

Grammar Teaching Approaches: Exploring Current Practices and Techniques for Improvement

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Abstract:

The aim of the study is to investigate teachers' practices and improvement techniques in relation to grammar teaching. This paper aims to answer these two questions: 1) What grammar teaching approaches do English and Arabic teachers use in preparatory and secondary public schools in Misurata? and, 2) What are the most practical techniques to improve language teachers in grammar teaching and in teaching skills in general? Twenty-one Libyan language teachers from 5 different public schools participated in the study (11 teachers of English & 10 teachers of Arabic). All participants are females teaching preparatory and secondary female students. One-to-one semi-structural interviews were conducted. SPSS was used to analyze data. The results show that traditional approaches to grammar teaching are common among Libyan teachers. However, the deductive approach is more common among teachers of English than among teachers of Arabic. This situation demands improvement. The most practical techniques to improve language teachers' practices are: providing training courses, improving instruction in teacher-preparation programs, and teaching potential instructors how to reflect on their teaching.

Keywords: grammar teaching approaches, language teacher, deductive, inductive, integrated approach, teacher improvement

أساليب تدريس القواعد النحوية: دراسة الممارسات الحالية وتقنيات تحسينها

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الملخص:

الهدف من الدراسة هو تحليل ممارسات المعلمين وكيفية تطويرها فيما يتعلق بتدريس القواعد النحوية. يهدف هذا البحث إلى الإجابة على هذين السؤالين: (1) ما هي طرق تدريس القواعد النحوية التي يستخدمها مدرسو اللغة الإنجليزية والعربية في المدارس الحكومية الإعدادية والثانوية في مصراتة؟ و، (2) ما

هي أكثر الأساليب العملية لتحسين أداء معلمي اللغات في تدريس القواعد بصفة خاصة ومهارات التدريس بشكل عام؟ شارك في الدراسة 21 مدرس لغة من 5 مدارس عامة من مصراتة (11 مدرسا للغة الإنجليزية و10 مدرسين للغة العربية). جميع المشاركين من الإناث اللاتي يدرسن طالبات الإعدادية والثانوية. تم إجراء المقابلات الهيكلية الفردية. تم استخدام SPSS لتحليل البيانات. تظهر النتائج أن الأساليب التقليدية لتدريس القواعد النحوية شائعة بين المعلمين الليبيين. ومع ذلك، فإن النهج الاستدلالي أكثر شيوعاً بين معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية منه بين معلمي اللغة العربية. وهذا يتطلب التطوير. أما أكثر الأساليب العملية لتحسين ممارسات معلمي اللغة فهي: تقديم دورات تدريبية، وتحسين التدريس في برامج إعداد المعلمين، وتعليم المدرسين المستقبليين كيفية التدبر في أسلوب تدريسهم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مناهج تعليم القواعد النحوية - مدرس لغة، استدلال - استقرائي - نهج متكامل - تطوير المعلم.

1. Introduction:

Methods and techniques to grammar teaching may considerably vary among instructors. However, all methods and techniques implemented in grammar teaching underlie only three main approaches: deductive, inductive, and eclectic or inductive-deductive approach.

In the deductive approach of grammar teaching, the teacher presents the grammatical rules and the usage; and explains them before dealing with the examples. On contrary, the inductive approach entails presenting the examples first. In this approach, the teacher raises students' awareness to a specific structure guiding them to deduce the grammatical rules and usage. Lastly, the inductive-deductive approach of teaching is a combination of the two: grammar teaching starts in regular inductive instruction and concludes with the straightforward deductive instruction.

1.1. Literature Review:

Deductive approach to grammar teaching is a traditional one. Its underlying principles are based on the Behaviorism Theory. This approach has positive impact on grammar learning and teaching; as evidenced by a number of studies (e.g., Akramy et al., 2022; Edirisinghe, 2021). However, the inductive approach is proved to have greater impact when compared with

the traditional direct approach (Tammenga-Helmantel et al., 2016; Benitez-Correa et al., 2019; Obeidat & Alomari, 2020; Iqbal & Ghayyur, 2022; Crismonita et al., 2022; Haight et al., 2007; Hu, 2019). Students taught inductively outperformed students taught deductively in: 1) achievement tests (Obeidat & Alomari, 2020; Iqbal & Ghayyur, 2022; Crismonita et al., 2022; Benitez-Correa et al., 2019), 2) short- and long-term memories (Haight et al., 2007; Hu, 2019), 3) classroom participation and motivation (Correa, 2019), and 4) teachers' preferences (Blašković, 2022; Ingemarsson, 2017; Freeman, 2023; Koşar, 2021). Still, when the effectiveness of the inductive is compared to the effectiveness of the eclectic, the eclectic wins. This conclusion has been drawn from several studies. For example, Jamolovna (2022) conducted a study to make comparison between the three approaches. He found that the eclectic _ or the *integrated* approach as he calls it _ the most effective instruction.

Despite the obvious advantages which the inductive and the integrated approach have over the deductive, literature reveals that many teachers use the traditional approach (e.g., Tutunjian, 2018; Akramy, 2022; Resmayanty et al., 2021). The reason behind their practices is their limited knowledge about the teaching approaches. This view is supported by a number of studies. Önalán (2018), for instance, found that the higher the degree, stronger belief towards inductive teaching). That is. Improvement in teachers' knowledge leads to disliking the traditional approach. Recently in Libya, the intention has been to improve the teaching instruction.

This study investigates the approaches applied in the Libyan schools specifically in Misurata to teach English and Arabic grammar. In addition, the study investigates the best ways to improve in-service teachers. The implementation of the three approaches (namely: deductive, inductive, and eclectic) and development of in-service teachers have not been investigated to the best of my knowledge.

1.2. Research Questions:

This paper aims to answer these two questions:

- 1- What grammar teaching approaches do English and Arabic teachers use in preparatory and secondary public schools in Misurata?

- 2- What are the most effective techniques to improve language teachers in grammar teaching and in teaching skills in general?

1.3. Significance of the study:

Understanding the current situation helps policy makers decide how to improve the teaching process. The findings of this paper provide valuable information about the current practices as well as information about teachers' preferences for improvement. Such information is beneficial to institutions responsible for pre-service and in-service teacher training. Such information helps policy makers improve potential and current teachers.

2. Methodology:

2.1. Participants:

The participants of the research are 21 language female teachers from 5 different public schools. They are 11 teachers of English and 10 teachers of Arabic. Most of them (11 subjects) graduated from the faculty of Arts, Misurata University. The others graduated from Faculty of Education, female teachers' Institution, Faculty of Languages, Libyan Academy, Al-Jamea` Al-Maftooha (4, 2, 1, 1 & 1 respectively). Sixteen of the participants teach secondary schools; the other five teach preparatory schools. The teachers are chosen via their schools. The researcher contacted the school administrators who helped the researcher contact the teachers.

2.2. Instrument:

The researcher administered structured face-to-face interviews (only three of them were on the phone). The first question of the interview aims to identify the implemented approach. The second, third and fourth questions are intended to reveal practical techniques to improve language teachers' performance. More precisely, the questions are:

Q1. Which approach do you use for grammar teaching. Please explain the process.

Q2. Where did you learn this approach from?

Q3. How have you developed your current teaching practices?

Q4. What is your favorite way to improve teaching skills?

2.4. Data Analysis:

After collecting data, SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) program was used to analyze data.

3. Results:

This section presents the findings of the research. The findings are organized according to the research questions.

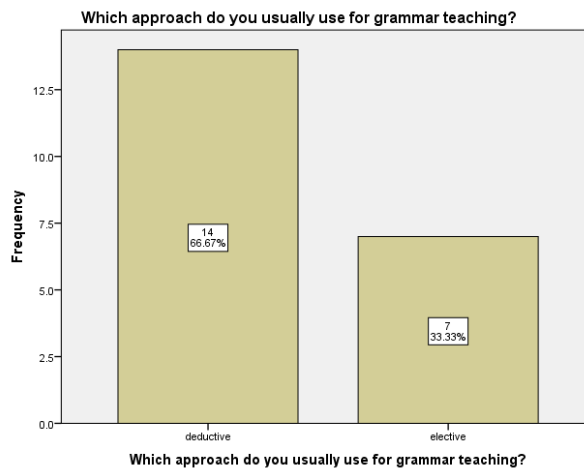
1. What grammar teaching approaches do teachers of English and Arabic use in preparatory and secondary public schools in Misurata?

To answer this research question, the interviewees were asked the following question: *Which approach do you use for grammar teaching?* According to the respondents (English and Arabic teachers) two approaches are applied to teach grammar: the deductive and the integrated. The inductive approach is not applied. The most common approach among language teachers to teach grammar is the deductive approach. Two thirds of the participants (66.67%) implement the traditional approach. The integrated approach is applied by only one third (33.33%). (See *Table 1* & *Figure 1*).

Table 1:

Which approach do you usually use for grammar teaching?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
deductive	14	66.7	66.7	66.7
Valid eclectic	7	33.3	33.3	100.0
Total	21	100.0	100.0	

Figure 1:

Differences between English teachers and Arabic teachers in grammar instruction:

Exploring the differences between teachers of English and teachers of Arabic is not an aim in this study. However, the researcher observes interesting differences which are worthy to be mentioned here. Grammar instruction implemented by the teachers of English and the teachers of Arabic are different in two aspects. The first difference is in the approaches used. The teachers of English implement the deductive approach. More than 90% of the participating English teachers implement the deductive approach.

The teachers of Arabic, on the other hand, tend to use the integrated approach; 60% of the Arabic teachers apply the eclectic approach. (See *Table 2*, & *Figure 2*).

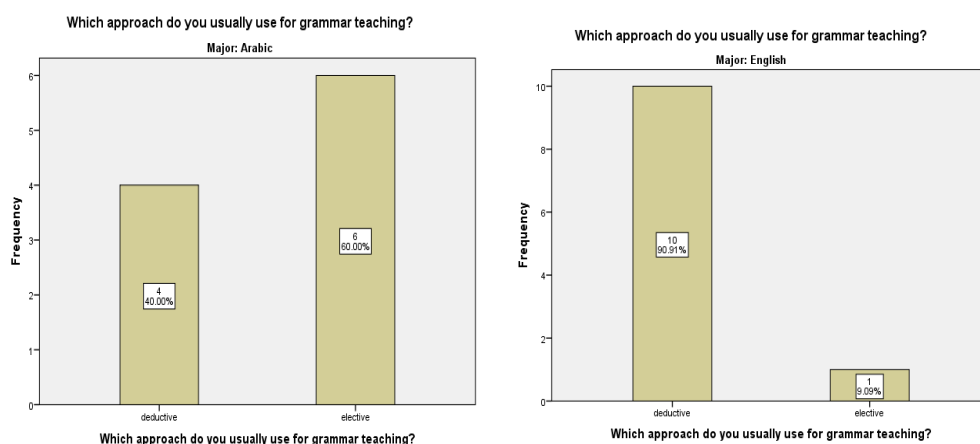
Table 2:

Which approach do you usually use of grammar teaching?

Major			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
English	Valid	deductive	10	90.9	90.9	90.9
		elective	1	9.1	9.1	100.0
		Total	11	100.0	100.0	
Arabic	Valid	deductive	4	40.0	40.0	40.0
		elective	6	60.0	60.0	100.0
		Total	10	100.0	100.0	

Which approach do you usually use for grammar teaching?

Figure 2:



The second difference is in the methods and the techniques implemented. All teachers of Arabic rely on the board and markers in their teaching. Some of them mentioned the use of different marker colors and the use of diagrams and arrows on the board. Visual aids other than the board and markers are never used by any of the teachers of Arabic. However, the teachers of English (7 out of 11) use various types of visual aids (including the board and the markers). Visual aids such as flash cards, pictures, puzzles and card

games are used only by the teachers of English.

After responding to the first main question, each participant was asked a follow-up question. The question is: do you know any other approaches? Although this is not a main question. The results are worthy to be mentioned. As illustrated in the table below (See *Table 3*), seven teachers know other approaches; the others (14 teachers) do not know any other approaches. Observing the data, these 7 teachers are exactly the same individuals who apply the integrated approach. The remaining 14 apply the deductive and do not know any other approach.

Table 3:

Do you know any other approaches for grammar teaching?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	7	33.3	33.3	33.3
Valid no	14	66.7	66.7	100.0
Total	21	100.0	100.0	

Q2. What are the best techniques to improve language teachers in grammar teaching and in teaching skills in general?

Three interview questions were asked in order to provide affirmative answer to this research question. The questions and the responses are as follows.

Where did you learn this grammar teaching approach from?

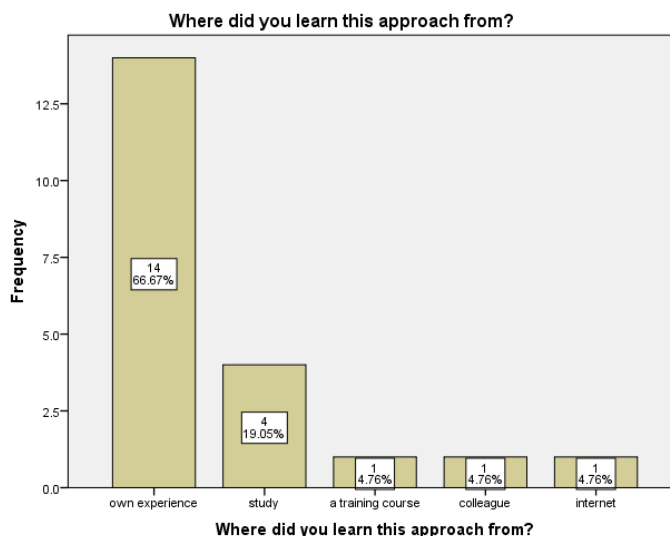
Two thirds (14) of the interviewees learnt the applied the approach from their own experience either the teaching or learning experience. Nearly 20% (4) of the respondents learnt the approach through their study; they have studied about the implemented approach. The other sources of knowledge are: a colleague, a training course, the internet (1, 1, 1 respectively). (See *Table 4, Figure 3*).

Table 4:

Where did you learn this approach from?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
colleague	1	4.8	4.8	4.8
own experience	14	66.7	66.7	71.4
a training course	1	4.8	4.8	76.2
study	4	19.0	19.0	95.2
internet	1	4.8	4.8	100.0
Total	21	100.0	100.0	

Figure 3:



How have you developed your current teaching practices?

About half of the participants (9 of them) developed their overall teaching practices through their experience. The others relied on training courses, a colleague, and their study; 5, 5 & 2 respectively. (See Table 5, & Figure 4).

Table 5:

How have you developed your current teaching practices?

	Frequenc y	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
colleague	5	23.8	23.8	23.8
own experience	9	42.9	42.9	66.7
a training course	5	23.8	23.8	90.5
study	2	9.5	9.5	100.0
Total	21	100.0	100.0	

Figure 4:



What is your favorite way to improve your overall teaching skills?

All participant teachers (100%) prefer training courses to improve their teaching methodology (See Table 6).

Table 6:

What is your favorite way to improve your general teaching skills?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid a training course	21	100.0	100.0	100.0

4. Discussion:

The main aim of the study is to investigate teachers' practices and improvement techniques in relation to grammar instruction. This section discusses the key findings.

Firstly, the results show that the deductive is the most common approach among language teachers. A main reason behind this is their lack of knowledge about the teaching approaches. Teachers who are familiar with recent approaches wouldn't apply the traditional. Teachers who are familiar with the inductive and the integrated approaches wouldn't favor the deductive. This is supported by several studies in literature such the one conducted by (Koşar, 2021). It is also supported by the responses to the follow-up question; teachers used the deductive approach because it is the only approach they know. Several studies indicate that Libyan teachers have limited knowledge about teaching methodology (e.g., Al-lasaqa, & Sahin, 2022; Athawadi, 2019; Omar, 2014).

Secondly, the study reveals that learning experience has great impact on teachers' practices. teachers tend to apply the methods and approaches which were used by their teachers in the past. These results emphasize the importance of improving teaching methods in teacher-preparation programs.

The third key finding is that teachers, based on their teaching experience, choose the methods and approaches which are effective in teaching. Such findings highlight the significance of reflective teaching. Huge body of research talk about the significance of reflective teaching (e.g., Pazin et al, 2022.)

Lastly, teacher-training courses are a favorable tool to improve the teaching process. Many studies (e.g., Nazari et al., 2022) proves the impact of training courses on teachers' effectiveness. However, the researcher did not expect such great willingness to taking courses by teachers. Being a member in the Libyan social community, one of the beliefs is that Libyan teachers are too lazy to improve. The results indicate that this is just a misconception; Libyan teachers favor taking courses for improvement.

5. Conclusion:

Traditional approaches to grammar teaching are common among Libyan teachers. However, the deductive approach is more common among teachers of English than among teachers of Arabic. This demands improvement. The most practical techniques to improve language teachers' practices are: providing training courses, improving instruction in teacher-preparation programs, and teaching potential instructors how to reflect on their teaching.

6. Limitation of the study:

The major limitation of this study is the sample size; it is insufficient. Twenty-one respondents are not representative of language teachers' population in Libya. The small sample is due to the nature of the method used for data collection; interviews necessitate a small number. The researcher chose this method for their benefit in providing deep understanding of the topic. However; to firmly generalize the results, the researcher recommends using questionnaire for future studies.

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