Integrating Grammar-Based and Communicative Approaches
in The Arabic Classroom

Friday, October 26, 2018
P.J. Veth Building
Nonnensteeg 1 – 3, 2311 VJ, Leiden

Symposium Program

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8:30 – 9:00	Welcome and Registration
9:00 – 10:30	Opening Remarks, Hossam Ahmed, Leiden University

Manuela Giolfo, University of Genoa
An Integrated Approach to Arabic 'Grammars' at the University of Genoa

Karim Laaraj, The Netherlands Institute in Morocco (NIMAR)
"Teaching Arabic within a Study Abroad Programme:
Combining Grammar-Based and Communicative Approaches at the Netherlands Institute Morocco"

10:30 – 11:00	Coffee

11:00 – 12:30	**Majdouline Enahibi**, Mohammed V University, Morocco

"TAFL: grammatical structures, learning strategies and auto-correction"

Raghda El Essawi, the American University in Cairo
"From Mechanical to Communicative Grammar Practice: Why and How"

Rasha Soliman, University of Leeds.
"Using the Communicative Approach in teaching MSA grammar"

12:30 – 14:00	lunch

14:00 – 15:00	**Zehad Sabry**, University of Oslo.

"Teaching, activating and developing language accuracy in the communicative environment in UiO"

Liesbeth Zack, University of Amsterdam
"The advantages and challenges of teaching dialect first: the Arabic curriculum at the University of Amsterdam"

15:00 – 15:30	coffee

15:30 – 17:00	**Maya Termonia**, University of Ghent.

"Studying Arabic at Ghent University: a radical change towards a 21st century curriculum"

Business meeting: Establishing and expanding a European Network of Teaching Arabic.

17:00	drinks

Abstracts

9:00 – 10:30 Opening Remarks, Hossam Ahmed, Leiden University

Manuela Giolfo, University of Genoa
An Integrated Approach to Arabic 'Grammars' at the University of Genoa

A couple of years ago we radically changed our program of Arabic and Islamic Studies at Ghent University. We aimed to bring it more in line with the changing expertise that was available at our department, to respond better to the needs of today's changing societies, and to meet the changing expectations of students. This also involved a closer co-operation with the Middle East and North Africa Research Group at the faculty of social and political sciences.
This new curriculum had a huge impact on the organisation of our Arabic language courses. On the one hand we wanted our students to continue to be able to access and study Islam's textual heritage. On the other hand we also wanted our students to acquire the skills necessary to interact with native-speakers in daily life conversations and to analyse Arabic media as a resource for research on the contemporary Middle East.
Therefore two course packages were developed. A language acquisiton package focusing on Media Arabic and on Egyptian Colloquial and another package that focuses on structures of Arabic (language and texts). In both packages grammar takes up an important place since we want our students to be able to use the language correctly and to understand its structure.
This means that in the language acquisition package grammar is taught in context. The structures of Arabic package is more grammar-based, but always in connection with different contexts of Islam's textual heritage.
In this presentation I will focus on the way we teach grammar in these two different packages. I will also introduce the different methods and textbooks we use in the classroom. Finally I will talk about the challenges we are still facing and how we hope to solve them.

Karim Laaraj, The Netherlands Institute in Morocco (NIMAR)
"Teaching Arabic within a Study Abroad Programme:
Combining Grammar-Based and Communicative Approaches at the Netherlands Institute Morocco"

At the Netherlands Institute Morocco (NIMAR), Arabic students with various backgrounds from different Dutch universities follow a study abroad programme. Besides learning about the country and culture, they come to the institute and Morocco to learn the Moroccan vernacular, but also to improve their language skills in Modern Standard Arabic. This is realised by combining grammar-based and communicative approaches for the different courses that are offered at NIMAR.
Since most students study Arabic with the goal of understanding, speaking, reading, and writing the language, both, spoken Arabic and Standard Arabic are important within the programme (at NIMAR). Students follow an intensive Moroccan Arabic course and various MSA courses.
The view at NIMAR is that students should build a solid grammatical basis in order to increase their understanding and to become more capable of expressing themselves, both orally and in writing. Therefore, grammar is offered explicitly and implicitly within Standard Arabic and Moroccan Arabic courses. At the same time, the NIMAR programme contains much room as well for communicative learning activities. So, for example students practise conversational skills, give presentations in Arabic, do listening and writing exercises, etc.
At the end of the study abroad semester, during the oral and written tests, students demonstrate great and sometimes highly impressive communicative skills and an increase in their grammatical knowledge. The

evaluations generally also show that students are pleased with the way and level of teaching at NIMAR and with the knowledge they have gained after completing the NIMAR programme.

11:00 – 12:30
Majdouline Enahibi, Mohammed V University, Morocco
"TAFL: grammatical structures, learning strategies and auto-correction"

Raghda El Essawi, the American University in Cairo
"From Mechanical to Communicative Grammar Practice: Why and How"
Recent research in the field of second language acquisition mostly stresses the importance of relating form to meaning when practicing grammar . Researchers like Dekeyser (2003) indicate that , "form-meaning connections are the essence of language, and taking them apart for practice activities would be unwise"(p.10). In fact Douhgty and Williams (1998) point out that "engagement with meaning" as is the case with communicative drills used as a form of grammar practice " is probably a cognitive prerequisite for learning new form" (Ortega, 2003:183). The importance of highlighting form and meaning during grammar practice is further highlighted by theories like Strategy Acquisition (SAT), which suggests that failure to use activities that balance focus on meaning and form is likely to block the process of transforming declarative knowledge (knowledge about formal aspects of language) to procedural knowledge (or proficiency in language communication) (Criado, 2016). Hence the importance of communicative grammar practice activities that encourage establishing the mentioned relationships as opposed to activities (like mechanical drills) that manipulate form without attention to meaning.
Studies done on language teaching textbooks however seem to suggest that activities that focus on form like mechanical drills still prevail in grammar practice. According to studies done by Aski (2003), Shelly (1995), Mitchel et al (1993), & Lally (1998), communicative practice represent a much smaller percentage in analyzed books compared to manipulative activities that highlight form only. This has led such studies to a conclusion that language teaching textbooks are lagging behind SLA research when it comes to grammar practice. The situation is not different in case of textbooks for teaching Arabic as a study conducted by the researcher covering 3 textbook series points out. Through using a typology that divides activities into mechanical, meaningful, communicative, and communicative performance the study reviewed grammar activities in the mentioned series. Results reveal that two of those series relied almost exclusively on mechanical drills (El Essawi, 2018).
In an attempt to address the mentioned problems in AFL/ASL teaching and material development, the current paper will present examples of mechanical grammar activities as they appear in AFL textbooks and demonstrate how they could be changed into communicative ones. The paper highlights how and why introduced changes are expected to help transform declarative knowledge (knowledge about formal aspects of language) to procedural knowledge (or proficiency in language communication) as indicated by SAT, thus enhancing level of accuracy in learners' communicative competence.

Rasha Soliman, University of Leeds.
"Using the Communicative Approach in teaching MSA grammar"

The communicative approach in Second Language (L2) teaching has mostly been linked to the students' speaking abilities in different communicative situations. Therefore, some teachers may confuse it with the Situational Language Teaching Approach (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In teaching a multi-glossic language like Arabic, teachers may retain speaking activities only for dialectal communicative situations such as in role-plays and class conversations. In the last two decades, researchers have supported the notion that speaking activities are not only necessary for learning situational speaking skills, but they also play a cognitive role in L2 acquisition (Hubert, 2011).

In this presentation I argue that providing speaking activities in MSA supports the acquisition of syntactic and morphological MSA rules which are mostly needed for MSA writing and reading tasks. I will present examples of communicative and task-based speaking activities that provide context to the learning of some of the MSA rules that may be perceived to be complex such as the conjugation of the hollow verbs, the accusative mood of verbs after أن المصدرية and the use of the accusative forms after كان و أخواتها. These activities do not aim to support the practice of speaking skills, but they instead have a pedagogical role in supporting the cognitive process involved in acquiring MSA rules.

References

Hubert, M. D. (2011). The Speaking-Writing Connection: Integrating Dialogue into a Foreign Language Writing Course. Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching 8(2), 170-183.

Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). Approaches and methods in language teaching (2nd ed. ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

14:00 – 15:00
Zehad Sabry, University of Oslo.
"Teaching, activating and developing language accuracy in the communicative environment in UiO"

The presentation will cover some aspects that are considered very important in L2 class when it comes to grammar lesson in UIO. The first and most important is the concept of grammar in the communicative class versus the traditional meaning of grammar. The awareness of this difference led to a deeper awareness of the battles students fight in language class to master grammar aspects. Thus, we in UIO learned how to choose these battles. In European universities, grammar was and still having a good position not only for teachers but also for students who are interested in Arabic as a second language. That's why we have developed an in-between approach to fulfill our students' needs and also to keep the communicative class to achieve the targeted language proficiency. This in-between approach is a mix of guided inductive approach and deduction approach of teaching grammar.
We start with Guided induction approach:
In subconscious induction on a structured material, the students are exposed to language material that has been structured in such a way to help the inductive process. The principle advocates that through the systematic repetition of the same pattern, through graded variations, through drill and practice, the student will come to an 'integrated mastery' of the rule, without conscious analysis. A guided inductive approach starts out with an analysis of language data in context (e.g., a passage from a novel, a chart, a video clip), but it can make use of the whole spectrum of options identified on the deductive-inductive continuum. In other words, students have the opportunity to discuss their understandings about grammar rules in separated class for one or two hours every week.
The steps of grammar learning in UIO (language class, grammar class, and language class again):
The first step is the pre-engagement with grammar rules when students got exposed to the grammatical forms and guided to develop similar forms with no mention to the grammatical rule behind it. That happens in the language class three times a week. The importance of this step is that students develop intuitive heuristics in the subconscious. Then when it's the time to learn the grammar rules students have the opportunity to read about it and to get a lecture about it in a specific grammar class and expected to participate in class activities to activate what he learned and develop better language accuracy.
Output and feedback importance in and outside Arabic class:
Students are expected to develop higher language proficiency by adding to their language and master the language skills and the best way of learning is to first produce language and then get a feedback on this output. Using task and project- based helps a lot to give both teacher and the students an idea about language accusation.

Also, the type of feedback is very important. We believe that students need to have an opportunity to correct themselves. So, we use the code system to correct their assignments. In addition, using technology is very important. For example, using formative assessment tools like Quizlet and Socrative helps both teacher and student to get an idea about the students' progress.

Liesbeth Zack, University of Amsterdam
"The advantages and challenges of teaching dialect first: the Arabic curriculum at the University of Amsterdam"

At the University of Amsterdam, the approach of teaching colloquial Arabic first has been in use since the early 1990s. In the first year, Egyptian Arabic is taught in the first semester, in transcription rather than in Arabic script, with a focus on speaking and listening. In the second semester, MSA is introduced, focussing on reading and writing. One of the advantages of this system is that students have good communicative skills in Egyptian Arabic when they travel to Egypt in the second year to study Arabic at the Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo. There are, however, also challenges, for instance that students have difficulties in making the connection between the two varieties once they start learning MSA. Therefore, in the past years, we have been looking at ways to create a more integrated approach to teaching colloquial Arabic and MSA. In this lecture, I will present our experiences with the dialect-first approach and our recent projects to improve the Arabic curriculum.

15:30 – 16:00
M**aya Termonia**, University of Ghent.
 "Studying Arabic at Ghent University: a radical change towards a 21st century curriculum"

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