



The Textual Approach In Teaching Grammar In Algerian High Schools

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Abstract:

The educational process in Algeria has gone through various and distinct stages; initially, it relied on the lecturing method which considers the teacher as the center of the educational process. It then shifted to the inductive method that focuses on deduction. With the development witnessed in the world and cognitive sciences, the textual approach was activated and invested in the field of education, serving both the educational process and the learner, who has become a central figure and contributor to the process. Accordingly, this article seeks to introduce the textual approach in teaching grammar at the secondary level in Algeria, its positioning within the educational field, its impact on the overall output of the two poles of the learning process, how it is represented and understood in grammar activities, and the extent to which it achieves communicative competence among learners.

Keywords: Grammar, Teaching, Methods, Competence, Approach, Text.

Introduction:

After the methodological shortcomings of old teaching methods and the subsequent criticisms they received, it became necessary to seek an appropriate approach to the teaching process in our educational institutions and move away from methods that are no longer effective, in line with the mentality of today's generation. Therefore, the Ministry of Education in Algeria adopted a new alternative that keeps pace with both the present and the future, especially in teaching grammar, as it is the cornerstone of the Arabic language.

The alternative lies in the textual approach; an approach, as is well known, is broader than a method and a technique alike. An approach includes a set of teaching methods, and each teaching method adopts a set of techniques that it employs and utilizes in the educational process. Thus, focusing on the text is focusing on competence and serving it, which reflects on

linguistic performance and production, contributing to activating the functional role of language within society.

Therefore, the textual approach gives attention to the learner and their competence. This is why it has been introduced into our educational system to develop it and build a competent generation capable of solving its problems independently, which is the main goal of this approach.

Research Objectives:

Among the objectives that the research aims to achieve are:

- To introduce the textual approach in teaching grammar at the secondary level in Algeria.
- To reveal the features, characteristics, and objectives of this approach, and the extent to which the grammar lesson comprehends it in light of the adopted curriculum.
- To examine its impact on the scientific and cognitive output of the learners, and the extent to which communicative competence is achieved through the activation of the learner's role in knowledge building and problem-solving. This includes evaluating their success in applying grammar rules in their daily uses of reading and writing.

1. The Importance of Teaching Grammar:

Grammar is an independent field of study that helps learners in both comprehension and production. It has numerous benefits, including:

- **Correcting Learners' Speech:** It helps learners produce grammatically correct and meaningful sentences and phrases, enhancing their linguistic and semantic abilities so they can formulate and understand texts in both reading and writing.
- **Developing Their Linguistic Repository and Competence:** Learners achieve a level of understanding and comprehension of what they read and receive, which cultivates their artistic taste and literary appreciation. This enables them to correct and reformulate structures, train them to make judgments, and critique constructions objectively based on grammatical standards.
- Grammar helps learners build their sensory and intellectual perceptions by observing and understanding meanings, as well as comprehending texts in terms of their structure and composition.
- Grammar works to enhance reading and writing skills; it enables learners to write more accurate and organized texts, making their writing clear and error-free. It also helps them interpret texts and understand the relationships and connections within them.
- It sharpens their minds and trains them to think continuously and systematically. While learning, they focus on abstract words and meanings rather than tangible objects, and

they understand the subtle differences between structures and their components, as well as the effects of grammatical factors on them.

- It enhances the ability to analyze, understand, and interpret complex and ambiguous structures, making it easier for them to comprehend and clarify these structures in a way that aligns with their linguistic competence and performance and suits the practical usage of speakers of that language.
- It supports self-learning, enabling learners to build, correct, and evaluate their own mistakes. This process boosts their confidence in speaking and communicating in their language, both orally and in writing. Consequently, they become capable of expressing their ideas and interacting with others without any problems.
- Thus, grammar becomes a powerful tool in improving learners' skills, refining their performance, increasing their linguistic output, and enhancing and advancing it. This is the aim of teaching grammar in Algerian schools, where efforts are made to institutionalize it in a way that serves the Arabic language.

2. Methods of Teaching Grammar:

The Algerian educational system has gone through various stages, during which different mechanisms and methods were employed in teaching grammar as a fundamental component of the Arabic language. Grammar is the source of eloquence and correct speech, and it corrects errors in speech. For instance, the traditional method used by teachers involved lecturing the scientific material, where the learner memorizes and recalls it. In topics such as the subject, object, or predicate, the learner deals with abstract rules received from the teacher, memorizes them, and recalls them on exam day.

Over time, this method changed. Teachers began to rely on a different approach, primarily based on dialogue. With the linguistic revolution, a new method emerged, known by researchers as the competency-based approach.

The methods used by teachers for teaching grammar in secondary education are almost limited to three methods, which are:

A - The Deductive Method: Also referred to by some as the instructional or informative method, this approach relies heavily on the teacher as the central figure in the educational process. It begins with stating the rule outright and then providing evidence and examples to support it. Essentially, it is based on memorization; the student is required to memorize the rule first, followed by examples that illustrate it. This method helps learners to know grammar rules by rote learning and aids teachers in saving time.

However, this method has faced several criticisms, including:

- It works in reverse order, from difficult to easy, moving from the whole to the parts; that is, it starts with the rule and then moves to the examples. This can confuse learners and hinder their understanding and application of what they have learned.
- Introducing the grammatical rule directly to the student can lead to easy forgetfulness since the rule is not discovered by the student themselves.
- It trains learners to imitate and memorize grammatical rules mechanically, leading to quick forgetfulness due to a lack of practical application and use, in addition to stifling the spirit of creativity and innovation in the learner.

The shortcomings of this method have led researchers to consider a more effective cognitive and methodological alternative for teaching grammar, one that integrates the learner into the process of knowledge, analysis, and inference, making them an active participant rather than a passive recipient. This alternative method is known as induction or deduction, and the following are some of its principles:

B - The Inductive Method: This approach is based on a dialogue between the teacher and the learner. The lesson starts with grammatical examples, which are then discussed with the learners to derive the rule. The teacher's role is to stimulate the learners with questions, encouraging them to observe and compare so that they practice guessing and discovering the rules themselves. This method helps to reinforce information for the learners.

However, this method has also faced criticisms, including:

- The limited number of examples and grammatical evidence, as the teacher typically provides only two or three examples. For instance, in a lesson on the direct object, the teacher cannot present all possible examples due to the learners' limited capacity to absorb them. Thus, the teacher might only cover a specific subset, which may be fragmented and from various topics, failing to achieve a comprehensive expressive goal for the learners.
- It is also criticized for not being immediately effective in conveying knowledge to the learners' minds efficiently.

C - The Integrated Literary Text Method: This method stands out by blending grammar rules with the language itself, addressing them within a comprehensive linguistic, scientific, and literary context. It reduces the perceived difficulty of grammar, highlights its value in understanding structures, and uses it as a tool for larger goals such as comprehension, comparison, and logical thinking. Additionally, it relies on reading as an entry point to grammar and uses the appreciation of texts as a means to understand rules, thus merging emotions and intellect.

By integrating grammar with correct expression, this method naturally reinforces the language and its styles, along with its syntactic features. Ultimately, it trains students in proper reading, understanding meanings, expanding their knowledge base, and practicing inference.

3. Teaching Grammar and the Textual Approach:

Teaching grammar in secondary education requires a reconsideration of its methodological and rule-based framework to align with the performance and functional levels of learners. Therefore, it is essential to seek beneficial methods and tools that facilitate the understanding and application of grammar rules by linking them to reality, society, and the learners' needs.

The modern linguistic system has produced many approaches and techniques that serve didactics. The transition from the sentence level to the text and then to discourse has helped in shaping this qualitative leap, making it suitable for contemporary demands. Consequently, the Algerian Ministry of National Education introduced a new method known as the competency-based approach, resulting from ministerial amendments to programs and curricula, culminating in this change.

The competency-based approach emphasizes the learner as a producer, participant, and active agent in the educational process and in building knowledge. It aims to help learners acquire practical and behavioral skills and abilities that enable them to solve problems and develop themselves by relying on their intellectual and linguistic abilities, as well as their prior and acquired knowledge from learning situations. This approach allows them to utilize these skills, contribute to the lesson, and reduces the teacher's role in delivering knowledge, transforming them into a guide for learners who build their own knowledge.

The competency-based approach aims to make the learner the focal point of the educational process. The learner asks questions, discusses, analyzes, deduces, and builds knowledge to reach conclusions, which they then apply in different situations and integrate into reality. This practice enables them to handle new situations and face problems effectively, fostering their cognitive and intellectual abilities, such as memory, imagination, comprehension, and creativity.

The pedagogical approach adopted in developing the general and technological secondary education curricula is the competency-based approach. This approach seeks to establish educational principles that align with the physiological, emotional, and intellectual needs of learners, aiming for consistent and balanced development. It focuses on addressing these needs holistically rather than independently.

The competency-based approach, which emerged from this shift in handling texts, ultimately equips the reader with the ability to produce texts with integrated elements (verbal, stylistic, and structural). These components accompany every literary or communicative text, allowing the learner to understand and appropriately use rhetorical, grammatical, and critical aspects. This transformation enables the learner to become a creator and sender of messages, transitioning from merely being a participant in constructing discourse.

The learner interacts with the written text in the textbook based on a binary relationship: the sender (the author of the text) and the receiver (the learner = the student). However, it is

essential to acknowledge that the learner is not alone with the text in the classroom. They are guided by an instructor, mentor, or teacher. This guide is the teacher, creating a new communication cycle, which can be illustrated as follows:

The Teacher (Sender) → The Message (Text) → The Student (Receiver)

To effectively convey the content from the textbook to the learner, the teacher must rely on their acquired knowledge and use an effective method that ensures the information is received under favorable conditions. Relying on a single method for instruction does not achieve the desired goal at the secondary level. Therefore, teachers often use a combination of various methods to ensure their message is effectively communicated to the students (Instructional, Dialogic, Integrative).

Accordingly, this ministerial adjustment introduces an important term in this context called "**textual approach**", which is an «educational approach focusing on studying the structure and system of a text. This approach emphasizes the text as a whole rather than studying individual sentences. Learning a language involves engaging with it as a coherent and cohesive discourse. Therefore, the focus is on the phenomenon of coherence and cohesion, which ensures that a text is not merely a series of consecutive sentences, but rather involves identifying all the conditions that contribute to producing a well-constructed and meaningful text»¹.

It is an educational method aimed at teaching grammar rules through texts, focusing on the real use of language and how to apply grammar rules in real-life situations. This approach involves selecting texts appropriate for the learners' level, related to the unit or theme being studied. For instance, in a lesson on the subject, the teacher extracts grammatical examples from literary and communicative texts relevant to the topic.

The learners read and analyze the text, then identify and deduce the grammatical rules. This process involves encouraging them through questions and discussions, stimulating their intellectual and cognitive engagement through brainstorming. Their responses vary, and the teacher settles on the correct ones, allowing students to correct each other's mistakes.

Therefore, this text is accompanied by auxiliary components that are studied alongside it, and originating from it, unlike in the past when they were treated independently. These components include grammar and morphology rules, rhetoric, prosody, literary criticism, in addition to the communicative text that complements the literary text. Consequently, the text in the new textbook not only includes texts from various eras but also integrates these auxiliary components.

Thus, the textual approach is introduced to prepare students for what lies ahead as they approach university. If we closely examine the relationship between these new structures and the critical terms imposed by contemporary conditions, we find that they are connected and extend through all previous and subsequent educational stages. They form a cohesive whole

that aims, in a coordinated and unified environment, to reflect a single goal: to graduate learners with the ability to apply their acquired knowledge to build and benefit from life.

In the old textbook, the method of text analysis relied on separating activities (grammar, rhetoric, prosody) from the discourse (text), teaching them in isolation without linking these activities to the content and structure of the text. Examples for the activities were taken from outside the text, leaving the learner with the impression that there was no connection between what they read in the studied text and what they learned in other activities regarding grammatical, morphological, rhetorical, and prosodic rules.

However, in the new textbook, based on the textual approach, there is no separation between the text and its auxiliary components. All these components (activities) are taught within the context of the text, preventing the learner's mind from becoming scattered and keeping them engaged and focused. Here, the text is a coherent entity, structurally and semantically integrated, with grammar, meaning, and rhetoric all working together, ensuring the learner engages comprehensively with the text.

Advocates of this perspective argue that the evidence lies in the ability to create; that is, to produce new sentences and words that have not been heard before, following patterns that are called creativity in language. From an educational standpoint, this view does not render the learner a passive individual who merely listens, imitates, and repeats. Instead, it assigns the learner an active and effective role in this process.

In this context, the grammar teacher focuses on the findings of modern linguistics, moving away from the constraints imposed by traditional grammar. Consequently, the teacher equips the student with linguistic competence, which is the ability to understand linguistic structures and their cognitive meanings, thereby integrating semantic components into grammar, a concept previously excluded in traditional grammar.

This approach to text within the framework of the "textual approach" is justified when we consider that the study of grammar and morphology is addressed from a functional perspective that is beneficial for proper speech, effective communication, and meeting practical needs. It is essential for language learning and developing linguistic intuition, not as theoretical rules to be memorized mechanically but as scientific patterns acquired through continuous practice and training.

It appears that proponents of this approach drew inspiration from Al-Jahiz's advice to Arabic teachers and scholars when he said: "Thus, the textual approach as an active method within the pedagogical framework used in developing secondary education curricula aims to foster a wide range of knowledge and educational principles that align with the physiological, emotional, and intellectual needs of learners."

However, it is observed that this method, when it comes to these auxiliary components (grammar, rhetoric, prosody), does not fully satisfy the learner's curiosity. They are presented in a superficial manner rather than in-depth, as if the primary goal is to focus on the essence of the text more than on these components. This is something that requires attention, especially from the teacher, who should be mindful of this and not limit themselves to what is outlined in the textbook. Instead, they should delve deeper according to the targeted secondary level, highlighting the key and essential points in any lesson related to these components. It is unreasonable to neglect the proper use of these components and still claim to produce a grammatically and rhetorically correct text at the structural level.

The concept of text in the new approach has become a central concept in contemporary linguistic studies. Studies focused on the text are known as text linguistics, text theory, or discourse linguistics, and they all agree on the necessity of moving beyond the sentence in linguistic analysis to a broader and more comprehensive space.

Therefore, if the learner can master this organization, its rules, principles, and laws, and encompass the language and practice it in their environment, they acquire the ability to perform what Chomsky calls communicative competence. This is the ability to produce sentences in interaction with others according to the demands of the communicative situation, representing linguistic creativity. It is the ability to use language practically in real-life contexts, i.e., in speech.

In the midst of this approach, it is essential to distinguish between two types of grammar¹:

1. **Scientific Analytical Grammar:** This is specialized grammar that should be deeply abstract and studied for its own sake. It is referred to as specialized grammar.
2. **Educational Pedagogical Grammar:** This type is based on linguistic, psychological, and educational principles, focusing on what the learner needs. It leverages some grammatical concepts and terms from various theories to build a consistent and organized educational methodology. This methodology relies on the findings of psychologists, pedagogues, and applied linguists and is referred to as functional grammar.

This type of grammar builds on the first type, selecting elements that suit the learner's educational needs. This selection is based on methodological principles related primarily to the learner, considering individual linguistic differences, cognitive ability, and comprehension capacity. The goal of setting pedagogical rules is to teach how to use language in daily life. The use of language depends on the learner's competence and ability, facilitated by the teacher's explanations, whether in production (speaking) or reception (understanding) in various contexts, which helps solidify the educational material in the learners' minds.

It is important to note that the success of the grammar lesson does not rely solely on the learner's understanding or the nature of the material presented but also significantly on the teacher's effectiveness. The teacher's competence, passion for the profession, and enthusiasm

for imparting knowledge to learners play a crucial role in the lesson's success. How can someone with no desire to teach achieve the lesson's purpose and objectives?

Therefore, the teacher must adopt an effective teaching method that suits the nature of the grammar lesson. This can only be achieved if the teacher has a sufficient amount of knowledge, uses the language correctly, and can capture the students' attention, engaging them in learning about its characteristics by applying what they have learned and using it in their expressions and communications.

Among the challenges to effectively implementing this textual approach is the noticeable aversion and fear of grammatical rules among learners. This is reflected in the negative results they achieve on grammar-related questions, extending even into university education. This issue has become a concern for teachers, prompting them to search for methods and ways to deliver grammar lessons effectively, leaving them perplexed. But where does the problem lie? Is it in the inherent difficulty of the rules?, or in the way they are presented?

Moreover, a significant proportion of learners lack prior knowledge, especially concerning grammatical rules, which hinders the building process. Consequently, teachers often have to start from the basics, wasting valuable time. Additionally, the varying levels of students within a single class pose a challenge for the teacher in selecting the optimal method for presenting the content. The limited time allocated, typically one hour per session, further complicates this tributary.

We also find that a large percentage of learners do not have prior learnings, especially with regard to grammatical rules, which hinders the construction process, so the teacher resorts to forming the learner from the beginning, thus wasting time. In addition to the variation in the level of students within one section, which poses difficulty for the teacher in choosing the best way to present the tributary, as well as the narrow time indicator, which is estimated at one hour (a class for this tributary).

Conclusion:

In conclusion, we have arrived at the following results:

- The textual approach is a new and effective method for enhancing the learning of the Arabic language in Algeria. It contributes to developing an understanding of grammar rules and helps learners use them naturally and functionally.
- This approach not only teaches grammar rules but also supports the development of reading and writing skills, enhancing learners' linguistic competence and their ability to use the language in various learning situations.
- It encourages learners to participate in constructing knowledge, drawing conclusions, and building lessons, while also promoting their critical and creative thinking. This creates a generation capable of communicating in a correct and proper language.

- The textual approach, as an active method within the pedagogical framework used in building secondary education curricula, aims to develop various knowledge and educational principles that align with the physiological, emotional, and intellectual needs of learners.
- It enables the learner to achieve linguistic fluency and organize discourse according to its rules, foundations, and laws, gaining a comprehensive understanding of the language and practicing it in their environment. This results in what Chomsky calls communicative competence, which involves producing sentences in interaction with others according to the linguistic creativity required by the communicative situation.
- The success of the grammar lesson is not limited to the learner's understanding alone or the nature of the material presented. The teacher also plays a vital role in the lesson's success. The key factor is the competence of the teacher.
- Grammar and morphology lessons are approached from a functional perspective, essential for correcting speech, ensuring effective communication, achieving objectives, and meeting needs. These lessons are crucial for language learning and developing linguistic intuition, not as theoretical rules to be memorized mechanically.

Footnotes:

1. Draft document for the curriculum of the first year of general and technological secondary education (Common Core Literature + Common Core Science and Technology), Algerian Ministry of National Education, 2005, p. 15.
2. Fadhel Kasmi, "The Teaching of Grammar for Third-Year Secondary School Students," Master's thesis, University of Abou Bekr Belkaid, Tlemcen, Algeria, 2014/2015, pp. 19-20.