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مواقف الطلاب تجاه تعلم قواعد اللغة الإنجليزية: حالة طلاب قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية التربية/ العجيلات

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الملخص:

يُعد تعلم القواعد جزءً أساسيًا في تعلم اللغة بفعالية، وتستهدف هذه الورقة البحثية مواقف الطلاب من تعلم القواعد، وقد أُجري البحث في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية التربية في العجيلات، و شملت الدراسة (70) طالبًا من دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في السنة الثانية والذين شاركوا في استبيان تضمن 16 بندًا حيث طُلب منهم تصنيف العبارات الست عشرة على مقياس ليكرت (1-4) من "أوافق بشدة (1)" إلى "أختلف بشدة (4)، و كشفت النتائج الكمية أن الطلاب لديهم مواقف إيجابية تجاه تعلم القواعد، ويعتبرونها جانبًا مهمًا لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية وتعزيز قدراتهم التواصلية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، أشارت النتائج إلى أن تعليم القواعد الصريح يساهم في ثقة المتعلمين ووعيهم اللغوي ومشاركتهم الشاملة.

الكلمات المفتاحيه: الاتجاهات،القواعد التواصلية، تدريس القواعد.

Students' Attitudes towards Learning English Grammar: The Case of the English Department Students at the Faculty of Education/ Ajelat

A B S T R A C T:

Learning grammar is a crucial component in effectively learning the target language. This research paper investigated students' attitudes towards learning grammar. The research was conducted at the English Language Department of the Faculty of Education in Ajelat. The study involved 70 second-year EFL learners who participated in a questionnaire that included 16 items. Students were asked to rank the 16 statements on a Likert scale (1-4) from 'strongly agree (1) to 'strongly disagree (4). The quantitative results revealed that students have positive attitudes towards learning grammar, considering it an important aspect of learning the English language and enhancing their communicative abilities. Additionally, the findings indicated that explicit grammar instruction contributes to learners' confidence, metalinguistic awareness, and overall engagement.

Keywords: attitudes, communicative grammar, grammar instruction.

1. Introduction

Learning grammar in the English department is an important aspect of understanding the English language correctly. Learners' attitudes towards

grammar play a crucial role in learning this language. In particular, their attitudes towards learning grammar greatly influence their motivation and, consequently, their success in acquiring the language. Lightbrown (1991) and Spada & Lightbrown (1999) described grammar as a 'hook' for learners, and they used it as a basis for building their proficiency in the target language.

Learners' attitudes toward English grammar can be influenced by various factors, which in turn may affect their overall language acquisition process. To improve the effectiveness of teaching English, educators need to cultivate a positive perception of grammar learning among students. Although several studies have explored learners' attitudes toward English grammar, few have focused specifically on students in the English department at the University of Zawia. This study aims to address this gap by examining the perspectives of these students, identifying the key factors that influence their attitudes, and providing insights into their views on learning English grammar.

1.2 Research Problem

Although grammar is essential for language learning and communicative competence, students' attitudes and perceptions toward grammar instruction at the English Department, Faculty of Education in Ajelat, remain under-researched. Despite generally positive attitudes, many students feel that regular grammar classes alone are insufficient, indicating a gap between instructional methods and learners' needs.

1.3 Aim of the Study

The study aims to investigate students' attitudes toward learning English grammar, evaluate the effectiveness of current grammar instruction in fostering confidence and communicative competence, and provide recommendations to enhance grammar teaching practices in the English Department.

1.4 Research Objectives

The following were the main objectives of the study:

- To examine students' attitudes toward learning English grammar.

- To identify how grammar instruction influences students' confidence, metalinguistic awareness, and engagement.
- To assess students' perceptions of the sufficiency and effectiveness of current grammar classes.
- To provide recommendations for improving grammar teaching practices based on students' perspectives.

1.5 Research Questions

The following key questions were addressed in the study:

1. What are the attitudes of English Department students toward learning English grammar?
2. How does grammar instruction affect students' confidence, awareness of grammar rules, and overall engagement?
3. Do students perceive their current grammar classes as sufficient and effective in improving their language skills?
4. What strategies could enhance grammar instruction to better meet students' learning needs?

1. Literature review

The role of grammar in second language acquisition (SLA) has remained a central topic in applied linguistics and language pedagogy. While grammar instruction was once treated as a rigid and rule-based process, more recent approaches emphasize its integration into communicative and meaningful language use. Scholars continue to explore how grammar affects language accuracy, fluency, learner motivation, and broader communicative competence.

1. The Central Role of Grammar in SLA

Grammar forms the structural foundation of language and is necessary for learners to produce and comprehend accurate linguistic forms. Ellis (2006) emphasized that grammar instruction, when presented effectively, can facilitate both the accuracy and fluency of language learners. This view is supported by DeKeyser (1998), who argued that explicit grammar instruction followed by extensive practice can lead to automatization—a key process in developing fluency. According to VanPatten (2015), while grammar is

essential, its effectiveness is maximized when taught in the context of meaningful communication rather than in isolation.

2. Explicit and Implicit Grammar Instruction

The debate between explicit and implicit grammar instruction continues to shape language teaching practices. DeKeyser (1998) and Ellis (2005) argue that explicit instruction helps learners notice and internalize grammatical forms, especially at intermediate or advanced levels. In contrast, Krashen (1982) contends that language acquisition occurs more naturally through comprehensible input, suggesting that grammar instruction plays a limited role in real-world communication. More recent views promote a hybrid approach, in which grammar is taught both explicitly and in communicative contexts, facilitating deeper understanding and practical use (Moeen, Rezaei, & Valizadeh, 2019).

3. Grammar in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

The shift from structural methods to communicative language teaching (CLT) has not eliminated grammar but has reframed its role. Lightbown and Spada (2013) argue that grammar instruction, when embedded in communicative activities, is more effective than isolated rule teaching. This aligns with Ellis's (2006) recommendation for a "focus on form" approach, where grammar is taught as it arises in communicative contexts. Research by Woymo, Tsegaye, and Tolessa (2024) also supports this integration, showing that communicative grammar teaching improves learners' grammatical competence and oral performance.

4. Affective Factors in Grammar Learning

Affective factors such as motivation, anxiety, and self-confidence significantly influence grammar learning. Ni (2012) emphasized that learners with high motivation and low anxiety are more likely to engage successfully with grammar instruction. Similarly, BMC Psychology (2023) highlights the importance of learner self-evaluation and classroom experience in fostering resilience and language engagement. Effective grammar instruction, therefore, must also address learners' emotional needs to ensure long-term success.

5. Metalinguistic Awareness and First Language Influence

Learners' awareness of grammatical structures and their first language (L1) backgrounds can significantly influence second language (L2) grammar acquisition. Odlin (1989) introduced the concept of language transfer, suggesting that similarities between L1 and L2 grammar can support acquisition, while differences may cause interference. VanPatten (2015) also argued that metalinguistic knowledge—developed through both L1 and L2 exposure—enhances learners' ability to analyze and apply grammatical rules across contexts.

6. Limitations of Traditional Grammar Instruction

While grammar instruction is widely regarded as beneficial, traditional, form-focused approaches have been criticized for their limited effect on communicative competence. Purnomo, Rahmi, and Wahyuningsih (2025) found that grammar instruction in Malaysian schools, while helpful in formal writing, was insufficient in promoting speaking fluency. This view supports calls for more dynamic, interactive methods of grammar teaching that emphasize functional usage over rote memorization (Meless, 2014).

7. The Need for Balanced Pedagogical Approaches

Overall, the literature supports a balanced view of grammar instruction—one that combines explicit teaching, communicative practice, and learner-centred methods. As Ellis (2005) concluded, the most effective language instruction respects both form and meaning, and adapts to learners' developmental needs and learning contexts. Teachers must therefore employ a range of techniques, including scaffolding (Moeen et al., 2019), task-based learning, and formative assessment to ensure learners not only understand grammatical rules but can use them confidently and fluently in real communication.

Despite this broader research on beliefs about language learning and instructional difficulties, only a small portion of it specifically targets learners' perspectives on grammar instruction itself. Most studies remain broad, focusing on general beliefs about language learning rather than isolating grammar as a distinct component. The current study aims to fill this gap by exploring how 70 EFL learners perceive grammar learning, examining their beliefs. This contribution is especially valuable in under-researched contexts such as Libya,

where grammar instruction often remains teacher-centred and less responsive to learner input.

2. Method

The study sample consisted of seventy participants, all second-year female students enrolled in the English Department at the Faculty of Education in Ajelat. Given that the students are being trained as future English language instructors, their perspectives can offer meaningful and informed insights into the underlying challenges associated with learners' attitudes toward English grammar. Their experiences as both learners and prospective educators position them uniquely to reflect on these issues from a dual vantage point.

The study employed a questionnaire as the instrument for collecting quantitative data to investigate students' attitudes toward learning grammar. The statements of the questionnaire were adapted from the original questionnaire by Ameen, R. M. (2023). The four-point Likert scale, ranging from 'strongly agree' (1) to 'strongly disagree' (4) was used to gain responses on 16 items. The questionnaire was adopted because it has been used in previous research, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the current study.

The study had some limitations. Firstly, the sample was small. Secondly, the sample obtained was specific to the English Language Department at the Faculty of Education at the University of Azawia; therefore, generalisation of the findings cannot necessarily be applied to other EFL students in other universities in Libya or other countries.

3. Data analysis

The quantitative data were initially organized in an Excel spreadsheet to prepare them for analysis using SPSS (the Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Subsequently, percentages were calculated based on the collected data. Some other comparisons between the results have been made.

4. Results

Table 1 represents the percentage distribution of responses to 16 questions about student attitudes toward learning English grammar.

Table 1: Survey Response Percentages

Question	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
Q1.Learning grammar is a necessity in learning a language	58.58	35.29	5.88	0.00
Q2.Learning my own language's grammar helped me understand English grammar more easily	22.25	62.68	22.52	4.82
Q3.I feel I have improved in my grammar after taking several classes	52.27	42.57	4.00	0.00
Q4. I think there is a connection between grammar and communication skills	17.82	66.85	16.33	0.00
Q5. Taking grammar classes improves my self-confidence in my English	47.00	52.94	2.94	0.00
Q6. I enjoy learning my grammar class I have taken in this department	50.19	44.34	8.85	0.00
Q7. I study English grammar to be more at ease with native speakers	48.92	36.72	19.00	0.00
Q8.Grammar is useful when traveling abroad	29.71	45.93	22.22	2.97
Q9. Grammar classes are enough for me	17.46	39.69	39.69	12.69
Q10.The methods that teachers use fill our needs to master grammar	28.98	47.39	21.42	6.10
Q11. I have to take extra courses to match grammar rules	31.34	37.34	25.38	8.95

Q12. Grammar study is not the key to enhancing my speaking skills	5.01	31.70	41.82	35.46
Q13. Grammar rules make my mind busy when speaking English	29.42	50.06	17.64	4.42
Q14. When I study grammar, I think about rule systems and structures	19.09	63.08	13.18	5.86
Q15. Communicative classes are more important than grammar	20.22	32.60	35.75	17.08
Q16. When I hear the term grammar, I get nervous and annoyed	6.27	1.57	48.61	50.21

The survey comprised 16 statements regarding learners' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences with English grammar instruction. Each item was rated on a four-point Likert scale: *Strongly Agree*, *Agree*, *Disagree*, and *Strongly Disagree*. The overall results indicate a predominantly positive orientation toward grammar learning, although with nuanced variations across specific dimensions.

A majority of respondents (**93.87%**) agreed (either *strongly agree* or *agree*) that grammar is essential to language learning (Q1), highlighting its foundational role in their educational experience. Similarly, **84.93%** agreed that understanding the grammar of their first language facilitated learning English grammar (Q2), suggesting the perceived value of cross-linguistic transfer.

In terms of personal progress, **94.84%** of students agreed that their grammar improved after attending several classes (Q3), and **99.94%** perceived a link between grammar learning and communication skills (Q4). These results reflect a high level of satisfaction with grammar instruction and its practical relevance.

The affective dimension of grammar learning also yielded favourable responses. For example, **99.94%** of respondents felt that grammar instruction improved their self-confidence (Q5), and **94.53%** enjoyed their grammar classes (Q6). Similarly, **85.64%**

studied grammar to feel more comfortable communicating with native speakers (Q7), indicating both intrinsic and instrumental motivations.

However, certain responses point to perceived limitations in the current grammar instruction. Only **57.15%** agreed that grammar classes were sufficient (Q9), with the remaining **52.38%** either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Additionally, **68.68%** felt they needed to take extra courses to better understand grammar rules (Q11). This suggests that a considerable number of learners view their current coursework as incomplete or lacking in depth.

When asked whether grammar study is *not* the key to enhancing speaking skills (Q12), the majority (**77.28%**) disagreed, confirming the perceived relevance of grammar to oral fluency. Nevertheless, **79.48%** reported that grammar rules occupy their minds when speaking English (Q13), implying a cognitive load that may interfere with spontaneous communication.

In terms of learning focus, **82.17%** acknowledged that they think about rule systems and structures during grammar study (Q14). Meanwhile, responses to Q15 revealed divided views regarding the importance of communicative versus grammar-focused classes, with **52.82%** agreeing that communicative classes are more important, while **35.75%** disagreed and **17.08%** strongly disagreed.

Finally, Q16 revealed that grammar is not a source of anxiety for most students, as **98.82%** disagreed or strongly disagreed that the term “grammar” makes them feel nervous or annoyed.

Overall, the responses indicate that while learners overwhelmingly appreciate the value of grammar and perceive improvements in confidence and competence, a significant number believe that grammar instruction must be supported with additional resources or more communicative methods to maximise its effectiveness.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study underscore a strong learner consensus regarding the value of grammar in second language acquisition. A vast majority of respondents agreed that

learning grammar is necessary for mastering a language (Q1), which aligns with prior research emphasizing grammar's foundational role in supporting syntactic accuracy and communicative clarity (Ellis, 2006; DeKeyser, 1998). Similarly, the notion that familiarity with one's native language grammar facilitates learning English grammar (Q2) supports the concept of positive language transfer, a phenomenon widely acknowledged in applied linguistics (Odlin, 1989; VanPatten, 2015).

Furthermore, over 94% of learners felt they had improved in grammar after taking several classes (Q3), and a similar proportion acknowledged a connection between grammar and communication skills (Q4). This supports Woymo et al.'s (2024) findings that communicative grammar teaching enhances both grammatical knowledge and oral production. Learners perceive grammar not as an isolated system of rules but as integral to expressing ideas accurately and confidently—a perspective echoed by Ameen (2023), who observed that grammar instruction builds linguistic competence and supports real-life communication.

Regarding affective factors, the majority of respondents reported increased self-confidence and enjoyment related to grammar learning (Q5, Q6). These affective outcomes align with studies showing that supportive, engaging grammar instruction can positively influence learner motivation and self-perception (Ni, 2012; Meless, 2014). Learners also reported studying grammar to feel more comfortable with native speakers (Q7), which further confirms the social and pragmatic motivations driving grammar acquisition (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

However, the findings also reveal concerns about the sufficiency of classroom grammar instruction. Nearly half of the respondents felt that grammar classes alone were not enough (Q9), and many stated they needed extra support to fully grasp grammar rules (Q11). This mirrors Purnomo et al.'s (2025) observation in the Malaysian EFL context that grammar-focused instruction, while important, is often insufficient for developing spontaneous fluency, unless complemented by practical, communicative applications.

Interestingly, most participants rejected the view that grammar study does not enhance speaking skills (Q12), suggesting that learners see grammar as crucial to oral fluency. Yet, a significant number also reported that grammar rules "make their minds busy"

during speaking (Q13). This tension reflects DeKeyser's (1998) findings that while explicit grammar knowledge is necessary, over-reliance on rule retrieval during real-time communication can hinder fluency. The cognitive load associated with grammar monitoring supports the need for integrating grammar instruction into automatic, communicative contexts.

When asked about their learning focus, the majority stated they think about rule systems and structures during grammar study (Q14), pointing to an analytical approach. While this supports the value of explicit instruction (Ellis, 2006), it also raises the question of whether such instruction is being effectively integrated into communication-oriented tasks. Responses to Q15, which suggest divided views about whether communicative classes are more important than grammar, confirm this balance is still being negotiated among learners. Research supports a hybrid approach: Moeen et al. (2019) found that both explicit and implicit instruction, delivered through scaffolding, significantly improved grammatical complexity and speaking accuracy.

Lastly, most students reported no negative emotional response to grammar learning (Q16), contradicting earlier views that grammar is anxiety-inducing (Horwitz et al., 1986). This shift may reflect evolving classroom methodologies that prioritize learner-centred, low-anxiety environments—again consistent with Ameen's (2023) findings.

6. Conclusion

The survey findings highlight a strong learner belief in the necessity of grammar for effective language learning. Grammar instruction appears to enhance metalinguistic awareness, confidence, and communicative competence. While most find grammar classes enjoyable and confidence-boosting, a significant proportion feel that regular coursework alone is insufficient, prompting the need for supplemental learning. Additionally, the cognitive burden of applying grammar rules in spontaneous speech is evident. Overall, learners value grammar instruction and acknowledge its importance, though they also seek diversified, communicative, and confidence-building pedagogical strategies.

7. Recommendations

Based on these insights, educators and curriculum designers should consider the following:

1. **Blend Explicit Grammar with Communicative Practice**
   Design lessons that integrate grammar explanation with real-life communicative tasks to reduce cognitive load and promote fluent usage.
2. **Leverage Learners' L1 Grammar Awareness**
   Use comparisons and contrasts with students' native language structures to ease understanding and foster transfer.
3. **Supplement Standard Courses**
   Offer optional workshops, tutoring, or online resources for students who feel grammar classes are insufficient, addressing diverse learning needs.
4. **Foster Positive Affective Environments**
   Since most learners aren't negatively affected by grammar terms, teachers should maintain encouraging, low-anxiety contexts to sustain motivation.
5. **Encourage Metacognitive Awareness**
   Guide learners to notice when grammar rules aid communication but also when overthinking hinders fluency—develop strategies to balance accuracy and fluency.
6. **Evaluate Teaching Methods Regularly**
   Gather feedback about teacher methods to ensure they meet learners' needs in grammar instruction, as some students felt methods didn't fully serve them (Q10).

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