills, increased their confidence, and offered valuable opportunities for interaction with peers worldwide. Overall, the project demonstrates how a large, open, collaborative online writing community can foster writing development, intercultural communication, and global understanding among EFL learners.

2) Building Cross-cultural Communication Through Online Collaboration (Al-Jarf, 2004b)

The survey results from the OWCP project show that sustained participation in the platform's cross-cultural forums significantly enhanced students' cross-cultural awareness, reduced stereotypes, and broadened their understanding of global issues. International participants, especially native-English-speaking PhD students, reported admiration for the depth, clarity, and authenticity of the cultural topics posted by Saudi students, noting that the discussions challenged preconceived notions and replaced negative stereotypes with more informed, nuanced perspectives. Many expressed that OWCP allowed them to "learn about other cultures from normal people," highlighting the value of peer-generated cultural narratives. Participants described becoming more tolerant, open-minded, and appreciative of cultural differences, emphasizing that exposure to diverse viewpoints fostered humility and a more cosmopolitan worldview. Although some felt that cultural exchange was still developing and required more engagement, the overall findings confirm that OWCP effectively promoted intercultural dialogue, increased awareness of cultural diversity, and strengthened students' ability to communicate across cultures.

3) *Developing Cross-Cultural Understanding through Online Forums (Al-Jarf, 2004e)*

The study examines how participation in the Online Writing Collaboration Project (OWCP), a large global online writing community with more than 2,600 members from countries such as the USA, Singapore, China, Egypt, Jordan, Bulgaria, and Korea, contributes to developing EFL learners' cross-cultural understanding, reducing stereotypes, and raising awareness of global issues. OWCP provides extensive components—including forums, e-courses, live chat, live tutoring, e-books, tutorials, and an e- Journal—alongside culturally rich spaces such as “Culture Through Pictures” and cross-cultural communication forums where members comment on movies, news stories, world events, and culturally sensitive topics. Survey findings showed that participation in OWCP exposed learners to diverse cultural perspectives, challenged preconceived notions, and fostered more nuanced views of Arab and Muslim cultures, particularly among native English-speaking PhD students who expressed admiration for the depth and clarity of Saudi participants' posts. Students described gaining a more cosmopolitan worldview, becoming more tolerant, and appreciating cultural diversity, while acknowledging that political conflicts sometimes limited deeper cultural exchange. Overall, the study demonstrates that online forums can serve as powerful spaces for intercultural interaction, enabling learners to communicate across cultures, confront stereotypes, and develop greater cultural awareness through authentic, student-generated content.

4) *Using Online Dialogue to Develop Cross-Cultural Understanding (Al-Jarf, 2006f)*

The study proposes a pedagogical model for developing Saudi EFL students' cross-cultural understanding through structured online dialog with native English-speaking students. Motivated by widespread post-9/11 stereotypes and misconceptions about Arabs and Muslims in Western media, the project outlines how online collaboration can be used to teach dialog skills, promote intercultural exchange, and introduce English-speaking students to Arabic and Islamic cultures. The model includes creating a shared online forum (e.g., Nicenet, OWCP, Google Groups, Dave's ESL Café), posting dialog ethics, and integrating multimedia resources such as online news stories, videos, movies, digital images, and newspaper excerpts to stimulate discussion. Students are trained to locate cross-cultural themes, and engage with a wide range of ideological, political, socio-cultural, economic, and educational issues such as women's image in the media, hijab, mixed marriages, curriculum and terrorism, unemployment, democracy, world peace, terrorism, Islamic fundamentalism, and the status of women in Islam. The model emphasizes dialog prerequisites such as reasoning, evidence-based argumentation, reading comprehension, persuasion, and fallacy detection, while encouraging respectful, logical, and bias-aware communication. Examples from online forums illustrate how students respond to sensitive global issues, negotiate cultural differences, and challenge stereotypes. Overall, the study demonstrates how guided online dialog can foster intercultural awareness, critical thinking, and meaningful engagement with global and culturally sensitive topics among EFL learners.

5) *Connecting The EFL Classroom with Local and Global Communities (Al-Jarf, 2009a)*

This study proposes a model for integrating current issues and events related to the global community such as world peace, terrorism, famines, earthquakes, refugees, wars, political and economic problems), and current issues, and problems of the local community such as teenage problem, violence, poverty, teamwork, volunteer work, relief work, housing problems, the homeless, crowdedness, unemployment, and job opportunities. Connecting speaking and writing activities with the local and global communities requires three types of goals: linguistic, communicative and participation goals. The teacher and/or the students can select a variety of current issues and events that are of interest to the students from local and international TV news, newspapers, and online newspapers. The difficulty level and degree of complexity of the themes should be chosen in terms of the students' proficiency level and the reason for which the students are learning English.

6) *Online Collaboration in Translation Instruction among Students and Instructors (Al-Jarf, 2008d)*

The study describes a multicultural, asynchronous online translation forum created on the World Arab Translators' Association's (WATA) website to connect 5 student-translators and 4 novice free-lance translators from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain, Syria Jordan, Palestine, UAE and Canada, with different proficiency levels in English (L2), varying degrees of translation experience, and educational backgrounds, participated in a non-credit online collaborative translation project. Over a semester, they collaboratively translated a wide range of text types—including children's stories, literary passages, scientific texts, and encyclopaedia entries—selected by the author or posted by students themselves. The online platform enabled the participants to revise and repost their translations multiple times, receive color-coded feedback on stylistic, syntactic, cultural, and terminological issues, and access a variety of online dictionaries and translation resources. The students learned to identify translation problems, apply background knowledge, improve cohesion, and distinguish between literal and meaning-based translation strategies. Survey results revealed highly positive attitudes toward the multicultural online environment, with participants reporting increased motivation, confidence, and awareness of stylistic and cultural differences between English and Arabic. They valued the opportunity to learn from peers across countries, compare multiple translations of the same text, and experience a supportive atmosphere that fostered both translation competence and intercultural understanding.

7) Cross-Cultural Communication: Saudi, Ukrainian, and Russian Students Online (Al-Jarf, 2004d)

The study reports on a cross-cultural online writing project connecting EFL students from Ukraine, Russia, and Saudi Arabia through a shared Nicenet course titled *Writing Across the Borders*, designed to develop students' writing skills, intercultural communication abilities, and awareness of global and cultural issues. Sixty-one undergraduate students participated in the online course, representing diverse cultural backgrounds and English proficiency levels, and engaged with eleven discussion threads, twenty external links, nine documents, three assignments, and a photo gallery. The online discussions addressed topics such as netiquette, cultural shock, beliefs and prejudices, media representations, gender issues, and global events—particularly the Iraq War—allowing the students to exchange perspectives shaped by their local contexts. Content analysis of 186 student posts showed that Ukrainian students contributed the majority of messages (67%), followed by Russians (23%) and Saudis (10%), with message length and depth reflecting differences in proficiency, prior online experience, and cultural comfort with public expression. The most active threads were "Welcome," "Voices on Iraq," and "Culture Shock," indicating strong engagement with personally relevant and globally salient issues. Questionnaire responses revealed that students valued the opportunity to interact with peers from other cultures, reported improvements in writing and cultural awareness, and expressed positive attitudes towards online collaboration despite technical and cultural challenges. Overall, the project demonstrated that online cross-cultural collaboration can enhance intercultural understanding, global awareness, and communicative engagement among geographically and culturally diverse EFL learners.

8) Building Cultural Bridges Through Social Media Networks (Al-Jarf, 2020b)

An Indian English teacher uses Skype to connect his high school students in an Indian village with international teachers to help them interact and converse with them in English. Each international teacher interacts with the students in English once for 40 minutes. The teacher does that daily, and each day an international guest teacher is from a different country. This study reports the effects of this kind of intercultural exchange on students' English language skill development and cultural and global awareness. Results showed many benefits for the students: Listening and speaking skill enhancement, getting used to different native and non-native accents, improved pronunciation, and learning new vocabulary and grammatical structures. The students also learn names of countries, their location, flags, currency, cities, and people, and exchange information and pictures about the local and target cultures. They learn about the foreign country's educational system, history, antiquities, food, art, traditions, and costumes. They are taken on virtual field trips to some historical places and museums. They learn about natural phenomena such as the northern lights. Sometimes they receive books, T-shirts and pens as gifts from foreign teachers. Shortcomings of such intercultural exchange and suggestions for improvement are given.

9) Collaborative Distance Arabic Language Learning Between Russian and Arab Students in Africa (Al-Jarf, 2025b)

This study proposed a model for online collaboration among Russian AFL teachers and students and Arabic-speaking teachers and students in African Arab countries through video-conferencing platforms to help Russian students practice oral skills. First, the host teacher contacts the collaborating teacher. The host and guest teachers select the platform, set the practice schedule together, prepare the material and online resources for oral practice. They try the platform and its different tools. The practice material may consist of Arabic language functions, things around the students, daily activities, experiences and students' environment, describing pictures, talking about cultural topics and so on. Only Standard Arabic should be used. No explanation in L1 (Russian), no translation, no explanation of grammatical rules, no use of Arabic grammatical terms, and no writing of the question and answer on the board. The students depend on their ears and use short sentences and concrete objects, nouns, verbs ... etc. Vocabulary and sentence structure are taught together. Pictures, gestures, and short videos are used while the students are answering the questions. Some students ask questions, others answer. The same question pattern *ما هذا؟ ماذا يفعل* is used to ask about names of objects and actions (verbs). They ask questions to help students discriminate singular, dual, plural, masculine and feminine forms and verb conjugations. The students repeat the correct form, word or question several times. Mistakes are corrected instantly. Positive feedback is given.

Cluster 5: Heritage Language and Cultural Identity Maintenance

1) The Need for Teaching the Arabic Language and Islamic Culture to Children of Arab Communities Living Abroad (Al-Jarf, 2004h)

The study argues for the urgent need to teach Arabic language and Islamic culture to children of Arab communities living abroad, emphasizing that Arabic is the language of the Qur'an, a major world language with deep historical influence, and a core component of identity, belonging, and religious understanding. It contrasts Arabic's global significance with the widespread neglect of the language among Arabs themselves, both in the Arab world and in the diaspora, where many parents prioritize foreign languages, enroll their children in non-Arabic schools, or avoid speaking Arabic at home out of fear of "confusing" the child. The PPT highlights how other nations—such as Germany, France, Greece, Korea, Israel, and Malaysia—actively protect and promote their languages, while Arab societies often undervalue Arabic in media, public life, and education. It also documents the Arab world's literacy crisis, low book production, weak reading culture, and deteriorating library systems, factors that contribute to global stereotypes about Arabs lacking a reading tradition. The study describes how losing Arabic leads to weakened identity,

reduced attachment to Islam, and inability to access religious texts authentically, especially for children raised abroad who may also lose cultural practices such as prayer, fasting, Eid celebrations, and connection with Muslim peers. It stresses that children can naturally acquire multiple languages if Arabic is used consistently from birth and supported through reading aloud, Arabic books, educational software, cartoons, songs, and community libraries. The PPT concludes with practical recommendations for preserving Arabic and Islamic identity abroad: parents should speak Arabic at home, teach early literacy and basic religious practices, celebrate Islamic holidays, take children to mosques, and create supportive Arabic-language environments to ensure continuity of language, culture, and faith across generations.

Cross-Cutting Methodological Cluster: Teaching Culture with Technology in all studies

This cluster does not introduce new studies; instead, it reorganizes the 31 studies according to the technological tools used. All studies listed here have already been summarized in Clusters 1–4. This cluster provides a cross-cutting methodological overview of the platforms, media, and applications that supported cultural learning across the corpus.

5. Discussion

5.1 Meta-Conclusion

Across the 31 studies distributed over 4 thematic clusters, a coherent and cumulative body of evidence demonstrates that integrating culture, global issues, and technology-mediated tasks into L2 instruction consistently enhances learners' linguistic proficiency, cultural awareness, global understanding, and engagement. Whether through global-theme speaking tasks, multicultural literature, cultural linguistic landscapes, cultural podcasts, blogs, wikis, mobile fiction apps, or cross-national online collaboration, the studies converge on a central conclusion: EFL learning becomes deeper, more meaningful, and more transferable when cultural and global content is embedded in authentic, interactive, and cognitively rich tasks. The corpus also shows that students benefit most when instruction combines explicit cultural knowledge, experiential exposure, and reflective engagement, supported by digital tools that expand access to real-world cultural input. Collectively, the studies confirm that cultural and global integration is not an optional enrichment but a pedagogical necessity for preparing learners to participate in an interconnected world.

5.2 Meta-Interpretation

A cross-cluster interpretation reveals that the effectiveness of cultural and global integration stems from three interacting mechanisms. First, authenticity of input—whether through real-world texts, global events, podcasts, linguistic landscapes, or online exchanges—provides learners with meaningful exposure that activates background knowledge, stimulates curiosity, and reduces the artificiality of classroom language use. Second, interaction and co-construction of meaning—as seen in blogs, wikis, OWCP forums, translation collaboration, and cross-national exchanges—creates a social learning environment where students negotiate meaning, compare perspectives, and develop intercultural communicative competence. Third, task-based cognitive engagement—through analysis, summarization, interpretation, dramatization, translation, and critical reflection—pushes learners beyond surface-level comprehension toward deeper processing of cultural content. The studies also show that technology acts as a catalyst: it expands access to multimodal cultural resources, enables asynchronous and synchronous collaboration, and supports learner autonomy. Importantly, the corpus suggests that cultural learning is most effective when it is scaffolded, with instructors providing models, guiding questions, terminology lists, and structured stages of engagement. Thus, the pedagogical value lies not only in the cultural content itself but in how learners are guided to interact with it.

5.3 Cross-Cutting Insights

Several insights cut across all five clusters. (1) Cultural learning enhances language learning. Studies consistently show that when students engage with cultural texts—stories, podcasts, Ls, global news, or cross-cultural forums—their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and interpreting skills improve. (2) Technology is a powerful equalizer. Whether through blogs, wikis, mobile apps, podcasts, or online collaboration, technology democratizes access to cultural content and creates spaces for authentic communication that traditional classrooms cannot replicate. (3) Background knowledge is a decisive factor. Studies on interpreting, reading, and translation show that limited world knowledge and unfamiliar terminology impede comprehension and performance, while enriched background knowledge significantly improves outcomes. (4) Students respond positively to culturally rich tasks. Across clusters, learners report increased motivation, confidence, enjoyment, and willingness to participate when tasks involve real-world cultural themes. (5) Intercultural interaction transforms perceptions. Cross-national online exchanges (Saudi–Ukrainian–Russian; Saudi–American; global OWCP forums) show that direct communication with peers from other cultures reduces stereotypes, fosters empathy, and builds global citizenship. (6) Cultural integration requires intentional design. The most successful interventions include structured stages (pre-task, task, post-task), guided reflection, explicit objectives, and instructor facilitation.

Together, these insights reveal that cultural pedagogy is most impactful when it is intentional, interactive, multimodal, and cognitively demanding.

5.4 Implications

The findings across the corpus carry significant implications for EFL curriculum design, teacher preparation, and policy. For curriculum designers, the evidence supports integrating global themes, multicultural texts, and culturally rich tasks across all language-skills courses rather than confining culture to isolated modules. Materials should include diverse global systems, human values, world issues, and historical interconnections, ensuring that students develop both linguistic and global competencies. For instructors, the studies highlight the need for training in culturally responsive pedagogy, digital literacy, and task design. Teachers must learn to curate authentic cultural resources, scaffold intercultural communication, and facilitate reflective engagement. For institutions, the success of online collaboration, wikis, blogs, and mobile apps underscores the importance of investing in digital platforms that support intercultural interaction and multimodal learning. For learners, the findings imply that cultural exposure should be continuous, varied, and student-centered, enabling them to become globally aware communicators capable of navigating diverse cultural contexts. Finally, the corpus demonstrates that EFL education must evolve from language-only instruction to culturally and globally informed pedagogy, preparing students not just to use English, but to participate meaningfully in a complex, interconnected world.

5.5 Positioning This SR Within the Global Culture and Global Issues in the L2 Context SRs

Within the global culture research in L2, existing SRs and MAs tended to focus on narrow, skill-specific or tool-specific domains, such as intercultural communicative competence, technology-mediated cultural learning, global citizenship education, or the use of specific platforms like blogs, wikis, or telecollaboration. These SRs typically synthesize studies that examine isolated interventions (e.g., email exchanges, virtual exchanges, multicultural literature, or global-issue projects) and often emphasize Western-centric contexts, L1–L2 partnerships, or short-term telecollaboration projects. In contrast, this SR occupies a distinct position by synthesizing a longitudinal, thematically coherent, and culturally situated corpus of 31 studies produced within a single research program spanning more than two decades. This unique corpus integrates five thematic clusters—curriculum-level cultural integration, task-based global learning strategies, technology-mediated cultural instruction, correlates of cultural acquisition, and cross-cultural online collaboration—offering a panoramic view of how cultural and global themes can be embedded across multiple L2 skills, platforms, genres, and pedagogical modalities.

Unlike global SRs that examine intercultural competence development through L1–L2 telecollaboration, this SR highlights L2–L2 intercultural interaction, multilingual online communities, and culturally diverse learner groups from Saudi Arabia, Ukraine, Russia, Egypt, Jordan, and beyond. It also extends the scope of prior reviews by incorporating multimodal cultural tools such as linguistic landscapes, mobile fiction apps, cultural podcasts, global-issue blogs, translation forums, and multimedia interpreting tasks—resources rarely synthesized together in existing literature. Furthermore, while global SRs often treat culture as an add-on to language instruction, the present review demonstrates that cultural and global themes can function as the organizing principle of L2 pedagogy, shaping curriculum design, task sequencing, assessment, and learner engagement.

This SR also contributes a novel perspective by highlighting predictors and correlates of cultural acquisition, such as background knowledge, terminology familiarity, and world-knowledge gaps—dimensions that are largely absent from global reviews focused solely on pedagogical interventions. By synthesizing studies that examine both instructional design and learner-related variables, this review positions itself at the intersection of intercultural pedagogy, task-based global learning, and technology-enhanced cultural instruction.

Overall, this SR advances the field by offering a comprehensive, multi-cluster, multi-skill, and multi-platform synthesis that captures the evolution of cultural and global-issue pedagogy in L2 contexts over two decades. It positions itself as a bridge between global SRs that examine isolated cultural interventions and the emerging need for holistic, culturally grounded, and globally responsive L2 curricula. In doing so, it provides a conceptual and empirical foundation for future research seeking to integrate global awareness, intercultural competence, and digital cultural engagement into mainstream L2 education.

5.6 How This SR Connects to the Author's Previous SRs

This SR serves as a major intersection point that unifies a comprehensive, multi-directional body of research published by the author throughout 2026. Rather than shifting away from previous work, this paper acts as a conceptual bridge, taking core insights from past syntheses on digital tools—such as social media (2026a), collaborative digital environments (2026q), mobile apps (2026g), and videos or podcasts (2026x)—and elevating them from simple platforms for grammar drill into spaces for cross-border collaboration. It simultaneously builds upon the author's technical evaluations of discrete language mechanics, including reading (2026c, 2026h, 2026j), listening and speaking (2026x), vocabulary (2026l), grammar (2026), and creative writing (2026p), by providing a cohesive framework where these separate skills are developed concurrently through global themes. Furthermore, the finding that students often fail at media interpretation due to missing world knowledge provides a real-world explanation for the

technical gaps identified in the author's previous reviews on translation errors (2026f), AI translation quality (2026l, 2026y), and ESP innovations (2026b, 2026z). Finally, by highlighting how optional, non-credit online exchanges suffer without structural incentives and psychological safety, this study confirms the systemic institutional barriers—such as staffing shortages, large class sizes (2026t), and distance learning anxieties (2026r)—exposed in the author's broader educational evaluations (2026d, 2026m). Ultimately, this review positions global cultural literacy as the necessary catalyst that brings all these independent components of L2 pedagogy into a single, cohesive picture.

5.7 Research Scope, Boundaries, and Methodological Constraints

Although this SR synthesizes a rich and diverse body of research, several boundaries must be acknowledged.

- (1) The corpus is authored by a single researcher, which ensures conceptual coherence but limits methodological diversity and theoretical plurality.
- (2) While the broader literature frequently focuses on abstract or localized constructs of culture, such as analyzing ideological biases in commercial textbooks (e.g., Karakuş, 2021) or mapping non-interventional teacher beliefs (e.g., Kidwell, 2025), this SR was strictly bounded to functional, applied global literacy. Because it is impossible for any single educator or researcher to investigate the entire spectrum of culture-related topics, the thematic selection in this SR was deliberately guided by the author's research interests and anchored in the established global themes framework synthesized from the global education literature. Accordingly, this SR focused specifically on four core pillars: (1) global systems; (2) diverse human values; (3) current global issues and problems; and (4) global history.
- (3) Most of the global-theme integration studies were based on a conceptual framework that the author synthesized from the global-education literature. The framework consists of 4 broad and comprehensive pillars: global systems, diverse human values, current global issues and problems, and global history. This framework was operationalized in multiple ways across different skills, platforms, and instructional contexts.
- (4) A further boundary is that studies conducted after 2012 reflect a model-proposing phase following the author's retirement from classroom teaching. These works present instructional frameworks, pedagogical models, and technology-integration scenarios rather than empirical classroom trials. Although grounded in extensive prior teaching experience and supported by relevant literature, these models were not implemented with active student cohorts.
- (5) The participant profile also shapes the scope of the findings. Most empirical studies involved Level 1 students, where global themes were introduced, and Level 4 students engaged in cross-national collaborations with Ukrainian and Russian peers. Consequently, the evidence reflects cultural learning at foundational and intermediate stages of L2 development, with limited insight into how advanced learners engage with global themes or technology-mediated cultural tasks.
- (6) Because many cross-national participants were geographically dispersed, pre- and post-testing was feasible only with the author's own students. International collaborators contributed primarily through interaction, discussion, and production tasks rather than controlled assessments. Additionally, campus infrastructure constraints—particularly the lack of reliable internet access—required that many digital interactions be conducted from home and outside regular class hours.
- (7) Despite these constraints, the research program is characterized by an expansive and pioneering operational scope. The studies connected learners across international networks, including participants from Russia, Ukraine, the United States, Singapore, Korea, and multiple Arab countries, and established early inter-university collaborations within Saudi Arabia. The SR also documents the development of sophisticated online writing communities (e.g., OWCP) and multicultural translation forums (e.g., WATA) long before cross-border digital exchange became common in applied linguistics. The interventions followed semester-bound and module-specific timelines aligned with established CALL research designs, ensuring structured control over instructional variables.

Finally, thematic boundaries of the SR reflect a deliberate focus on functional, applied global literacy rather than abstract or ideological analyses of culture. Given the impossibility of covering the full spectrum of culture-related topics, the author's studies concentrated on the four global themes of a synthesized framework, forming a coherent and focused corpus.

6. Recommendations & Directions for Future Research

Based on the synthesis of the 31 primary studies comprising this SR, this study recommends the integration of global themes and educational technologies in L2 and translation programs. (i) Rather than treating global themes as ad-hoc supplementary material, L2 and translation departments should systematically integrate global systems, diverse human values, current global issues, and global history directly into core curricula. This ensures that global literacy is developed symmetrically alongside linguistic competence. (ii) Creative instructional design should not be deterred by campus infrastructure limitations. As demonstrated in the earlier empirical phase of this portfolio, when campus networks or lab spaces are unavailable, educators should leverage ubiquitous, mobile-first technologies that allow students to engage in interactive, asynchronous communication from home. (iii)

Academic coordinators should avoid over-relying on observational media such as pre-packaged cultural applications or passive video streaming. Course designs should prioritize active digital ecosystems—such as collaborative blogs, writing communities, and translation forums—where language is applied dynamically to negotiate meaning with global peers. (iv) Since students live in the AI age, generative AI tools can provide unprecedented opportunities for integrating global themes into L2 instruction by generating level-appropriate texts, intercultural dialogues, comparative cultural analyses, multi-perspective summaries of global events, and customized project-based tasks. These affordances directly support the development of global awareness, intercultural competence, and critical global literacy.”

Moreover, this study recommends that future researchers take the advanced pedagogical proposals and theoretical blueprints published in the post-2012 phase of the author’s research program and subject them to classroom testing. Future researchers can implement these modern frameworks within active student cohorts to measure their empirical efficacy against current digital baselines. Future investigators should also design longitudinal studies by tracking cohorts into the professional translation and international job markets. This would yield invaluable data on the long-term career durability of technology-enhanced global literacy. In addition, given that early studies in this corpus pioneered cross-continental telecollaboration (connecting classrooms across Saudi Arabia, Russia, Ukraine, the US, and beyond), future research must explore how these cross-cultural interactions function when mediated by modern generative AI tools. Investigating how AI impacts collaborative translation and cross-cultural negotiation remains open for further investigation. Finally, future research should examine how higher-proficiency learners respond to culturally enriched instruction, whether they benefit differently from digital cultural tools, and how advanced linguistic competence interacts with cultural interpretation and global awareness.

7. Conclusion

This SR synthesizes 31 studies spanning two decades and 4 thematic clusters, revealing a coherent and compelling narrative: EFL learning becomes more powerful, relevant, and transformative when global culture and global issues are placed at the center of instruction. Across diverse platforms—blogs, wikis, podcasts, linguistic landscapes, mobile apps, online forums, translation communities, and cross-national collaborations—the studies consistently demonstrate that culturally enriched tasks enhance linguistic proficiency, deepen comprehension, strengthen critical thinking, and foster intercultural understanding. The findings show that students not only learn English more effectively but also develop the ability to interpret global events, challenge stereotypes, appreciate diversity, and engage with the world as informed, empathetic communicators.

The review also highlights the crucial role of authentic input, interactive meaning-making, and technology-supported engagement in shaping learners’ cultural and linguistic development. It underscores the importance of intentional instructional design, scaffolded learning, and reflective practice. At a broader level, this SR positions cultural and global-issue integration as a pedagogical imperative rather than an optional enrichment, offering a unified framework that connects language learning with global citizenship, intercultural competence, and digital literacy. Ultimately, this review contributes a holistic, multi-skill, multi-platform, and culturally grounded model for L2 education—one that prepares learners not only to use English, but to navigate and participate meaningfully in an increasingly interconnected world. It also lays the foundation for future research that continues to explore the intersections of language, culture, technology, and global awareness, ensuring that **EFL** pedagogy remains responsive to the complexities and demands of the 21st century.

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