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# Challenges and Solutions in Teaching Arabic Grammar: Pedagogical and Cultural Perspectives

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**Abstract** – It is well known that the issue of teaching Arabic language remains essential, not only for non-native speakers but also for native speakers' children alike. As for grammar, it is more challenging to teach and comprehend due to its numerous rules interconnected with each other. Students often claim difficulty in understanding these complex rules, exacerbated by teachers' inadequate application of effective teaching methods. This research aims to explore the teaching of grammar rules, discussing the problems encountered by students in learning them and suggesting solutions, alongside a concise explanation of the essence of grammar education. This study is a qualitative conceptual research using a structural educational approach and based on library research. The data consist of classical and modern grammar books, teaching materials, and academic articles. Findings indicate that students' aversion to Arabic grammar stems from multiple factors, including the abstract nature of grammar, inconsistent pedagogical strategies, the rigidity of traditional textbooks, and limited contextualization of grammatical examples. The proposed solution for both students and teachers involves increasing practice, clarifying and simplifying grammar, among other strategies.

**Keywords** – Arabic, Problems, Solution, Teaching.

## INTRODUCTION

Language is one of the tools by which all individuals convey their goals (Devianty, 2017). Language has been practiced for thousands of years, making it equally ancient as human society (Susiawati, 2019). It is a feature that distinguishes humans from other animals, enabling them to develop societies and civilizations. Language, society, and civilization are all interconnected and complementary phenomena (Khitam, 2019).

Language is thus an important and necessary aspect of people's lives as they use it in all their activities or in other words, it cannot be separated from them (Saifuddin, 2022). Despite this crucial issue being present throughout society's existence, the books and educational materials prepared for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers are few. Many Muslims and others who are non-native speakers find it very difficult to study Arabic, especially the grammatical rules that lead to correct writing, perfect translation, eloquent speech and proper pronunciation with correct style (Salaudeen, 2019).

There is no doubt that the problem of teaching Arabic is still considered one of the essential and fundamental issues, not only for non-native speakers but also for native speakers (Khitam, 2023). This issue has persisted for many years up to the present day, and it has been a topic of discussion since before the time of Sibawayh and the era that followed him to the modern era (Al-Huri, 2015). Several conferences, seminars, and linguistic symposiums have been held on both regional and international levels, inviting many grammarians, linguists and literary figures to explore the future of the Arabic language and address the issue of teaching it. The interest of scholars and thinkers in this language is evident from the establishment of several institutes, colleges and departments dedicated to teaching Arabic, as well as the creation of councils for the promotion of language education with their linguistic laboratories for various purposes.

As for grammar, it is the most difficult to teach and understand because it has many interconnected rules (Seiler, 2023). Students, faced with this difficulty,

often claim that they cannot understand these complex rules, especially when the teacher struggles to apply effective methods to motivate their enthusiasm. This issue is thus one of the most important in teaching Arabic, as grammar is considered a means of proper speech.

Based on this, the researcher aims to explore the teaching of grammatical rules and then supplement it by mentioning some of the problems students face in their learning and how to solve them, along with an explanation of the reality of education first and a brief explanation of the significance of grammar. This is because method and content are two important aspects of education, the method exists to serve the content and there is no benefit in a good method without content that the method seeks to deliver to students. Therefore, a good method and rich content are two important elements for the success of the teacher in performing his mission and for students to understand everything they learn from that content well.

## METHOD

This study is a Qualitative Research with a structural educational approach. The structural approach in this research focuses on the systematic analysis of grammatical elements of the Arabic language, including morphology (word forms), syntax (sentence structure), phonology (sound system) and other syntactical forms. By examining the internal structure of the Arabic language, this research aims to understand the underlying rules governing the use of the language in the context of learning. On the other hand, the educational approach in this research emphasizes pedagogical aspects, specifically how Arabic grammar is taught and learned in educational settings. The study considers the teaching methods used by teachers, the learning strategies applied by students and the instructional media and resources that support the process of learning Arabic grammar. The goal is to identify effective ways of teaching and learning Arabic grammar to enhance students' understanding and language skills.

In data collection, this research employs the basic technique of tapping (Mahsun, 2007), which involves direct observation of the object, and combined with the follow-up note-taking technique that is used to document all findings and observations throughout the research process (Mahsun, 2007). These notes are then analyzed to identify specific patterns in the teaching and learning of Arabic grammar. Thus, this technique allows the

researcher to obtain rich and in-depth data on educational practices related to Arabic grammar learning.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A Historical Perspective on Arabic Grammar

Arabic grammar is one of the sciences of the Arabic language that has developed in the hands of its scholars since the two centuries following the revelation of the Quran (Jnaidi, 2022). The revelation of the Quran is a fundamental factor in its emergence and advancement (Salleh, 2007). It is known that the interaction between Arabs and non-Arabs increased after the spread of Islam to non-Arabic-speaking countries, leading to the appearance of grammatical errors in Arabic, which caused its corruption (Brustad, 2000). Therefore, some scholars began to derive linguistic rules, both fundamental and subsidiary, to preserve the purity of Arabic from corruption due to these errors. In their derivation, the discourse on grammar and its interaction with other sciences, such as theology (*kalam*), logic, and philosophy, elevated the status of grammar as a science. In its development, grammatical rules and principles were built on epistemological foundations, forming a scientific structure that persists to this day.

As for the role of grammar in speech, it acts as a regulator, ensuring that speakers can only speak correctly by adhering to its rules. Thus, speech is an act, and grammar is the boundary of this act, speech is behavior and grammar is the standard of this behavior; speech is activity, and grammar is the rule of this activity, speech is movement and grammar is the system of this movement.

Tamam Hassan, a renowned modern linguist, viewed grammar as having a specific system consisting of five elements, (1) A set of general grammatical meanings such as declarative and interrogative sentences, affirmation and negation, and various types of requests like commands, prohibitions, questions, supplications, wishes, hopes, offers and specifications, as well as conditional, oath, exclamation, praise and criticism, among others, (2) A group of specific grammatical meanings or meanings of individual grammatical categories like subjectivity, objectivity and states, (3) A set of relationships that connect these specific meanings, forming semantic indicators to clarify the intended meaning when constructing sentences, such as relationships of predication, specification,

proportion and dependency, (4) A set of elements provided by the sciences of morphology and phonetics to grammar, like structures suitable for expressing the meanings of categories and (5) Comparative values and contrasts between each element of the aforementioned categories, such as declarative versus interrogative, praise versus criticism, nominative nouns versus accusative nouns, and so on (Luthfi, 2016).

The benefits of learning grammar are numerous including, (1) Protecting the tongue from errors, preserving writing from slips and developing correct linguistic habits, which is one of the primary goals that motivated Arabs to establish grammatical rules, (2) Training students in observation, logical thinking and developing skills in inference, judgment and reasoning, among other intellectual benefits that students acquire by following inductive methods in studying grammatical rules, (3) Aiding in the correct understanding of speech, facilitating the quick comprehension of meanings, (4) Sharpening the mind, refining taste and enhancing students linguistic wealth, (5) Equipping students with the ability to apply grammatical rules in various linguistic contexts and (6) Establishing precise foundations for imitation, ensuring that effective training can only occur through imitation based on rules and principles that regulate and refine speech (Ly, 2023).

### Methods of Teaching Grammar

Before delving into the methods of teaching grammar, it is worth noting that the perspective on grammatical study has changed since the beginning of this century (A. Lubis et al., 2024). Previously, the study of grammar was focused solely on the subject itself, with students learning and memorizing grammatical rules (Rugh, 2002). This old approach produced students who could recite grammar rules but failed to apply them practically. In contrast, the contemporary approach to studying grammar views it not as an end in itself but as a means to ensure the correctness of expression, the accuracy of statements, and the refinement of speech (Verawati & Hasanah, 2021). This modern perspective has led to the exploration of the best and easiest methods to teach grammar, enabling learners to understand and memorize the rules while also being able to apply them practically.

The best method for teaching Arabic grammar, particularly grammatical rules, is the natural method, which relies on practicing the language through listening, speaking, reading and writing (Al-Busaidi,

2013). This comprehensive practice helps learners understand and retain the rules effectively. After engaging in practice, learners should then continue their studies with consistent training to reinforce their memory and application skills. Therefore, teachers should provide opportunities during lessons for listening, expression, and reading to allow students to practice grammatical rules, making them feel the need for these rules for comprehension, expression, and writing without pressure or coercion.

There are several methods for teaching Arabic grammar, some of which were used in the past but have since fallen out of use in some Arab countries, while still being employed in others (Tuhfatul Unsy, 2018). Among these numerous methods, two well-known ones are used in both ancient and modern times: 1) the deductive method and 2) the inductive or inferential method.

### The Deductive Method

This method is sometimes referred to in textbooks as "rule then examples." It is one of the oldest methods used in teaching Arabic grammar and is still employed in some schools in Arab countries. This method uses logical reasoning to move from known information to the unknown. Deduction transitions from general rules to specific cases. Therefore, deduction always follows knowledge, whatever that knowledge may be.

This method involves presenting the grammatical rule first and requiring students to memorize it, followed by examples that illustrate the rule to ensure students understand it. After grasping the rule, students try to apply it to new examples. For instance, a teacher explains the grammatical topic of adjectives using *Jami' al-Durus al-Arabiyya*, presenting the general rule that adjectives are typically derived nouns (like active participles, passive participles and comparative adjectives) and must agree with their nouns in case, number, gender, and definiteness (Mustafa al-Gulayaini, 1987). The teacher then provides examples, such as "جاء التلميذ" (The diligent student came), "أكرم المرأتين" (Honor the two beloved women), and "الكتاب في الحقيبة الجديدة" (The book is in the new bag), explaining and applying the rule to these examples. Students then try to apply the rule to new examples, such as "شرح الأستاذ الكريم" (The kind teacher explained), "اقرأ الصفحتين الأخيرتين" (Read the last two pages), and "المسجد وسط الجامعة الواسعة" (The mosque is in the middle of the wide university), using

relevant examples from their real-life context to engage their minds and motivate their learning.

Once students understand the general rule, the teacher can introduce specific rules. For example, explaining that adjectives can also consist of verbal or nominal sentences, providing appropriate examples and having students apply these new rules, ensuring thorough comprehension.

This method, according to the researcher is more commonly used than other methods for teaching grammar, as evidenced by the numerous old grammar textbooks that follow this approach, such as *Jami' al-Durus al-Arabiyya* by al-Galayaini, *An-Nahw al-Wafi* by Abbas Hassan, and *Qawa'id al-Lugha al-Arabiyya* by Hafni.

#### The Inductive Method

This method is also known as the inferential or Herbartian method. It involves following Herbart's five steps: introduction, presentation, association, generalization, and application. While the deductive method moves from general rules to specific cases, the inductive method uses reasoning to move from specific cases to general rules (Ornstein, A. C. & Hunkins, 2018).

In this method, examples are presented first, followed by a discussion among students to compare and contrast these examples, allowing them to deduce the grammatical rule. For instance, to teach adjectives, the teacher presents connected examples such as "أكرم المرأتين المحببتين", "جاء التلميذ المجتهد", and "الكتاب في الحقيبة الجديدة". Students discuss and compare these examples, and after understanding their structure, they deduce the general rule that adjectives must agree with their nouns in case, number, gender and definiteness, and that they are typically derived nouns. This method is applicable to other grammatical rules, both general and specific.

The inductive method, according to the researcher, has great benefits for stimulating students' thinking. In this method, students are active participants and the teacher's role is limited to guidance, unlike the deductive method, where the teacher plays a significant role and students are passive. In the inductive method, students derive the rule after discussing and comparing examples and they solve applications themselves, keeping them engaged throughout the lesson (Retty et al., 2018).

It is worth noting that this method has two approaches, both aiming for the same general goals,

namely: "Examples then Rule" and "Text then Examples and Rule" (Tuhfatul Unsy, 2018). The first approach, also known as synthetic examples or individual examples, involves presenting examples first and then deducing the rule from them. On the other hand, on the second approach, also known as continuous style or auxiliary text, involves presenting a cohesive, meaningful text from reading materials, literary texts, history lessons or newspapers. The teacher explains the text, extracts relevant examples for the lesson and students discuss and compare these examples to deduce the rule, as in the first approach.

#### **Problems and Solutions in Teaching Arabic Grammar**

Students claim that grammar is a difficult branch of Arabic language sciences due to the complexity of its intertwined rules (I. Lubis et al., 2022). They argue that understanding its numerous rules is challenging, especially for non-native speakers who do not practice or encounter them in their daily speech. Native speakers, on the other hand, do not need to consciously apply grammar rules in their speech as they naturally acquire Arabic language proficiency from a young age (Hastang & R., 2023). Therefore, there is little motivation for them to study grammar, leading to a weak understanding of its rules.

These are among the major factors that deter students from studying grammar. Certainly, there are many other factors contributing to students' neglect of this science. For instance, grammar's reliance on abstract general laws, analysis, division, inference, and balance require intellectual efforts that many students may struggle to achieve. The abundance of different grammatical constructions, multiple definitions, examples and anomalies consuming their time (Hidayati, 2023).

These problems occur mainly because the current arrangement and traditional compliance of grammar rules in textbooks were established by ancient grammarians. The imposition of these rules by the elderly onto the young can lead to a reactionary response that results in students developing aversion and disdain towards grammar.

Another factor is the occurrence of grammatical error practiced by some teachers. In this regard, Arabic language teacher builds, other subject teachers may tear down, either due to ignorance of Arabic grammar rules or disdain towards them. If students perceive genuine interest and commitment

from all teachers towards Arabic grammar rules, not only in Arabic language classes but across all subjects, their interest and belief in the necessity of adhering to these rules would undoubtedly increase. The principle of reinforcement in education is certainly one of the principles that lead to tangible results.

These are the challenges that hinder students from studying Arabic grammar. Each student faces these motivations in studying grammar and tends to avoid it. Although these problems have affected students' motivation on learning arabic, but there are some solutions that can be used in order to address these problems, some of which are:

(1) Increase practice in using grammar rules and their application (Wahyudi et al., 2023), whether in grammar classes or in other branches of Arabic language such as reading, expression, texts, spelling, rhetoric and criticism. These subjects are practical applications of grammar and students should take them seriously without negligence. This training will solidify their understanding of grammar rules and enable them to use them with ease.

(2) Purify and simplify grammar, eliminating unnecessary complexities that do not benefit students (Ulfyatul Jannah & Shofwatul Fu'adah, 2022). This duty should be undertaken by ministries of education in Arab countries, benefiting from the efforts of linguistic academies and specialized international institutions.

(3) Ensure consistency in the curriculum at each stage, matching the maturity level (Mudinillah et al., 2023). In the first four years of primary education, students should focus on hearing and repeating correct Arabic styles without exposure to grammar and its definitions. Similarly, in the fifth and sixth years, they should focus on fundamental principles essential for constructing speech, such as nominal and verbal sentences. There should be a gradual distribution of topics among different classes, considering the cognitive maturity of students in each stage.

(4) Examples used to derive grammar rules should be familiar to students (Maha, 2023). The more examples reflect the environment in which students live, the closer they will be to understanding the lesson and grasping its content easily.

(5) Teachers should inspire students' motivation to learn grammar, and students should recognize the

significant role grammar rules play in understanding and comprehension, making them acceptable and palatable (Shafie et al., 2019).

These are the problems in teaching Arabic grammar and their potential solutions that a researcher could present in this short article. Other teaching methods in grammar education could be analyzed in future research to address new problems and find solutions for them.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the challenges surrounding the teaching of Arabic grammar are multifaceted and deeply rooted in both pedagogical and cultural factors. Students' perceptions of grammar as daunting and disconnected from their daily lives, coupled with the rigid traditionalism in how grammar is taught, contribute significantly to their disengagement. The complexity of grammar rules, often abstract and not immediately applicable, further alienates learners, especially non-native speakers. This disconnect leads to a lack of motivation and a superficial understanding of grammar principles, undermining their integration into fluent Arabic communication.

Addressing these issues requires a holistic approach that reimagines how grammar is taught and perceived. Simplifying and contextualizing grammar rules, ensuring their practical application across all language subjects, and fostering a supportive educational environment where teachers from all disciplines emphasize the importance of grammar can significantly enhance student engagement and comprehension. By aligning educational practices with students' cognitive development and real-life experiences, educators can cultivate a deeper appreciation and mastery of Arabic grammar, empowering learners to use it effectively in both academic and everyday contexts. Such reforms are crucial not only for revitalizing the study of Arabic grammar but also for preserving its cultural and linguistic significance in contemporary education.

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