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# The Impact Of Textual Approach On The Acquisition And Development Of The Linguistic Competence Of Arabic Learners In Algeria –Intermediate Stage As A Model–

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## Abstract:

In recent years, the educational system in Algeria has embraced new interactive methodologies, aligning them with the latest cognitive advancements in the field of education. Among the most recent and significant of these approaches is the textual approach, which is grounded in well-established principles and has demonstrated notable benefits in the domain of applied linguistics. This approach has become one of the central pedagogical strategies in contemporary educational systems. Its primary focus is to link the activities prescribed in Arabic language instruction to the text, positioning the text as the central element around which the teaching and learning process revolves. The ultimate goal is to achieve several competencies, with linguistic competence being the most prominent.

This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the textual approach at the intermediate stage, which is widely regarded as the most critical phase in the learning process. The research will explore the role of this approach in the acquisition and enhancement of linguistic competence, identify potential challenges that may arise, particularly in terms of procedural or practical implementation, and propose appropriate solutions that could facilitate the achievement of this goal.

**Keywords:** Textual Approach, Linguistic Competence, Arabic Language, Learner, Pedagogy.

## Introduction:

Scholars within the field of applied linguistics and language teaching have increasingly directed their attention to textual linguistics, a shift that has prompted substantial progress in the education sector. These advancements are evident in teacher and learner preparation, the development of educational resources, instructional methodologies, and evaluation techniques. Text linguistics, a relatively recent field that emerged in the 1970s, represents one of the latest branches of linguistics<sup>1</sup>. It is an analytical approach that investigates the structure of texts by examining the linguistic, semantic, and contextual mechanisms that contribute to their construction. Unlike traditional approaches, which concentrated on sentence-level analysis, text linguistics expands the scope of study to encompass the entire text and discourse.

This marks a significant departure from earlier linguistic paradigms, such as structuralist and transformational-generative approaches, which emphasized the sentence as the fundamental unit of linguistic analysis. These earlier frameworks treated linguistics as the study of sentence structure, focusing on elements like nominal, verbal, and adverbial components, or their respective complements.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast, text linguistics broadens the focus to include the relationships between sentences, examining aspects such as coherence, cohesion, and the overall unity of the text. This perspective provides a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that contribute to textual cohesion, how consistency and coherence are achieved in reading, the formation of textual unity, and the various functions that texts serve in communication.

The findings of text linguistics have been effectively integrated into the teaching of Arabic through the implementation of what is known as the textual approach. Amidst these developments, the Algerian government has actively sought the most suitable pedagogical method for reforming the national educational system. Consequently, the competencies-based approach was adopted, followed by a comprehensive revision of textbooks, focusing on both design and content, to align with this new educational model.

As part of this transformation, one of the methods incorporated into Arabic language textbooks for intermediate learners is the textual approach, beginning in the academic year 2013/2014. This approach was regarded as an appropriate choice for educational reform, despite certain limitations, particularly regarding its procedural and practical application.

This research aims to introduce the textual approach, outline the key principles and foundations upon which it is based, and emphasize its importance in the development and acquisition of linguistic competence. This serves as the central issue of the study. Subsequently, the paper will address some of the challenges and difficulties faced by both teachers and learners during its implementation, proposing possible solutions to overcome these obstacles. The analysis will be conducted using a descriptive-analytical methodology, drawing upon significant findings from various field studies in this domain, with a specific focus on the intermediate educational stage in Algeria as a model.

### **1- The Concept of the Textual Approach and Its Foundations:**

The term "textual approach" is composed of two components: "approach" and "text." The term "approach" refers to a set of concepts, principles, and strategies that guide the design, planning, and evaluation of a curriculum<sup>3</sup>. In contrast, "text" is defined as "a semantic structure produced by an individual or group within a coherent and unified linguistic framework. It forms a complex network of words, constructions, and elements that together constitute the language system. A text embodies knowledge within a particular culture, as knowledge is encapsulated within the text, and each body of knowledge has its specific texts."<sup>4</sup>

The textual approach is an educational strategy that aims to activate the linguistic aspects of language from a textual perspective. "It treats the text as a larger structure, in which various

linguistic, syntactic, intellectual, literary, and social dimensions are present. The textual approach enables learners to identify the components of the text, allowing them to comprehend its meanings, understand the internal relationships that govern its coherence and consistency, and recognize the significance of temporal and spatial contexts.

This is accomplished through a gradual and structured methodological plan that ensures students can deconstruct texts, understand their composition, and grasp the underlying logic that governs them, so that they can subsequently reconstruct them in new forms." <sup>5</sup>The textual approach can also be defined as "a set of pedagogical methods for handling and analyzing texts for educational purposes. It represents a scientific approach to text analysis, with a primary emphasis on the functions of reception and production, grounded in the principles of text linguistics."<sup>6</sup>

From these definitions, it is apparent that the textual approach establishes a fundamental link between the educational process and texts, with the text serving as the central focus for the study of various linguistic levels, where all knowledge converges. The textual approach has received considerable scholarly attention, which has, in turn, influenced the design of school textbooks in Algeria. Consequently, these textbooks have been systematically divided into units, with twenty-four units assigned to each of the four educational levels. Each unit includes a series of educational activities, which begin with the presentation of a reading text, followed by in-depth analyses encompassing lexicography, semantics, intellectual, literary, and linguistic perspectives. These activities are designed to be completed within a weekly three-hour timeframe. In addition, students engage in both oral and written expression exercises. In this context, it is essential to select texts that are not only appropriate for the intellectual and social capacities of the learners but also align with their interests and needs. Furthermore, the selected texts must adhere to the structural integrity of the language while also conveying significant ideas and knowledge.

## **2- A Sample of Texts for Third-Year Intermediate Learners:**

### **Reading Text: <sup>7</sup>**

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "The example of what Allah has sent me with, of guidance and knowledge, is like abundant rain that falls on the earth. Some of it falls on fertile ground that accepts the water and produces abundant grass and herbs. Another part falls on barren land that retains the water, benefiting those who drink from it, water their plants, and irrigate their crops. A third part falls on flat land, incapable of retaining water or growing grass. This is the example of the one who gains understanding in the religion of Allah and benefits from what Allah has sent me with, learning and teaching others. The example of the one who turns away and does not accept the guidance of Allah that I have been sent with is like the barren land."<sup>8</sup>

This text is featured in the second educational unit, where it serves as the basis for a variety of pedagogical activities. Initially, the text is read silently by the students, followed by an oral reading. Afterward, learners engage in a series of cognitive processes, including association, understanding, comprehension, organization, and inference, which help identify the genre and style of the text. This analytical approach enables students to develop effective means of

expression and communication skills. However, the pedagogical process is not considered complete until the learners have progressed through additional stages of text analysis.<sup>9</sup>

The stages involved are outlined as follows:

❖ **First: Vocabulary and Semantics:** During this phase, challenging words and phrases within the text are elucidated, facilitating students' comprehension and enabling them to better understand the text.

**Understanding the Text:** In this phase, a series of questions are posed to the students to encourage deeper engagement with the text. The answers to these questions contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the central themes and ideas<sup>10</sup>. Some of the key questions include:

- How does the Prophet, peace be upon him, compare the guidance and knowledge granted to him by Allah?
- The Hadith describes three types of land that the rain falls upon. What are these types?
- What impact does the rain have on fertile land?
- What effect does the Muhammadan message have on a believing soul?
- Why does the hard, smooth land fail to benefit from the water?
- Does an individual who turns away from the call of Islam derive any benefit from the guidance the Prophet, peace be upon him, has brought?<sup>11</sup>

❖ **Second: Artistic Structure:** In this phase, the learner directs attention to the rhetorical and aesthetic elements of various stylistic features within the text. This stage plays a crucial role in cultivating the learner's artistic sensibilities. The following questions are posed to help identify the intended figurative imagery, specifically simile, and to comprehend its components and functions within the context. These questions are as follows:

- \_ To whom did the Prophet, peace be upon him, compare fertile land?
- \_ In what manner is this comparison made?
- \_ What additional meaning or significance does this imagery convey?
- \_ Who did the Prophet, peace be upon him, compare those who rejected Allah's guidance to?
- \_ How is this comparison articulated?
- \_ What additional impact or insight does this imagery provide?<sup>12</sup>

❖ **Third: Linguistic Structure:** The questions in this phase include:

- \_ In the Hadith, the phrase "إنما هي قيعان" ("It is nothing but barren land") is used. What are the subject and predicate in this sentence?
- \_ Is it syntactically permissible to switch the order of the subject and predicate in this phrase? If so, why?
- \_ Consider the following phrase: "كانت منها أجادب" ("There were barren lands among them"). If the verb "كان" is omitted, leaving the nominal sentence "منها أجادب," what is the structure of the phrase?
- \_ Identify the subject and predicate within this new construction, noting that the predicate precedes the subject in this case.
- \_ Is the subject in this construction indefinite or definite?
- \_ Under what circumstances can the subject be considered indefinite?<sup>13</sup>

As has been demonstrated, the textual approach is systematically implemented by focusing on the central reading text, and subsequently constructing further knowledge based on the learners' accomplishments. This approach is consistently applied across all units and various educational stages at this level.

### **3- Its Impact on Acquiring and Developing Linguistic Competence:**

The overarching objective of the textual approach is the acquisition of the four core language skills, which include:

#### **3-1- Listening Skill:**

This skill is cultivated through both the teacher's and the learner's oral reading practices. The learner practices respecting punctuation, mastering sound pronunciation, understanding prolongations, stress, and similar aspects of speech. The teacher's role in this process is to read with intention, expressiveness, and clarity, ensuring the reading leaves a lasting auditory impression on the learner. The aim is for the student to be motivated to imitate the teacher's style of reading. Scholars have long recognized the centrality of listening in the development of linguistic competence.

Ibn Jinni, in his definition of grammar, emphasizes the importance of listening, noting: "Grammar is the method of aligning with the speech of the Arabs...<sup>14</sup>" underscoring the significance of listening to the authentic speech of native speakers of Arabic. Similarly, Ibn Khaldun regarded listening as foundational to linguistic faculties, stating: "The Arab speaker, when the linguistic faculty of the Arabic language was present in them, would listen to the speech of their contemporaries, their expressions, their modes of communication, and how they would convey their intentions.

Just as a child listens to the use of words in their meanings, initially receiving them, and then listening to sentence constructions afterward, their listening continues at every moment and from every speaker. Their use of words repeats until it becomes ingrained as a fixed habit, and their linguistic ability becomes a stable trait. It becomes as if they are indistinguishable

from native speakers. This is how languages, including Arabic, have been passed from generation to generation, learned by both non-Arabs and children.<sup>15</sup> Undoubtedly, listening remains one of the most critical skills in the process of acquiring any language. Modern language acquisition methodologies continue to emphasize the training of learners in this skill, as it has proven highly effective in achieving linguistic proficiency.

### **3-2- Reading Skill:**

This component of the curriculum aims to enhance the learner's ability to engage with texts in a mindful and analytical manner, enabling them to uncover the main ideas and key concepts within the material. The goal is for learners to be capable of summarizing the text's content, rephrasing it both orally and in writing, and making evaluative judgments regarding the text, articulating their opinions. This is accomplished through the use of well-crafted, precise questions posed by the teacher, ensuring clarity and focus.

### **3-3- Writing Skill:**

The writing skill is nurtured through activities focused on written expression, with a particular emphasis on the application of spelling, grammatical, and morphological rules. The teacher works to reinforce the linguistic principles outlined in the curriculum, presenting them in practical contexts.

### **3-4- Expression and Communication Skill:**

The development of this skill is facilitated through both written and oral expression exercises, where learners are tasked with using their language skills and knowledge to compose written paragraphs or orally express their viewpoints on particular topics. The learner is expected to present their ideas coherently, breaking down the components of the topic for discussion.

These skills are designed to develop the learner's reception abilities by fostering an understanding of the text and its construction, as well as their production abilities, which involve the creation of texts that bear similarities to the assigned ones. This process occurs gradually, enabling learners to develop their proficiency over time. The "reception ability" enables learners to:

- Comprehend the subject matter.
- Recognize the connection between substructures within the text.
- Discern the differences between various text types and categories.

Meanwhile, the "production ability" allows learners to:

- Generate topics.
- Develop a general outline for the created topic.
- Organize the elements of the topic appropriately.

- Construct a text that aligns with the specific models and types of texts encountered in their studies.<sup>16</sup>

The transition from reception competence to production competence represents a methodological necessity, as indicated by the practical findings derived from recent research and studies in the fields of language acquisition and educational theory.<sup>17</sup>

In summary, the importance of this approach can be encapsulated in the following points:

Enriching the learner's linguistic vocabulary with terms after each text they study, which helps them develop a continuously growing linguistic competency.

- Expanding the knowledge base through diverse texts across various fields of life.
- Allowing the learner to actively participate in constructing their own knowledge through their efforts in observation and discovery. This is because the text is a semantic structure produced by an individual or a group within a coherent and interconnected linguistic framework... It is knowledge achieved within a specific culture, as knowledge is summarized in the text, and every type of knowledge has its own texts.<sup>18</sup>
- Strengthening the tendency for both oral and written expression and communication, enabling the learner to express their needs and thoughts skillfully.
- Opening up to principles of criticism and expressing opinions.
- Enabling them to control their abilities and capacities in solving the problems posed by the text.

#### **4. Deficiencies and Challenges:**

Through an in-depth review of the textbooks assigned for middle school education, the curriculum, and the accompanying instructional documents, we have identified several critical deficiencies. The foremost issue pertains to the lack of alignment between the educational curriculum and the annual distribution of content. This misalignment stems from the disorganized sequencing of the units and certain activities, which creates disruptions that hinder the learner's ability to effectively comprehend and engage with the educational material. <sup>19</sup>This issue is particularly evident in the fourth-grade middle school textbook, where, for instance, the learner is introduced to the concept of expanding an idea in written expression in the first unit, yet is expected to apply it only in the nineteenth unit. A similar misalignment is observed in application sessions, where learners are tasked with solving exercises that rely on knowledge they have not yet encountered.<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, at times, the core texts fail to comprehensively address the linguistic and rhetorical needs outlined in the curriculum. This gap necessitates that teachers resort to external examples to bridge the void, as some texts are incomplete and omit essential linguistic and grammatical phenomena.

Additional challenges include:

- Insufficient instructional time allocated to lessons, particularly when dealing with lengthy texts. Coupled with overcrowded classrooms in many schools, this limitation further impedes opportunities for all students to engage in meaningful reading and participate in diverse activities.
- The presence of dry and overly technical texts, some of which are purely scientific in nature, thus lacking relevance to the learners' immediate educational context.
- The assignment of texts that are overly complex or cognitively demanding for the students, such as the text titled *The Electronic Pen*, prescribed for first-year middle school students.<sup>21</sup>
- The inclusion of fragmented and unverified texts, particularly those sourced from the internet, which detracts from the credibility and academic integrity of the material.

In addition, there are challenges related to the educators' implementation of the proposed approach. These challenges may arise from teachers' unfamiliarity with the method or their lack of experience and training in its effective application. It is noteworthy that some middle school teachers may not hold degrees from higher education institutions, further complicating the matter. Moreover, certain learner-related obstacles also hinder the successful adoption of this approach, particularly the tendency for students to rely heavily on the internet, often resorting to copying and pasting content without engaging in critical analysis, thus bypassing the development of their independent skills and abilities.

## **5. Conclusion:**

The development of textual competence is intrinsically linked to an understanding of Arabic language curricula and the necessity of enhancing this competence throughout the educational process. Achieving this objective requires the careful selection of diverse textual content that spans various genres and text types, enabling learners to progressively develop their reception and production skills. The following recommendations should be considered:

- Texts should be chosen to explicitly incorporate the linguistic phenomena under study within the unit, ensuring that the learner does not feel disconnected from the core material.
- Texts must be developmentally appropriate, taking into account the cognitive, psychological, and social capacities of the learners, as well as their interests, preferences, and needs.
- The credibility of textual references must be ensured, avoiding reliance on unverified sources, especially from the internet, which may compromise the text's authenticity and value for the learner.
- A methodical distribution of texts across educational units is essential, ensuring a coherent progression from simpler to more complex content, in line with the principle of gradual learning.



- Coordinated efforts between those responsible for the annual distributions and the curriculum authors are necessary to ensure greater alignment and coherence.
- Training programs for educators should be conducted, beginning at the university level and guided by experienced trainers and professors, with a focus on practical, hands-on approaches rather than solely theoretical instruction.
- The diversity of assigned texts should be expanded to reflect and engage with the learners' creative and functional life experiences.
- There should be a commitment to integrating modern academic research that focuses on the efficacy of this educational approach, ensuring the continuous development of teaching practices.

### Footnotes and References:

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> National Curriculum Committee, "Accompanying Document for the Curriculum of the Second Year of Middle School," National Office for School Publications, Algeria, 2003, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Bachir Ibrir, "Teaching of Texts between Theory and Practice," Alam Al-Kutub, Jordan, 1st Edition: 2007, p. 108.

<sup>5</sup> Saleh Ghailous, "Rebuilding the Educational Text in Light of the Textual Approach – The Third Year Secondary Model," PhD Dissertation, Setif 2 University, Algeria, 2013/2014, p. 145.

<sup>6</sup> Abdel Karim Gharib, "The Educational Spring," Encyclopedic Dictionary of Educational Terms and Concepts, Al-Najah Printing, Casablanca, Morocco, 1st Edition: 2006, Volume 1, p. 269.

<sup>7</sup> Charif Meribai and others, "Arabic Language Book for the Third Year of Middle School," National Office for School Publications, Algeria, 2005/2006, p. 15.

<sup>8</sup> Al-Bukhari, "Sahih al-Bukhari," Book of Knowledge, narrated by Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari, may God be pleased with him, Hadith number: 77.

<sup>9</sup> Layla Sharifi, "The Textual Approach in the Arabic Language Book for the Third Year of Middle School," Journal of Linguistic Practices, Tizi Ouzou, Algeria, Issue 25, 2014, p. 48.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 48.

<sup>11</sup> Charif Meribai and others, "Arabic Language Textbook for the Third Year of Middle School," p. 16.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, same page.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p. 17.

<sup>14</sup> Ibn Jinni, "Al-Khasa'is," edited by Muhammad Ali Al-Najjar, Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiya, Beirut, Lebanon, 4th Edition: 2001, Volume 1, p. 211.

<sup>15</sup> Ibn Khaldun, "The Muqaddimah," edited by Abdullah Al-Darwish, Dar Ya'qub, Damascus, Syria, 1st Edition: 2004, Volume 2, p. 385.

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<sup>16</sup> Mohammad Al-Bahrami, "Didactics of Reading Texts in the Second Stage of Primary School, Theory and Practice," Dar Al-Thaqafa, Morocco, 1st Edition: 1998, p. 59.

<sup>17</sup> Ismail Bouzidi, "Teaching of Texts: Towards a Linguistic Didactic Approach," "My Functional Language" for the Second Year of Primary School as a Model, Journal of Arabic Language, Algeria, Issue 21, 2010, p. 36.

<sup>18</sup> Bachir Ibrir, "Teaching of Texts between Theory and Practice," p. 108.

<sup>19</sup> See: Charif Meribai and others, "Arabic Language Book for the Fourth Year of Middle School," National Office for School Publications, Algeria, 2005-2006, p. 5, 6.

<sup>20</sup> See: Lakhdar Harizi, "The Textual Approach in Teaching Grammar between Theory and Practice," Al-Omdah Journal in Linguistics and Discourse Analysis, Algeria, Issue 3, 2018, p. 274, 275.

<sup>21</sup> See: "Arabic Language Book for the First Year of Middle School," National Office for School Publications, Algeria, p. 11.