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STUDENTS AND THE TEACHING OF ARABIC GRAMMAR AT JORDANIAN SCHOOLS

HATEM AHMED AL-QUDAH

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

September 2002

Abstract

Students and the teaching of Arabic grammar at Jordanian schools

The main purpose of this study is to explore the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar at Jordanian schools, taking as an example the upper basic stage (ages 14-16 years) in the Al-karak district. The study consists of nine chapters; the first three chapters explain the background and context of the study, the teaching of Arabic grammar in Jordan and the heart of the problem together with an outline of previous research. The fourth chapter explains the methodology and procedures of the study.

The fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth chapters present the findings of the study and a discussion of the findings. And finally the ninth chapter is the conclusion and recommendations of the study. This chapter points out that some further research is needed in the area of grammar learning and teaching.

The methods of data collection were the questionnaire and interview. One questionnaire was developed, directed to the teachers of Arabic and the students of the upper basic stage (eighth, ninth and tenth grades). The interviews were conducted with teachers of Arabic, students and the education supervisors. The sample of the questionnaire was 700 students and 135 teachers. The sample of the interview was 10 teachers, 15 students who were selected upon their willingness to be interviewed. 7 education supervisors who form the whole population were also interviewed.

The collected data was analysed based on the frequencies and percentages of the responses. They showed several reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar which attracted high percentages of the participants' acceptance. For instance, 70 per cent of students considered the unavailability of audiovisual aids one of the reasons for their weaknesses in grammar. About half (58.6 per cent) of the students considered the lack of standard Arabic being used by the teachers of other subjects as one of the reasons for the weaknesses. From the teachers' point of view, two reasons attracted the vast majority (89.6 per cent) of their agreement. The first one was students' belief that the formal assessment for students' achievement is lenient. The second one was the lack of previous knowledge of grammar amongst students. The next strong reason for the weaknesses was students' belief that grammar is difficult to understand. Students' carelessness with previous preparation for grammar lessons was also considered one of the strong reasons for the weaknesses in grammar.

Education supervisors emphasised that the procedures of teachers appointments are not based on the criteria of teachers' quality and that makes it possible to nominate some teachers who are not able to teach grammar successfully. They also blamed the lack of effective preparation for grammar lessons by the teachers. The supervisors stressed the teachers' weaknesses in grammar. There were many other more subtle reasons for the students' problems which are discussed in depth. The study came up with several recommendations to develop grammar teaching in Jordan as well as some further research related to this study. The original contribution of this study is the combination between the perceptions of students, teachers and education supervisors which enriches the data. It also discussed the procedures of teachers' appointing as one of the issues most neglected by most of the previous studies.

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank a number of people and organisations whom without their help and support this study could not have been accomplished. I would like to thank deeply my supervisors Professor Cedric Cullingford, Dr. Paul Oliver and Dr. Christine Jarvis for the invaluable advice and guide.

Deep thanks for the entire participants who took part in this study: teachers, students and education supervisors as well as the Jordanian MoE that gave me access to the schools. My deep thanks should be expressed to the Mu'tah University for supporting me to do this study. I should also express my gratitude to the kind people in the library of Huddersfield University for their complete support and kindness.

I am highly indebted to my father, mother, brothers, sisters and relatives who always wish me the best. I would like also to thank all friends in the U.K and Jordan especially Omar Mohammed for the faithful advice and creative ideas that we shared.

A very special thank to my lovely wife for her support and encouragement that gave me special motivation during my study. I would like to thank my dearest daughters and son: Islam, Eman, Amina, Takwa, Mohammed and Tasneem for their patience. And finally I have to thank Allah for all blessings that facilitate every difficult and critical moment throughout this study.

Declaration

This is to certify that this thesis is my own work, except where I pointed to ideas or quotations from other resources. This thesis has not been submitted before, in support of any other degree in this University or other University and Institute of Learning.

Dedication

To my beloved and faithful parents, my loyal brothers, sisters, relatives and friends who gave me a lot to keep me motivated. To my loyal wife, daughters and son.

The researcher:

Hatem Ahmed Al-qudah

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List of abbreviations

- DEL: Directorate of Education and Learning.
- FNCER: First National Conference of Educational Reform.
- NCHRD: National Centre of Human Resource Development.
- NTC: National Team for Compilation.
- ERP: educational Reform Plan.
- M.A: Master of Arts.
- MoE: Ministry of Education in Jordan.
- Nu: Number.

Chapter One

Introduction and background to the study

Chapter One

Introduction and background to the study

1.1 Introduction

This study was carried out in Jordan, and it seems vital to have a brief idea about Jordan in terms of the location and the nature of educational system because these form the context of the study. Jordan is one of the developing countries in the Arab homeland. It is one of the members of the Arab league, which considers standard Arabic as the official language. The area of Jordan is 90.000 square kilometres and most of it is desert (Ahlawat and Billeh, 1996). The focus of the thesis is the explanation of students' weaknesses in Arabic grammar especially in the light of the way Arabic grammar is taught through the central textbooks in Jordanian schools.

The nature and the limitation of natural resources have put Jordan in critical need of finding alternative resources to achieve financial development, since it is considered one of the poorest countries in the world. The Jordanian people have had to think of the best and most efficient ways to protect themselves from poverty.

One of the ideas that form the policy of the Jordanian people is that the best and most efficient way to be free from poverty is to get an official job in the state system, or to get an opportunity to work in one of the gulf countries. Both routes need a qualification depending on the needs of the employment market, either in Jordan or in

the gulf countries, and the higher academic qualification the better. In this connection, Al-momani (2002) described the situation in Jordan by saying:

Jordan had few options in improving its economic status due to the lack of natural resources and has therefore concentrated on a human resource development strategy. The government has focused on upgrading technical and vocational knowledge and skills that are marketable in both domestic and region-wide labour markets (p.2).

This quote reflects the response of the Jordanian government to the need to find solutions to the limited natural resources. One of the normal results of attempts to develop the economy is to give special attention to the educational system both in the schooling sector and in higher education. Different educational reforms have occurred in Jordan, but the most important one was in 1987 when the First National Conference of Educational Reform (FNCER) was held in Amman, the capital of Jordan.

The reason for special importance of the reform is the involvement of different international agencies in the reform such as the World Bank, The British Council and the former Overseas Development Administration.

The present educational reform was started when educational policy makers called, in 1985, for an evaluation of the educational system in order to make a real development and improvement that could help Jordanian society to overcome the challenges of the new century.

The first practical step towards educational reform started with establishing a committee consisting of a number of educational leaders such as university lecturers and high-ranking officers in the Ministry of Education (MoE). They were nominated by the Prime Minister to discuss and clarify the deficiencies that prevent achieving the

educational goals of the educational system in Jordan and to prepare a comprehensive report which was called later the Educational Reform Plan.

After two years of discussions and debates, the report came to a disappointing conclusion when it pointed out the following weaknesses in the educational system:

1. The lack of connection between the curriculum and social needs.
2. The shortage of educational technology and the poor application of the available resources.
3. The reinforcing of old-fashioned methods.
4. The lack of efficiency of educational supervision.
5. The lack of efficiency of educational administration and the failure to make the best use of the available resources.
6. The failure of the evaluation and examination system, including the General Certificate Standard Examination at the end of schooling period, to achieve their aims.
7. The shortage of school buildings in the light of the rapid increase in students' numbers every year. (MoE, 1992). The shortage of school buildings leads the MoE to hire some buildings without having schools' criteria in terms of the ventilation and heating.

The first result of the comprehensive report about the educational system in Jordan was to hold a FNCER. The conference decided to run a ten years Educational Reform Plan from 1988 to 1998 (1989, MOE). The objectives of that plan covered schooling and suggested increasing compulsory education from the first to the tenth grade aged 6-16 years. The plan also covered the development of new school textbooks for all subjects, which led to the need to retrain teachers according to these new textbooks.

The comprehensive plan of educational reform also covered the development of the teaching and learning environment including the need for new buildings and special equipment. The plan, however, was difficult to implement because of financial difficulties; so different international agencies were approached to overcome the financial difficulties. The Overseas Development Administration, the British Council and the World Bank participated in building new schools with high standards of facilities. They also participated in re-building many old schools.

By the end of 1987, a committee of the World Bank visited Jordan and discussed the financial support to the educational reform. The expected costs for the reform during the ten years (1988-1998) were 433.300.000 Jordanian dinar, which equals 909.600.000 American Dollars (Abu Samaha, 1989).

With all this support, it is understandable that educational reform was assumed to be comprehensive and expected to cover all weaknesses. The structure of the educational system according to the new reform started from the age of 4-6 years, which is called the nursery stage. The second stage is the basic stage, which is divided into three stages. Those are primary, lower basic stage and the upper basic stage.

The third stage in the educational system is the secondary stage and the last one is the higher education stage. The figure (1.1) presents the structure of educational system.

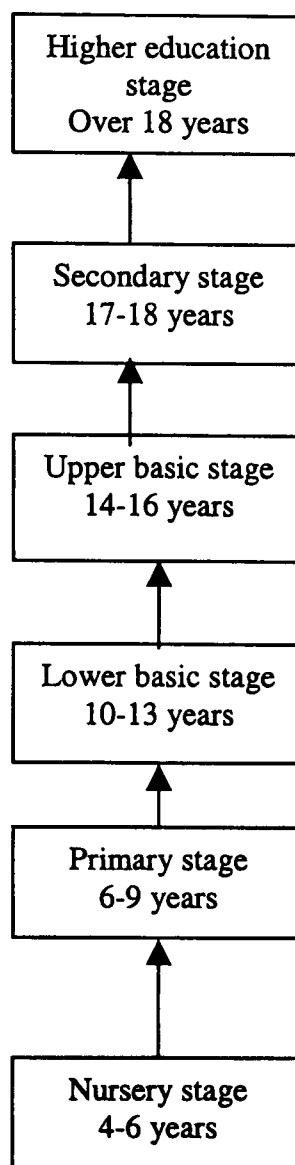


Figure (1.1): The structure of the educational system in Jordan

1.2 Special attention to language teaching

As the essential medium of education, language was paid special attention by the FNCER. The second recommendation of the conference contains a statement directly related to the Arabic language. That statement says: “Arabic is the basic column in the occurrence of Arabian nation which makes a strong connection and unity between

them". Both in terms of high-level communication, and in terms of people's personal aspiration and qualifications a comprehensive knowledge of Arabic grammar was deemed essential. This is true of all stages in the educational system since the main condition to put the students in higher grades is to pass in Arabic.

One of the practical steps, which reflects that importance of language, was to give it 68 per cent of the teaching time in the primary stage and to allocate seven lessons a week for Arabic language in the upper basic stage. (MoE, 1990).

The importance of Arabic language led the FNCER to allocate a special section in the sixth recommendation that explained what is needed to improve the teaching of Arabic. And one of the ways to gain that improvement was to encourage students at all stages to read as much as they can, because this reading is deemed one of the best ways to enrich students' abilities and knowledge of language.

The conference also called for evaluating the content of Arabic textbooks in all stages taking into account the connection between students and their environment. The main recommendations of the FNCER related to Arabic teaching and learning could be summarised as follows:

1. More effort should be paid to make a connection between the different skills of Arabic as a school subject throughout the stages, taking advantages of modern educational research. These skills are taught via separate textbooks dealing with grammar, reading, composition and summarisation skills which give the students special training on summarizing different texts.

2. More effort should be paid to oral and written composition and also to improve the summarisation skills of any Arabic text.
3. More advantage should be taken of the available audiovisual aids at schools and more attention paid to the linguistic side of the language which means the communicative nature of the language, because it might help facilitate language teaching and learning.
4. More co-operation should be arranged between the MoE and other organisations, especially the mass media, to encourage the use of standard Arabic among the students and teachers. The use of standard Arabic is one way, putting grammatical rules into practice.
5. The aims of Arabic teaching should be reviewed by taking into account the gradual movement from general to specific knowledge.
6. All words in the Arabic textbooks should be written with vowel signs accurately in order to facilitate correct reading by students.
7. Teachers' guides for the basic and secondary stages should be prepared. (MoE, 1990).

1.3 Students' weaknesses in previous studies

Despite all changes in the textbooks and plans, students' weaknesses in Arabic grammar remain very high and the reasons behind students' weaknesses form the heart of the problem in this study. If Arabic teaching were seen to be going in the right direction, there would have been no need to reform the textbooks, the teacher training programmes and the examination system in all stages. The question therefore is after more than ten years of the educational reform, have the students' performances in Arabic grammar changed positively? In other words, are the

students' weaknesses in grammar the same as before? This is in fact the heart of the problem.

The best way to open up this question is to consult the research evidence in the same area before and after 1990 as the practical steps of educational reform took place. It was clear that the problem of students' weaknesses in grammar have been facing teachers and students alike before 1990, which is the year when new grammar textbooks were introduced, and the problem remains even after teaching was based on these new books. For instance, Hamdan (1976) studied the common grammatical mistakes amongst the students at the basic stage. He presented the students with an achievement test, and the conclusion showed that there were clear weaknesses amongst students in all aspects of grammar. In the same year (1976) Staytiah studied the common grammatical mistakes amongst the students of the secondary stage in Jordan. He used the composition papers of general certificate standard examination in Arabic which were chosen randomly. The result showed that there were clear weaknesses in the application of grammar amongst the students: the application of the theoretical rules in a context of reading and writing. The result also showed that male students committed more mistakes than the female students.

Two years later, Alian (1978) studied the levels of achievement in Arabic syntax amongst the student teachers at the community colleges in Jordan. He used an achievement test consisting of sixty questions which included different aspects of grammar such as the use of tenses, the use of adjectives and the use of correct vowel signs. The result showed that the achievement of student teachers in grammar was just 56 per cent of the whole score, which means the targets of teaching Arabic syntax at the community colleges have not been achieved.

In Quater, Jaber (1980) studied the level of students' performance in grammar. They were asked to vowelize the last letter of selected words that shows to what extent students are aware of grammatical rules. The result showed that students' levels were below the needed level. The result also showed that the levels of female students in grammar were better than the male students, and the levels of students who are in the scientific branch were better than students who are in the literature branch. The result of this study leads to the necessity of doing further qualitative research in order to find out why the female students score better than male students and how female teachers organized their teaching of grammar.

In 1983, Al-khateeb conducted a study to measure the efficiency of learning grammatical skills for the sixth grade. An achievement test has been designed to measure students' achievement amongst 1000 students who form the sample of the study. The result showed that the mean of students' score in the test was 53.55 per cent from the total score, and that low achievement is attributed to the difficulty of grammatical topics, the huge number of grammar subjects in the textbook and the lack of focusing on the practical activities by teachers of Arabic such as the absence of speaking activities using standard Arabic. That use of standard Arabic enables students to reinforce the knowledge of grammar and puts that knowledge in a real situation. The study showed that the teaching methods of Arabic grammar did not achieve the goals of teaching.

In 1984, An'najjar studied the capability of grammar teaching by an observation checklist. Students' capability was checked by an achievement test in grammar that

covered a sample of basic, secondary and University students. The fieldwork study was applied on 30 teachers of Arabic grammar and 580 students in Amman. The result showed that there was a palpable weakness in teachers' performance and the same results were found with students.

Two years later, Odibat (1986) studied the common grammatical mistakes in students' writings. He asked the students to write a particular topic giving them limited time. He then analysed the grammatical mistakes in their writings. The result showed that students who are in grade six committed more grammatical mistakes than students in higher grades. One year later, Hilal (1987) conducted research to diagnose the grammatical mistakes in Bahrain amongst the student of the secondary stage. He applied an achievement test on 428 students and found that students committed grammatical mistakes in most of the grammar topics they learnt.

One of the most important studies was carried out by Ar'rubaiei (1989). He studied the difficulties of grammar teaching in the basic and secondary stages in Jordan from the perspectives of teachers and students and concluded that there were problems. He mentioned that students' weaknesses in grammar might be due to many reasons, related to the textbooks, the teachers, the students and the examination system. More specifically he mentioned the insufficient time allocated for grammar teaching, the lack of practical activities and the deficiency of some teachers of Arabic in teaching skills. The overall results of Ar'rubaiei's study indicated that students' weaknesses in grammar are still one of the main educational problems in Jordan. He classified the difficulties of grammar teaching in the following way:

- Difficulties related to the grammar textbooks such as the shortage of time given to teach the grammar textbook, and the lack of the practical activities.
- Difficulties related to the teachers of Arabic such as the lack of teachers' concentration on the speaking and writing skills, the use of colloquial Arabic by the teachers of other subjects and finally the deficiency of teachers related to the teaching skills.
- Difficulties related to the students such as the low level of students' abilities in grammar from the earlier stage, and students' believe that grammar is not an essential subject.
- Difficulties related to the examination system such as the emphasis of the dictation method throughout the questions and the limited score allocated to grammar, which makes students careless about grammar.

Several studies have been conducted focusing on teaching methods of Arabic grammar, considering it one of the most important factors of students' weaknesses in grammar. The first study was conducted by As'Sayid (1969) to compare between three methods of teaching Arabic grammar; these methods were the inductive, deductive and the full text methods. As'Sayid argued that teaching methods are the most important factor which might cause students' weaknesses in grammar. The researcher selected three groups of students. Each group was taught by one method for one full year, and at the end of each month the researcher presented students with an achievement test, in order to find out to what extent students' achievement was affected by the teaching method. He concluded that students who studied by the deductive method scored better than other methods and depending on that he recommended using the deductive method in teaching Arabic grammar.

Eleven years after Assayed study, Azzam (1980) studied the effect of inductive and deductive methods on students' achievement in grammar. He used an experimental method by teaching a control group and experimental group by these two methods and after the experiment, the students were presented with an achievement test to check the effect of the inductive and deductive methods on students' achievement. The result showed that there were no statistically significant differences between students' achievement attributed to the teaching method. In the same year, Ad'dulimee (1980) conducted a study to compare the effects of inductive, deductive and text method on students' achievement in grammar. He selected randomly 326 students to be divided into three groups; each group was taught by one method and after the experiment, students were tested to compare between their achievement. The result showed that there were no statistically significant differences between students' achievement related to the teaching method.

In the same area, Ad'dulimee and Kamel (1983) studied the effect of different methods of teaching on students' achievement in grammar. The researchers selected two groups of students and taught one of them by the text method and the other group by the explanation method. The length of the experiment was five weeks, followed by an achievement test, which showed that there was a statistically significant difference on students' achievement in favour of the explanatory method. In the same year (1983) Obidat studied the effect of exploratory and explanatory methods on students' achievement in Arabic grammar. He found that students who were taught by the exploratory method scored better than students who were taught by explanatory method.

The research evidence after 1990, as before, emphasised students' weaknesses in grammar. For instance, Ibdah (1990) studied the level of students' performance in Arabic syntax. The sample of her study was 436 students, which is about 10 per cent of the whole population in the Irbid district in the north of Jordan. The sample was distributed into 12 groups. The researcher presented students with a comprehension exam consisting of literary text provided with a number of examples and sentences covering the basic subjects of grammar. Students were asked to put the vowel signs on particular words in order to find out the accuracy of students' answers.

The general average of students' score was 59.51 per cent of the whole score. This result indicates that students' performance in grammar is low. In the same year (1990), Al-mosa emphasised that the prevalence of poor performances in the application of grammatical rules was not limited to school students, but also prevailed amongst university students. The above study was carried out after three years of the educational reform started in Jordan (1990). The situation in Algeria was the same. Morjanah (1990) did an evaluation in order to find out the levels of students' awareness of Arabic language. The study was amongst the students of the ninth year in Algeria the capital.

The study aimed at identifying the factors of students' weaknesses in Arabic by consulting the students about the conflict between colloquial and standard Arabic. Students were also consulted about the relationship between their desires to learn grammar, the methods of teaching and the weaknesses in grammar. The researcher

designed four tests and found out that 54 per cent of the students were behind in terms of the achievement.

In 1993 Ashomali conducted a study to find out students' abilities in writing skills and the result emphasised the prevalence of mistakes amongst the students of the basic stage. The study did not go into depth to find out the reasons for the prevalence of these mistakes.

The prevalence of grammatical mistakes in Saudi Arabia attracted researchers' attention. Al-majed (1996) made an analytical study to find the actual levels of students in grammar and the areas of students' weaknesses where they committed grammatical mistakes. The study came up with a long list of grammatical mistakes students committed. That list covered the overwhelming majority of concepts that are taught to students in the Saudi schools. He maintained that:

95 per cent of students made errors in using the rules of Arabic. This is undoubtedly a large proportion which confirms my viewpoint that teaching Arabic grammar faces a real crisis. P.214.

Even after nine years from the educational reform, the students' weaknesses in Arabic grammar remain the same, as pointed out by Al-Qudah (1997). He studied the barriers to using standard Arabic which indicated to what extent students were able to apply Arabic grammar. He found that student' abilities in using standard Arabic were very weak. The percentage of students who are not able to use standard Arabic was one third of the whole sample.

The prevalence of students' weaknesses in grammar amongst the University students who are going to teach grammar is one of the important signs of the weakness in

teachers' preparation. Al-hroot (1997) studied the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar at the Arabic department in Mu'tah University. He took into account students' opinions through a questionnaire. The students focused for instance on the shortage of time given to grammar teaching and the lack of previous preparation by students themselves. They also mentioned the common belief of grammar difficulty amongst students. In addition, they stressed on the lack of practical activities.

The fact of students' weaknesses in Arabic language as a whole has been emphasised by Khodir (1998). He studied the factors of the weaknesses in language use in the Irbid district in the north part of Jordan. His study showed that students at schools suffer from real weaknesses in the Arabic language in general. His study was not especially directed to students' weaknesses in grammar but it dealt with students' low achievement in the Arabic language. Therefore, the current study comes to fill the gap in this area of research.

The general impression then is that the educational reform did not solve the problem of students' weaknesses in grammar, because the performance of students is still poor. This fact was clear from different studies that have been done since the educational reform.

One of the resources of educational research is the researcher's own experience (Awdah and Malkawi, 1992). The writer worked as an Arabic teacher for the MoE in Jordan between 1990 and 1998, and realised that students in general were complaining about the difficulties of Arabic grammar. The writer also realised that their levels in the knowledge and application of Arabic grammar were low. It was the

starting point for exploring the reasons behind students' weaknesses in grammar; reasons not addressed in the educational reforms. For all the plans and directives, and despite all the textbooks, the problem remains.

1.4 Aims and questions of the study

The aims of the study are the following:

1. To explore the reasons for students' weaknesses in Arabic grammar related to the students themselves.
2. To explore the reasons for students' weaknesses in Arabic grammar related to the grammar textbooks.
3. To explore the reasons for students' weaknesses in Arabic grammar related to the teachers.
4. To explore the reasons for students' weaknesses in Arabic grammar related to the teaching methods.
5. To explore the reasons for students' weaknesses in Arabic grammar related to the educational supervision.
6. To propose some suggestions and recommendation that might help the educational policy makers in Jordan to reach the point of fully effective teaching of Arabic grammar.

The above aims could be achieved through answering the following questions:

1. What are the reasons behind students' weaknesses in Arabic grammar from the perspectives of teachers of Arabic?
2. What are the reasons behind students' weaknesses in Arabic grammar from the perspectives of the students themselves?

3. What are the reasons behind students' weaknesses in Arabic grammar from the perspectives of the educational supervisors?

There are several reasons for choosing the Al-karak district to do the study; the first one was that Al-karak is far from the centre of Jordan. The result of this is a clear lack of facilities not just in the schools, but also in all spheres of life. As a result of this, teachers used to try their best to get away from this area as soon as they could. One of the negative effects of this is that students will need time to adjust with new teacher and his teaching styles. The latest plan by the MoE to overcome this problem is to give an extra sum of money to the teachers who come from other districts to work in these places. (Al-ra'i daily newspaper, Amman, 9.3 .2002).

Such a point is important, because it means that after students get used to the styles of a particular teacher, he or she will move to another school and the better the teacher the more likely this is. This situation creates a certain degree of confusion amongst the students because they have to adjust themselves to the teaching styles of new teachers.

The second reason for choosing Al-karak was pragmatic which is the limitation of the financial resources of the researcher, since one of the important questions to be answered before starting any research project is can you afford the expenses of the research? More importantly, it was considered that the best use of the limited resources was to concentrate on a particular area and carry out a study in depth.

The third reason was that the researcher used to be an Arabic teacher in this area for eight years 1990-1998 and this experience and insight would be helpful, together with the contacts he made. The effect of personal contacts is considered one of the factors that facilitate the researchers' task. Wellington (2000) said:

Personal contacts and links may already exist with a school, college or employer that can be usefully exploited to gain quality information rather than attempting to forge new links or gain new entry for the sake of probability sample.(p.59).

In the case of the current study, a huge network of personal contacts and links, already made earlier as the researcher was an Arabic teacher in this area, supported the quality of information. The final reason for choosing Al-karak district was that Al-kokhon and al-zghoul (1995) found that the students' performance in Arabic language in this area was one of the lowest in Jordan. It is worthwhile asking what makes students' performance over there lower than other areas? Moreover, if we can understand the particular conditions, which affect the lowest standard, we might gain an insight to the most crucial evidence.

1.5 The significance of the study

This study is significant for many reasons. Some of those reasons could be summarised as follows:

- The starting point is the continuity of the problem despite the educational reforms that took place between 1987 and 1998. The grammar textbooks have been changed and the teacher-training programme have been re-organised according to the new textbooks, but the problem of students' weaknesses is still the same.

- The shortage of the studies related to Arabic grammar in educational research in Jordan. Al-kokhon (1998) made a survey to analyse the content of the educational research in the University of Jordan and he found that only 6.86 per cent of the studies were directed to Arabic grammar, its teaching and learning. The majority of studies in the field of Arabic teaching and learning were the measurement of students' achievement in Arabic language, which took 25 per cent of the studies.

More specifically, there is an absence of the studies related to students' weaknesses in Arabic grammar in Jordan which take the perspectives of students, teachers and educational supervisors alike.

- The analytical nature of the study distinguishes it from the majority of the studies in this area, because of the prevalence of descriptive studies in Jordan. This was clear to the researcher throughout the wide readings in the previous studies. Al-kokhon (1998) also said that:

Two third of the studies related to the Arabic language in Jordan were descriptive. p.320.

This study will analyse deeply the reasons behind students' weaknesses in Arabic grammar from different perspectives. It will use the triangulation method which enriches the data of the study to make it more comprehensive, valid and reliable. The previous studies used only one method for data collection, which was the questionnaire. The researcher believes that the use of triangulation helps to avoid any disadvantages of a particular method. In this aspect the current study has an additional distinction compared with the previous studies.

- There has been increased discussion of the prevalence of the weaknesses in grammar amongst the teachers of Arabic language. This matter has not been discussed deeply in the previous studies. Al-Habashnih (1993) mentioned that teachers' mistakes in grammar remain very high.

The teachers' ability to teach grammar effectively is a sensitive point because it involves the effort of the Jordanian universities and the procedures of teachers' nominated by the MoE. The teachers' ability to teach grammar has been discussed frankly by Brandley (1999). She explained that many English teachers feel that they are standing on insecure ground in their teaching of grammar because they did not learn enough grammar themselves to be able to teach. For all the plans and directives, and despite all the textbooks changes, the problem remains. This implies that the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar have not been studied In depth

1.6 The special context of the study

It is understandable that every scholarly study has a number of particular circumstances, which might prevent the generalisation of the results to cover other populations. It is always difficult to have a complete ideal study in the educational and social sciences which deal with very complex variables and conditions, and this might be taken into account rather than repeat a safer descriptive study. The study concentrates on the Al-karak district, which includes three directorates of education and learning. Those directorates are Al-mazar, the South, Al-karak, the centre, and Al-qasr, to the north of A-karak district.

One of the important issues about this study is that it is concerned with standard Arabic, the language of education and newspapers, and the formal language for correspondence in the Arabian countries. The study is not concerned with colloquial Arabic, which is the language of daily life because this level of Arabic has no written grammar. It was essential to explain this issue because some one might say: as long as we understand each other without grammar, then we do not need to learn grammar at all.

The study is restricted to the views of teachers of Arabic who teach the upper basic stage in Al-karak district. The study concentrates on the views of students in three grades, which are eighth, ninth and tenth grades, aged 14-16 years old. In addition, the study takes into consideration the perceptions of educational supervisors, who work as advisors and assessors of teachers. The above points should be taken into account as the context of the study which might prevent the findings from being generalised to another area or populations.

1.7 Operational definitions

There are some particular terms used in this study, which need to be defined because they are common in the educational system in Jordan. These terms are the following:

1. Upper basic stage

This stage covers three grades, which are eighth, ninth, and tenth grade aged 14, 15, and 16 years respectively.

2. Arabic grammar

This term refers to the system in which the Arabic language is controlled syntactically and semantically throughout a group of vowel points. These vowel signs appear up and below the letters of every word.

3. Students' weaknesses in grammar

This term refers to the deficiency of the students in the knowledge and application of the grammatical rules in the formal settings of school and higher literacy.

4. Educational supervisors

This term refers to the person who has been nominated by the MoE in Jordan to give the teachers the support and guidance regarding the teaching process.

5. Directorate of education and learning

This term means the local authority of educational service, which is responsible of the range of schools.

6. Standard Arabic

This term is one level of Arabic language, which is the language of education and official correspondences. Educated people always speak this level of Arabic.

7. Classical Arabic

This level of Arabic is the language of Cur'an and the ancient books, which is the highest level of Arabic. This level can not be understood easily except by the specialists people in Arabic language.

8. Colloquial Arabic

This level of Arabic is the daily life dialect that is considered the most popular level, which differs from one country to another, like a dialect.

9. Complementary Supervision

A system of supervision that applied in the academic year 2000/2001 which mixed the supervisors of all subjects as one unit. According to this system, the supervisor of Arabic can supervise the teachers of other subjects and the supervisors of other subjects can also supervise the teachers of Arabic. This system divided schools into the geographical units; the close schools have one supervisor to supervise all teachers no matter what his or her field is.

Chapter Two:

Grammar Teaching in Jordan

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Grammar Teaching in Jordan

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the teaching of Arabic grammar throughout the educational system in Jordan. The chapter includes a definition of language and grammar, and the reasons for the importance of language and grammar teaching. The chapter also takes a critical view of the process of grammar teaching in Jordanian schools.

Under the educational system in Jordan, students study several subjects at schools. These subjects are the following: Arabic language, Islamic education, Art, Pre-vocational education, General sciences, Social studies, Maths, Music, physical education and English language. Studying English language used to be from the fifth grade, which is aged 11 years old. More recently, the MoE decided to start teaching English from an earlier age, which is the first grade, aged 6 years old. The success of students and taking him or her to a higher grade depends on the success of that student in the Arabic language according to the latest instructions of students' success and failure. That means if a particular student did not pass in Arabic, he or she has to remain in the same grade for one year and learn all subjects again.

2.2 Status of language and grammar

Human beings are unique in their use of language which is considered one of the remarkable characteristics of human beings, (Cullingford 1995). This fact reflects the importance of language learning and teaching. There was a debate about the definition of language between the linguists and the human behavior scientists. The linguists defined language, according to Bell (1981), as follows:

Language for a linguist is form; sounds, letters, their combinations into larger units such as words, sentences and so forth. Such a set of forms would also be expected to have meaning and the elements and sequences, by virtue of having meaning, would naturally be expected to be used for communication between individuals who shared the same rules.(p.19).

The main elements in this definition are the combination between different units of language to create an understandable context and these combinations could not be achieved without the knowledge of basic grammar in every single language. For example, the one who could not understand the difference between verb and noun is not expected to produce an understandable piece of writing. Even for speaking skills, there is always a need for the basic knowledge of grammar.

The definition of language in the eyes of human scientists is an:

Open system interacting with, changed by, and changing, its environment. (Bell 1981, p.22).

In this open system, grammar stands as a constitution of speech by which the words combined together making new sentences and ways of connecting these sentences into a full or meaningful text.

In the light of language definitions, it is normal that every nation shows a certain degree of attention to language learning and teaching because it is a matter of identity and it is the easiest way to record thoughts and the cultures of human beings. The importance of language comes partly from its role as a carrier of knowledge and experiences from one person to another and from one nation to another. People can understand and benefit from others' cultures, traditions and sciences throughout the knowledge of different languages. Grammar is considered one of the most important characteristics of language. Trask (1996) described grammar by saying:

The Grammar of language is simply the way it combines the smaller elements (such as words) into larger elements (such as sentences) (p.25).

Grammar teaching is a part of language teaching and there is a big debate whether to teach grammar separately or not. The reason behind such a debate is the continuing complaints about the difficulty of this branch of learning for students and even by teachers. To define the term “grammar” is a problematic issue.

When answering the question ‘what is grammar?’ Fromkin and Rodman (1993) said:

The sounds and sound pattern, the basic units of meaning, such as words, and the rules to combine them to form new sentences constitute the grammar of a language. (P.13).

The definition of grammar indicates how important it is to every language and because of that importance of grammar; language teaching always involves grammar teaching in different ways. In this connection, Cotton (1997) explained that one of the main needs to understand any language is the combination of words and sentences in the correct way and he mentioned acknowledge of syntax to understand the meanings. The importance of grammar for the communication is vital; Cullingford (2001) explained that fluent reading relies on the ability to respond to the text by a variety of methods. This variety of methods could not be gained without a sufficient amount of grammatical knowledge.

Grammar is considered the structure of language, which we need to understand and in order to be able to use the language effectively. Pollock and Waller, (1999), mentioned that the correct use of grammar is essential so that people can express themselves in a way that others can understand. They also explained the importance of grammar by saying:

Although children might have their own playground language -their own code, so they can speak- they also need to be properly understood in other environments. Later in their lives an employer will probably choose the candidate who impresses with well-structured language both at interview and in written application. The employee is a prospective representative of the firm (p.2).

This fact could be applied to all languages so it is easy to realize the importance of grammar. Arabic grammar is described by al-Naqah (1979) as a set of principles which regulates and controls each skills of language learning. In addition, grammar is essential for teaching and learning because it helps to understand more precisely. In this connection, Al-Barakat (2001) mentioned that sentence structure helps students to better understand the written text.

2.3 The teaching of Arabic language

It is understandable that all nations pay a certain degree of attention to teaching its own language in order to keep them aware of its own culture and experiences. Arabic language is one of the global languages, which spread out not just in the Arab world, but all over the world, Romaine (1994) said:

Many smaller languages are dying out due to the spread of a few world languages, such as English, French, Chinese, Russian and Arabic (p. 50).

The importance of Arabic is not limited to the religious usage because of the increasing number of Arabic learners all over the world. For instance, Florunsh (1997) explained that the first professor of Arabic in southern Nigeria and the Arabic chief examiner for West African Examination Council is a devoted Christian. The same case could be generalised to the Arabic countries where millions of Christians and Jews learn Arabic and use it effectively as native speakers. Historically, the establishment of Arabic grammar was to help new Muslims who are not Arabic

speakers to read and understand the Qur'an and to learn the traditions of Prophet Mohammed.

People can understand others' culture and traditions through the knowledge of their language. If we imagine life without language we will realize how important is language for the mankind. Because it is one of the most essential characteristics for mankind, every one can learn it at a very young age (Carin 1999).

The importance of language in the educational field has been emphasised by many researchers. Rowell (1997), stated that much science teaching and learning depends on the use of language such as talking, reading and writing. Bentley, et al (2000) emphasised that language is vital for thinking and learning.

However, there are different fields of language studies under the term language, which are the following:

The first one is the phonetical field, which is related to the vocal sounds and their classification. The second one is the syntactical field. This field is related to the rules that control the combination of words and sentences. The third one is the semantic field, which is related to the meanings of the words. The fourth one is the morphological field, which is related to the construction of the word and the word's inflection.

Arabic has an extra degree of attention by Arabs since it is considered as one of the important factors of their unity. Moreover all Muslims around the world who are not Arabic native speakers consider the knowledge of Arabic one of their religious duties. In addition, many colleges and Universities in the United Kingdom and United States offer different levels of Arabic courses for a variety of reasons.

The Arabic language today comes is the widely used language in the modern world after English and Spanish regarding the international application and the area that is covered by speakers of it (Jawdat, 1987). The Arabic language is taught as a mother tongue and also as a second language, mainly for Moslems who are non- Arabic native speakers. Arabic courses are also offered in many universities and colleges across European countries and United States of America for different reasons. Moreover, it is one of the six official languages of the United Nations. (Ibrahim and Surty, 1992)

Like other countries, Jordan gives language teaching and learning considerable attention throughout several procedures and arrangements. For instance, the proportion of Arabic language in the first four grades is 68per cent of the time given to the teaching process (MoE 1990). Moreover, one of the most important conditions in order to transfer students from one grade to a higher one is to pass in Arabic language. This should strengthen the motivation of students to learn Arabic.

It is worth mentioning the expected aims from the teaching of Arabic language in all stages. As stated by the MoE in Jordan, Arabic teaching aims to enable students to:

1. Read correctly written material, which has vowel points and also the material with no vowel points depending on their grammatical knowledge.
2. Write correctly and clearly an Arabic text at a reasonable speed.
3. Take into account the rules of handwriting and punctuation.
4. Understand the content of what he or she reads or listens and also to give a personal opinion on it.
5. Express the feelings, needs and experiences orally and graphically using standard Arabic.
6. Create a language knowledge that enables the students to express their daily lives.
7. Apply the rules of syntax, dictation and morphology in a correct way.
8. Increase the desire towards the independent readings for the sake of knowledge and enjoyment.
9. Be familiar with the use of the lexicon and encyclopaedias.
10. Re-enforce the literary tendencies and talents for the sake of enjoying Arabic literature.

One of the expected outcomes from Arabic teaching is to enable the students to read a text which has vowel points in a correct way. More advanced students should be able to read a text “correctly” without having vowel points depending on the grammatical knowledge they possess. The role of the vowel points is to guide the reader of any Arabic text how to pronounce each letter in a proper way. In reality, the research evidence showed that this expected outcome has not been achieved. Ibdah(1990).

Khodir (1998) mentioned that in spite of the circulation of education in Arabic countries, students who have graduated from secondary schools are not able to read

“correctly” even one page. In addition, they are not able to write one page without making several grammatical mistakes. This is not just the case of Arabic learners, but it is also the same case of other language learners. For instance, English learners have the same problem and in this connection, Cullingford (1993) said:

The mistakes children make with syntax are the result of their tendency to apply certain rules too rigorously. They appear to have an instinctive grasp of necessity to understand grammatical structure for the sake of formulating and generalizations and creating new categories that they can apply to what they experience (p.63).

The statement above indicates that English students face the same difficulty when they attempt to apply the theoretical knowledge of grammar. It also shows that one of the reasons for students’ mistakes in applying grammatical rules is the desire to be complete, which leads them to make different grammatical mistakes.

In the view of the above fact, the need to study grammar teaching seems necessary in order to find out the real reasons behind students’ weaknesses in grammar.

The aims of Arabic teaching as stated by the MoE are not realistic enough because they tend to draw an ideal image for students irrespective of the real situation in the schools. And of course when we set an ideal aim, we have to have ideal facilities to achieve that aim. The ideal aims could not be achieved where 35- 40 students are studying in a small room, and where teachers cannot be expected to use group work, under these conditions.

The aims of grammar teaching in Jordan could not be achieved partly because highly academic staff without enough experiences of students has established the textbooks. And the textbooks are supposed to be delivered “from cover to cover” as stated by many interviewees. One of the other reasons might be the limitation of time given to

grammar teaching compared with the grammatical material. The problem here is related to the number of grammar subjects included in grammar textbooks. Arabic language as a school subject in the upper basic stage in Jordan includes the use of five textbooks which are the following, see Figure (1.2):

- 1. Grammar textbook with two lessons a week.
- 2. Reading textbook with one lesson a week.
- 3. Art and additional reading textbook with two lessons a week.
- 4. Language practices textbook with one lesson a week.
- 5. Composition and summarisation textbook with one lesson a week.

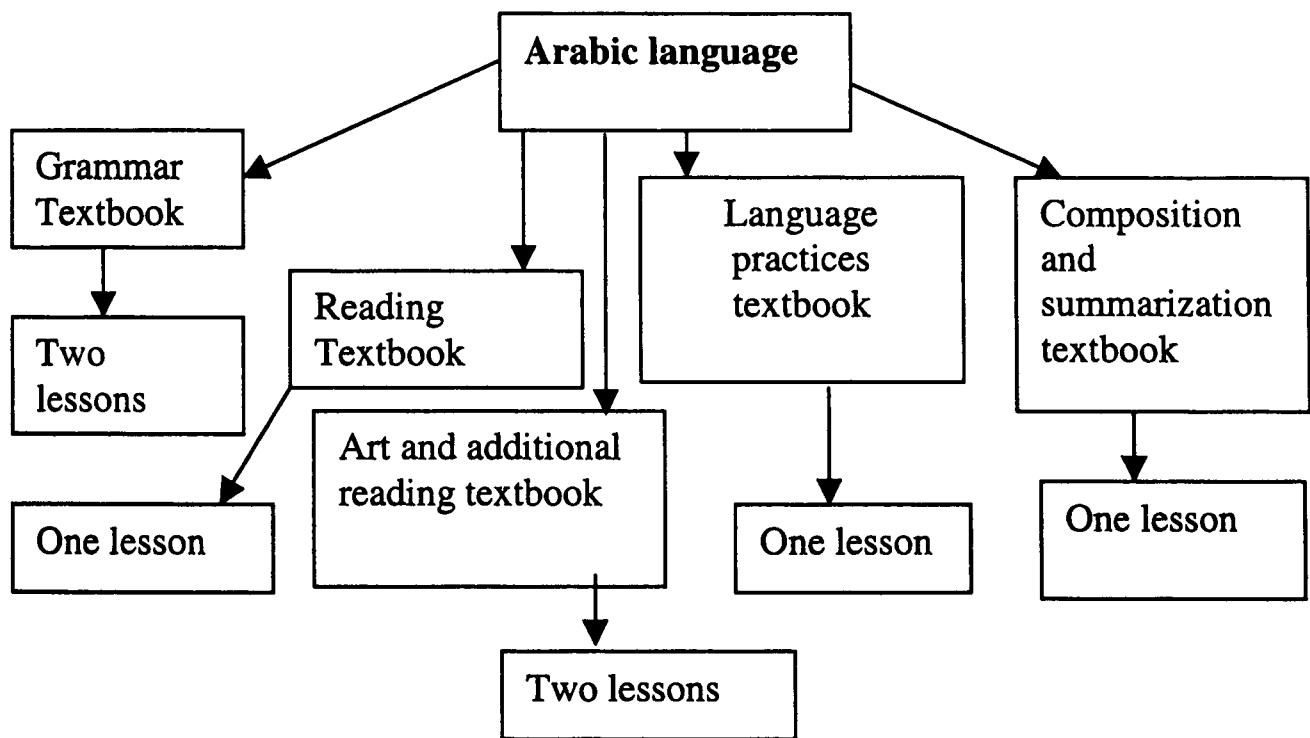


Figure (2.1)

Division of Arabic lessons during the week

The connection between the different branches of Arabic is essential to make the teaching of Arabic effective and reflect the language skills, because in the light of the aims of Arabic teaching, the application of grammatical knowledge is more important than abstract knowledge of grammatical terms. One of the educational supervisors stated during the interview that the teaching of Arabic grammar in separate textbooks

might give the impression that grammar is something different from other branches of language that are taught in Jordanian schools.

There is a big debate whether to teach grammar or not and that debate is not limited to Arabic grammar. For instance, Ahmed (1983) explained the nature of this debate by saying:

Educators have two points of views regarding grammar teaching; the first one suggests to teach grammar whenever there is a chance as a part of Arabic teaching and according to this team, there will be no need to allocate special sessions and textbooks for grammar. Instead, grammar could be taught through readings or composition lessons and through copying the correct examples in order to build the ability of the correct use of grammar. The second point of view suggests that grammar should be taught in a special sessions and textbooks because it is difficult to cover all grammar subjects without giving special sessions and textbooks (P.188).

The real situation all over the Arab countries tries to compromise between the two opinions by adopting the first opinion in the early years (one to seventh grades) aged 6-13 years and adopting the second opinion from eighth grade to the end of schooling aged 14-18 years.





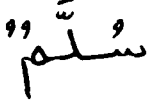
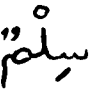

In terms of English, Flower (1974) divided the teachers of English into three groups; the first one supports the teaching of the old traditional grammar, the second one supports the teaching of the new functional grammar and the third one do not want to teach grammar at all. There is clear insistency to teach grammar in all living languages no matter what method and material are used to teach it. Weaver (1996) explained to what extent people concern with grammar teaching by saying:

They argue for grammar on what for them are moral and religious grounds, and when other stake-holders in education realize that grammar is not being taught as formal system and that students are not

necessarily mastering some of the conventions of edited written English. It is easy for them to simply assume a casual relationship and believe that English teachers are not doing their duty when they do not teach grammar as a complete subject. (p.15)

In the view of the above it is clear that even with a big debate on grammar teaching, the educationalists find grammar difficult to deal with which means there is no clear agreement amongst them to teach grammar or not and when to teach it? On the one hand it is essential for language; on the other hand it is an arcane study. Mohammed (1993) argued that the teaching of grammar draws the learners' attention to the forms and structures of the language and give them rules of usage.

2.4 The nature of Arabic language

Arabic language is one of the most difficult languages because of the vowel signss system that are changeable from one word to another and from one sentence to another. The vowel sings are Fat'ha () which appears above the letters, Damma () which also appears above the letters and the third one is Kasra () which appears bellow the letters. One of the results of this system is that the learners of such a language might face different difficulties. For instance, the word سلم with no vowel points has a several meanings, which can be identified by using specific vowel points. If we wrote it this way (sallama)  it will mean greeted, and if we wrote it this way (sollam)  it will mean leader. If we wrote it this way (selm)  it will mean peace, and if we wrote it this way (salima)  it will mean he escaped.

Abu Absi (1986) explained the nature of Arabic and the difficulties that face the learners of Arabic by saying:

The problem for beginning students and often times for advanced readers is the absence of harakat (vowel signs) which can be crucial for understanding the text. For instance, the words darasa دَرَسَ (he studied), darrasa دَرَّسَ (he taught), durisa دُرِسَ (was studied), durrisa دُرِّسَ (was taught), dars دَرْس (lesson) are spelled the same as دَرَس. Since the readers are called up to supply the proper vocalization of ambiguous written forms.(p.341).

The above problem becomes more serious when the children are targeted to learn grammar, because their ability to classify, judge and cope with the exceptions of grammatical rules is not the same as the adult learners. The difficulty of grammar is not limited to Arabic. Trask (1996) stated that the grammar of language is a complex and highly structured affair. Fromkin and Rodman (1993) acknowledged the same fact when they stressed that every grammar is equally complex.

2.5 The components of Grammar teaching in Jordan

As the language of Qur'an, Arabic is familiar to the whole of the Muslim world, (Beeston, 1970). It is the language of prayers and worships for all Muslims and that gives them a strong motivation to learn it and teach it to youngsters as well as to adults. In this connection, Romaine (1994) mentioned that being the language of Qur'an endows Arabic with special significance. She also pointed out that in Britain, Muslim children receive religious training in Arabic. The situation is the same in all Europe and United States of America where a lot of courses in Arabic are offered in the Universities and education institutes.

The teaching of Arabic language in Jordan involves several components in the process of teaching. The first component is the student, the second one is the grammar textbook, the third one is the teacher of Arabic grammar, and the fourth one is the educational supervisor of the Arabic language.

2.5.1 Student component

There is a considerable attention given to the students as a focus of learning because even if we have an ideal textbook and an ideal teacher, we will need to attract students' attention in a way that keeps the student's interest and desire to learn. Therefore students were asked to clarify the reasons behind their weaknesses in grammar in order to fill the gap in the previous studies. One of the latest workshops in the MoE in Jordan stressed the need to concentrate on student centred learning rather than teacher centred due to the increasing trend to limit teacher's role in the facilitating of learning. (Al-ra'i daily newspaper, 11.3.2002).

There was a general ignoring of students' opinions in the previous studies that dealt with the weaknesses in grammar. Those studies ignored one of the most important principles related to student centred learning and this study tries to fill this gap. Students of the lower basic stage in Jordan learn Arabic grammar as different activities and exercises throughout one textbook. This stage includes the fifth, sixth, and seventh grades aged (11-13) years old. They learn Arabic grammar with respect of their age so there are no complex rules to learn. They learn a very basic knowledge of grammar, which means that the educational system takes into account the level of students when choosing grammatical material. At the same time, students of upper basic stage in Jordan, which includes the eighth, ninth and tenth grades aged (14-16) years old learn grammar through separate textbooks.

2.5.2 Textbook component

The focus on the textbooks was clear in the educational reform that started in 1987, and one of the practical actions in this aspect was the compilation of new textbooks in

all subjects. The main aim of that step was “to improve and develop the teaching level by choosing suitable material for students’ needs and abilities” MoE, 1989. P.25.

The compilation of the new textbooks has been divided into four stages; the first one was to prepare the textbooks of grade one, five and nine. They were expected to be ready during the academic year 1990/1991. The second stage was to prepare the textbooks of second, sixth and tenth grade by the beginning of the academic year 1991/1992. The third stage was to prepare the textbooks of the third, seventh and eleventh grades by the beginning of the academic year 1992/1993. The fourth stage was to prepare the textbooks of the fourth, eighth and twelfth grades by the beginning of the academic year 1993/1994.

Grammar textbooks in Jordan are designed by a group of people called the National Team of Compilation (NTC) who are nominated by the MoE. This national team consists of some academic staff in the Jordanian universities and some officers in the MoE. The members of this team in general appear to be out of touch with the real world of schools. One of the unsurprising results is the absence of suitability of the textbook for students’ levels. That is because the expectations of the national team of the students could not be accurate unless there is shared experience between them and the students.

There is an important point, which needs to be considered in grammar teaching. This point is the gradual development of grammatical knowledge. Kingen (2000) stressed that understanding grammar and syntax is something that develops gradually.

One of the crucial points is the time given to teach grammar in the light of the multitude of subjects in grammar textbooks. The academic year in Jordanian schools is divided into two terms. Each term is four months, and the textbooks have to be covered during this period of time, no matter what the barriers are. For instance, the grammar textbook for the eighth grade includes 29 subjects and it is supposed to be delivered by an Arabic teacher through about 50 lessons a year. If we knew that the average student number in the class is 30, we will realise how difficult it is delivering all grammatical material included in the grammar textbook.

If the teacher gave every student just two minutes, he will need 60 minutes for all students, whereas the length of the lesson is 45 minutes, especially if we know that every subject needs two lessons, one for explanation and one for practicing and exercises. The national team of compilation stressed the pragmatic approach in their introductions to grammar textbooks for eighth, ninth and tenth grades.

In the ninth grade, the grammar textbook has 32 subjects supposed to be delivered through 50 lessons across the academic year whereas, teachers of Arabic will need 64 lessons to teach these 32 subjects effectively.

And finally, the grammar textbook for the tenth grade has 25 subjects supposed to be delivered through 50 lessons across the academic year. The question therefore is what is the role of grammar textbook in the problem of students' weaknesses in grammar, both in the sheer amount of material and the comprehensive nature of the books themselves. The teachers have little, if any, autonomy.

The current study considered the perceptions of students, teachers and educational supervisors towards grammar textbooks. The grammar textbooks are designed according to the inductive method. That starts with presenting different examples from which students are supposed to derive the rules with the help of the teacher.

2.5.3 Teacher component

Although Arabic grammar is taught through separate textbooks in the upper basic stage in Jordan, teachers of Arabic are responsible of teaching it in addition to other branches of Arabic language such as language practice and composition. One of the vital questions is this: can any Arabic teacher teach grammar effectively and successfully in these circumstances and with those demands?

The requirements of being teachers of Arabic are to have an award of a Diploma in Arabic language from a community college or a bachelor degree in Arabic language from any recognised University either inside or outside Jordan. After applying for a job, the applicants normally wait a few months until they receive feedback. The applications have to be treated by the Civic Centre which is the authority that organise the fulfilment of state careers including the MoE.

The successful applicants can find out the decision by following the local newspapers in order to consult the directorate of education and learning for which he or she will work. The question is what are the next steps to be a teacher? In other words, is there any academic test or specialized interview with those teachers? There is no academic test or specialised interview with those new teachers. How can we guarantee that having a degree or qualification makes a successful teacher? Is it possible that the in-

service training could be a substitution of any lack of academic knowledge amongst new teachers?

The writer believes that teachers always should be chosen from the most intelligent and effective people in order to have a certain degree of flexibility to deal with different abilities, aptitudes and backgrounds amongst students. In the view of the current policy of teachers' preparation, there is a possibility for students with low marks to be teachers, which is because of the admission policy at Jordanian universities. The policy of teachers' preparation starts from the admission of the students at the Jordanian Universities to carry out their higher education. Students who study Arabic for instance do not study it because they like it but because there is some regulations that the scores of students in the General Certificate Standard Examination determine the students' choice. And even at the University, students who study Arabic language take no more than seven modules of Arabic grammar which is not adequate to build up solid knowledge of grammar. In essence, the quality of teachers could be lower than the required level since all of other subjects attract the more intellectually gifted.

Ma'ali (1988) classified the teachers' needs for training as stated by educational supervisors as follows:

1. Classroom management
2. Teaching planning
3. Communication skills
4. Evaluation and measurement
5. Teaching methods
6. Teaching aids

7. Educational technology

His study also showed that there were no statistically significant differences between the opinions of teachers of Arabic and educational supervisors towards the training needs of teachers of Arabic. The needs of teachers of Arabic might remain the same today because there is no real change in students' performance.

In connection with teachers' preparation and training, there are two types of training programmes for teacher. The first one is pre-service and the second one is an in-service training programme. The first one starts at the universities, and is called practical education. The programme is prepared in a way to enable the students' teachers to have real practice inside the classroom.

As a part of the educational reform in 1987, there was a complete plan to re-train the teachers during their service because all textbooks were changed and the MoE decided that a new training programme should be started.

There is no doubt that the success of any reform or development plan depends on the satisfaction and efficiency of the people who are involved in that plan. One of the important elements in education is the teacher, so there was a plan in Jordan to improve teachers' performance. That plan was divided into two parts; the first was the in-service rehabilitation program, which aims to raise the levels of primary teachers to gain the first degree in their academic fields instead of the diploma of community colleges, according to the educational act 27 in 1988, MoE (1989). This part of the

plan includes some academic modules and practical training in real classroom situations.

As a result of the reform plan, teachers' rehabilitation college was established with three branches in Amman, Irbid and Al-karak districts. In addition, all teachers who are the holders of the BA degree were given educational modules at the Jordanian universities. This step aims to give better performances in terms of teaching methods and other educational aspects such as awareness of individual differences between students, the use of educational technology and the evaluation methods. The reform plan covered the teachers of all subjects.

The second part of the plan was a pre-service rehabilitation programme, which aimed to provide student teachers at the universities with educational modules to enable them to work as primary teachers. There was a plan between the MoE, the Ministry of Higher Education, and the Jordanian Universities to fulfil the needs of the MoE by employing teachers who are well prepared academically and professionally. Moreover the plan also excluded the holders of the diploma of community colleges from being nominated as teachers within the coming ten years (1988-1999).

The current study comes after more than ten years of the latest educational reform and the problem of students' weaknesses in grammar still faced by both teachers and students. That means there should be something more radically wrong which prevents teachers and students from achieving the targets of grammar teaching and learning.

2.5.4 Supervisor component

The educational supervisor is the one who has been nominated by the MoE in Jordan to observe and give guidance to the teachers in order to promote good qualities of teaching. Therefore, the importance of the supervisor's role comes partly from the need for the feedback and the best use of the feedback to improve the performance of the teachers.

The supervisors should be chosen according to their distinguished performances as experienced teachers and according to their qualifications. Depending on the Act of Education and Learning 27 in 1988, the supervisor should have a Master degree in his or her field and should also work as teacher or head teacher for at least five years. MoE (1989).

The significance of educational supervision in grammar teaching depends upon the sensitivity of the relationship between the supervisor and the teacher which is normally of a nervous and suspicion nature. In another words, teachers of Arabic usually think that the supervisor comes just to criticise and display the negative points of teachers' performance. Such a relationship might prevent an effective supervision or support for improvement.

2.6 The outcomes of grammar teaching in Jordan

One of the expected outcomes of grammar teaching in Jordan is to produce a student who can read, write and speak correct Arabic according to the grammatical rules. The question here is to what extent has grammar teaching in Jordan achieved that

outcome? To answer this question we need to consult the research evidence related to grammar teaching and students' performance in grammar.

Al-kokhon and Azzghol (1995) studied the levels of students' performance in Arabic language including grammar. They found that students' levels were low and in particular they stressed that the lowest performance was in Al-karak and Tafilah in the southern part of Jordan.

In the view of the above facts, this study attempts to find out what are the reasons behind students' weaknesses in Arabic grammar. There is no doubting about the importance of the students' weaknesses in grammar, nor the continual of effort that has given into tackling it. The education reform was designed to meet all criticisms and laid down clear plans. And yet the problem remains.

This chapter explained the value of language as a communication tool between the human beings and the role of grammar in understanding the ideas. It also presented some crucial issues related to the teaching of Arabic grammar in Jordan as the part of the context of this study including the components of grammar teaching in Jordan. It also explained the importance of Arabic for all Muslims around the world. The chapter also highlighted the general aims of teaching Arabic grammar and the debate whether to teach grammar in the way it is taught or to make some changes.

Chapter three

Students' weaknesses in grammar

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3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the aspects of students' weaknesses in grammar as stated in the previous studies and the reasons behind students' weaknesses in grammar as classified in the previous research. This chapter will also explain where the gap is in terms of the previous research related to the students' weaknesses in grammar.

3.2 Aspects of students' weaknesses in grammar

It is worth explaining aspects of students' weaknesses in grammar so that the reader can understand the problem. Grammatical knowledge is supposed to reflect students' language skills either in reading, writing or speaking skills; otherwise the learning of grammar will be a useless process. As Sayid (1972) explained many students who learnt Arabic grammar for several years are not able to read and write correctly. They can hardly articulate classical Arabic with correct sound pronunciation.

Alian (1978) mentioned that one of the major aspects of the low performance amongst students is the lack of the ability to apply the theoretical knowledge of grammar in their reading, writing, and speaking activities. His study showed that even the teachers' performance in grammar was low. He presented the sample with an achievement test and found out that the mean of their scores was 56.12 per cent out of hundred.

In the view of the above fact, the aspects of students' weaknesses could be divided into three categories; the first one is the weaknesses in reading skills, the second one is the weaknesses in writing skills and the third one is the weaknesses in speaking skills.

The weaknesses in reading skills appear through the lack of rules' application when reading any text by students because in the case of Arabic language, the grammatical system produced a group of vowel signs that should appear on the letters to help reading it correctly. For instance the word (ذهب) with no vowel signs on the letters could mean several things by putting particular vowel signs. If we wrote it this way (ذَهَبَ) it will mean 'he went'. But if we wrote it this way (ذَهَبٌ) it will mean 'gold'.

Khodir (1998) mentioned that students' ability to read Arabic text correctly is weak. They cannot apply the grammatical rules, which they have learnt throughout grammar lessons. In addition, Ibdah (1990) carried out research to measure the level of students' performance in grammar. She found out that the average of students' marks on the achievement test, which she has designed, was 59.51 per cent and she considered it low.

One of the important issues to be clarified is the level of Arabic language that the study investigates. The study has nothing to do with the daily language that is called colloquial Arabic. The reasons behind such explanation is that some people might ask, if we can talk and communicate with each other without using grammar then why to bother and spend time, effort and money to learn this difficult subject?

Standard Arabic is the language of education in Jordan as in other Arabic countries and students are supposed to master grammatical rules, which control standard Arabic. This point leads to a differentiation between three levels of Arabic language. The first level is classical Arabic, which is found in the ancient books and dictionaries. The second level is standard Arabic, which is the language of educated and academic people. The third level of Arabic is colloquial Arabic, which is different from one country to another and even from one region to another in the same country. Therefore, the level of Arabic in this study is standard Arabic as it is the language of education; in particular the study will explore the reasons behind students' weaknesses in Arabic grammar. Students' weaknesses in grammar includes both the knowledge and the application of grammar, which includes reading writing and speaking skills using a correct Arabic, because the application of Arabic grammar must reflect reading, writing and speaking skills. The study considered students' achievement as an indicator of their levels of mastering grammar.

Historically, the Arabic language has acquired its distinguished status only after it was put into the service of Islam, because it was a language of Arabs before the Islamic period and during that period there was no special interest given to Arabic language. (Abu-Absi, 1986)

After revealing of the Cur'an in Arabic, the situation became different, especially after the spreading of Islam amongst non-Arabic speakers, because Arabic native speakers at the beginning of Islam were able to read and understand the basic meaning of Cur'an

without extra effort. Non-Arabic speakers needed, for example, to learn how to read it correctly, and if they try to understand the meaning, they will need more effort.

The problem of students' weaknesses in grammar has been discussed in many studies since 1972 when the problem was raised by the first conference of the educational Ministers of Arabian countries, Ibdah (1990). All of those studies focused on the fact that students' levels in grammar were low, (Stytiah, 1976). Even before the conference of education Ministers, (As'Sayid, 1969) many others have emphasized the same fact. Ahmed (1983) also mentioned that there are many complain about students' weaknesses in grammar. They are not able to understand and benefit from the learning of grammar through their reading and writing activities. Furthermore, some students might hate Arabic lessons because of the difficulties that they face when they learn grammar. The fact of the problem is well known and often discussed in the name of research.

The problem of the weaknesses in grammar is not limited to students. It is also a problem for many teachers; even English language teachers as stated by Brandley (1999). She said:

Some teachers may not have been taught grammar themselves. Uncertain about terminology and appropriate modes of describing and analyzing aspects of word and sentence structure, they may feel that without this foundation their own teaching remains on insecure ground.(p.220).

Ibdah (1990) has stated that, in spite of all the attention of Arabic countries paid to Arabic teaching and learning, there is still a clear weakness amongst students in the application of grammatical rules.

The researcher worked as an Arabic teacher in the Ministry of education MOE in Jordan between 1990-1998, and realized that students' in general were complaining about the difficulties of Arabic grammar, so he became very keen to understand the reasons behind that complaint.

In Jordan, the teachers of Arabic and the educational supervisors alike noticed the poor performance of students in Arabic grammar and they started discussing the problem to understand the reasons behind it. The main types of students' weaknesses in Arabic grammar are the misuse of the vowel signs that control the meaning of every single word and also the meaning of the whole sentence. This type of weakness affects students' readings since the way of pronouncing the Arabic text involves the pronunciation of the vowel signs (Jaber 1980). The meaning of the words and sentences could have a major change in meaning because of a small grammatical difference. For instance there is a verse in the Qur'an says:

(إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ) translated: (The scholars are the most fearful of Allah). This meaning comes only from having the Fat'ha at the top of last letter of the word (Allah) and having Damma at the top of last letter of (Alolama'u). What is interesting is that if the reader changed the vowel signs oppositely, the meaning also will be the opposite which is Allah is the most fearful of the scholars and this meaning does not make any sense.

The second type of the weaknesses is to read or write without applying the grammatical rules. For instance, there is a rule which says: the adjective should follow the noun it describes in declension (Ad'dahdah, 1992). That means both the adjective and the word it describes should have the same vowel sign at the last letter. When students write any sentence that contains the adjective, they do not follow the rule precisely although they know it theoretically. They might put a different vowel sign at the end of the adjective. The use of prepositions by students was identified as one of the most difficult subjects where students committed grammatical mistakes.

In her study, Ibdah (1990) arranged the grammar subjects that were included in the achievement test where students committed grammatical mistakes according to the prevalence of the mistakes. The first subject was the use of the (Sifah) adjective which attracted 82.8 per cent of students' mistakes. The second one was the use of (Khabar almubtada) predicate, and the third one was (Almudaf) adjunct. Students did not use the correct vowel signs both in their reading and writing. Her study also proved that female students scored better than male.

Al-majed (1996) mentioned that 90.70 per cent of Saudi students committed mistakes in the use of prepositions. He also pointed out that 85.36 per cent of students committed grammatical mistakes in the use of present and order tenses.

3.3 Reasons behind student' weaknesses in grammar

This section will present the reasons behind students' weaknesses in grammar according to previous studies in order to know why they focused on particular aspects and what are the factors that they ignored, and most importantly why they did so.

The majority of previous studies related to grammar have concentrated on the effect of teaching methods on students' achievement. They accept the fact that students' performance in grammar is low and therefore they tried to find out the effect of different teaching methods on that performance considering teaching method is one of the most significant factors. There are other factors over which an education system has little control, like parental attitude. The previous studies have limited the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar to the following classification:

3.3.1 The grammar textbooks.

One of the reasons that come under this point is the shortage of time allocated to grammar teaching and the lack of practical activities. (Ar'rubie'i 1989) cited in (Al-kokhon 1992, p.68). The previous studies have focused on the role of the curriculum in creating the weaknesses of students.

Khodir (1998) mentioned that one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in Arabic, as a whole is the textbook; even they have been designed with a modern look. The instructional material is not fully connected to the students' daily language and pays no

special attention to functional grammar, which is supposed to be used by students' themselves. (p.12).

3.3.2 The teachers of Arabic

One of the reasons given for the disappointing results is the lack of teachers' concentration on practical activities, which reinforce the theoretical knowledge of grammar. In addition, previous studies considered the use of colloquial Arabic by teachers one of the most important reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar because the use of standard Arabic by teachers might support giving a good model to the students who are watching every act that teachers make. Al-habashneh (1993) mentioned that grammatical mistakes committed by teachers of Arabic were high and most of the mistakes came from their ignorance of vowel signs. Therefore, teachers of Arabic should be tested before nominating as language teachers to ensure that students will have high quality of teaching.

Moreover, the lack of teaching skills amongst teachers of Arabic might affect students' performance in grammar since the role of teachers is crucial in the process of teaching and guiding students to the suitable learning styles. Khodir (1998) explains that teachers of Arabic need special training to enable them to teach effectively and he argued that the low level of teachers' knowledge and ability might attribute to the Universities or colleges of teachers' preparation. Just as it is quite easy to describe the students' weaknesses so it is easy to blame teachers.

3.3.3 The students

Students are the targets of the teaching process, so the role they must play in participating the process of teaching and learning is essential. One of the suggested reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar is the lack of their previous knowledge of grammar and the public opinion amongst students that grammar is insignificant subject. Arrobie'e (1989) sighted in Al-kokhon, (1992).

In addition, there are some psychological and educational factors, which might affect students' attitudes towards grammar learning such as having negative feelings towards the grammatical material and revealing having to learn it. Such attitudes might create barriers between students and their experience of grammar in school.

3.3.4 The examination system

The reasons related to the examination system could be summarized in three points; the first one is the concentration on the dictation questions that measure students' ability in the memorization. The second reason is the insufficiency of giving a mark for grammar to encourage students towards effective learning of grammar since they pass easily. Even if the student had a low mark in grammar, there will be a chance to pass in Arabic by scoring better marks in the other branches of Arabic which are mentioned earlier in chapter two. The third reason is that the current exams do not measure the real language abilities amongst students because the vast majority of teachers do the exams just to follow the instructions and to fill the marks record. The quality of the exams is not at a level to measure the real ability of students.

In the light of the current examination system both students and teachers remain under pressure throughout the academic year because there are too many exams every term. Students need to prepare for the exams and teachers need to deal with it starting from choosing the question to marking the exams and recording the marks. That means that students do not find enough time to apply their grammatical knowledge especially when there are no real demands in the examination system. The teachers do not find enough time to learn new styles of teaching and to interact with students effectively.

The researcher believes it is better to present students with fewer exams because that will give the teachers of Arabic an opportunity to improve the quality of the exams in order to cover memorization as well as understanding and application. At the same time that will give students more opportunities to apply their grammatical knowledge without the pressure of constant examination. It will also mean that the whole task of learning grammar is not devoted solely to the demands of the exams.

3.3.5 The duplication of standard and colloquial Arabic

The idea of using two levels or patterns of Arabic has been considered one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar because it causes a certain degree of confusion amongst students since they use colloquial Arabic in their daily language and as they go to schools they start learning a different level of Arabic which is the standard Arabic. It is like changing from dialect to academic forms of utterance. Under these circumstances, students might ask several questions related to the distinction between standard and colloquial Arabic. (Khodir, 1998). They might ask which level of language we need to use and if we do not use standard Arabic in our daily communication why do we have to

learn it. There is no doubt that such a questions affect students' motivation to learn grammar.

One of the questions that students might ask is, if we can communicate easily without learning grammar why should we learn it? They might also ask why do we not apply the grammatical knowledge through our speech so we can re-enforce that knowledge? Such a questions might affect students' attitudes towards grammar learning and affect their achievement in grammar. These questions are rarely addressed, let alone answered, since there is an assumption that the textbooks have all the answers and it is the pupils' duty to learn. The idea of involving them is not considered.

3.3.6 The teaching method of Arabic grammar

The teaching method is important in its effects on students' achievement because it forms the way of presenting the grammatical material. It has to be attractive for students in order to keep their interest and enthusiasm towards learning grammar and involve them in class activities. Arabic grammar is taught in Jordan by the inductive method. The grammar textbooks are designed according to it and the question is; is this method the only and unique method to teach grammar? There are in fact different methods that can be used to teach grammar. For instance, the deductive method is one of the traditional methods of teaching grammar that is based on presenting the rules directly to the students as starting point followed by examples from the teacher. Students are also supposed to come up with similar examples in order to reinforce the knowledge and practice of the rules. In addition, there is another method of teaching grammar called the whole text

method; this method is based on presenting the examples through a full text. Students are supposed, with the teacher's help, to derive rules from the text. The MoE strongly prefers teachers of Arabic to use this one considering it the most suitable method for students' levels and schools environment. In response to this policy by the MoE, grammatical material in the textbooks is arranged according to the inductive method, starting with the examples, and followed by explanation and the rules respectively. Al-khateeb (1990) studied the common teaching methods of grammar amongst the teachers of Arabic. She found out that the main one was the inductive method that is used by all teachers of Arabic with the exception of some teachers who occasionally use the deductive method. She took permission from the MoE to record the lessons of 72 teachers on a tape recorder; one lesson was recorded for each teacher. After that the researcher analyzed the recorded material and found that the overwhelming majority of teachers tended to use the inductive method which means they are committed to the instructions of the MoE via the educational supervisors who visit them regularly to give them guidance and advice. More clearly, she said:

The result showed that 74 per cent of the teachers used the inductive method and 25.35 per cent of them used the deductive method in the teaching of grammar. (p.27.)

The result of this study does not necessarily mean that the 25.35 per cent of teachers use the deductive method always. They might use it occasionally. It is always difficult for the MoE to control teachers' use of inductive or deductive method because the head teachers and the educational supervisors can attend few lessons to assess or observe teachers' performance. They cannot keep teacher always under observation to check which method

he or she uses in grammar lessons. This does, however indicate that despite the demands of the MoE some teachers go their own way

That study was carried out after the educational reform act and judging by its results, there is not enough flexibility given to the teachers of Arabic to choose any other method that might suit students better than the inductive method. The research evidence showed that the best performance comes from the schools which used mixed teaching methods, and yet the problem of students' weaknesses in grammar in Jordan remains and the same method is used. We see a contradiction between the failure of a policy and its continued imposition.

One of the issues to be taken in to account when teaching grammar is students' needs for grammatical knowledge in a way that can be applied throughout their daily life. That issue can be achieved by choosing suitable material.

Khodir (1998) stated that grammar teaching is limited to introducing students to Arabic grammar as basic and formal information about the construction of the word, leading the teachers of Arabic grammar to use the dictation method. That method relies on the memorization of grammatical rules with not enough attention to the idea of grammar application.

From 1969 research started paying attention to the comparative studies between inductive and deductive method on students' achievement in grammar when Al-saied (1969)

conducted a research to compare these teaching methods. He found out that the deductive method gave better results on students' achievement compared with the inductive method. After that study many researchers tried to find out the effect of different teaching methods on students' achievement in grammar. In particular, they concentrated on the inductive and deductive methods.

Azzam (1980) conducted a study titled "the teaching of Arabic grammar between deduction and induction". He selected 'randomly' four schools in the Irbid district and divided the students in each school into two equal groups with 20 students in each group. Azzam taught all control groups by the inductive method and all of the experimental groups by the deductive method and after each lesson an achievement test was arranged for the students. The results showed that there were no statistically significant differences between students' achievement due to the teaching method. It should be noted that the same teachers bring many other factors rather than a simple method such as their individual differences in terms of grammatical knowledge and even their behaviors inside the classroom.

Although this study was limited to the use of an achievement test and on the third preparatory grade, which is aged 15 years, it brings up an important question, which is why keep teaching grammar just by inductive method if research shows no difference between the effects of any method?

In the same way, Assultani (1981), cited in Al-kokhon, (1992) studied the effect of inductive and deductive methods on the achievement of female students in grammar. He

also used an experimental method in two schools and divided 144 students into two equal groups to teach each group by one method. After nine weeks of teaching inductive and deductive methods, he presented the students with an achievement test. The results showed that there were no statistically significant differences between students' achievement attributed to the teaching method. The limitation of the sample in this study is clear but it also raises the question of why to insist on using the inductive method if it gives the same result as deductive method? Why not give teachers freedom to choose?

It is clear that all of the previous studies displayed the problem of students' weaknesses in the Jordanian schools. They emphasize the fact that students' weaknesses in the application of grammatical rules is due to various reasons such as the use of colloquial Arabic in students' daily life. They also mentioned the low level of teachers' ability in academic knowledge or teaching skills without discussing it deeply. Most importantly, the teaching method of Arabic grammar, which is currently focused on the inductive method, was blamed as one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar.

In 1988 Al-akeel studied the effects of the deductive and inductive methods on students' achievement in Arabic grammar. The study was done as a quasi experimental study in the Irbid district targeted to the students of the first secondary grade aged 17 years. The study sample was 146 male and female students typically divided into two groups. The experimental one which was taught by the deductive method and the control group was taught by the inductive method. The experiment took four weeks and finished with an achievement test. The analysis of the results showed that there were no statistically

significant differences between students' achievement due to the teaching methods. This study could be clear evidence that the method of teaching, as such, is not the point. There are deeper issues, like the imposition of methods whatever they are that needs to be considered. The problem is not the method but the effect of imposition teachers of Arabic to teach in a certain way.

It is worth mentioning that all of the previous studies ignored one of the most important factors that participate effectively students' weaknesses in grammar, which is the educational policy in nominating teachers of Arabic. That policy allows nominating many teachers who are not fully prepared either academically or professionally but who will happily concur with the set instructions. This fact was clear from the opinions of students, educational supervisors and even teachers themselves through the interviews.

Therefore, the main argument in the current study is that students' weaknesses in Arabic grammar are due to two types of reasons. The first type are the internal reasons that are related to the students, the grammar textbooks, teachers and teaching methods and educational supervision. The second type are the external reasons those are out of school control such as the effect of mass media, the use of colloquial Arabic throughout students' daily life, and the formal procedures of nominating the teachers of Arabic.

No one has looked deeply at the reasons behind students' weaknesses in Arabic grammar, so the current study tries to clarify the reasons from three different points of views, which are students, teachers and educational supervisors. As in the findings of the study in

chapters (5-8), there were some main internal reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar such as the students' carelessness in previous preparation for grammar lessons and the students' conviction that Arabic grammar is difficult to understand. In addition one of the highest reasons given by teachers was the students' sense that the formal instructions that constitute students' success and failure demanded by the MoE are lax. Those instructions enable students to pass and go to a higher grade irrespective the real abilities of students. 89.6 per cent of teachers and 36.3 per cent of students suggested this. At the same level of acceptance, teachers considered the lack of basic knowledge of grammar amongst students one of the main reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar.

This chapter has clarified aspects of students' weaknesses in grammar which implement the low performance of grammar applications either in speaking or writing skills. The chapter also presented briefly the previous studies that tried to discuss the problem, sometimes from teachers' points of views and sometimes from students' points of views. Therefore, the originality of the current study comes from the fact that puts together the opinions of three parties who are involved with grammar teaching and learning, and attempts to analyze them more deeply. The parties are students, teachers of Arabic and education supervisors.

It was clear that previous studies came up with several reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar such as the unsuitability of grammar textbooks to the students' levels, the competence of teachers and the students' carelessness of grammar homework. The previous studies also came up with a fact that female students always have better

achievement and performance in language learning. They also tried to say where the blame lies, rather than analyze the reasons.

There was a debate about the effect of the gender on the language performance amongst the students and most of the studies found that there were statistically significant differences between male and female students to the favor of the female students. That could be one of the starting points to make major improvement on students' achievement and performance in the language generally and in grammar particularly. For instance, Stytiah (1976), Alian (1978) and Morjee (1989) respectively found that the female students scored better than male students. Females also committed fewer mistakes than male students and that could open up a question why is the females' performance in language use better than male students? And yet how can the male teachers improve their teaching according to the language teaching methods used by the female teachers?

However, this research is not research on gender but it deals with the problem of students' weaknesses in Arabic grammar. There are many factors, each of which can be blamed for the occurrence of the problem. Parents can be blamed for not encouraging their children to use standard Arabic as a normal way of applying grammar. The Society can also be blamed because of the huge gap between the status of teachers nowadays and two decades before. The teachers of Arabic also can be blamed because of their defensive nature that prevents any possible improvement or development in their performance in their teaching.

This academic problem involves many issues that are connected in one way or another. Schools' administration has to do something to get the parents involved; they could offer great help and support. Pupils at schools have no voice in terms of essential matters such as teaching methods and grammatical material. Indeed there is a body called students' government in all schools but it has no effective role. Pupils have not been told why they need to learn grammar. At the same level of un-involvement, teachers have no voice or freedom to choose the grammatical material or the teaching method because the MoE has a central policy which runs schools all over Jordan no matter what the particular circumstances of each region.

Chapter Four

Methodology and Procedures of The Study

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES OF THE STUDY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology and procedures of the study in detail, so the chapter explains the population and sample of the study, the methods of data collection, the pilot study and the analysis of the data.

4.2 Population and sample of the study

The population of the study always depends on the nature and the purpose of the study, and it could be a complete set of elements, which we investigate. Hinton (1995) defined the population of the study by saying:

A population needs not to be a collection of people, even though we are used to hearing the term used in this way, such as the population of the Britain. A population can be a complete set of anything. (p.46).

Depending on the above definition, the population of the current study consists of the following elements:

- The public schools in Al-karak district in the south of Jordan, which are distributed on three directorates of education and learning.
- The teachers of Arabic who teach grades eight, nine and ten in the public schools during the scholastic year 2000/2001, particularly in the district of Al-karak, which consists of three directorates of education and learning.

- The students of eighth, ninth and tenth grades in the basic schools of Al-karak district.

The age of the students is between (14-16) years. Students at this age are able to deal with the research instruments more than student in the lower basic stage.

- The educational supervisors of Arabic language in Al-karak district.

The reasons behind this choice could be summarized as follows:

1. The research evidence showed that students' performance in Arabic language in this area is one of the lowest performances compared to the other areas in Jordan. Al-kokhon and Azghoul (1995) studied the performance of Jordanian students. They mentioned that the average of students' performance in Arabic was around 50 per cent, but they stressed the fact that students in Al-Karak and Tafilah had the lowest performance.

Therefore, the researcher believes that if we understood the reasons behind students' low achievement in this area where there is a lack of facilities and services, we might then understand easily the roots of the problem. Ota'ala (1997) maintained that in poorly equipped and serviced schools the level of proficiency and outcomes of teaching was very low.

2. The ease of access to the schools, information and participants because the researcher worked in this district for eight years (1990-1998) and he has made good relationship with colleagues, either teachers or supervisors. Therefore, the value of these relationships could be very helpful in all contacts made to facilitate the researchers' tasks.

3. The research budget was very limited and so encouraged the researcher to do this study in one district, which is Al-karak.

It is always difficult to cover all of the research population, which leads to the idea of sampling. The sample selection can be made in two main types. These are probability sample and non-probability sample. The difference between these two types is that in a probability sample there is great chance to avoid bias because the sample is drawn randomly whereas non-probability sample might cause a certain degree of bias.

The sample of this study has been selected according to the probability sample and specifically it was simple random sample. This sample has the advantage of equal opportunity for each member in the population to be one of the sample members. Cohen et al (2000) said that:

In simple random sampling, each member of the population under study has an equal chance of being selected and the probability of a member of the population being selected is unaffected by these selection of other members of the population. (p.100).

The questions then should be a representative sample? And which method is suitable for the research? The sample size is one of the complex issues because there is no clear agreement between the researchers about the ideal size of the sample. And in this connection, Cohen and Morrison (2000) say:

There is no clear-cut answer, for the correct sample size depends on the purpose of the study and nature of the population. (p.93)

Depending on the sampling idea, the sample of the questionnaire in the current study consists of 25 schools in Al-karak district, taking 700 students of upper basic stage aged

14-16 years. The students’ sample was chosen from the three Directorates of Education and Learning DEL. The table (4.1) presents the division of students on the DEL.

Table (4.1)
Division of students’ sample

DEL	No	%
Southern Al-mazar	208	29.7
Al-karak	258	36.9
Al-qasr	234	33.4
Total	700	100

DEL: Directorate of Education and Learning
NoS: Number of students.

The sample also covered 135 teachers of Arabic who teach students of upper basic stage. The table (4.2) presents the division of teachers’ sample.

Table (4.2)
Division of teachers’ sample

DEL	No	%
Southern Al-mazar	49	36
Al-karak	54	40
Al-qasr	32	23
Total	135	100

DEL: Directorate of Education and Learning.
NoT: Number of teachers.

The sample also included 7 education supervisors in three DEL, those are Southern Al-mazar, Al-karak and Al-qasr directorate. The supervisors were interviewed. The choice of the sample included students, teachers of Arabic and education supervisors in order to fill the gap of the previous studies. To the best of the writers’ knowledge, there is no study in Jordan that covered these components to explore the reasons behind students’ weaknesses in Arabic grammar.

As stated in many books on research methodology, the choice of the sample should be done carefully bearing in mind the idea of a representative sample in order to avoid any bias or error to get valid and generalizable findings. Bell (1999) said:

Sampling techniques will be employed in order to produce a sample which is as far as possible, representative of the population as a whole. (p.126).

The 25 schools represent 21 per cent of the study population, which are 117 schools. The choice of students' sample has been arranged to give all students in the chosen grades an opportunity to participate responding to the study instruments because the researcher did not want to allow any chance for the schools to choose any particular student to participate because they might choose students based on their good attitudes towards school and teachers. The schools were listed and each name was written on a small piece of paper. All of them were entered in a box to start the selection. The selected schools were ticked on the list in order to write them later in a separate list.

Alian and Ghonim (2000) said:

To guarantee a comprehensive sample, the size of the sample should be large enough because the large is the sample the better is the representativeness of the population. (p.141).

The teachers' sample represented about 56 per cent of the study population in order to have generalisable findings because as long as the sample is large, the findings could be generalized. The number of male teachers was 70 and the number of female teachers was 65 amongst the sample of teachers because there was no huge gap between the numbers of male and female teachers in the study population. It was 114 male and 127 female.

Awda and Malkawi (1992) stated that some researcher might choose a small sample to limit the expenditures but he or she will not be able to generalize the findings of the study. He emphasized that, as the sample size is larger as the chance of representativeness increases. The sample of the interviews was 10 teachers, 27 students and 7 supervisors depending on the desire of participants to be interviewed.

4.3 Methods of data collection

It is important to explain the methodology of the current study so the readers will have the opportunity to judge and evaluate it. Wellington (2000) said:

No one can asses or judge the value of a piece of research without knowing its' methodology. (p.22).

The current study did not adopt one single approach for data collection. But both quantitative and qualitative methods have been adopted. Figure (4.1) presents the methods of data collection.

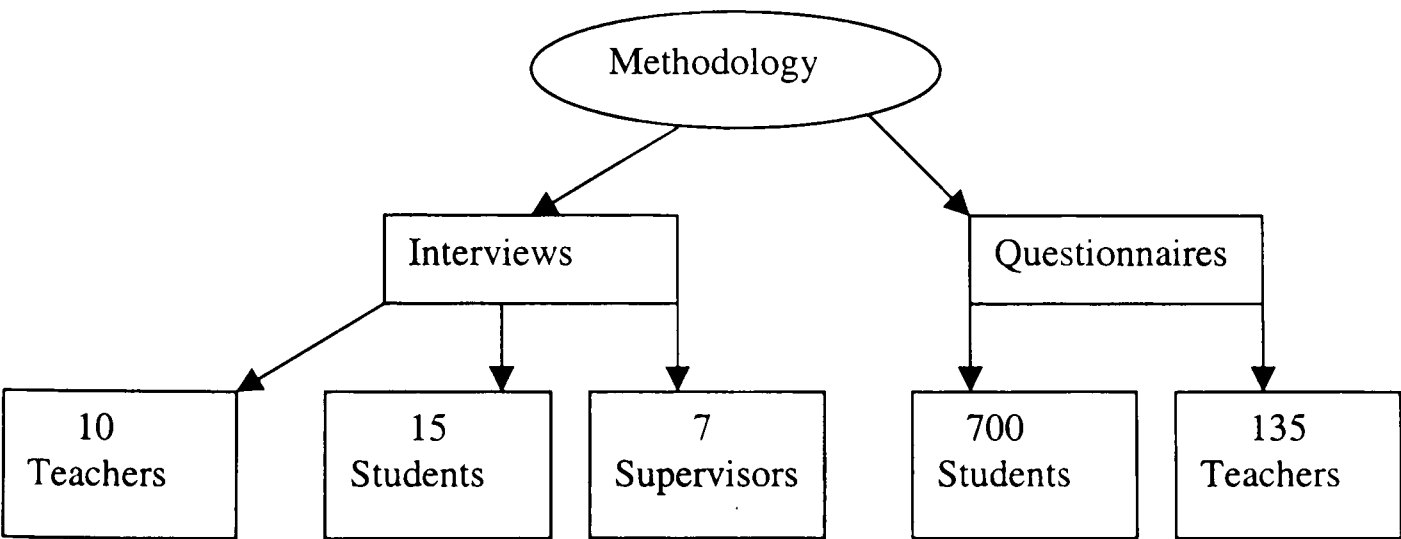


Figure (4.1)
Methods of Data Collection

Quantitative and qualitative methods are the best methods for data collection in educational research because both quantitative and qualitative methods have some disadvantages and criticism, so the combination between both of them might help to avoid these disadvantages and overcome any criticism. This combination of quantitative and qualitative is one of the meanings of the term 'triangulation'. Allam and Skinner (1991) encouraged the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches by saying:

Many have questioned whether the contrast between qualitative and quantitative research is a particularly constructive one, arguing that the best research in social science contains elements of both. (p.177).

In addition, Awda and Malkawi (1992) mentioned that, if the researcher wanted to make educational decisions on the research, he or she should combine qualitative and quantitative methods. Furthermore, Oliver (2000) explained that in order that the researcher can give a more detailed picture of the study under investigation, it is acceptable to combine both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Cohen and Morrison (2000) have defined triangulation as the use of more than one method of data collection. Creswell (1994) made it clearer by saying:

Any bias inherent in particular data source, investigator and method would be neutralized when used in conjunction with other data source, investigator and method. (p.175).

In concord with this Bryman (1995) mentioned that the main idea of triangulation in educational research has emerged from the idea of multiple operationism, which assert that validity and confidence in the findings might be improved by using more than one method for data collection. Oliver (2000) encouraged the combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection, arguing that this will give the researcher

more detailed picture of the study. Moreover, Denzin (1970) extended the meaning of triangulation to include several types of triangulation such as taking the perceptions about the same subject from different resources. Triangulation is also applied in this study through the consultation of students, teachers of Arabic and educational supervisors about the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar.

Depending on the idea of triangulation, the application of this idea in this study will involve the use of open question, questionnaire and semi- structured interview for data collection. The open question was directed to the group of teachers of Arabic, students of the upper basic stage and educational supervisors to find out if students' weaknesses in Arabic grammar are a real problem. The questionnaire was directed to the teachers of Arabic and the students of upper basic stage aged 14-16 years in order to explore the reasons behind students' weaknesses in Arabic grammar from different perceptions. The interview was also directed to the teachers of Arabic, students, and the educational supervisors of Arabic.

4.3.1 Questionnaires

The questionnaire could be defined as a group of questions, which are directed to the number of participants regarding their perceptions towards a particular matter, which is the problem of the study. Clearer definition for the questionnaire has been created by Al-khooli (1994), by saying:

Questionnaire is an instrument for data gathering by directing selected questions to a selected sample of participants. (p.388).

One of the main advantages of the questionnaire is the low cost of data gathering, because the questionnaire enables the researcher to get the data from a huge number of the participants. In addition, it saves the time and effort compared with other research instruments. May (2001) said:

The mail or self-completion questionnaire offers a relatively cheap method of data collection over the personal interview. (p.97).

For the above advantages, amongst others, the questionnaire was one of the instruments for data collection in this study.

4.3.1.1 Construction of the questionnaire

To design a questionnaire, the researcher needs to go through different steps, which is considered one of the complex operations. Lowvel and Lowson (1970) said:

Designing a questionnaire is a complex and involved operation. The nature form and order of the questions is of great importance if meaningful results are to be obtained. (p.91).

There are several steps before the occurrence of last version of the questionnaire. The first one was wide readings in two directions: the methods of educational research, and the educational research of teaching and learning of language, and in particular the field of grammar teaching. The reason of a wide reading in the methods of educational research was to develop and enrich the researcher's background in this field.

The readings throughout an educational research related to language teaching involved grammar teaching methods, students' weaknesses in Arabic grammar because such a readings would give a since of what have been done in the relevant area of research. It

also opens a sight on the themes of the research instruments and to explore where the gap is in the previous studies.

After these wide readings, an open question was directed to the people who are involved in grammar teaching including 200 teachers, 100 students and 7 educational supervisors in Al-karak district, asking them if students' achievement in Arabic grammar is low and if yes, what are the reasons behind that? (See appendix 1).

When analyzing the responses of the participants in the open question, 290 people, who represent 94 per cent of them, considered students' achievement in Arabic grammar is low. The suggested reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar mentioned in the responses of that open question were the basic background of the questionnaire. One of the main advantages of using open questions is to give the participants a certain degree of freedom to express their opinions frankly, which enriches the collected data. Best (1981) stated that, open form of questionnaire calls for a free response from the respondent in his or her own words, In addition, the open question provides for greater depth of response.

In the light of the open question results, the first version of the questionnaire was designed in five parts as follows:

- General information.
- Students' dimension.
- Grammar textbooks dimension.
- Teachers and teaching methods dimension.
- Educational supervision dimension.

The last dimension which is educational supervision was just employed for teachers because students are not in touch with the supervision and most of them have no clear idea about it. The covering sheet of questionnaire contains a note for students to leave out the last part of the questionnaire. (See appendix 2).

The covering letter is important because it forms an introduction to the questionnaire and it gives the respondent clear idea and instruction about filling the questionnaire. It is also supposed to stress the confidentiality of the responses in order to respond frankly and honestly as much as possible. Robson (1999) maintained that the covering letter should indicate the aims of the study and convey its importance, in addition to assuring confidentiality of the responses. Every domain of the questionnaire has a list of suggested reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar, and the respondents were asked to show to what extent these reasons could cause students' weaknesses in grammar. The scale of the questionnaire was: strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree and strongly disagree.

The general aim of the questionnaire is to explore the reasons behind students' weaknesses in grammar from the perceptions of both teachers and students. The questionnaires were circulated in group situations because it saves time and effort and enables the researcher to be in touch with the participants directly to clarify any ambiguous issues. Bell (1981) stated that questionnaire with written replies might be presented either by post or by group situation such as class of children.

4.3.1.2 Pilot study of the questionnaire

The value of pilot study is that it helps to make sure that every aspect of the questionnaire will work as intended (Opppenhiem, 1994). The main purpose of the pilot study is to reduce any kind of ambiguity in the research instrument, Sundramoorthy (1992) mentioned that the pilot study is one of the important steps in which the researcher tests the extent of clarity in the research instrument.

The value of pilot study comes from the need to facilitate the task of the participants in order to get valid and reliable responses to the research instrument. Bell (1999) emphasized the importance of the pilot study as a method of clarifying every possible ambiguity in the research instruments.

Therefore, the current study also took the pilot study of the questionnaire into two main directions. The first one was to check the validity of the questionnaire by giving it to 28 referees who are specialized in Arabic language, teaching methods and educational supervision, in order to check the wording of the questions and the extent of suitability of items for the respondents. The experts were also asked to remove or change any item, which might cause any ambiguities and to add any item, which might give more clearness to the research instrument. After one week of giving them the questionnaire, the researcher arranged several meetings with them to discuss their comments and suggestions. The return questionnaires were 23. Some new questions were added, some other questions were deleted and a few questions were revised. In the initial version of questionnaire, there were 50 items and the last version consists of 45 items. The second

direction of the pilot study was to check the reliability of the questionnaire. It was applied on a group of the respondents, students and teachers amongst the research sample.

The questionnaire was distributed on 50 students and 35 teachers in order to make sure that all questions are clear and to omit any ambiguity which might confuse the participants. After two weeks, the same participants were given the questionnaire again in order to check its reliability, which means that the application of the instrument should give the same results if we applied it again in the similar context. 30 questionnaires were returned because there were five teachers who were newly nominated as teachers and they said they have no clear idea yet about the items of the questionnaire.

4.3.2 Interviews

The use of interview in educational research gives a researcher a certain degree of freedom to have a deep and valuable data because the researcher can ask the participants for more details and clarification, which is not available in the case of questionnaire. In addition the freedom of the participants is one of the valuable advantages of interview. Cohen (2000) said:

Interviews enable participants- be they interviewers or interviewees- to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view. (p.267).

The above statement emphasized the fact of positive effect of the interview as a research instrument for data collection in terms of the richness of the data compared to the other instruments. The interview is similar to an organized talk or conversation; Robson (1999)

maintains that the interview is a kind of conversation, a conversation with a purpose. So one of the main advantages of the interview is the flexibility of finding things out.

There are three types of the interview, which might be used as a method of data collection; the first one is the structured interview, which has a fixed number of questions directed by the interviewer and the one difference between this type and the questionnaire is the oral nature of the interview whereas there is no oral communication between the respondents to the questionnaire and the researcher. The respondents can also provide many more details. Awda and Malkawi (1992) considered a structured interview a verbal questionnaire because the respondents participate in the completion of the interview via a conversation between them and the interviewer.

The second type of the interview is the unstructured interview, which is the one that no specific questions are prepared in advance. The general areas of the conversation are known and the talk develops between the interviewee and the interviewer gradually.

The third type of the interview is the semi-structured interview, which stands in the middle point between structured and unstructured interview. In the semi-structured interview, the interviewer has to prepare a group of the questions with a certain degree of freedom; he or she might change in the wording order, omit some questions or even include new questions according to the development of the conversation. (Robson 1999).

The writer found that semi-structured interview is the most appropriate type for this study because of the flexibility of carrying out this interview.

As this study used a triangulation method for data collection, three interviews were conducted with a group of teachers of Arabic, students of upper basic stage and educational supervisors of Arabic. The interviews were to support the collected data by the questionnaire, in order to avoid any effect of the questionnaire's disadvantages, so the student's interview consists of two parts:

- General information.
- The questions. (See appendix 3)

The general construction of the teachers' interview was the same as the students' interview. Unlike the students, teachers were asked about the educational supervision because students are not involved in the supervision process in any way, since the supervision is between teachers and educational supervisors (See appendix 4). The third interview was the supervisors' interview that is similar to the teachers' interview. (See appendix 5). The division of the interview sample is presented in (appendix 6).

4.4 Data collection and analysis

The approach of data analysis always depends on the methods of data collection, so this study has combined quantitative and qualitative approaches in collecting and analyzing of the data. Therefore, it is worth explaining in details the way of collecting and analyzing the data.

4.4.1 Data collection and analysis of questionnaire

The number of the students' questionnaires was 700 questionnaires, distributed in three directorates of education and learning in Al-karak district, whereas, 135 questionnaires were distributed to the teachers of Arabic in the same area.

There are several steps of collecting the data by the questionnaire in this study, which are the following:

1. Earlier contact with the MoE in Jordan was made to have a permission to enter the schools and for that purpose, a copy of the questionnaire was given to the department of research and studies in the MoE. The reason of giving that copy of the questionnaire is to check if there is any contradiction between the content of the questionnaire and the educational policy of the state.
2. A list of the schools' names and addresses in Al-karak district was obtained from the directorate of education and learning in order to make the arrangements to visit the schools and to distribute the questionnaires.
3. A clear timetable was arranged after contacting the schools to check the availability of students and teachers to fill the questionnaire.
4. Distributing the questionnaires according to the timetable in the three directorates of education and learning.
5. Gathering the questionnaires in the same day of distributing them because the researcher believes if we left them with the respondents the number of the returned questionnaires will be less. So the number of the returned questionnaires was 700

questionnaires because the writer distributed the majority of the questionnaires in his presence and gave the participants an average of half an hour to fill them.

The normal step after the data collection is to analyze it using the appropriate methods, so the researcher started coding the questionnaires day by day in order to save time and to work the data out as soon as possible. Therefore, the general information about the participants have been entered to the computer using SPSS in order to have clear idea about the effect of location, gender, qualification and years of experience on the responses of the participants.

The scale used in the study was coded according to the following categories: Strongly agree equals 5 points, Agree equals 4 points, Uncertain equals 3 points, Disagree equals 2 points and Strongly agree equals 1 point. Depending on this scale, if the response is strongly agree, that means the participant believe the item is one of the strongest reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar and so on.

The choice of strongly agree and agree were joined under the classification of agree, whereas the choice of strongly disagree and disagree were joined under the classification of disagree because the researcher believes that the five point scale was designed to give the participant a certain degree of freedom to respond and there is no clear cut distinction between strongly agree and agree since it is related to opinions, which are always complex and difficult to be clarified through numbers.

The questionnaire was treated by calculating the frequencies and percentages of the responses in order to explore the most important reasons for students' weaknesses in Arabic grammar according to the perceptions of the participants. Each item of the questionnaire was treated separately in order to discuss it in depth and to connect it 'where applicable' with the previous studies. The items in general were divided into several themes according to the main argument in this study, which has classified the reasons for students' weaknesses in Arabic grammar into two categories: the internal reasons and the external reasons. The internal reasons are the ones related to the educational administration and regulations. And the external reasons those are related to the something other than educational administration such as the spreading of unemployment amongst all educated people, which might cause the lack of students' desire towards the learning process as a whole.

4.4.2 Data collection and analysis of the interview

The procedures of the interviews with students, teachers of Arabic and educational supervisors were the following:

1. During the distribution of questionnaire, the researcher noticed high degree of co-operation from a number of teachers, students and educational supervisors who are willing to present more information about the problem of students' weaknesses in grammar, so he arranged with those participants to be interviewed after filling the questionnaires.
2. Appointments were booked with the interviewees at the convenient time for them. which was generally in the school's library with most of them.

3. The length of the interview was on average fifty minutes because if the interview length is less than half an hour it will have doubtful value and if it is longer than one hour; it will not encourage the respondents to participate. Moreover, Robson (1999) explained that long interview might lead to biases in the sample.

It was important to create general themes from the interviews. In this connection, Boulton and Hammersley (1996) said:

Generating as many categories as possible is sound advice in many circumstances because it may enable the researcher to see features of the data, or of what the data refer to, that might be overlooked with a more focused approach. (p.291).

4. The frequencies of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar were calculated in order to have clear idea about the most common reasons for the weaknesses stated by the interviewees.

5. The researcher has distributed the data of the interviews amongst the themes of the findings in order to combine qualitative and quantitative approaches in the analysis.

6. The interviews were not recorded on tape recorder due to some cultural aspects. If the interviewees were female they did not agree to record the interviews. It was the request of the participants and because the researcher wanted them to talk freely and frankly, he found another means of recording their ideas.

CHAPTER FIVE

Findings and discussion

Perceptions of students, teachers and supervisors related to students

Chapter five

Findings and discussion

Perceptions of students, teachers and supervisors related to students

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study related to the perceptions of students and teachers of Arabic about the reasons for students' weaknesses in Arabic grammar. In particular, the chapter will discuss the perceptions of students and teachers related to the role of students in the occurrence of the problem. The chapter answers the first question in this study; which is whether the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar lie in the students themselves?

Therefore, the chapter will be divided into the following themes:

- Students' understanding and desires to learn grammar.
- Students' learning styles and the surrounding environment.

5.2 Students' desires and beliefs

Students are the corner stone of the teaching and learning process. The interaction between all elements is essential for the success of the teaching and learning process. For instance the teacher needs to choose any suitable method for students' levels to deliver the instructional material in an effective way.

Modern theories of teaching and learning approaches have focused on the student's role in participating as much as possible in the activities of learning. The importance of the students' role in learning process must be taken into consideration when planning for teaching; Reece and Walker (2000) said that:

The ability of students relates to their temperament and special aptitudes. When choosing a teaching strategy you need to consider the attention span of the students and the ability they have to cope with the adopted approach. (p.141).

Students' levels of understanding and aptitudes are important in considering the teaching strategy because choosing a suitable one for the context of teaching will reduce the time and effort of achieving the educational aims of teaching particular material. In the light of the important role of students, the current study took students' perceptions into account as an important factor that affects students' weaknesses in grammar. Their attitudes and motivation are significant. Indeed, there are some commentators who feel that all failure in Arabic grammar is due to the students' lack of interest and application. Hammodi (1994) and Murjana (1990).

The current study found out several reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar, which are related to the students' attitudes. These reasons could be summarised as follows:

1. Students' belief that the use of colloquial Arabic can be an alternative of standard Arabic.
2. The lack of students' desire to learn Arabic grammar.
3. Students' belief that Arabic grammar is difficult to understand.
4. Students' sense that formal assessment for students' success and failure given by the MoE, is lenient, and that the demands are low.

5. Students’ sense that mastering of Arabic grammar will not give them any particular advantage in their future careers.

In the view of the above circumstances, one can see that students have a number of excuses not to learn grammar.

5.2.1 The use of colloquial Arabic instead of standard

One of the suggested reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar is students’ belief that the use of colloquial Arabic could be an alternative to standard Arabic. The responses of students and teachers regarding this reason are presented in table 5.1.

Table (5.1)

The use of colloquial Arabic instead of the standard Arabic

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Students’ belief that, the use of colloquial Arabic could be an alternative of standard Arabic.	Teacher	74	54.8	21	15.6	40	29.6
		Student	281	40.1	88	12.6	313	47.3

F: Frequencies
A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree

The students, teachers of Arabic and education supervisors were asked whether the use of colloquial Arabic by students causes students’ weaknesses in grammar. It was found that 54.8 per cent of teachers of Arabic consider significant the students’ belief that Arabic grammar is not essential for their life simply because they do not have to use standard Arabic, with the application of grammatical rules. They can use colloquial Arabic, with no need for grammar.

Classical Arabic is the language of ancient books and dictionaries, which is appropriate for academic and specialised in Arabic studies. This level of Arabic is difficult to be used by the public because they will not use that knowledge in their daily life as the academic people. Students also are not asked to use that complex level of Arabic because they need basic knowledge of grammar.

It is associated with two factors: with scholarship and with religion. It can be likened to the academic learning of early English texts, like Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, or at a simpler level, Chaucer. Arabic is also taken very seriously because it is part of the study of Qur'an.

Standard Arabic is the language of education and formal correspondence. Colloquial Arabic is spoken Arabic which varies from one country to another in terms of dialect and employed by the mass media throughout a huge number of programmes.

Al-rikabi (1986) stated that colloquial Arabic became a strong competitor of standard Arabic because of its prevalence on the mass media. During the interviews in this study, however, ten out of fifteen of the students preferred to watch those TV programmes and series which use standard Arabic. When asked about the reason, the majority of them stated that it gives them an example of the correct use of standard Arabic. That correct use is constituted by the grammatical rules.

Abu Absi (1986) suggested that the difficulty which most Arabs seem to have is mastering the written language stems from duplication of at least two varieties of Arabic. One of them is classical Arabic which is gradually developed into Modern or

standard Arabic that is used for formal functions like sermons, books, lectures and Newspapers. The second variety is colloquial Arabic which differs from one region to another. In fact, this duplication makes certain degree of confusion amongst students because they need to adjust to different situations, and different demands.

In the light of the above, the issue of grammar becomes very complex; educational policy makers insist on teaching a particular material of grammar in a particular method, no matter whether it suits all students and classroom environments or not. The weight of the past and the earnestness of expectations make learning a weighty matter.

However, it is worthwhile asking why teachers of Arabic consider the students' belief with the use of colloquial Arabic one of the major reasons for the weaknesses in grammar. It is known that there are many sides of the problem including students, teachers and textbooks so why they blame students and they did not blame the textbook?

The writer thinks that it is easier for them to blame the students rather than textbooks, because the Ministry of Education MoE has designed the textbooks, and they do not want to criticise the educational authority that they work under. The evidence of this fact comes from the majority of teachers 54.8 who blamed students for using colloquial Arabic. In reality, grammar textbooks are considered very complex from the students' point of view, to the extent of naming them as one of the major reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar.

During the interviews, student 4 from school H said that:

I would like to say that, there are so many subjects in grammar textbook, and I found it difficult to follow and understand all of them. In addition to that, when some students understand the subject perfectly, the teacher will think that all of us understood the subject. In fact, no more than 20 per cent of the students can understand and use grammar correctly

The writer would agree with the responses of teachers of Arabic because such a belief among students reduces their motivation towards the process of learning the grammar since they can manage without it. Moreover, in his study, Khodir (1998) mentioned that:

The duplication of using both standard and colloquial Arabic was one of the strongest reasons for students' weaknesses in Arabic grammar. (p.35)

The duplication of language means that students have to use two levels of the same language; one at schools which is standard Arabic, and one in their daily life, which is colloquial Arabic.

The duplication of language was discussed in 1977 by the cultural seminar of the Jordanian council of Arabic. That seminar was specially allocated to discuss the reasons for students' weaknesses in the application of Arabic grammar in speaking and writing skills and came to the conclusion that the problem lay in the duplication of both standard and colloquial Arabic in students' daily life (Khodir 1998). It seems that students learn grammar not for application but for the exams, and teachers teach them also for the exams. If the learning-teaching process were done for practical purposes such as having dialogues and writing topics by standard Arabic, it should reflect on students' abilities for the correct use of grammar.

The writer would agree with the views of teachers of Arabic because such beliefs among students reduce their motivation towards the process of learning grammar since they believe they can manage without it. When asking the students about the use of colloquial Arabic, 40.1 per cent of them suggested that it was a reason for students' weaknesses in grammar, which is less than the acceptance of teachers of Arabic. 47.3 per cent of the students disagreed, and that percentage indicates the majority of students do not consider any relationship between students' weaknesses in grammar and their belief of having other options rather than standard Arabic. 12.6 per cent of the students were not certain and they did not decide about their opinions.

Many students would like to say it does not matter learning grammar, as they are not going to use it in their daily life. They might also say it is important but difficult. An illustration of this finding came from student 7 from school J. She said in the interview:

I strongly agree that grammar is important for the people, who are planning to continue their study after schooling, and I always try my best to learn grammar but, I really found it difficult. I can say that there is no grammatical rule without some exceptions, which makes no clear rules

The quotation above reflects that students in general consider grammar one of the important subjects but at the same time one of the most difficult subjects simply because this idea was repeated by nine out of fifteen students. It also indicates that the importance of grammar is not for all students because not all of them will take an academic direction in his or her future career.

The very seriousness with which it is taken and the amount of time devoted to it draws attention to the association of Arabic grammar with academic achievement. Students are aware of the different levels of language, some of which only take place

in schools. This is like Bernstein's distinction between different types of English.
(Bernstein, 1977)

The question is what is the reason for that gap between the responses of the students and teachers of Arabic? Such a question could be answered in the light of the relationship between students and teachers, which is a very complicated issue. That relationship seems to be one of suspicion, since teachers consider their own performance to be of a high standard whereas some students have stated that teachers of Arabic need to be taught grammar. Teacher 3 from school B said in the interview:

One of my problems in grammar lessons is I can not keep correcting my teacher in the grammatical mistakes during his reading, because I found it an embarrassing situation for both of us. In addition, I am not feeling secure regarding my score at the end of the academic year, because the teacher can put it down by being very rigid in marking the exams. The teacher is not an angle and I think he will feel it if I kept correcting him.

This shows that students are not satisfied with the academic level of their teachers of Arabic since eight students out of fifteen supported this idea during the interviews. It also shows that students cannot express their opinion freely and frankly about some particular issues such as their real evaluation for teachers' performance.

During the interviews with education supervisors, they emphasised teachers' use of colloquial Arabic during grammar lessons. One of the supervisors mentioned that:

If the teachers of Arabic can not speak standard Arabic we do not expect students to speak it. I think that if there is solid grammatical knowledge amongst teachers of Arabic they would speak standard Arabic.

5.2.2 Students’ desire to learn grammar

The lack of students’ desire to learn Arabic grammar plays an essential role in their achievement. Both students and teachers were asked about this point as a reason for the weaknesses in grammar. Their perceptions are presented in table 5.2.

Table (5.2)

The lack of students’ desire to learn grammar

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
2	The lack of students’ desire towards learning Arabic grammar	Teacher	85	63	20	14.8	30	22.2
		Student	170	24.3	90	12.9	440	62.8

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

The lack of students’ desire to learn Arabic grammar was supported by 63 per cent of teachers, which means that teachers of Arabic blame the students’ lack of motivation as a factor of weaknesses in grammar. The lack of students’ desire to learn Arabic grammar, could be interpreted by the following points:

1. The nature of Arabic grammar needs a high degree of concentration to be understood by the students. This difficulty comes partly from the use of vowel signs or marks those should be written on the letters in each word and without writing them, the word could be understood with a different meaning. For example, the word Madrasa (مدرسة) without any marks on the letters could mean school or female teacher. If it is written this way (مَدْرَسَة) Madrasa, it will mean school, and if it is written this way (مُدَرِّسَة) Modarrisa, it will mean female teacher.

Arabic grammar could be considered out of use in students' daily life, which is an important factor of its difficulty, simply because students are not familiar with it.

2. The common opinion among students that Arabic grammar is difficult to understand.
3. The students' belief that grammar is not a big deal, since they can communicate with the others without it.

The result leads to many questions, like, what are the reasons behind that feeling among students and what can be done to change it. Without changing students' attitudes, teaching grammar could seem to be a waste of time and effort.

The connection between this item and the previous one will give a clear vision about the attitudes of students towards the learning process as a whole. Students' desire to learn grammar is not strong enough to give them an intrinsic motivation. The psychologists described the motivation as psychological driver pushing a person or an animal to behave in a certain way (Noel, p.193).

Students' motivation to learn Arabic grammar is based simply on the fact that they have to do it according to the instructions given by the MoE. This fact makes it hard for teachers to persuade them that there is more to his or her task in teaching grammar than the imperative of purely academic success. Some of the student interviewees interpreted the lack of desire to learn grammar. Student 8 from school M said:

Grammar sessions are always at the end of the day and most of the students will be tired when grammar needs full attention and concentration. I prefer to have grammar sessions at the beginning of the day when students and teachers are more active and enthusiastic.

This suggestion reveals a tired attitude and little intrinsic motivation in taking fundamental action in this matter such as swapping grammar sessions with other sessions. Students looked at the desire to learn grammar deeper than the writers' expectations by connecting it with the prevalence of unemployment. During the interview of the current study, many students showed the lack of their desire to learn grammar frankly. Student 15 from school D said:

You are a part of our society and I think you have heard about the huge number of qualified people who had graduated from the universities in different subjects.

They have applied for jobs and they have to wait for years to give them a job, so how they will survive without having sufficient income. And even if they got it, they will not be able to live over the poverty line

The statement above reflects many issues, which could be summarised as follows:

- Students have negative attitudes towards education and learning in general, because they look at it as a way of obtaining a job that enables them to have an acceptable life. And since their learning grammar will not in itself guarantee such a job, they will not find enough motivation to carry on and enjoy it.
- The problem of students' carelessness is not limited to grammar or the Arabic language, but it includes other school subjects.
- Students are not happy with their future prospects because they do not feel they will financially rewarded.

It is always essential for the success of the learning process to have an intense motivation to learn, because that motivation will make the learners enthusiastic to receive and participate in new knowledge. The lack of students' desire to learn Arabic grammar was clear. It was also emphasised through the interviews with the students

themselves and with teachers of Arabic. One of the teachers of Arabic said in the interview:

I think if we gave the students an opportunity to choose either to stay or to leave during grammar lessons, we will have just 5 per cent of the current number of students.

The above statement indicates the extent to which students have negative attitudes towards grammar. teachers of Arabic did not ask themselves why students have negative attitudes towards grammar learning.

Students' carelessness towards complex grammar is not limited to Jordan or Arab countries. It is a global problem because schools are not ideal places in students' eyes. The rejection of the academic stems partly from the fact that students have a negative feeling towards schools.

Just three students out of fifteen said that the most preferable subject for them is Arabic grammar which indicates the lack of students' desire to learn grammar.

It is always difficult to isolate students from the whole environment around them like their families, peer-groups and the effect of the public opinions in the society towards learning. To change the attitudes and feeling of students towards schools in general and Arabic grammar in particular is not simply a matter of decisions to be taken by the policy makers. It is a result of years and years of accumulated beliefs. The key issue remains is how to increase their desire to learn Arabic grammar? The complexity of this question comes from the diversity of the factors, which shape the attitudes and desire of students to learn.

According to the nature of Arabic grammar, it might be easier for students to understand the grammatical rules if they had a chance to use them in real situations, because that will reinforce the theoretical knowledge in their minds by practising them. They also need to learn grammar by an enjoyable way such as role-play or audio visual aids. The real case in teaching grammar is that teachers and textbooks rely on theoretical activities; the portion of practical activities in grammar textbooks is very limited.

Students' beliefs about grammar have strong effects on their motivation to learn, but as soon as they start to understand and master grammatical rules, they would get rid of that belief. To understand at first is hard, but once one understands, action is easy. The wide disparity between students and teachers' responses could be interpreted by the defensive nature of both sides which made them trying to blame each other for the weaknesses in grammar.

5.2.3 The difficulty of grammar

One of the suggested reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar is the students' belief that Arabic grammar is difficult to understand. The writer believes that such a belief amongst students develops a strong barrier between students and grammar even with the easier subjects in the textbooks such as the speech parts and how to distinguish between verbs and nouns because of the effect of stereotyping. The perceptions of students and teachers are presented in table 5.3.

Table (5.3)

The difficulty of grammar

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
3	Students' belief that Arabic grammar is difficult to understand	Teacher	114	84.5	6	4.4	15	11.1
		Student	292	41.7	153	21.9	255	36.5

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

This was one of the strongest reasons for student' weaknesses in grammar chosen by teachers of Arabic. It seems that teachers tried to put the responsibility on the students. They feel they are facing an intractable problem. One of the possible reasons for this is the defensive nature of teachers of Arabic no. The main elements of teaching and learning process are students, teachers and textbooks, so the teachers will not blame themselves. One of the possible reasons for this result is the psychological obstacle between the learners and Arabic grammar, (Al-hroot 1997.p.48). Such obstacles could be attributed to the public opinion among students feeling that Arabic grammar is difficult to understand, so they should not waste more time trying to learn that complex subject. Any effort is wasted. Teachers feel the gulf between the demands made by the textbooks and the lack of understanding by pupils- a lack of understanding, that as that we have noted, is shared by the teachers. It is therefore, no wonder that students are deemed to find grammar difficult.

Students ask themselves: "we have a lot of successful people around us in different fields and their knowledge of Arabic grammar was never a condition of that success, so why should we learn it?" When asking the students about their belief that Arabic

grammar is difficult to understand, 41.7 per cent of them agreed. Students' belief that grammar is difficult to understand will negatively affect their attitudes and motivation towards grammar learning and this is one of the main findings in this study but they do not consider this to be as significant as the teachers do. Most of them think that learning Arabic grammar is a waste of time and effort, because it is either too complex to understand or not particularly useful, but they do not dismiss the possibility of being capable of learning it.

It has been demonstrated in this study and previous studies that the objectives of teaching grammar have never been totally achieved (Ibdah 1990) and (Al-farisiah 1995). Therefore, it could be understandable why students are not very keen or not interested to learn grammar. It seems they gave up from learning grammar. Weaver (1996) explained that:

The research apparently gave no support to the idea that teaching grammar would help students develop mental discipline, master another language, or become better users of their native language. Indeed, further evidence indicates that training in formal grammar did not transfer to any significant extent to writing correct English or even to recognise it. (p.10).

The question here is why insist on teaching formal grammar in a separate textbook and why not teach it through the full context of language in use? The research have proved that teaching formal grammar never leads to the objectives of teaching it. The students' belief in the difficulty of grammar could be changed into a psychological barrier between the students and grammar to the extent of ignoring even the easy and simple subjects of grammar. The question here is why students have that belief?

Such a belief amongst students might be generated by their own experiences about Arabic grammar, or from other students in the same class. It also might come from teachers of Arabic themselves while trying to get students to work hard and care about grammar. When asking the students during the interviews about the idea of grammar difficulty, student 11 from school M said that:

I used to hear many students talk about grammar considering it difficult subject, some of them used not to attend grammar lessons, because they do not want to be embarrassed in front of the students when the teacher will ask them. I also used to hear my Arabic teacher says: listen carefully because grammar needs you to pay more attention than other lessons if you want to understand it properly

This statement indicates the effect of peer-groups and teachers inside the schools on the generalisation of the ideas without any chance to test the correctness of those ideas. It also indicates the importance of individual differences, whether the teachers took into consideration the levels of the students or not, when directing their questions, whether there will be embarrassment and whether students will deal with grammar lessons normally without any extra sensitivity and suspicion.

The statement also indicates how strong is the influence of teaching styles used by teachers of Arabic when they insist on repeating particular phrases to get students to care about grammar. Instead of encouraging students to learn grammar, it contributes to creating barriers between students and grammar. Some teaching styles re-enforce the negative attitudes towards grammar among students subconsciously as if the degrees of difficulty were reinforced.

Eight teachers out of ten in the interviews stressed the prevalence of the common opinion amongst students says that grammar is difficult subject. Teacher 7 from school K said:

Sometimes when there is an easy subject I expect students' participation in class activities to be more than usual but even with that easy subject students are hesitated to answer. They are not confident of their answers due to their belief that grammar is difficult subject.

The belief of students that Arabic grammar is difficult to understand might occur because of the nature of Arabic grammar; especially the control of vowel signs on the meaning of each word, but it might also occur because of the pre-disposition to resist learning. The belief that grammar is difficult precedes and undermines all study.

The ways of pronouncing each word is different according to the vowel signs, in the light of this complex system; students have the right to consider grammar difficult to understand. But these problems also stem from the fact that they have to study four textbooks under the subject of Arabic language at schools. Despite some trials to simplify grammar for the learners, grammar is considered difficult subject not just by students but also by teachers.

5.2.4 The formal assessment for students' achievement

In every educational system there is a set of rules to assess the achievement and progress of the learners, which gives a clear image about the process of teaching and learning. Students and teachers were asked in this study weather the formal assessment for students' success and failure affect students' achievement in grammar. The responses are presented in table 5.4.

Table (5.4)

The formal assessment for students’ achievement

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
4	Students’ sense that the assessment for students’ achievement given by the MOE is lax	Teacher	121	89.6	4	3	10	7.4
		Student	254	36.3	154	22	292	41.7

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

The frequencies of teachers’ acceptance on this item were 121 out of 135, with a percentage of 89.6 per cent of their acceptance. The result above indicates that teachers of Arabic have strongly criticised the policy of MoE, which is different from the normal trend of teachers, since they used to avoid criticising the educational policy of the MoE. The question is what are the reasons behind that criticism?

The writer believes that, teachers of Arabic like other teachers have faced a real struggle with students’ carelessness due to the low requirement of formal assessment for students’ success and failure because students rely on those assessments. They expect to pass because, at the end of the year, teachers will only make one or two students fail although, the number of students who deserve to fail is more than that. In this case the majority of teachers give students better scores so they pass considering that as fair treatment. Thus students will not work hard and in essence, their performances will be less than teachers’ expectations in the higher grade they will move to.

There is a contradiction here which is revealing. The MoE insists on a standard type of delivery, through heavily prescribed and demanding textbooks. There is to be no

deviance from these requirements. And yet, if they were fully implemented assessment, the majority of students would fail and the whole system would collapse. Teachers are then almost encouraged to ignore standards, and the huge demands of the syllabus. Pupils realise this. They interpret it as a sign that the demands of grammar are so great as to be impossible. If impossible then they can also be ignored.

One of the clear signs of low assessment standards is that the percentage of failure in every grade is not allowed to exceed 5 per cent of the whole students number which means they can pass easily and they are not held back however badly they do. The laxity of formal demands for students' success and failure creates a certain degree of student carelessness.

This question elicited the highest responses by teachers of Arabic which indicates the extent to which teachers of Arabic are affected by the assessment system. Such a result could be interpreted as condoning the general carelessness of students in Jordanian schools, because the percentage of failed students in any grade should not exceed 5 per cent of the whole number of student no matter what the standards. In addition, if it exceeds 5 per cent of the students in a particular grade, the teacher will be questioned for that result, and criticised as if it were his or her fault. Moreover, in the tenth grade all students must be given a successful mark, no matter what the real mark they achieved happens to be. The final result shown in their certificate is (finished the basic stage). This statement means he or she is able to go to the secondary stage. Students feel that they will pass at the end of the academic year, no matter how well or badly they did in their final exams. Why should students bother if this is the case?

There is a contradiction between all the effort of time and the investment in textbooks, drawing attention to the importance of grammar and the ironic acceptance of low standards which pupils are all aware of. For all the rhetoric they perceive that it does not really matter. The MoE did not explain the justification of the assessment for success and failure. And one might ask were the assessment of students' success and failure based on educational research?

To the best of the writer's knowledge, in 1962, a special department for educational research has been established and the outcomes of that department were about thirty research and reports. MoE 1989, (P.91-93). None of them discussed or justified the formal assessment for students' success and failure.

When asking the students of the basic stage about the role of formal assessment of students' success and failure in creating the students' weaknesses in grammar, 36.3 per cent of them agreed with the item, which is completely different from the responses of teachers of Arabic.

Thus, it is worthwhile finding the reason for inconsistency between their responses.

The writer would assume that teachers of Arabic try to emphasise the matter of losing their previous status and authority inside the classroom because of the formal assessment and how they must mark it which gives the students more freedom and more opportunities to pass without any hard work. Such a result fits the defensive nature of teachers of Arabic who work to present themselves as successful. Students are also expected to support and encourage the current assessment because it gives them a certain extent of freedom. It also facilitates their transfer from one grade to another. And yet they don't consider it one of the reasons for their weaknesses in

grammar. In contrast, the majority of students disagreed with the item as if there is no relationship between their weaknesses in grammar and the formal assessment of their success or failure.

The positive point here is the courage of teachers of Arabic to criticise the MoE by saying that the formal assessment of success and failure are the main reason of students' weaknesses in grammar. In fact they needed more assurance from the writer in terms of confidentiality. The reason for that courage amongst Arabic teacher to criticise MoE comes from teachers' feeling that students will keep ignoring any advice given to them by their teachers to allocate more time and effort for grammar learning, and that their cajoling and encouragement means nothing. Teachers feel they have no support. The students, on the other hand, could be denying the idea that there is an external incentive to learn. For them, the problem goes deeper. The whole system of learning complex grammar is not conducive to their motivation.

There was a trend amongst the education supervisors to criticise the formal assessment for students' achievement considering it one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar. Supervisor 7 from directorate A said in the interview:

Our students are aware of the formal assessment of their achievement and I think it is lax enough to make them careless. They know that at the end of the academic year, they will pass.

5.2.5 Arabic grammar and students' future careers

The current issue is related to the students' motivation towards grammar learning. Driven (1990) explained that the factor of motivation is extremely strong in the learning of language. This motivation forms learners' attitudes towards the learning of any subject.

Students’ sense that the mastering of Arabic grammar will not give them exceptional advantages in their jobs attracted more than half of teachers’ agreement. The responses of students and teachers are presented in table (5.5).

Table (5.5)

The lack of advantages from mastering the Arabic grammar

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
5	Students’ sense that mastering of Arabic grammar will not give them exceptional advantages in their jobs	Teacher	90	66.6	21	15.6	24	17.8
		Student	226	32.3	170	24.3	304	43.4

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

It is essential for students to be enthusiastic to learn any subject effectively to have any kind of motivation that attracts their attention and desire to learn it. In this connection, students, teachers of Arabic and education supervisors were asked whether the lack of the advantages of mastering Arabic grammar causes students’ weaknesses in grammar. This suggested reason attracted 66.6 per cent of teachers’ acceptance, which means, a third of the participant teachers tended to consider this reason one of the strongest apart from the examination. teachers of Arabic tend to say, we always do our best to teach grammar effectively, but our students are not very keen to learn grammar. The teachers agreed that students believe in the uselessness of grammar regarding their future careers.

Theoretically, the importance of grammar learned in childhood, and the command of language has a big influence not only on academic success but on the future career. (Pollock & Waller 1999). Moreover, Burke (1999) mentioned that:

Grammar stalks us all, teachers and students alike. Grammar, the ways words are used to shape meaning, voice, style strikes a chord in everyone (p.62)

The application and the use of grammar in students' daily life does not equal the effort and time allocated to teach it in Jordanian schools.

When asking students about the relationship between their weaknesses in grammar and the lack of its' importance for their future careers, 32.3 per cent of them agreed with the item, whereas 43.4 per cent of them disagreed with it. The question is how do we interpret this result?

Teachers of Arabic are expected to respond in such a way because that response fits in with their defensive nature. During the interview, many teachers supported the idea that students have a sense that the mastering of Arabic grammar will not give them exceptional advantages in their future careers. Teacher 4 from school G stated that:

In my opinion, the majority of the students will not benefit from mastering Arabic grammar. Students who might benefit from the teaching of grammar are those who will specialise in Arabic language, in addition to some students who are interested in the innovation literature. The knowledge of grammar will provide them with great opportunity to be good writers in the future

The gap between students and teachers' responses could be interpreted by the complexity of the relationship between teachers and students, which can be described as a contradicting relationship in terms of clarifying the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar. During the interviews, sixteen out of twenty seven students explained that one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar is that Arabic

language and its grammar is not the key of success in life, despite its link with academic prowess. The interviews with students made it clear that mastering Arabic grammar does not give students any additional advantages in their future careers which reduce their motivation to learn it. Student 14 from school J raised an important point by saying:

I would like to say it frankly. It is better for me to master English grammar and English language in general rather than Arabic. Mastering English language gives me more opportunities to work in the future.

It was surprising to have this way of thinking in the future amongst students of upper basic stage and that brings to the surface again the importance of motivation to learn grammar. Students' belief that Arabic grammar is a difficult plays an important role in forming psychological barriers between them and grammar which needs time and effort to be removed.

5.3 Students' Study Habits

The students' learning styles could be defined as the practices of students learning and gaining new knowledge. Therefore, students' learning styles play an important role in their achievement and because of that, the participants in this study were asked several questions to explore to what extent students' learning styles could cause students' weaknesses in grammar.

5.3.1 Previous preparation

One of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar related to the students' practices is students' carelessness in previous preparation like homework for grammar lessons. According to the inductive method, which is used in Jordanian schools to teach grammar, students are supposed to derive the grammatical rules through the

examples given in the textbook. That means previous preparation for grammar lessons is essential, because the explanation of grammar lessons by Arabic teacher is not sufficient to enable the students to learn the rules. The responses of students and teachers are presented in table 5.6.

Table (5.6)

Students’ carelessness with previous preparation

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
6	Students’ carelessness towards previous preparation for grammar lessons	Teacher	113	83.7	7	5.2	15	11.1
		Student	229	32.8	133	19	338	48.2

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

There is no doubt that students’ preparation for their lessons in advance gives them some clues and ideas about the lesson so they will have some links with teacher’s explanation during the lesson. (Shabeeb 1990).

The students’ carelessness towards previous preparation for grammar lessons was supported by 83.7 per cent of teachers, which means that teachers of Arabic blame students again, considering their carelessness in the previous preparation for grammar lessons as one of the main reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar. The inductive method, demands students prepare their grammar lessons in advance, because they are supposed to derive the grammatical rules themselves. And if they have no previous idea about the lesson, they will not be able to participate and derive grammatical rules.

Such a result leads one to ask whether the students are really careless about their preparation of Arabic grammar? If they are careless towards previous preparation for grammar, what makes them careless? According to the responses of the interviewee teachers, the writer believes that the carelessness of students is a real problem not just with grammar, but also with the process of learning and teaching as a whole. The vast majority of interviewee teachers mentioned that day after day, students show real carelessness about learning. This issue could be connected with another one in this questionnaire, which is the leniency of formal demands for success and fail given by the MoE. One of the main sign of the low standard is that teachers are not allowed for having more than 5 per cent of failed students in every class, no matter what are the real levels of students in that class. To make it clear, if there a class consists of twenty students, the formal instruction says that just one student should be failed. If the failed student is more than 5 per cent of the whole number in the class, the teacher will be blamed and asked why? That is because MoE believes Arabic teacher must find a suitable ways to attract students' attention.

In the light of this assessment, we can not expect students to work hard in Arabic grammar or even in other school subjects, because they have an idea about the lack of demand of formal assessment for students' success and failure. And that will reduce students' interest to learn because they will feel it is easy to success. They do not need to spend much time and effort preparing their lessons.

In addition to what has been said about the reasons of students' carelessness, there is a possibility of another interpretation for the carelessness, which is the spreading of

unemployment all over Jordan, especially among the educated people. Student 9 from school N explained this issue in the interview by saying:

You are a part of the society and you may know that many students prefer to leave the school considering it a waste of time, simply because they have many examples of educated people with no jobs.

That statement above raises a very important problem, which may affect the process of teaching and learning negatively. That problem is the effect of unemployment among educated people on students' desire whether to stay or to leave schools. Students' lack of careful preparation is one sign. Students were asked in the interview if they prepare for their grammar lessons in advance. Five out of fifteen said they prepare their lessons to some extent whilst the majority of them do not prepare at all.

We know that students' achievement can be affected positively by previous preparation for lessons (Shabeeb, 1990), but this rarely happens. It is not part of the system of delivery or assessment. When trying to interpret the carelessness of students, we cannot isolate Arabic grammar from other subjects taught in Jordanian schools. Students' carelessness is not limited to Arabic grammar, but includes other subjects. Such a fact was clear to the writer during the interviews with students, teachers and the education supervisors of Arabic. The way that Arabic grammar is presented is a way that does not encourage any extra effort. Traditionally the teacher plays a central role; he writes the examples on the board, read them and start explaining the relationships between the examples reaching to the grammatical rule. Where is the students' role in all of that? It is very limited.

5.3.2 The Memorisation of grammatical rules without Practicing

One of the important reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar is related to the students’ practicing their exercises. It is students’ dependence on memorizing grammatical rules without practicing them. The perceptions of students and teachers regarding this reason are presented in table 5.7.

Table (5.7)

The memorisation of grammatical rules without practising

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
7	Students’ dependence on the memorising of rules without practicing them	Teacher	111	82.2	11	8.1	13	9.6
		Student	201	28.8	104	14.9	395	56.3

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

82.2 per cent of teachers of Arabic considered the item above one of the most important reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar, whereas, 28.8 per cent of students agreed with the item indicating that they felt they were not expected to be responsible for their own learning. It indicates that students do not know exactly what are they required to do for the sake of learning Arabic grammar.

Understanding and memorising the grammatical rules will not necessarily mean that the learner can use or apply the knowledge of grammar effectively in real situations, either in reading and writing skills. Learning grammar by rote is a common phenomenon, like doing just enough for the exams. It further undermines the essential utility of learning grammar for the sake of language in use.

The result above indicates to what extent teachers of Arabic tended to blame students as a factor of the weaknesses in the application of grammatical knowledge. The result also leads to a critical question which is who is the responsible for students' tendency to rely on memorising the rules with no practical activities? In other words, is it just students' fault in this aspect? It is really difficult to answer such a question because there are many factors involved in the process of teaching, either in Arabic grammar or in other subjects.

Teachers of Arabic have a strong influence and effect on their students by their teaching styles. Therefore, students are not the only party responsible for memorising the rules without practising them. The students assume that they are there to learn by rote to hear the explanation from the teachers and to follow the textbooks.

Both students and teachers put the responsibility of students' weaknesses in grammar on each other. The tendency of the MoE in Jordan nowadays is to stop focusing on the memorisation of the knowledge. The teachers are pressed by the MoE to focus on the practical side of the knowledge. Teachers of Arabic ought to try to follow the desire of the educational policy makers at the MoE, but there is little incentive to do so. The assumption is that a general order will instantly lead to a change in practice. Circumstances are far more complex. Recognising what ought to be is not the same as doing something about it.

There is a gap between the reality and theory. The last version of the grammar textbooks which were designed by the MoE between 1990 and 1992, have no

concentrated section on speaking skills as stated by teachers of Arabic themselves. The teachers have little practical support.

In the questionnaire of this study, there is another item, which has a clear connection with the current one. That item is the lack of concentration on speaking skills in grammar textbooks. 61.4 per cent of the participant teachers agreed with the item. Teachers' responses on this item indicate again that students are not the only ones responsible of the memorising grammatical rules without practising them.

When educational policy makers in the MoE in Jordan determined the aims of teaching Arabic language, they considered reading and writing correctly according to Arabic grammar one of the main aims. We should bear in mind the fact that

Knowledge of grammar is not a sufficient condition for successful communication. (Beeching, 1989, p.96).

The statement above reflects the importance of practical activities of grammatical rules in order to re-enforce the theoretical knowledge of grammar. In addition, Kingen (2000) explained the weakness of rote learning and memorising by saying:

If the language teacher asked the students to memorise a list of prepositions all year, this will not help students to understand what prepositions are or how they function. (p.434).

Grammar has become a dry subject, disconnected from everyday life, and that makes it difficult for students to pay it real attention and to give it a big deal compared with other subjects such as English, and Science.

The education supervisors blamed teachers of Arabic. For instance, supervisor 5 from directorate B said:

Students’ learning styles are always affected by teachers’ influence. If they encourage their students to practice grammatical rules rather than memorising them, students would get used to the rules and apply them in the written or spoken context.

The statement above supports the argument that teachers have strong influence on their students and if the influence directed to the creative learning styles, the teachers’ effort will be to organise the process of learning and to guide students rather than teaching them.

5.3.3 Parents’ role in the application of grammar

The role of parents in language learning is extremely important because they can create strong motivation amongst children by encouraging them to learn. In this connection, Florunsho (1997) maintained that in any given language, it is not enough to have enthusiastic learners but that parents should encourage the learners. Students and teachers in this study were asked about the amount of parents’ encouragement to use standard Arabic by students. The perceptions of students and teachers are presented in table 5.8.

Table (5.8)
The lack of parents’ encouragement to use standard Arabic by students

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
8	The lack of parent encouragement to use a standard Arabic by students.	Teacher	108	80	15	11.1	12	8.9
		Student	283	40.4	99	14.1	318	45.5

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

The item above achieved a high level of teachers' acceptance. The issue of parents' encouragement for their children to use standard Arabic needs to be researched further. The teachers' view is that the whole of the social conditions undermines their teaching. But involving parents in such a difficult subject is no easy task. It depends on the parents' level of education, economic status and social class. It is not possible to expect all parents to use standard Arabic and to transfer their knowledge to the students. If educated parents are not expected to have grammatical knowledge to the extent of helping their children, then the other parents are also cannot expected to do so. If the teachers who are nominated to teach grammar did not success to do the task of grammar teaching properly, how can we expect the parents to help?

The writer would argue that such a reason is secondary compared with other reasons, especially those are related to teaching and learning styles. When asking the students about the same item, 40.4 per cent of them agreed, considering it one of the reasons for their own weaknesses in grammar.

There is a gap between the opinions of students and teachers of Arabic since the students are less likely to blame their parents and cannot isolate the nature of their relationship from the cultural context as a whole. They tended to say they did their best, and their parents used to encourage them to learn grammar but the problem has not been solved yet.

5.3.4 Previous knowledge of grammar

The reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar are accumulative. Grammar cannot be learned at once. It is the lack of previous knowledge of grammar amongst students which grows more significant ones time and fail to support the process of grammar

learning in the upper basic stage. The responses of both students and teachers are presented in table 5.9.

Table (5.9)
The lack of previous knowledge of grammar

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
9	The lack of previous knowledge of grammar amongst students	Teacher	121	89.6	5	3.7	9	6.7
		Student	289	41.3	152	21.7	259	37

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

The question has the support of 89.6 per cent of teachers. Many grammar lessons could not be understood without requisite knowledge to enable students to understand and interact with new facts. Al-hroot (1997) asked the students of the Arabic department at Mutah University about the relationship between students’ weaknesses in Arabic grammar and their grammatical background, and he concluded:

The lack of students’ background in grammar is one of the strongest reasons for their weaknesses in grammar, because of the limitation of his or her grammatical knowledge. The reason for that limitation is the weaknesses of building a basic knowledge during the early stages of teaching grammar. (p.49).

When asking the students about their lack of previous knowledge of grammar, the gap between their responses and teachers’ responses is clear. Teachers of Arabic tend try to support any reason for students’ weaknesses in grammar, as so far as it does not involve them in responsibility.

89.6 per cent of teachers of Arabic consider students’ lack of previous knowledge in grammar one of the strongest reasons for their weaknesses. In a sense that means they indirectly blame grammar textbooks, because grammatical material is not organised gradually from one stage to another building on previous knowledge.

The result also indicates that teachers of Arabic tend to blame previous teachers of the early years at schools since they are responsible for building basic knowledge of grammar. Ten students out of fifteen who were interviewed agreed that the lack of previous knowledge of grammar amongst students is one of the reasons for the weaknesses in grammar.

5.3.5 Students’ attention to grammar lessons

The nature of grammar learning requires students to pay full attention to the teachers because the knowledge of grammar consists of logical sequence and if there are any missing steps students will be confused. This study asked both students and teachers about the lack of students’ attention during grammar lessons which is outlined in table 5.10.

Table (5.10)
The lack of students’ attention to grammar lessons

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
10	The lack of students’ attention during lessons	Teacher	68	50.4	7	5.2	60	44.5
		Student	142	20.2	84	12	474	67.8

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

The table above indicates that about half of the participant teachers considered that students' lack of attention was one reason for their poor performance, although they did not consider this the most significant. It is normal that teachers tend to blame students for the occurrence of students' weaknesses in grammar, but the lack of students' attention could be due to the teachers' teaching styles or practices inside the classroom.

When asking the students about the same item, 20.2 per cent of the students considered it one of the reasons for the weaknesses in grammar, which means the majority of them tended to say that we are paying enough attention to learn Arabic grammar. The problem is something other than the lack of students' attention during the lessons.

The defensive responses of both students and teachers are itself revealing. In his study Al-hroot (1997) asked the students in Mu'tah University whether their attention during grammar lessons affects their levels of performance. He concluded that it is not a strong reason for the problem. The study was directed to the university students who are supposed to have more awareness about their duties towards the process of learning.

From his previous experience, the writer would suggest that the responses of teachers of Arabic carry more weight than students' responses, because students' difficulty with grammar will negatively affect their attention towards grammar learning. In fact twenty-six out of twenty-seven students agreed in the interviews that students' disruption in lessons is one of the reasons for their weaknesses in grammar.

Teachers of Arabic are here criticising themselves by considering the lack of students’ attention during grammar lessons as one of the reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar. This could be due to their teaching styles and practices being unattractive to students

5.3.6 The crowdedness of the classrooms

One of the reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar is related to the size of classrooms. The number of students in each class should enable them to participate the classroom activities and in some cases because of the limitation of the financial resources, we might find between thirty and forty students in one class. The responses of students and teachers of Arabic related to this issue are presented in table (5.11).

Table (5.11)

The crowdedness of classrooms

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
11	The crowdedness of classrooms.	Teacher	93	68.8	7	5.2	35	25.9
		Student	337	48.1	80	11.4	283	40.4

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

The crowdedness of classrooms in Jordanian schools is a serious problem because the number of students is increasing every year. The formal statistics by the MoE in Jordan indicates that, a number of school students are 1.4 million students according to the latest statistics in the year 2000, (Alrai daily newspaper Tuesday January 4th 2000.)

Some schools in Jordan are run in rented properties, which do not have the conditions of the real schools, in terms of heating or ventilation. Students' numbers increase by 40.000 students every year according to statistics of the MoE, (1989, p.97). To overcome this problem, the Jordanian government has to spend 202.3 Million Jordanian dinar, in order to build new schools, MoE,(1989,p.97). As an urgent response to the problem, the MoE arranged for many schools to hold classes twice a day, the first period in the morning, and the second period in the afternoon.

In Jordanian schools, the average students' number in classes is between 30 and 40 student, according to the statistics of the MoE. And in the light of that, it might be difficult for grammar teachers to teach effectively because the teacher will not have a chance to give all students equal opportunities to participate grammar learning.

The teachers also face a problem of managing the classrooms, because they have to deal with a crowd of students from different backgrounds with a variety of abilities and behaviours. The effort of teachers will be distributed between managing and controlling the classroom on the one hand, and teaching a difficult subject, on the other.

The crowdedness of classrooms could affect the process of teaching and learning because the students will not have adequate opportunities to participate in the learning process, so the students' level will be affected negatively. When speaking about grammar, participating in practical activities by every single student is one of the best ways to benefit from grammar learning.

One of the students interviewee considered the classroom very crowded because there is 34 students inside the classroom and if they all want to have their homework checked by teacher there will be no time to carry on with new lesson. When asked about the same point, 48.1 per cent of students considered it one of the reasons for their weaknesses in grammar. The gap between the responses of students and teachers of Arabic indicates again that teachers of Arabic and students tend to give opposite opinions to each other. However, the majority of teachers and students agreed that the crowdedness of classes would cause students' weaknesses in grammar. The writer believes that here the teachers' responses are more realistic, they are supposed to be the organisers of the teaching process and they can probably judge this connection better than students.

5.3.7 Students' carelessness in grammar homework

Grammar homework is one of the ways to support and re-enforce grammatical knowledge in students' minds and students are supposed to deal with it with a high degree of accuracy and interest. One of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar is students' carelessness in homework. The responses of students and teachers of Arabic are presented in table (5.12).

Table (5.12)

Students' carelessness in grammar homework

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
12	Students' carelessness in grammar homework	Teacher	86	63.7	12	8.9	37	27.4
		Student	165	23.5	108	15.4	427	61.1

A: Agree
 UN: Uncertain
 D: Disagree
 F: Frequencies

The role of homework is vital in making connections between the instructional material of grammar and the application of that material. Students' carelessness with grammar homework was supported by 63.7 per cent of teachers. Such a result could be interpreted in the light of general carelessness amongst students in Jordanian schools which is not limited to grammar, but includes all school subjects as stated by students themselves and by teachers of Arabic.

In his study, Al-hroot (1997) asked the students of the Arabic department at Mu'tah University about the relationship between their weaknesses in grammar and the avoidance of doing homework and assignments. Although there is a big difference between the levels of homework for school students and University students, the effect of doing homework on students' achievement is strong. It creates the link between theory and practice of grammatical rules, but it does need enthusiasm and interest.

5.4 Summary

This chapter presented the perceptions of students and teachers of Arabic about the reasons behind students' weaknesses in grammar. The strongest reasons for the weaknesses from the points of views of teachers could be summarised as follows:

1. Students' sense that the formal assessment for success and failure of students are laxity.
2. The lack of previous knowledge of grammar amongst students.
3. Students' beliefs that grammar is difficult to understand.
4. Students' carelessness with their preparation for grammar lessons.
5. Students' dependence on memorising the rules without practicing them.

The reasons above achieved the highest percentages of teachers' support. And the following reasons achieved the highest percentages of students' support:

1. The over crowdedness of classes.
2. The previous belief amongst students that Arabic grammar is a difficult subject.
3. The lack of previous knowledge of grammar amongst the students.
4. The lack of parents' encouragement to use standard Arabic by the students.
5. Students' belief that the use of colloquial Arabic could be an alternative to standard Arabic.

CHAPTER SIX

Findings and discussion Perceptions of students, teachers and supervisors on grammar textbooks

Chapter six

Findings and discussion

Perceptions of students, teachers and supervisors on grammar textbooks

6.1 Introduction:

This chapter presents the findings of the study related to grammar textbooks which are established by a committee called the “National Team for Compilation” NTC. In particular these textbooks are designed to teach grammar for the students of the upper basic stage in Jordan aged 14-16. Therefore, the findings will be presented separately by counting the frequencies and the percentages of teachers’ responses followed by students’ responses. The combination between qualitative and quantitative approach in data analysis will be applied through the analysis of questionnaires and interviews, because the best piece of research is the one that combines quantitative and qualitative methods. In this connection, Oliver (2000) explained that in order for the researcher to give a more detailed picture of the study under investigation, it is acceptable to combine both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Despite the fact that grammar textbooks have been changed for the grades eight nine and ten in Jordan, the problem of students’ weaknesses in grammar has not been solved. This chapter explains some issues related to grammar textbooks, such as their suitability for students’ levels, the insufficiency of time and the connection between grammar textbooks and students’ daily language. The new textbooks are supposed to improve students’ levels of grammar awareness and application because they were designed as a kind of comprehensive plan for educational reform.

6.2 Grammar material is higher than students' levels of understanding

The idea of teaching grammar through separate textbooks is a questionable matter because it might give an impression that grammar is something isolated from language, and one of the normal results of this impression will be the lack of grammar application in speaking and writing activities carried out by students who learn grammar as a school subject. The researcher believes there is no point of teaching grammar, paying great effort, time and money if this teaching of grammar is not reflected in student's writing, reading and speaking activities. Kingen (2000) said:

Having students open their textbooks to the chapter on nouns is probably not the best way to introduce the study of grammar, and syntax. Consider trying something different such as starting with some children's books. Ask the students if they can characterize the style of writing that they find in the books. (p.430).

The statement above reflects that there is a debate whether to teach grammar through specific textbooks or to teach it naturally through the normal context. The reason behind such a debate is that students in every class have mixed abilities and skills which are difficult to take into account by the writers of the textbooks. If they wanted to establish suitable textbooks for students' levels, they might need to do complex research to explore students' backgrounds regarding their knowledge of grammar. In this aspect, Florunsho (1997) explained that it is necessary for the textbooks to be in accordance with the learners' level. In addition, Mahjoob (1986) emphasised that there is a gap between the levels of students and the level of instructional material of grammar.

The participants in this study were asked to state to what extent grammar textbooks are suitable for students' levels. The statement was particularly concerned with

exploring whether the grammatical material is higher than students’ levels. The responses of teachers and students are presented in table 6.1.

Table (6.1)
Grammatical material is higher than students’ levels of understanding

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
1	The grammatical material is higher than students’ levels of understanding	Teacher	38	28.2	11	8.1	86	63.7
		Student	336	48	135	19.3	229	32.7

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

The table shows that 28.2 per cent of the teachers of Arabic considered the grammatical material presented in grammar textbooks as higher than student’ levels, whereas 63.7 per cent of the teachers considered the grammatical material suitable for students’ levels. On the contrary, 48 per cent of the students agreed that grammatical material is higher than students’ levels, and 32.3 per cent of them disagreed. This disparity suggests that teachers are more comfortable with the textbooks, and possibly unaware of all students’ needs.

Such a response could be interpreted by the trend of teachers not to criticise or blame directly or indirectly the policy of the MoE. The reason behind teachers’ trend to avoid criticising the MoE is they are not very keen to criticise the authority for which they work. They might consider themselves a part of the MoE, and they will not criticise themselves.

They explained their views more clearly during the interviews when the majority of them agreed that grammar textbooks have been established by a group of the experts in the field of Arabic grammar; those are professors and lecturers in different Jordanian universities. Teacher 1 from school C said:

I think that grammar textbook for eight, ninth and tenth grades are suitable for their levels, and from my experience I found these textbooks very simple and helpful to achieve the basic knowledge of Arabic grammar. The people who are responsible of establishing grammar textbooks are specialised in grammar, most of them are professors or lecturers in the University and I think they know what to do

The statement above indicates that teachers of Arabic have a high degree of confidence in the national team for the compilation of textbooks nominated by the MoE. The reasons behind that confidence and trust might be their conservative nature towards any of the textbooks, because change will lead to new teacher training programmes which are not sought by teachers. The teacher training programmes are normally held during the weekends, and it is not acceptable by the teachers, since it is their own time for having a rest and doing their private and social activities. They fear change and find it easier to assume that what is laid down by experts must be correct. It suggests that they accept the prevailing conditions, even if they do not work.

Despite that, some teachers rely on their own experiences more than anything else. Only 28 per cent of them considered the difficulty of grammatical material one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar. One of the most important issues is that teachers of Arabic are confident of the knowledge of the national team for textbooks compilation. The researcher would say that being specialised or professors in the University might be the reason for the creation of a gap between

the real abilities of students at schools and the expectations of the NTC. The members of the NTC have knowledge of grammar but they do not have knowledge of students' abilities and backgrounds. It is worth reiterating that the problem with grammar remains. The textbooks might be perfect, but they are not succeeding.

When one of the interviewee teachers was asked whether grammar textbooks are well established and suitable for the students' levels, and if so what are the reasons behind students' weaknesses in grammar; she said:

Students' weaknesses in grammar might be due to the students' themselves, they are not interested to learn grammar because they do not use grammar in their daily language. It might also due to the lack of students' desire to learning process as a whole because at the end of their schooling, the majority of them will have a degree from university and they will start waiting few years for a job.

This statement reflects a real problem in Jordan which affects students' motivations to learn. The difficulty of grammatical material given to the students cannot be isolated from the difficulty of Arabic grammar generally, in the students' eyes. So the idea of difficulties in grammar among students has a strong effect in preventing them from having the needed interactions with their teachers. The researcher thinks that once the idea of grammar difficulty is generated in students' minds, they will build negative attitudes towards grammar.

Half of the interviewee students agreed that the difficulty of grammatical material is one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar. The nature of grammar depends on complex relationships and rules that connect the words in one sentence, and even between one sentence and another in the full context. Therefore the idea of teaching grammar in a separate textbook as in the case of Jordan will reinforce the negative attitudes amongst students considering grammar as something separated

from language activities. Students are expected to respond in such a way because they are not willing to confess their responsibility about their weaknesses in grammar. Moreover, during the interviews the majority of students supported the idea that grammar textbooks are complex. Some times they feel confused about them. Student 2 from school B said:

I would like to say that in many grammar lessons, I lose my concentration simply because the topics seem very complex for me. It is true that I can ask the teacher to repeat some information, but when my questions become more and more, I will feel embarrassed because there are some other students who need also to ask.

The statement indicates that students are convinced that grammar textbooks are higher than their own levels of understanding which emphasises the sense of superiority of the distinguished teachers in the national compilation team. The gap between students' responses and teachers' responses could be interpreted in the light of their contradictory relationship; in other words each party tries to put the responsibility on the other one. In his study Al-hroot (1998) asked students about the suitability of grammatical material for students' levels. The responses indicated that the majority of them considered the unsuitability of grammatical material to the students one of the strongest reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar.

The question here is what will teachers of Arabic do to overcome this problem and to facilitate grammar for students? And if they want to do something to help students in this aspect, can they do so in the light of the obligation to finish all grammatical material allocated for every term? It is doubtful that teachers can do something effective to overcome this matter simply because of the formal insistency to finish the textbooks by the end of the academic year.

It is worth mentioning that central textbooks are used in all schools and there is no flexibility which would enable the teachers to find suitable material for students' levels. Theoretically, there is an assumption that teachers can choose instructional material that suits students but in practice teachers concentrate on the central textbooks because if they do not finish them and do not adhere to them, the head teachers and educational supervisors will question them. The vast majority of educational supervisors supported the current grammar textbooks considering them the most suitable books for students' levels. When asked whether if the textbooks' choice based on the research on students' needs, they stated that the people who selected the material were professors and lecturers in the universities. The writer would argue that the problem comes from the gap between professors' expectations and students' actual levels.

The First National Conference of Educational Reform (FNCER) held in Amman in 1987, brought together many organizations inside and outside Jordan including the MoE. The MoE nominated a committee to evaluate the textbooks in all subjects taught at schools including Arabic grammar. The results were negative; the committee described the curriculum in general in a long list of negative descriptions. These could be summarised as follows:

1. They have no clear objectives.
2. They do not reflect the needs of the learners.
3. They do not reflect the needs of Jordanian society.
4. They concentrate on memorising the information with no attention to high intellectual skills.

The concentration on memorising grammatical rules without practicing them was clear from the findings of this study although, it has been done after thirteen years of the last educational reform. That could mean the effect of educational reform is limited in terms of grammar teaching.

The general impression of the committee about the textbooks was, they are not suitable for students' levels, and they needed a comprehensive revision. One of the recommendations of FNCER was to re- establish all textbooks in a way that cover all school subjects.

Arabic grammar was one of the textbooks to be revised by the NTC. The team includes several people who are specialised in each subject. Depending on the recommendations of the FNCER in 1987 grammar textbooks were changed. The changing process took place between 1990 and 1994. It covered both the basic and secondary stage. No one however questioned the way in which the textbooks are used. All the criticism was of the content of the textbooks. One set of experts heavily criticised the work of others and set out to improve on it. They did not question whether the whole style of approach was flawed or that their greater expertise might not have any more success.

The change of grammar textbooks did not solve the problem of students' weaknesses in grammar, since there are many studies conducted after 1994 that emphasised the fact that students' achievement in grammar is still low. For example, in his study, Khodir (1998) recommended further research to explore the reasons behind students' weaknesses in language generally and in grammar particularly.

Students' weaknesses became even worse after changing grammar textbooks for basic and secondary stages. The reason behind that might be that every change needs a certain time to be accepted and digested by students and teachers. Furthermore, grammar textbooks contain many activities that depend on making further readings by the students, whilst schools libraries are not rich enough to contain the books needed for those readings. This makes the difficulty of grammar more complex for students. The research evidence after 1992 shows that students' weaknesses in Arabic grammar is one of the most complex problems in the educational field simply because there are clear weaknesses amongst students in terms of the correct use of language. Khodir (1998) stated that despite the fact that education is available for the majority of Arabian people, students who finished their schooling are not able to write even one page without grammatical mistakes.

6.3 The lack of connection between grammar and students' daily language

It is important to make a connection between grammar and students' daily language through out the application of grammatical rules studied by students, otherwise grammar teaching and learning seems an end in it self. In this connection, the participants were asked to what extent the lack of connection between grammatical material and students' daily language cause students' weaknesses in grammar. The responses of students and teachers of Arabic are presented in table 6.2.

Table (6.2)

The lack of connection between grammar and students’ daily language

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
2	The lack of connection between grammar and students’ daily language	Teacher	75	55.6	15	11.1	45	33.3
		Student	321	45.9	164	23.4	215	30.7

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

The table above shows that 55.6 per cent of teachers of Arabic agreed with the item as a reason causing students’ weaknesses in Arabic grammar, whereas, 33.3 per cent of them disagreed with it. When asking the students about the same item, 45.9 per cent of them agreed with it and 30.7 per cent of them disagreed with it.

It seems that students and teachers’ responses are close to each other regarding this item because grammar textbooks ‘in general’ have no clear connection between grammatical material and students’ daily language. That means the grammatical knowledge gained by students will not reflect any application outside the schools or even outside the classroom, because the common form of Arabic is colloquial Arabic which is the language of daily communication.

In his study. Alhroot (1997) asked the students about the lack of connection between grammatical material and daily language. The responses of students indicate that they considered the lack of connection between grammatical material and students’ daily life one of the reasons for the problem.

If we want students to be well motivated towards learning, we need to make a clear connection between the instructional material and their daily language, so they can enjoy learning and prepare themselves to apply the knowledge of grammar.

In the case of grammar, students are taught many subjects; those are very far from the language they use. That means the grammatical rules they learn at schools are not used elsewhere. If this is the case, students will forget the grammatical knowledge easily; simply because there is no real chance to reinforce that knowledge. In this aspect, Kingen (2000) said:

As much as possible, the study of grammar and syntax should be linked to the students' own language use. (p.430).

It is clear that without connecting grammatical material with students' daily language, grammar will be an isolated subject and will not be applied throughout real communication which might reduce students' motivation towards grammar learning. Linking the instructional material of grammar and syntax to the students' own language can be made through choosing a common pattern of standard speech which is used in their daily communication. Even the colloquial level of the language is derived from the standard one and there are a lot of examples that can be used in grammar textbooks rather than using an old and repeated ones.

It is clear that the majority of students and teachers of Arabic agreed about the lack of connection between grammatical material and students' daily language and there was also clear support for this finding throughout the interviews. Student 5 from school D said:

I do not use the grammatical rules that I learn at school in my daily language. In addition, the subjects and even the examples in the textbooks are out of use, it is not just my opinion, and I can say that the majority of my students share this idea with me.

The quotation reflects that students are not fully happy with the lack of connection between grammar textbooks and students' daily language, and that should be taken into account in any change in grammar textbooks. The same problem faces the teachers of English, especially at middle schools. In this aspect, Kingen (2000) said:

For some students, learning standard English may be similar to learning a foreign language, one that they use only in certain places and when communicating with certain people. (p.438).

In the light of the above fact, students' motivation to learn grammar will be below the level that makes them enthusiastic to learn because of the lack of connection between the subjects they are taught and their daily communication. Beeching (1989) argued that one could better learn by communication in the real world than by studying some idealised grammatical system.

6.4 The lack of concentration on speaking skills

One of the most important functions of grammar is to control language elements such as words and sentences, and that leads to the importance of speaking activities. Abbott and Wigard (1989) argued that students can remember the drill but they are unable to apply it practically. The participants in this study were asked about the lack of concentration on speaking skills which use standard Arabic. The responses of teachers and teachers of Arabic are presented in table 6.3.

Table (6.3)
The lack of concentration on speaking skills

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
3	The lack of concentration on speaking skills by standard Arabic	Teacher	83	61.4	7	5.2	45	33.3
		Student	327	46.7	126	18	247	35.3

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies
F: Frequencies

The item shown in the table reflects the fact that, 61.4 per cent of teachers of Arabic criticised grammar textbooks because the textbooks do not concentrate on speaking skills when using standard Arabic. When the students were asked about the same point, 46.7 per cent of them agreed with it. It is clear that the overall majority of teachers and students agreed with the statement as a reason for students’ weaknesses in grammar, and the question is what do their opinions mean? The researcher believes that such consistency of view might be due to the case of grammar textbooks, since there is no allocation in grammar lessons for speaking skills using standard Arabic, or applying what students have already leaned. Borg (1999) said:

Grammar practice consolidates students’ understanding of grammar and provides the teacher with diagnostic information about their needs. (p159).

From the researcher’s experience, speaking skills are supposed to be done in the composition lessons, but those lessons are completely dedicated to written composition. In such a case, students miss the chance to practice their theoretical knowledge of grammar. In this connection, Richards and Rodgers (1991) explained that language teaching could be made active by using it in the class rather than using analytical procedures that involves the explanation of rules.

As explained in the previous item, grammar textbooks have been changed for the grades, eight, nine and ten, as a part of basic stage. The new versions of the textbooks were supposed to concentrate on speaking skills by using standard Arabic. It was felt that such an activity is one of the important methods to facilitate and reinforce grammatical knowledge. One of the main aims of teaching grammar after all is to enable students to write, read and speak standard Arabic, (not a classical Arabic as stated by the MoE). In reality the main aim of teaching grammar has not been achieved, although a lot of effort and time have been dedicated to achieve it. What is interesting about this is the prevalence of students' weaknesses in grammar around the Arabian countries. Al-majed (1996) stated that

Arabic as it is done nowadays has led to a weakening of the students' ability to express themselves clearly.(P. 80).

The responses of students, teachers and educational supervisors to the interviews showed that there was no concentration on speaking skills in grammar textbooks.

Student 7 from school K said:

I wish to have some activities such as role-play. We can act in standard Arabic after reading the text by our teacher. I really enjoy that because it is fun and at the same time we understand the rules better than using the blackboard. The problem is with some students who annoy all class which makes the teacher nervous.

The statement explained that students want to learn differently; they want to have new methods of teaching from time to time. It also explained why teachers prefer to use traditional method in their teaching. This method helps to control their classrooms.

6.5 The number of grammar lessons weekly is not adequate

Students in the upper basic stage in Jordan study two grammar lessons every week and the participants were asked in this study whether these two grammar lessons are sufficient to teach grammar effectively or not? The responses of teachers and students are presented in table 6.4.

Table (6.4)

The number of grammar lessons weekly is not adequate

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
4	The insufficiency of grammar weekly lessons to teach grammar effectively	Teacher	54	40	8	5.9	73	54.1
		Student	237	33.8	90	12.9	373	53.3

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies
F: Frequencies

The table above indicates that 40 per cent of teachers of Arabic disagreed with the idea. At the same time, 33.8 per cent of students considered the statement one of the reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar, whereas 53.3 per cent of students disagreed with it.

One of the possible reasons for the teachers’ opinions is the their tendency not to criticise the MoE who decided to teach students two grammar lessons weekly, considering that number of grammar lessons as sufficient to achieve the aims of grammar teaching. Students are also expected to respond in such a way because they are not very keen to have more lessons in grammar. Their motivation towards grammar learning is not strong enough to make the process of teaching and learning of grammar an enjoyable one.

In the eighth grade, the grammar textbook has 18 units for the academic year which is on average 32 weeks with two grammar's sessions each week. Each subject needs two sessions on average which means 36 sessions for the whole year. This implies there is no need for extra sessions for grammar in order to cover all grammar subjects. If we took into consideration that teachers of Arabic, like any other teachers, are asked at the beginning of every year to provide the schools' administration with a clear plan for the teaching of all subjects, grammar lessons are supposed to be adequate to teach the current textbooks according to the responses of students and teachers of Arabic.

The Grammar textbook in the ninth grade has also 18 units for the academic year. Those units need approximately 36 sessions to be delivered to the students effectively, whereas, the second term also has 18 additional subjects which need 36 sessions. In the light of that the grammar textbook for ninth grade needs more sessions to be delivered during the allocated time, since grammar could be better taught by practice and the current number of sessions seems to be adequate to deliver the content effectively. The problem is we always need students to be involved in practical activities. Each subject in the textbook needs at least two additional sessions, one for speaking skills and one for writing skills that give students an opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge of grammar. In the tenth grade, there are 26 subjects distributed on the academic year which is approximately eight months, and there are eight lessons every month. In essence, 64 grammar lessons are distributed over the whole of the academic year and again the number of sessions to teach grammar is not adequate if we take into account the need for the practical activities. Each subject in the textbook needs two additional sessions for speaking and writing skills to enable the students to apply the rules in different contexts.

The grammar textbook for the tenth grade contains 26 subjects distributed over the academic year which is 8 months and if we calculate the number of grammar lessons, there will be 64 sessions per year. And when we consider that each subject needs two lessons, all subjects in that grammar textbook will be delivered within the academic year easily but if we add on the top of those two sessions for practical activities in each lesson, the situation will be different. We will need to allocate more sessions for grammar or to reduce the number of subjects in the textbook. It will be easier then for both students and teachers to better teaching and learning of grammar. Teachers of Arabic are always asked, like all other teachers, to provide the school administration with a clear plan that explains the timetable of his or her work from the beginning of the academic year. Clearly this makes little difference. In the interviews, about half of the students consider the insufficiency of grammar weekly lessons one of the reasons for the weaknesses in grammar.

From the students' interviews it was clear that they were not keen to have more grammar lessons. Student 9 from school D said:

We have two grammar lessons every week and it is enough to cover grammar textbook.

This result is expected because of the lack of students' desire to learn grammar and the common opinion amongst them that consider Arabic grammar a difficult and complex subject.

6.6 The absence of teachers' participation in grammar textbooks

It has been explained earlier that, the NTC designs grammar textbooks and there is no role for teachers of Arabic to participating in that process although they are in touch

with students and they might be able to choose suitable material for students’ levels.

Borg (1999) explained the importance of teachers’ role by saying:

In recent years, educational research has revealed the powerful influence of teachers’ theories on their instructional decision. These theories often consist of implicit personal understanding of teaching and learning which teachers develop through educational and professional experiences in their lives. (p.157).

In the light of the teachers’ theories and the experience they had, it is important to consult them or at least the distinguished teachers, regarding the instructional material of grammar because there is a continual problem and teachers are involved in it more than any other party. The participants in this study were asked about this issue and their responses are presented in table 6.5

Table (6.5)

The absence of teachers’ participation in grammar textbooks

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
5	The absence of teachers’ participation in the compilation of textbooks	Teacher	97	71.8	14	10.4	24	17.8
		Student	334	47.7	163	23.3	203	29

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

The table above indicates that 71.8 per cent of teachers of Arabic considered this as one of the reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar, and 17.8 per cent of them disagreed with it, but this is to be expected. There is however, a contradiction with the idea or thought that this was the authority of textbook as laid down by the MoE. Students’ response showed that 47.7 per cent of students agreed with the statement, whereas 29 per cent of them disagreed with it.

It seems that teachers of Arabic are very keen to participate in establishing grammar textbooks because they are keen to invest the time accurately by choosing the right subjects for students, since they know their levels better than any one else. The problem is that they have not been given the chance to do so. If we look back to the table 6.5, we will find that, 17.8 per cent of the teachers did not agree with the statement which means they tended to say: there is no relationship between the absence of teachers' participation in grammar textbooks and students' weaknesses in grammar. Students can easily realise that their teachers did not participate in the compilation of grammar textbooks because the names of authors are placed at the beginning of the textbooks.

The desire of teachers of Arabic to participate creating grammar textbooks comes from the nature of the relationship between students and teachers. That means the closeness between students and teachers might enable the teachers to choose the right and suitable material for students' levels because teachers use to deal with students for a long time to the extent of illustrating clear image about students' abilities and aptitudes. This also means that they think that any textbook is necessarily a good idea.

The result here indicates that, the central textbooks do not take into consideration the individual differences between students in each class because it is taught to the students from different background and levels all over the country and do not take into account that range of students' levels. The dilemma of students' weaknesses in grammar is due to many factors and one of the main factors is the textbooks, not the way they are written but the way they are used. Al-majid (1996) stated that:

It has been noticed that, the syllabuses of grammar teaching have undergone many changes during the last fifty years. Sometimes some grammar subjects are set for a certain period of time, then they are

changed but, in the end, the syllabus returns to the original set subjects. Undoubtedly, this is evidence of a lack of proper grounds for selection. Had there been clear and proper grounds for selection, we would not have seen all these changes. (p.102).

Although the above statement relates to grammar textbooks in Saudi Arabia, the situation in Jordan is the same; several changes have been made to grammar textbooks, but the problem of students' weaknesses in grammar still faces both students and teachers.

The idea of proper selection of grammatical material to be taught to the students is the main idea in the above quotation. The participation of teachers of Arabic should be taken in to account when selecting the material of textbooks, not just because of their experiences and knowledge of students' abilities and aptitudes. But also because they have studied Arabic language including grammar for at least three years, so they can choose the right subjects to suit their students. They should also be allowed greater flexibility and discretion. During the interview, some teachers manifested a strong desire to participate in grammar textbooks in the light of their experience with students and their awareness of students' levels. Teacher 4 from school H Said:

I think if some distinguished teachers had a chance to participate in grammar textbooks, the students' weaknesses in grammar will be less because they know students' levels better than the members of the NTC who are mostly lecturers in the Jordanian universities.

The above opinion reflects reasonable justification to the teachers' desire to participate in grammar textbooks.

6.7 The lack of gradual development from easy and simple to difficult and complex

Grammar is a difficult subject, in students’ eyes and it should be presented to them in a way that reduces the effect of public opinion amongst students. One of the ways to do that is to start with simple and easy subjects and then move on to the more difficult and complex subjects. The participants in this study were asked about this matter. Their responses are outlined in table 6.6.

Table (6.6)

The lack of gradual development from easy and simple to difficult and complex

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
6	The lack of gradual from easy and simple to difficult and complex knowledge	Teacher	77	57	14	10.4	44	32.6
		Student	382	54.6	136	19.4	182	26

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

The table above shows that about half of the teachers (57 per cent) and the students (54.6 per cent) agreed with the statement. Such a consistency reflects that, the establishers of grammar textbooks did not take in to account one of the important issues in the educational field. That issue is to start the textbook with easy and simple knowledge that attracts students’ attention and gives them strong motivation to learn more about the topic.

The writer believes that starting with easy and simple material will give students strong motivation to keep up with the learning of new subjects of grammar. Because they will achieve success in learning, they will not consider it like a complex puzzle. Student 11 from school G said:

I remember when I started grammar textbook in eighth grade, the textbook started with a very simple lesson that is the parts of Arabic speech, the verb, the noun and the particle. I was very keen to participate class activities and that was abnormal in my case. In the contrary, grammar textbook for tenth grade starts with a complex subject and because of that I just kept silent simply because I was not confident to answer any question. I think that the first impression is very important for students about any textbook. If they build an impression that this textbook is complex or difficult, it will be difficult to change this idea about it.

The statement above reflects the fact that students can judge many situations which are beyond of our expectations. They can decide whether if this is the right way to make them understand a specific subject.

If we want the teaching process to start from in the right way and to go smoothly, we should pay attention to the students' circumstances, so they can follow up the teaching process logically. It was clear in chapter five that, students' conviction with the difficulty of grammar was widespread. In the light of that assumption among students, it is essential for them to get rid of such a bias, in order to give them a chance to learn grammar in natural circumstances without any previous anticipates or judgements.

6.8 Summary

The chapter presented the perceptions of teachers and students about the textbooks and their role in the weaknesses of students. The most important reasons from the teachers' points of views were the following:

1. The absence of teachers' participation in the compilation of grammar textbooks.
2. The lack of concentration on speaking skills.
3. The lack of smooth transition from simple to complex knowledge.
4. The lack of connection between grammatical material and students' daily language.
5. The insufficiency of weekly grammar lessons.

The perceptions of students indicated that the strongest reasons for the weaknesses related to the textbooks are the following:

1. The lack of smooth transition from simple to the complex knowledge.
2. The difficulty of grammatical material compared with students' levels.
3. The absence of teachers' participation in the compilation of grammar textbooks.
4. The lack of concentration on speaking skills.
5. The lack of connection between grammatical material and students' daily language.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Findings and discussion

**Perceptions of students, teachers and supervisors on teacher and
teaching methods**

CHAPTER SEVEN

Perceptions of students, teachers and supervisors on teacher and teaching methods

7.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the findings and discussion of the study related to the teachers and teaching methods of Arabic grammar. The chapter therefore will present the possible reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar related to the Teachers of Arabic and the teaching methods. The frequencies and the percentages of students and teachers' responses are presented separately in tables in order to enable the readers to compare between the opinions of students and teachers. The chapter will be divided into the following themes:

1. Teachers' efficiency and environment
2. Teachers' convictions and teaching styles

7.2 Teachers' efficiency and environment

The problem with Arabic grammar is generally accepted as proven. The question remains open as to the reasons for this, so the opinions of staff and students were sought. Teachers are the responsible party of organising the students' learning inside the classroom and that requires them to be well prepared in terms of the academic knowledge of the subject and the skills of teaching. And students are the targets of teaching process. Therefore, the participants in this study were asked about several reasons, those might cause students' weaknesses in grammar, from their point of view, and to try to discover underlying factors which relate to those already given.

7.2.1 The weight of the weekly teaching load

The number of weekly lessons taught by teachers plays an important role in shaping the teachers’ ability to concentrate on his work and to teach the subject effectively, because if the teaching load is beyond the ability to cope, then the quality of teaching will be under the acceptable level. The participants in this study were asked about this issue as one of the reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar. There are of course, two levels in the question. Most teachers feel burdened with work. This can be because too much is imposed on them and because they cannot easily feel in command of any thing they do.

There are extrinsic factors, like the sheer bulk of the textbooks and the shortage of time, and there are also intrinsic factors like the sense of psychological strain arising from the feeling of inadequacy and lack of complete command over the subject matter. Once again, the difference in perceptions between teachers and pupils are telling. The perceptions of teachers and students are presented in table 7.1.

Table (7.1)
The weight of the weekly teaching load

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
1	The weight of weekly teaching load of teachers of Arabic	Teacher	111	82.2	2	1.5	22	16.3
		Student	242	34.5	124	17.7	334	47.8

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

The table indicates that, 82.2 per cent of the participant teachers agreed that the sheer weight of the weekly teaching load is one of the strongest reasons for students’

weaknesses in grammar. This suggests that teachers feel that they cannot keep up. It is one of the signs that reveal that the difficulties cannot simply be subscribed to students. Whilst the question is centred ostensibly on the students' performance, it does uncover the awareness of teachers. As explained in chapter two, the average of teachers' delivery for Arabic is 24 lessons per week, which includes the teaching of four textbooks. The first book is reading and literature contexts, the second one is Arabic grammar, the third one is the composition and summarisation and the fourth one is language applications. This sense of having too much to teach is a revealing finding; it admits not only that there is a problem but also that the problem lies in the teaching. Given the circumstances, teachers say it is not surprising that they should be failing. It is interesting that they extrapolate students' weaknesses on themselves.

The teacher of Arabic teaches different classes in his or her school and the number of Arabic sessions is seven sessions per week for each class. The length of each one is 45 minutes. In the light of this number, and the number of Arabic textbooks allocated for every grade, it is not surprising that teachers of Arabic agree with the statement that their teaching load is one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar. Teachers of Arabic have to finish all Arabic textbooks in a specific time, which is the period of the academic term (normally 16 weeks). If we know that the school day starts at 8 o'clock in the morning and finishes at 2 o'clock, we can say that teachers of Arabic will have to teach five lessons during six hours, which is about four hours. In addition most of the teachers of Arabic are responsible for different activities at schools, which add another load on them. These activities include for example editing school magazines, school media and organizing the assembly on alternative weeks.

The nature of Arabic language taught in Jordanian schools puts more pressure on teachers of Arabic. They have to mark a lot of homework and many exams, and when it comes to comparing the teaching load of teachers of Arabic and the teachers of other subjects, teachers of Arabic feel they are being treated unfairly.

Some people would argue that the more lessons, the more tests and the more homework, the better performance is. So the question is what is going wrong?

The weight of the teaching load becomes more complex in the light of the examinations system. The exams to be held during the term are divided into three types; the first one is the short exams, which are held twice a month. The second one is half term exams, which are held twice a term and the third one is the final exam at the end of each term. In the light of this system, the Arabic teacher and the students spend the whole of the term in continual exams and all of them will be under pressure. The interviews showed that the majority of students learn grammar because they have to be presented with achievement tests; they learn to pass the tests, however slight the chances of failure.

In the view of these circumstances, teachers of Arabic might skimp in their teaching, which affects students' understanding of grammar lessons. They need to rush their teaching in order to cover all subjects in the textbook; otherwise they will be questioned by the head teacher and the educational supervisor of Arabic.

When asking the students about the weight of teaching load and its effect on students' weaknesses in grammar, 47.8 per cent of students disagreed with the item, which means that the majority of students made no connection between their weaknesses in

grammar and the weekly teaching load of teachers. The responses of students might be interpreted by students' awareness of what is going on inside the schools, because every class has a body called students' government, which shares the ideas and thoughts with the schools' administration. The students are involved to some extent in the school administration as part of the democratic trend in Jordanian schools and that enables them to have an idea about the teachers' load.

The gap between the responses of students and teachers is clear and the question is what does that gap means? That gap might due to the different levels of experience and knowledge among students and teachers. Thus, it is not extraordinary to have such a result in terms of the gap between the responses of teachers and students. Furthermore, students might think it is just an excuse by teachers of Arabic to keep themselves away from the responsibility of students' weaknesses.

All teachers interviewees agreed that their teaching load is heavy. For instance, teacher 3 from school L said:

I think it is not fair to teach five textbooks under the name of Arabic language where every textbook has its own load: preparation, examination and homework. In some busy days I do not have time like other teachers to have a normal break without marking or doing something related to my teaching load.

The statement above shows that teachers of Arabic are not happy at all with their teaching load especially if they compare their load with other teachers, Although they have the same salaries.

7.2.2 The burdening of teachers with additional duties

In all of the Jordanian schools, there are different tasks to be done by teachers in addition to their teaching load. For instance, the idea of school media is that, during the assembly, students are supposed to participate in a short speech or short plays to give all students some general advice and guidance. The teachers of Arabic are always responsible of organising all these activities, which adds more load on the teachers and that might prevent them from ideal use of their free time to prepare grammar lessons.

The teachers are also responsible of organising the assembly and observing students during the break time. This prevents the teachers from making ideal use of the free time during the school day. The participants were asked about this point and their responses are presented in table 7.2

Table (7.2)

The burdening of teachers with additional duties

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
2	The burdening of teachers of Arabic with additional duties (like school media, weekly alternation and class responsibilities)	Teacher	113	83.7	2	1.5	20	14.8
		Student	100	74.1	3	2.2	32	23.7

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

The table shows that 83.7 per cent of the teachers agreed with the statement considering it one of the reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar. When asking students about the same reason, 74.1 per cent of them agreed with it, and 23.7 per cent of them disagreed with it. Teachers’ agreement with this reason is understandable because they are already doing a very hard job in terms of teaching four textbooks under the subject of Arabic language. This finding reveals that teachers of Arabic consider their job very hard compared to the other teachers, because when you teach four textbooks you will need to pay more effort than when you teach one. At the same time it reveals, both from the pupils’ and teachers’ points of view, the sense that teachers are distracted from their essential task. They are always busy, delivering one part of the curriculum or caught up in other duties.

Therefore, teachers’ responses reflect their sense of unfairness compared with the teachers of other subjects, simply because they teach different textbooks and they are given other duties such as school media, class responsibilities and weekly alternation. School media is general activities controlled by a committee of students and Arabic teacher, which makes activities. Those activities are organised generally during the morning assembly, which always include a short speech, advice or new information

by one of the students. Before that teachers of Arabic are supposed to check the readings of students and train the presenter of each activity.

Class responsibility is the task given to one teacher to be responsible for marks and absence records of a particular grade that also burdens the teacher with additional tasks during school day. In addition there is weekly alternation, the system of organising students' assembly in the morning and even during the breaks. The majority of teachers supposed to take part in this process, which is considered an additional task.

The teachers complain about these additional duties considering them one of the barriers of teaching effectively. What was surprising in this finding is that 14.8 per cent of the teachers disagreed with the statement. This minority would say they are not the only teachers who have to do additional duties. All teachers at schools have the same duties. Therefore, this minority of teachers of Arabic would argue that there is no relation between students' weaknesses in grammar and giving additional duties to the teachers of Arabic.

The writer would understand to some extent the view of these teachers of Arabic because during the school day, the teachers have some gaps between the lessons, which could be used for marking and following up the students' work. The problem is that, with any additional duties, teachers of Arabic will not find the time to do the job in a proper way. Al-khooli (1986) considered the heavy load of teaching and other duties on the teachers of Arabic one of the obstacles that prevent them from using new teaching methods. Instead, they tend to use the easiest teaching methods.

According to the responses of students, the majority of them agreed that teachers of Arabic are burdened with additional duties and that affects the quality of their teaching. The responses of students could be interpreted in the light of new tendency by the MoE in Jordan to share the thoughts of students by establishing students' government in every class. 74.1 per cent of the students appreciated the difficulty of teaching Arabic faced by teachers in the light of the current school system. The students called indirectly for reduced additional duties given to teachers of Arabic because this reduction will enable them to teach grammar effectively.

The responses of teachers to the interviews showed strong agreement that burdening them with additional duties at schools affects the quality of their teaching and they can not teach grammar effectively under these conditions. For instance, teacher 7 from school F said:

I supposed to check the material that students present every day during the assembly. I am also responsible of the tenth grade. I have to check the register for that class as well as taking their marks from the teachers of other subjects. In addition, whenever there is a meeting or national ceremony I have to be the organiser. Some times I feel confused because my main job is to teach Arabic not to do all of these duties.

The statement shows that teachers of Arabic are not doing one or two jobs at schools; they do different duties in addition to their heavy load which keeps them under pressure all the academic year. These conditions would affect the quality of their teaching either directly or indirectly because the time of the additional duties would be invested in preparing some useful aids to facilitate the teaching of grammar.

7.2.3 The lack of following up the grammar homework by teachers

In order for students to understand and apply grammatical rules, there must be a follow up by teachers of Arabic to the grammar homework given to the students. Otherwise, grammatical knowledge will not last long. The participants in this study were asked weather the lack of following up the homework affects students' achievement or not. The responses are presented in table 7.3.

Table (7.3)

The lack of following up the grammar homework by teachers

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		UN	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
3	The lack of following up the grammar homework by teachers of Arabic	Teacher	100	74.1	3	2.2	32	23.7
		Student	241	34.4	92	13.1	367	52.4

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

The table indicates that, three quarters of teachers of Arabic agreed with the item as a reason for students' weaknesses in grammar. The interpretation of teachers' responses should be connected with the results of the previous two items, because all of them are related to insufficiency of time given to teachers of Arabic to teach grammar effectively in the light of the heavy teaching load and additional duties given to them. But this is also a confession. They wish they had time to do their job properly but they cannot do so due to the shortage of time given to them. The responses of teachers of Arabic indicate that they should be excluded from having additional duties because they have to teach for textbooks under the title of 'Arabic language' as a school subject.

They will not find enough time to prepare for grammar teaching comprehensively and they will not find enough time to follow up students' works, especially if we know that the number of students is never less than 30. The writer therefore would understand teachers' responses because if they want to follow up students' homework, their teaching load and additional duties given to them by the school administration makes it difficult. The problem of additional duties given to teachers of Arabic unlike other teachers could be also connected with the number of grammatical subject taught through grammar textbooks. If the number of the grammatical subjects in the textbooks were reduced, then teachers of Arabic might find an opportunity to follow up the grammar homework, and in essence, to teach grammar more effectively.

The responses of students show that 34.4 per cent of them agreed that the lack of following up of students' work by teachers is one of the reasons for their weaknesses in Arabic grammar. 52.4 per cent of them disagreed with this. This result might be attributed to the students' trend to ignore homework because they have a lot of homework to do not just in grammar but also in the other school subjects. The result might also be due to the students' desire not to criticise their teachers because they respect them to some extent. The majority of students did not consider the lack of following up students' works by the teachers one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar. There are different levels to the question: those pupils who are indifferent to learning would consider that no amount of extra help would make a difference. Others reveal a sense of neglect and lack of personal interest.

When asking the students during the interviews about this suggested reason for students' weaknesses in grammar, the majority of them stated that it is not one of the

strong reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar. For instance, Student 8 from school E said:

I can say that whenever I do my homework, my teacher always checks it, but in many cases I consider it as a formal check up because he used to put one tick on the whole page no matter if there is some mistakes or not

The statement indicates that teachers of Arabic follow up the students' homework only as a formal procedure, which might be due to the desire to satisfy the head teacher who must follow up students' homework in order to evaluate teachers' performance. In the view of that, following up of students' homework does not achieve its aim, which is to re-enforce grammatical knowledge in students' minds.

Therefore, the sheer lack of time and the weight of the system play an important role in creating the problem of students' weaknesses in grammar. Teacher of Arabic who teaches four textbooks at once would find it difficult to follow up all homework given to the students. And at the end of the day students will start feeling there is no point of doing the homework if the teacher will not look at it. Students might think that the teacher does not care about homework, whilst the teacher could not find adequate time to cover all students' work.

7.2.4 The lack of using standard Arabic by teachers during grammar lessons

One of the applications of grammar is to use standard Arabic as a communication language because that gives students an opportunity to practice the theoretical knowledge of grammar. The participants in this study were asked about the lack of using standard Arabic language by the teachers of Arabic as one of the suggested reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar. Their responses are presented in table 7.4.

Table (7.4)

The lack of using standard Arabic during grammar lessons

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
4	The lack of using standard Arabic, by teachers of Arabic during grammar lessons	Teacher	38	28.1	8	5.9	89	65.9
		Student	264	37.7	105	15	331	47.3

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

The table shows that 28.1 per cent of the teachers consider the item one of the reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar, whereas 65.9 per cent of them did not consider it one of the reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar. The number confessing to their own shaky hold on grammar is revealing. That more than a quarter reveals they are not in full command of the subject they teach is startling.

The acceptance of teachers of Arabic with this reason might be considered low compared to their acceptance with other reasons. Teachers of Arabic are not expected to criticise themselves and their nature is to be defensive. If then they consider it one of the reasons for the weaknesses in grammar, this will display one of the negative practices of the teachers themselves. The writer would say that even the 28.1 per cent of teachers who agreed with the item is high because it is self-criticism, which is not

easy for human beings, since people always try to give a positive image about themselves. This high acceptance by teachers of Arabic might be due to the fact that mastering standard Arabic is not possible for the majority of them and when they confess with it, they are emphasising that fact rather than criticising themselves. Mahjoob (1986) stressed the importance of using standard Arabic by teachers in order for students to have good example of language application.

The responses of students indicate that 47.3 per cent of them did not consider it one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar but 37.7 per cent of them did consider it as one, as if a poor role models, as well as inaccurate information were undermining.

The percentage of the students who agreed with the item represents about third of the participant students, so is the real case that teachers of Arabic generally tend to use colloquial Arabic? Why do the teachers have this tendency? It might due to the lack of their knowledge of grammar or the lack of their ability to use standard Arabic. It might also attributed to their conviction not to use it, because it will look funny, since students are not familiar with that level of language and they always hear colloquial Arabic either from TV or in all daily situations. They hardly hear people use standard Arabic in the news, sermons or formal interviews. Teachers also might find using a colloquial Arabic easier than standard Arabic in terms of the smoothness of their teaching.

Moreover, during the interviews, the educational supervisors emphasised the fact that, the majority of teachers of Arabic tend to use the colloquial Arabic during Arabic lessons including grammar. Teacher 10 from school F said:

I can say that, about 60 per cent of teachers of Arabic whom I supervise tend to use a colloquial Arabic, whereas 40 per cent of them tend to use standard Arabic. The use of standard Arabic is very helpful to apply the grammatical rules and to give students good example of grammar application. In this case students might be expected to benefit from teaching grammar

The above statement indicates that teachers of Arabic in general use colloquial Arabic.

That will not help in reinforcing the knowledge of grammar in students' minds. It indicates that educational supervisors of Arabic language believe in the importance of using a standard Arabic by teachers in order to give the students an example of the correct use and application of the grammatical rules rather than sticking purely to the theoretical knowledge. Al-habashneh (1993) maintained that teachers of Arabic commit a high number of grammatical mistakes when they use standard Arabic in their teaching. An improvement of teachers' role might be achieved by making self criticism and that can be made by recording grammar lessons from time to time in order for teachers to review their own performance. That would enable them to strengthen the weaknesses and the gaps of their teaching.

7.2.5 The lack of using standard Arabic teachers of other subjects

The use of standard Arabic is one of the ways of re-enforcing grammatical knowledge in students' minds, which means that the teachers of other school subjects might help students in achieving the objectives of grammar teaching if they use standard Arabic in their teaching. In the view of that, one of the suggested reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar was the lack of using standard Arabic by the other teachers. The responses of teachers and students are presented in table 7.5.

Table (7.5)
The lack of using standard Arabic by teachers of other subjects

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
5	The lack of using standard Arabic by the other teachers	Teacher	110	81.5	11	8.1	14	10.3
		Student	410	58.6	114	16.3	176	25.1

A: Agree
 UN: Uncertain
 D: Disagree
 F: Frequencies

The table indicates that 81.5 per cent of teachers of Arabic agreed with the item considering it one of the reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar. The acceptance of teachers of Arabic indicates their tendency to blame the teachers of other subjects, because those teachers tended to use colloquial Arabic in their teaching. In addition, teachers of Arabic want to suggest that the responsibility lies beyond their control. If all others parents, teachers and the media all use colloquial Arabic how can they overcome this? But their greater concern is other teachers. If the academic establishment is not working together and presenting a united educated front, how can students take their work seriously? The percentage of teachers’ acceptance indicates that the teachers of other subjects are expected to use standard Arabic in order to support or complete the teaching of grammar, which is the application of the theoretical knowledge of grammar in a living and used form.

It is worth asking, if teachers of Arabic themselves are not able to be good users of standard Arabic and to give real example to be followed by students, then how can we expect the teachers of other subjects to do so? It is easier to blame others, but this also suggests the difficulties of the context. Teaching Arabic grammar goes against the

contextual grain. Suddenly, in particular lessons, pupils have to speak and write differently.

When asking the students about the same item, 58.6 per cent of them consider it one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar. This result shows that the teachers of other subjects in general do not use standard Arabic during the teaching process. This result also is a description of the real situation because the teachers of other subjects have not the knowledge of grammar that enables them to use standard Arabic. The students might not expect other teachers to use standard Arabic, which is the application of grammar and this might indicate that Arabic grammar is an arcane and difficult subject and not a normal part of life.

During the interview, teachers of Arabic also considered the use of colloquial Arabic by the teachers of other subjects as one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar. For example, teacher 4 from school M stated that,

I think that, the teachers of other subjects play an important role in the problem of students' weaknesses in grammar, simply because as an Arabic teacher, I can teach Arabic grammar effectively and I can also use standard Arabic during grammar lessons but, the problem comes from the teachers of other subjects. They are supposed to co-operate and support the roles of teachers by using standard Arabic or even a correct Arabic, in order to give the students an example of good use of language and if they did so, students will not be confused in terms of adjustability with two levels of language

The statement above reflects the need to have a certain degree of co-operation between teachers of Arabic and the teachers of other subjects at schools. This co-operation would produce a complementary process in order to achieve the objectives of teaching. The statement also reflects the necessity of having an acceptable

knowledge of grammar amongst the teachers of other school subjects because without that knowledge, they won't be able to use standard Arabic correctly. The writer would say, if the teachers of Arabic who teach grammar struggle in using standard Arabic, the teachers of other subjects are not expected to do better since they are not specialists in Arabic.

The responses of educational supervisors supported teachers' of Arabic when they consider the use of colloquial Arabic by other teachers one of the reasons for students' weaknesses. Even if teachers of Arabic do their job perfectly, the teachers of other subjects will make the students confused by using different level of Arabic.

7.2.6 Unavailability of audio visual aids

The role of audio visual aids is essential to facilitate the teaching process especially in a subject like grammar, where students have previous conviction that grammar is difficult. In general students consider their work boring. In this aspect the research showed that the majority of students count the minutes waiting for the end of the lesson. Therefore the use of audio visual aids is one of the possible ways to reduce that feeling amongst students. The participants were asked weather the audio visual aids are available adequately at schools. The perceptions of students and teachers are presented in the table 7.6

Table (7.6)
Unavailability of audio visual aids

No	Item	Data source	A		U N		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
6	Unavailability of audio visual aids which may facilitate grammar teaching	Teacher	85	63	5	3.7	45	33.4
		Student	490	70	50	7.1	160	22.9

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

The table indicates that 63 per cent of teachers of Arabic agreed with the statement considering it one of the reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar, which reflects the shortage of using audio visual aids at schools and a lack of time to use them if they were available, given the demands of the textbooks.

The use of audio visual aids is one of the important components to facilitate the teaching process and in the case of Arabic grammar the need for these audio visual aids is more important because of the assumption that it is a dry subject. In the view of that students might find it easier to learn grammatical rules via videotape, or

presenting a short dialogue between two actors or actresses, rather than learning it via traditional methods.

There are clear differences between the availability of audio visual aids and the use of them in teaching. The availability means that different equipment could be used to help both students and teachers in the process of teaching and learning. For instance, some schools have videos, TVs, tape recorders, overhead projectors and computers, which can be used as aids of teaching and learning. The actual use of audio visual aids is the extent that teachers use the available resources, no matter how limited they are. In many schools there is a good variety of audio visual aids, but the point is they are not being used by the teachers of Arabic grammar to facilitate their teaching and to make it more attractive to the students. Educational technology is a symbol both of the use of traditional teaching methods and the burden imposed by the context of the textbooks, all of which has to be crammed in, if necessary by rote learning rather than by role playing.

For the above reason, the latest educational reform plan (1987-1998) concentrated on the necessity of providing all schools with suitable audiovisual aides. The eighth recommendation by the First National of Educational Development was to establish special department in each directorate of education and learning to deal with providing schools with audiovisual aids and to arrange sufficient training for the teachers, MoE, (1988). P.78.

The majority of teachers still considered the audiovisual aids at schools less than needed and that could be interpreted in the light of the financial difficulties of the

of the MoE, which prevent it from providing the schools with suitable audio visual aids that might facilitate and activate the teaching-learning process. But availability of the audio visual aids does not necessarily mean that educational technology would be used. There is always need to give training for the effective use of educational technology by teachers, and there is also need to encourage teachers to use them.

The availability of audiovisual aids is not necessarily a sign of effective teaching of grammar because there must be sufficient training on how to use these audiovisual aids in a correct way to benefit the teaching process. We need to make a distinction between the availability of educational media and their use. Audiovisual materials and other teaching aids are used to facilitate teaching and to keep students' interest and attention during the lessons.

Educational technology is a symbol of the possibility of more flexible exciting approaches to teaching, and quite different from the traditional content imposed by the textbooks. When asking students about the same item, 70 per cent of them consider it one of the reasons for weaknesses in grammar.

Students' desire to use those aids in grammar lessons came about because their use will attract them, and help them enjoy their learning of grammar. It indicates that students wish to be entertained via the teaching procedures. Therefore, the use of these audio visual aids could help students to get rid of their previous conviction, which considers grammar an arcane and dull subject.

The fact that there is a lack of audiovisual aids at schools was clear throughout the interviews with both teachers and students. The majority of teachers of Arabic stated that their schools suffer from the lack of audiovisual aids. Teacher 2 from school B said:

In my school, there is a clear lack of audiovisual aids, we have two tape recorders and one of them is always in the head teacher's room. We also have two overhead projectors and whenever I want to use them I will need to bring my students to the show room and take them back to their class, which takes up to ten minutes. Honestly, I avoid using it because if I waste ten minutes approximately from the lesson, I will not finish the topic of that day according to my plan, which will be calculated as a negative point by the head teacher. In addition, if the overhead projector broken down for any reason, I will be blamed. If I want to bring the overhead projector to the classroom, there will be no space to run the lesson comfortably

The above statement shows the limitation of an audiovisual aids at schools and the limitation of using them, which is due to the rigidity of schools' instructions or to the shortage of teaching time. Indirectly, the statement reflects the need to reduce the number of topics included in grammar textbooks because if there are fewer topics, the teachers might be able to use audiovisual aids without too much concern about the timing problems. Teachers are worried about the shortage of time when using audio visual aids. They calculate it in minutes because they have limited time to cover all topics in the textbook.

During the interviews, the majority of students displayed dissatisfaction about the availability of audiovisual aids at schools. For instance, student 5 from school M said:

I can tell you that the only things we have at my school is an old video, which is placed in the library, in addition, we have three tape recorders, one in the head teacher' office, one in the staff room and the third recorder is mobile one between all classes. I think that the head teacher wants to protect them from the damage as long as possible

The statement illuminates the responses of teachers and students throughout the questionnaire. There is no special hall for the audiovisual aids which would enable teachers to use them. That was clear from placing the video in the library, which is supposed to be very quiet. The overall result is that there is clear lack of audio visual aids, and there is no suitable environment inside the school to store or use them.

The eighth recommendation of the FNCER that was held in Amman 1987 stressed the point of unavailability of educational technology by explaining the need to establishing comprehensive centres for educational technology in all schools. Those centres should be equipped with tape recorders, TVs, videos and all buildings that are necessary for flexible use of the equipment. In addition, most of the schools should have computers according to the size and age level of the school. MoE, (1988) (p.78-79).

Educational supervisors mentioned that there is clear lack of using audio visual aids.

Supervisor 2 from directory A said:

From my visits to different teachers I can say that audio visual aids are hardly used and I do not blame teachers of Arabic because they have to finish the textbooks. The use of audio visual aids needs more time for preparing them and taking students to the hall, if there is a hall. In some cases teacher needs to bring the equipment to the class under the risk of damaging some of them.

The statement shows that educational supervisors understand the reasons for the lack of using audio visual aids by the teachers of Arabic. It also shows the need of having special arrangement to use the aids as well as suitable building.

7.3 Teachers' convictions and teaching styles

The teaching styles could be defined as the ways in which teachers use to deliver the instructional material. This section deals with teachers' convictions and the teaching styles they adopt, because their conviction towards teaching as a job and the methods of teaching form their performance and teaching styles, because if the teachers are not satisfied about their careers, there will be no creative thinking in their work. Therefore, the perceptions of teachers of Arabic and students are presented throughout a number of tables, in order to explain the relationships between these reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar.

7.3.1 The lack of using audio visual aids

There is a slight difference between audio visual aids and teaching methods. The difference is that teaching methods is a more comprehensive concept that involve a particular approach to teaching whilst audio visual aids can be used to facilitate the teaching process either with traditional methods or modern methods. For instance the traditional lecturing method can be supported by overhead projector.

The availability of audio visual aids does not necessarily mean there is an effective use of them by teachers. In many schools, there is good variety of audio visual aids, but the use of them is very limited for different reasons. The participants were asked about the lack of using audio visual aids and their perceptions are presented in table 7.7.

Table (7.7)
The lack of using audio visual aids

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
7	The lack of using audio visual aids in grammar teaching	Teacher	86	68.1	4	3	39	28.8
		Student	449	64.1	95	13.6	156	22.3

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

The table shows that 68.1 per cent of teachers of Arabic agreed with the statement considering it as one of the reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar. Thus, the majority of teachers of Arabic agreed that there is lack of using audio visual aids especially in grammar teaching and yet, the question is what are the reasons behind lack of using them.

The lack of using audio visual aids could be interpreted in the light of the insufficiency of grammar weekly lessons, which are two lessons. If Arabic teacher wanted to use audio visual aids in grammar teaching, the time of the session would not be adequate, because it would need further time to prepare the equipment even in the classroom or inside a special hall allocated for the use of educational aids in different subjects.

There is a lack of the use of audio visual aids in grammar lessons. When asked about the same item during the interviews, there was a strong trend amongst teachers to consider it one of the reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar. Al-khooli (1979) maintained that students who learn grammar by the audiovisual aids scored better than students who learnt by traditional method.

Teacher 4 from school S said:

From my own experience, there is many basic audio visual aids inside the schools but the problem is the shortage of using them. For example, if I want to use the overhead projector in presenting the examples of grammar I will have to bring it from the educational technology hall to the classroom, the other option is to take all students to the hall. Those two options will disturb the smoothness of grammar lessons and waste a certain amount of the time. The final result is I will not be able to finish the textbook in the allocated time

The statement above reflects many important issues; the first one is the availability of limited audio visual aids inside the schools, which means the aids are not available in all classes. It also reflects that one of the main concerns for teachers of Arabic is to finish the whole grammar textbook in the allocated time, no matter what the teaching methods are. The statement emphasises that teachers of Arabic acknowledge the clear lack of time given to teach Arabic grammar.

The statement also reflects the difficulty of class management in the light of the available facilities. If the audio visual aids are available for all classes, and the size of grammar textbooks is smaller than the current size, the teachers might start using them without really worrying about the insufficiency of the time to finish the textbook.

When asking the students about the same reason, the majority of them (64.1) per cent consider it one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar. Such a result might due to the teachers' desire to finish grammar textbooks, which could not be done if they use the audio visual aids in all lessons, because that use will take them longer than traditional teaching methods.

In addition, the use of audio visual aids needs students to have a certain degree of commitment in order to let the teacher concentrate on the delivery of grammatical material instead of keeping student discipline.

7.3.2 The lack of encouraging students by teachers to use standard Arabic

The use of standard Arabic by teachers is considered one of the teaching styles that involves both students and teachers in the application of grammar effectively.

This question is about the role of teachers to encourage their students to use standard Arabic as an application of the theoretical knowledge. The use of standard Arabic is considered a comprehensive application of grammatical rules and teachers are supposed to use it in order to give students a real example of the correct use of grammar. Teachers are also supposed to encourage students to use standard Arabic in every possible way of encouragement. The table 7.8

Table (7.8)
The lack of encouraging students by teachers to use standard Arabic

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
8	Teachers of Arabic do not encourage their students to use standard Arabic	Teacher	48	35.5	8	5.9	79	58.6
		Student	334	47.7	118	16.9	248	35.4

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

The table indicates that half the teachers of Arabic did not consider the item one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar, whilst 35.5 per cent of them agreed with the item. The use of standard Arabic by the students is one of the best ways to practice grammar throughout real situations because we all communicate in different aspects of the life and if students start using standard Arabic inside and outside the

classroom, they will get used to use it in time and with practice the target of grammar teaching will be achieved.

Such a result might be interpreted in the light of another reason, which is the lack of standard Arabic used by the teachers of Arabic. It was clear that the 28.1 per cent of teachers of Arabic use colloquial Arabic during their teaching according to the teachers' responses to the questionnaire. The perceptions of educational supervisors showed that 60 per cent of the teachers of Arabic tend to use a colloquial Arabic. If teachers of Arabic do not use standard Arabic as stated by the educational supervisors, we cannot expect students to do so, because it is important for students to have clear example that encourages them to use standard Arabic. One might ask what is the relationship between the use of standard Arabic and Arabic grammar?

The simple answer for such a question is that, the use of standard Arabic is the application of theoretical knowledge of grammar and that application is very important to reinforce that knowledge in students' minds. Therefore, the writer believes that, years and years of teaching and learning of Arabic grammar has not achieved its objectives, because the process of teaching grammar has not been designed pragmatically to enable students to use them in real situations. For instance the concentration on speaking skills and writing skills by using standard Arabic could be one of the steps to be taken in grammar textbooks.

When asking students about the lack of encouragement they receive by Arabic teachers in use standard Arabic; 47.7 per cent of them consider it one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar. Half of the participant students tended to blame teachers of Arabic for the lack of their encouragement to use standard Arabic, and

when it comes to investigating the reasons behind that lack of encouragement, we will find several reasons such as the lack of teachers' use of standard Arabic and that was obvious from the interviews with the education supervisors. The result might also due to the general trend in the society to use the colloquial Arabic. Teachers of Arabic are a part of society and they will feel a strong conflict and difficulty if they use standard Arabic just during grammar lessons and then use the colloquial Arabic.

7.3.3 The lack of giving students equal opportunities in class participation

Stern (1995) explained that each student should be given equal chance to participate the learning activities. One of the most important signs of the effective teacher is the ability to give students equal opportunities to participate in classroom activities. Otherwise there will be a group of students who will feel isolated and start acting badly as a kind of reaction for being excluded from participation. Regarding this matter, Ibrahim and Surty (1987) stated that a good teacher is quite familiar with the basic problems, aptitudes and background knowledge of his students. Such knowledge enables the teacher to give all students equal opportunities to participate in class activities. In this study, both students and teachers were asked about this matter as one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar. The perceptions of students and teachers are presented in table 7.9.

Table (7.9)
Teachers of Arabic do not give students equal opportunities in class participation

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
9	Teachers of Arabic do not give students equal opportunities in class participation	Teacher	38	28.1	10	7.4	87	64.4
		Student	303	43.2	93	13.3	304	43.5

A: Agree
 UN: Uncertain
 D: Disagree
 F: Frequencies

The table indicates that, the majority of teachers of Arabic (64.4) per cent asserted that they gave all students opportunities to participate in class activities. They tended to say we do treat our students fairly and we give them equal opportunities in class participation, but the problem is some thing else rather than giving them equal opportunities, it is making sure they make use of them. One way of achieving equality is to distribute the questions and activities across the whole number of students in each class; other wise some students will feel isolated and might start disturbing the smoothness of the lesson.

If we know that the average of students’ number in each classroom is about 35 students, it will be easier to realise how difficult is the situation of teachers of Arabic if they want to distribute class participation equally among the students of each class. That means if the teacher allocated one question for each student which might take one minute; the whole number of students will take 35 minutes out of 45 minutes, which is the length of the session. The rest of the session time is 10 minutes and of course those ten minutes will not be adequate to explain grammar problems

effectively because it is clear confession that teachers of Arabic do not make careful preparation for grammar and that affects students' levels of performance.

In such a case, and if we know that teachers of Arabic have to finish the whole of grammar textbook, we can not expect teachers of Arabic to give students equal opportunities in class participation because there are more than one factor that affect teachers' performance.

Al-hroot (1997) asked the students of Arabic department in Mu'tah University about the bias of lecturer of Arabic in favour of some students as a reason for students' weaknesses in grammar. The result of Al-hroot's study is clear evidence to explain to what extent the problem of students' weaknesses in grammar has spread out not just at schools but also at the Universities. It showed that about half of the students consider the lack of students' opportunities to participate in class activities as one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar.

If this is the case in the University, then the case of schools will be the same if not worse, because the University lecturers are supposed to have more awareness about teaching styles and classroom management and the classes are much smaller. When asking the teachers of Arabic through the interview about the same matter, about 30 per cent of them confessed the lack of giving students equal opportunities. They attributed that to different barriers, some of them related to the class size, some of them related to the size of textbooks and some of them related to the students. Teacher 7 from school O said:

All right, you are asking me a question, which involves several factors, It is true that not all students in my class have a chance to participate class activities, but, there must be reasons for that. For instance, there are 37

students in my class and I won't be able to allow all students to participate in class activities, because of the shortness of the lesson and if I want all students to participate I might need a double lesson. The ability of many students to take part in class activities is limited, some students are not even willing to take part in class activities because they are shy, and some of them are not interested in grammar learning

The above quotation presents that some of the teachers of Arabic admitted there is a lack of giving equal opportunities to the students in class participation or activities and in the same time, they found several reasons for that lack. It seems that teachers of Arabic are not happy with the size of class and textbooks, as well as students' abilities to participate in class activities. The quotation also suggests that some students who are able to take part in class activities are not doing so because they are shy. Subsequently, teachers of Arabic ask themselves, if those students were given some easier question and simpler activities with immediate consolidations, would they find any excuse not to participate?

In contrast to teachers' perceptions, 43.2 per cent of students consider that it was one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar. That means students believe that teachers of Arabic do not treat students fairly and such a treatment might affect students' desire to learn grammar because they will hate this kind of treatment. It makes them hate the subject of grammar in general. When asking the students about the same topic during the interview, the majority of them stated that all class activities are limited to a few students, because the teacher always thinks they are the best.

Student 6 from school E said:

If you had a chance to observe our grammar lessons, you will feel that there are only five or six students who answer the questions and work out the exercises. In many cases I was aware of the answers but I do not have enough opportunities to say it because whenever the students in the front desks raise their hands they will have a chance to answer. I believe that my teacher considers them their favourite students. Some of

my colleagues used to complain between themselves about that, but they never complain direct to the teacher

The above quotation shows that teachers of Arabic in general concentrate on a particular students to participate in class activities, which means they ignore the rest of the students in the class. Teachers of Arabic do not take in to account the individual differences between students. For instance, there must be simple questions and activities for the students who have a basic knowledge of grammar, and there must be some other questions and activities for the advanced students.

Most importantly, the quotation reflects the general complaints amongst students about the unfair treatment of the students by their teachers. The complaints are hidden from the teachers. Therefore, the writer believes that if teachers of Arabic tried to revise their own teaching, they might realise how unfair is their treatment to the students. For example, they can record some grammar lessons in order to watch them later for at least one time. They will find some strong points and some weaknesses point and then they can improve the quality of their teaching. Alternatively, Arabic teachers can ask one or more of his or her trusted colleagues to observe one of the grammar lessons in order to give his or her honest feedback.

Giving students equal opportunities makes them enthusiastic to learn which makes a desirable trend in terms of students centred teaching. Brindley (1999) mentioned that teaching is not a matter of knowledge transfer but it is about creating opportunities for students to work on their own understandings.

7.3.4 Teachers of Arabic do not prepare carefully for grammar lessons

This section presents the perceptions of teachers of Arabic and students related to the preparation for grammar lessons by the teachers. Specifically, they were asked to state if they think that teachers of Arabic do not prepare carefully for grammar lessons. Their perceptions are presented in table 7.10.

(Table 7.10)
Teachers of Arabic do not prepare carefully for grammar lessons

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
10	Teachers of Arabic do not prepare carefully for grammar lessons	Teacher	43	31.8	4	3	88	64.4
		Student	185	26.4	168	24	347	49.5

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

The table indicates that, 31.8 per cent of teachers of Arabic consider the item above one of the reasons for students’ weaknesses in Arabic grammar which means the majority of them considered their preparation careful enough. Given the weight of textbooks and the constraint of time, one would have thought that the teachers of Arabic would feel themselves adequately prepared for the task. The fact that almost a third of them admitted not preparing fully for the lesson is revealing.

The writer would consider 31.8 per cent of teachers who confessed that they do not make elaborate preparation as a high percentage because they are not expected to make such a confession. It is worth noting that elaborate preparation for grammar lessons would help the teachers of Arabic preparing different questions and activities, which are suitable for students’ levels. From my own experience, the lessons’

preparation in Jordan is a matter of formal procedures decided by the MoE and all teachers have to follow them because this kind of preparation is one of the important criteria to evaluate teachers' performance. All teachers are provided with preparation books to include the aims of the lesson, the methods of achieving these aims and the methods of evaluation in which teachers can measure students' achievement or performance. The educational supervisors agreed that teachers' preparation is just to meet the formal instruction; they never do an elaborate preparation. The supervisors do not ask why and how to reach that point of elaborate and comprehensive preparation simply because their concern is about the formal procedures; they want to see all records of attendance and marks and preparation books in a good look no matter what the content is.

When asking the students about the same item, just 26.4 per cent of them agreed with it. Students can realise if there is an elaborate preparation for grammar lesson through the range of questions and activities they are given by teachers and they can also judge according to the nature of questions because there must be a difference between the questions which are prepared in advance and the questions which are generated inside the classroom. Such a result could be interpreted in the light of growing roles of students in Jordan to participate the process of teaching and learning in many ways. Therefore the writer believes that, if teachers of Arabic want to make a full and comprehensive preparation, the size of the textbooks have to be reduced since they do not have an opportunity to present this elaborate preparation because there is always a shortage of time.

7.3.5 The lack of grammatical knowledge amongst teachers of Arabic

Ahmed (1983) considered the wide and proper knowledge of grammar one of the important conditions for teachers of Arabic to be successful teachers. One of the sensitive issues is the lack of grammatical knowledge amongst language teachers, because it is related to the weaknesses of the tutors, who are supposed to be an example for their students. In this connection, Kingen (2000) said:

Most language arts experts agree that teachers need to know much more about language than they can possible teach their students (p.451).

The participants in this study were asked if the lack of teachers’ knowledge of grammar affects students’ levels in grammar. This question goes further than that asked in table 7.4. There the specific focus was whether standard Arabic was used in lessons. Here the question penetrates the actual knowledge of grammar- the command over subject matter, the essential resource for a teacher. The perceptions of teachers and students are presented in table 7.11.

Table (7.11)

The lack of grammatical knowledge amongst teachers of Arabic

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
11	The lack of grammatical knowledge amongst teachers of Arabic	Teacher	80	59.3	13	9.6	42	31.1
		Student	160	22.9	138	19.7	402	57.4

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

The table indicates that, the majority of teachers of Arabic (59.3) per cent consider the lack of grammatical knowledge amongst the teachers themselves, as one of the reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar, and that reflects how complex is the

problem of students' weaknesses in grammar. The complexity comes from the fact that teachers of Arabic have a clear lack of confidence about their own knowledge of grammar. The writer thinks that such a lack of grammatical knowledge might affect negatively the teacher's performance and students' levels of achievement. What is surprising under this result is the confession of teachers of Arabic they admitted the teachers of Arabic having a real lack of basic knowledge of grammar, although they were not expected to say so.

The question here is why teachers of Arabic have this lack of grammatical knowledge? This is in fact one of the crucial points in the field of grammar teaching and such a lack could be interpreted by referring to the quantity and quality of grammatical material given to the students teachers in the Universities. For instance in the Yarmook University, students teachers take 6 grammar modules out of 28 Arabic modules which cover Arabic art, language history and teaching methods of Arabic during 4 years of studying. In Mu'tah University, student teachers in faculty of education take 7 grammar modules out of 29 modules during four years of studying. In view of this, there is a need to revise the share of grammar modules in the Jordanian Universities in terms of the number and the quality of grammatical material taught to the student teachers. It seems that, teachers of Arabic would like to have more grammatical knowledge in order to be more confident in their teaching. That knowledge could be achieved by having more training programmes that concentrate on the academic knowledge and not just on the teaching methods.

When asking the students about the same item, 22.9 per cent of them consider it one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar and this result might be due to the

limitation of their grammatical knowledge, which might prevent them from making accurate judgements.

The result also might be due to students' feeling that their teachers will know their responses and if they criticised the teachers, they might get in critical situation, and this is despite the assurance of confidentiality given by the writer.

Khodir (1998) asked teachers of Arabic about the same item and the majority of the participants in his study agreed that teachers' lack of grammatical knowledge would affect students' achievement.

7.3.6 The lack of diversity in teaching methods of grammar

It is not a wise idea to limit teaching to one method because it might suit some students but not all of them. Instead teaching methods should be flexible. Ahmed (1983) stressed that individual differences of students should be taken into account when determining the teaching method. The teaching of Arabic grammar in Jordan is limited to one method, which is the inductive method. By using the inductive method the teacher should start with presenting grammatical examples in front of the students and after reading the examples by students or teachers, students are supposed to uncover the grammatical rules throughout teachers' explanation. Grammar textbooks are also designed according to this method, and educational supervisors used to encourage teachers to teach grammar by this method. It is always difficult to stick to one teaching method in all lessons and for all students. Therefore, the participants in this study were asked if the lack of diversity in teaching methods one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar. Their perceptions are presented in table 7.12.

Table (7.12)

7.12 The lack of diversity in teaching methods of grammar

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
12	The lack of diversity in teaching methods of grammar	Teacher	79	58.5	11	8.1	45	33.3
		Student	129	18.4	124	17.7	447	63.9

A: Agree
 UN: Uncertain
 D: Disagree
 F: Frequencies

The table indicates that, 58.5 per cent of teachers of Arabic consider the item above one of the reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar. The result means, the majority of teachers of Arabic have agreed that they need to vary their teaching method so that students will benefit from different teaching methods and will not get bored and then they might lose their interest to learn grammar.

As a response to the students’ weaknesses in grammar several studies were conducted in Jordan and other Arabian countries to compare the effect of teaching methods on students’ achievement and the results showed that there is no ideal method which can be used for every instructional situation. For instance, Al-akeel (1988) compared between the effect of inductive and deductive methods on students’ achievement in Arabic grammar. The result showed that there were no statistically significant differences between students’ achievement attributed to the teaching methods. In addition, Al-khomasi (1987) compared the students’ achievement in grammar after teaching two groups, one by inductive method and the other one by deductive method. After seven weeks of teaching, the students were presented with an achievement test. The result showed that the use of inductive method gave better results on students’ achievement. Despite that contradiction of the research evidence, the MoE is still insisted on using the inductive method. Indeed, the MoE acknowledged the fact that

dictation method is used widely at schools but there was no practical action has been taken to change that method. The only thing was to hold a workshop in March 2002 stressing that teaching methods should be developed at schools towards learning centred instead of teaching centred, that means the role of teachers will be changed from dictator to facilitator and guide to the students. (Alrai daily newspaper, Monday, March 11th 2002, Amman, Jordan).

When asking the students about the same item, only 18.4 per cent of them consider it one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar and 63.9 per cent of them did not consider it so. This result could be interpreted in the light of students' desire not to criticise their teachers as a kind of respect for them. The result might due to the students' believe that any change in the teaching methods will take them longer to adjust to it. In this connection, Kingen (2000) mentioned that the most popular tendency when teaching grammar is to tell and show, but she suggested using different methods, to question and discover. Moreover Pine, Meser and Godfrey (1999) stressed that evaluating of the effectiveness of any teaching methods needs to look at how children may differ in receptivity to the information. That means teaching methods should be reviewed from time to time in order to chose the suitable method for particular students on the basis of educational research and the results of each method on students' achievement. In other words teachers should always take into consideration the individual differences between students.

7.3.7 The lack of teachers’ ability in classroom management

One of the most important conditions for effective teaching is to control the students inside the classroom. In this case all students can understand and participate class activities; otherwise, few students who used to make disruptions will make it difficult for the teacher and the rest of the class to go through the lesson smoothly. The participants in this study were asked about the issue of controlling the students inside the classroom. Their perceptions are presented in table 7.13.

Table (7.13)

Teachers do not control students inside the classroom effectively

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
13	Teachers of Arabic do not control students inside the classroom effectively	Teacher	45	33.3	10	7.4	80	59.3
		Student	134	19.1	123	17.6	443	63.3

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

The table indicates that 33.3 per cent of teachers of Arabic consider it one of the reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar whereas 59.3 per cent of them did not consider it one of the reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar. The result above reflects that, the majority of teachers of Arabic considered themselves as good directors of the classrooms in terms of controlling the students in a way that enable them to run the lessons effectively. Nevertheless about one third of the teachers considered the lack of teachers’ ability to control the students as one of the reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar. Their sense that they are not in control is revealing. Most teachers would assert that they are in command or their sense of professional competence would be undermined. Here, however, we see signs of grave disturbance.

During the interviews, students manifested clear worries about the annoying members of the classroom who always disturb the smoothness of the lessons. Eleven out of fifteen students considered it one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar simply because grammar needs more concentration to keep up with teachers' explanations.

The importance of controlling the students inside the classroom comes from the fact that any kind of interruption during the lesson will cause students and teachers to lose their concentration with the instructional sequence they are involved in. And if we connected this item with the result of the interviews, we will realise how complex is the issue of class control because there are many factors involved in this matter such as the number of students in each class and the design of the classroom itself.

When asking the students about the same item 19.1 per cent of them agreed with the item, which means that, the majority of them believe their teachers of Arabic can control the students inside the classroom effectively and this point is not one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar. This is again an interesting comment on the control over learning that teachers of Arabic armed with textbooks are supposed to wield. Students perceive control; the teachers reveal a sense of helplessness in the face of a difficult situation. This all adds to the insight into the psychological states of mind by teachers of grammar. Indeed, this is a general problem but it affects grammar teaching as well as any other subject at schools.

The result of students' perceptions regarding the ability of teachers to control students inside classroom might due to their desire not to criticise their teachers because of

many reasons such as respecting the teachers. Students also might take in to account the power of teachers in terms of students’ marks, which let them think before giving any judgement related to the teachers.

7.3.8 The lack of correction of students’ oral mistakes

Students correct different grammatical mistakes relying on teachers’ advice when they read any text and one of the ways to get rid of these mistakes is to leave them corrected immediately by the language teacher, so students can compare between the right and the wrong use of language. For some reasons, such as the limitation of time and the crowdedness of classes, language teachers are not able to correct all mistakes, and the ignorance of mistakes might affect students’ achievement negatively. The participants in this study were asked about this point as one of the reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar. Their perceptions are presented in table 7.14

Table (7.14)

Teachers of Arabic do not correct students’ oral mistakes

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
14	Teachers of Arabic do not correct students’ oral mistakes	Teacher	69	51.1	4	3	62	45.9
		Student	197	28.1	93	13.3	410	58.5

A: Agree
 UN: Uncertain
 D: Disagree
 F: Frequencies

Surprisingly, about half of teachers of Arabic (51.1 per cent) agreed with the lack of teachers’ corrections for students’ oral mistakes as one of the reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar. That means they accepted the fact of their responsibilities in causing the problem of students’ weaknesses in grammar but the question is what was

the reason behind this endorsement, which is abnormal compared with teachers' opinions regarding the other reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar?

The writer believes that the reason behind this result could be connected with other points in the teachers' questionnaire. The first one is the inadequate amount of time allocated to teach grammar since 40 per cent of teachers of Arabic consider the inadequacy of time for grammar teaching one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar. The second one is the over-crowdedness of classes, which prevents teachers of Arabic from correcting all of students' mistakes. If teachers of Arabic kept correcting all students' mistakes during the reading or speaking activities in grammar lessons the time will not be adequate to finish grammar textbook and because of that teachers of Arabic will not give a big deal for the continual corrections of students' mistakes.

When asking the students about the same point, 28.1 per cent of them consider it is one of the reasons for their weaknesses in grammar and this percentage of students' acceptance is considered high because it represents about one third of the students' sample. It might be due to the students' belief that teachers should correct all mistakes in order to put students on the right direction.

The correction of students' mistakes is considered direct feedback on students' learning that helps them to avoid making the same mistakes again. Bell(1981) considered errors or mistakes as a sure sign that the learner has not mastered the target language.

7.3.9 The lack of correction of students’ written mistakes

Writing activities are considered one of the applications of grammatical rules and language teachers are supposed to correct grammatical mistakes in students’ writing immediately in order to guide them to the correct use. As Borg (1999) argued grammar work is based on the errors of students. He stressed the importance of errors’ correction because these activities encourage reluctant students to accept the learning more enthusiastically. The participants in this study were asked if the lack of mistakes corrections affects students’ achievement. Their perceptions are presented in table 7.15.

Table (7.15)

Teachers of Arabic do not correct students’ written mistakes

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
15	The lack of corrections of students’ written mistakes	Teacher	67	49.6	7	5.2	61	45.2
		Student	180	25.8	91	13	429	61.2

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

The table indicates that, 49.6 per cent of teachers of Arabic considered the item above one of the reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar whereas 45.2 per cent of them did not consider it one of the main reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar.

Such a result could be interpreted by the shortage of the time allocated to teach grammar as mentioned by teachers of Arabic themselves. 40 per cent of teachers of Arabic agreed that the insufficiency of grammar is one of the reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar.

When asking students about the lack of correction for students' written mistakes, just 25.8 per cent of them considered it one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar. And this result might be due to students' desire not to criticise each other, so they would say by indirect way we are doing very well in grammar.

The picture that emerges gradually is that if pupils are left without corrections, despite the needs in the learners and the demands of the curriculum, then the mistakes will increase. Teachers will put up with the routines which insist on them finishing all topics listed in the textbook.

7.3.10 Teachers of Arabic are not satisfied about their job conditions

The job conditions affect teachers' teaching styles in a way that reduce any creative thinking of new styles if the teachers are not satisfied with their jobs conditions.

The MoE realized that the teachers are not satisfied about their job conditions due to many factors such as the social and financial status of teachers and the latest theoretical action taken by the MoE was in March 2002 when the public workshop in Amman decided to improve the quality of teachers' status financially and socially. (Alrai daily newspaper, Monday, March 11th 2002, Amman, Jordan). The value of this action could be decided in the light of the practical actions which might take time to take effect. The participants in this study were asked about the role of teachers' dissatisfaction in students' weaknesses in grammar; their perceptions are presented in table 7.16

Table (7.16)
Teachers of Arabic are not satisfied about their job conditions

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
16	Teachers of Arabic are not satisfied about their job requirements	Teacher	80	59.2	5	3.7	50	37.1
		Student	169	24.1	120	17.1	411	58.7

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

Students are in touch with teachers across the academic year and they can tell if there is any complain from the ways teachers present the lessons. In addition, students are involved in many aspect of school by something called students’ government which attend the meeting with teachers and has the right to know more details about the school system and that enables students to answer such a questions.

The table indicates that more than half of the participant teachers consider the lack of teachers’ satisfaction about their job requirements one of the reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar. The result might due to the heaviness of their teaching loads and the nature of Arabic as a school subject. The nature of Arabic language teaching could be described as the teaching of four subjects in one, because teachers of Arabic are supposed to teach four textbooks under the name of the Arabic language. In the view of that one might think that Arabic teachers have a deep feeling that they are not being treated fairly compared to teachers of other subjects. This could develop a feeling of despondency amongst them. One of the results of such a conditions is that the teachers of Arabic will not take training programmes and teaching activities seriously. They will not have a strong motivation to prepare their lessons effectively; they will not bother about giving students equal opportunities, and they will keep looking for another job that has a better future than teaching. The writer thinks that

the satisfaction of teachers of Arabic needs special research to find out to what extent the teachers of Arabic are satisfied with their careers.

The dissatisfaction of teachers of Arabic about their job requirements is clear from many responses on the questionnaire. For example there was an item in the questionnaire that asked teachers about the lack of grammatical knowledge among teachers of Arabic, and teachers acceptance with this item was 59.3 per cent of the teachers.

When asking the students about the dissatisfaction of teachers of Arabic about their job requirements as a reason for students' weaknesses in grammar, 24.1 per cent of them consider it one of the reasons for their weaknesses in grammar. This percentage represents about one fourth of the students' sample. Students can tell if their teachers are satisfied about their job requirements, because they are always in touch with teachers and during the interview, students stated that teachers used to complain in front of them about the time and the teaching of four textbooks under the subject of Arabic language. Then teachers are unhappy with their lot is the kind of finding one would expect from the external analysis but here it comes from the teachers and indirectly related to the students' failure.

7.3.11 Teaching Arabic grammar in separate textbook

Grammar teaching for the upper basic stage in Jordan relies on using separate textbooks that are specially designed for grammar. In the lower basic stage, grammar teaching relies on some exercise at the end of every lesson in one textbook called the Arabic language. In fact the teaching of grammar should be connected with the

practical activities in order to give students the sense of grammar because the research showed that students who were taught grammar in the context of their writing made better use of writing mechanics than student who were taught these skills in isolation. (Weaver, 1996) When teaching grammar in a separate textbook, students might have the impression that grammar is an isolated subject. Thus, students and teachers were asked if the teaching of grammar in a separate textbook affects students' achievement negatively. The perceptions of the participants are presented in table 7.17.

Table (7.17)
Teaching Arabic grammar in a separate textbook

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
17	Teaching Arabic grammar in a separate textbook	Teacher	49	36.3	19	14.1	67	49.6
		Student	318	45.4	143	20.4	239	34.2

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

The table indicates that 36.3 per cent of teachers of Arabic consider the item above one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar, whereas 49.6 per cent of them disagreed with it. The result here comes this way because teachers of Arabic might try to follow what already decided by the MoE in Jordan.

It seems that the majority of teachers of Arabic are in agreement with the educational policy in terms of teaching Arabic grammar in a separate textbook because they are not willing to criticise the educational authority since they are working for it and under its management. Half of the participant teachers did not consider teaching grammar in a separate textbook one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in

grammar. The teachers' perceptions could be understood if we know that any change or cancellation of the central textbooks will add more responsibilities and duties to what they have. They would prefer to keep going with the current textbooks no matter if they suit students' levels or not.

There is still more than one third of teachers of Arabic, (36.3) per cent who consider teaching grammar in a separate textbook as one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar. The issue of teaching grammar formally in a separate textbook seems to be left out of discussion in the previous studies, at least in Jordan, although it might be one of the important issues to be explored. There was no research evidence to support the idea of teaching grammar formally in a separate textbook. On the contrary the evidence shows that students benefit from learning grammar in a way that encourage them not just to gain to gain grammatical knowledge but to apply it effectively. Weaver (1996) said:

It can be difficult for community members and English teachers alike to believe what decades of grammar studies tell us: that in general, the teaching of grammar does not help any practical purpose for the majority of students. (p.15).

In this study, the critical argument is why to teach grammar separately in a special textbook, which means additional costs and effort and might give students, the impression that, grammar, is a separate subject from language.

The writer's experience has shown that teaching grammar formally in a separate textbook might give students an impression that grammar is a different subject from Arabic language and such an impression will reduce the chance of linking grammar with other branches of Arabic language as school subject. When asking the students about the same point, 45.4 per cent of them consider it one of the reasons for students'

weaknesses in grammar. And the reason for such a result could be their feeling that grammar is totally a different subject and the link between grammar and other branches of Arabic at schools is not needed. Therefore, the writer thinks that teaching grammar formally through a separate textbook will reduce the link between grammar and other branches of Arabic and in the essence, the lack of that link will affect students' performance negatively.

7.3.12 The use of dictation method

Grammar teaching in Jordan relies on the use of the dictation method. That method depends on the central role of teacher. Therefore, students and teachers were asked in this study about the use of dictation method and its effect on students' achievement. Their perceptions are presented in table 7.18.

Table (7.18)
Teachers of Arabic insist on using a dictation method

No	Item	Data source	A		UN		D	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
18	Teachers of Arabic insist on using a dictation method, which depends on central role for teachers	Teacher	49	36.3	19	14.1	67	49.6
		Student	147	21	210	30	343	49

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

The table indicates that, 36.3 per cent of teachers of Arabic consider the item one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in Arabic grammar whereas, 49.6 per cent of them disagreed with it.

One third of teachers of Arabic consider the use of the dictation method one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar, which might due to their desire to change this method.

The majority of teachers of Arabic did not consider the use of dictation method one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar and this result could be interpreted in the light of many points. The first one is the familiarity of teachers of Arabic with a traditional teaching method, which enables them to play a central role inside the classroom.

The second point is the desire of teachers of Arabic not to change their teaching method because any change will take extra time and effort to get used to the new teaching method especially as the teachers know that any training program will be given during their holidays or weekends.

The third point is the teachers desire to keep controlling the class room because the use of the dictation method gives the teacher more chance to control the whole process of teaching and learning and it reduces the chance of any disruption, which might created by some students.

When asking students about the teachers' use of a dictation method, 21 per cent of them consider it one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar, whereas 49 per cent of them disagreed with it as one of the reason for students' weaknesses in grammar.

The reasons for such a result could be the desire of students to satisfy their teachers who support the idea of teaching grammar by using the dictation method since students usually care about their scores which are already controlled by the teacher.

The result also might due to the students' desire not to accept any other method in teaching grammar because any change might cause them to make an additional effort to adjust with this new method.

7.4 Summary

This chapter included the perceptions of students and teachers about the actual reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar related to the teachers and teaching method. The major reasons from the teachers' points of views were the following:

1. The burdening of teachers' of Arabic with additional duties at schools.
2. The heaviness of weekly teaching load.
3. The lack of using standard Arabic by the teachers of other subjects.
4. The lack of following up students' homework by the teachers of Arabic.
5. The lack of using audio visual aids, which might facilitate grammar teaching.

The current study has nothing to do with the theory of teaching styles. It took some issues related to the teachers teaching styles as some of the suggested reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar.

Students' perceptions pointed the following reasons as the major ones for the weaknesses in grammar:

1. Unavailability of audio visual aids to be used in grammar teaching.
2. The lack of using audio visual aids.
3. The lack of using standard Arabic by the teachers of other subjects.

4. The burdening of teachers of Arabic with additional duties.
5. The lack of encouraging students to use standard Arabic by all their teachers.

Chapter eight

Findings and discussion

Perceptions of teachers and supervisors on the factor of supervision

Chapter eight: Findings and Discussion

Perceptions of teachers and supervisors on the factor of supervision

8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study related to the educational supervision. The responses of teachers of Arabic will be presented and discussed. The writer did not ask the students about the role of educational supervision because they are not in touch with educational supervision and most of them might have no clear idea about it.

The chapter includes the following themes:

- Definition of educational supervision.
- Educational management.
- The efficiency of supervisors.

8.2 Definition of educational supervision:

Educational supervision is part of an evaluation system of the MoE in Jordan, which is designed to provide all teachers with needed feedback, advice and guidance in order to improve the process of teaching. They also take part in the assessment of teachers' performance. The improvement of teachers' performance could be achieved by a number of visits by education supervisors to the teachers of his subject in a particular directorate of education and learning. Al-saydeh (2002) pointed out that:

Each subject at school has its own supervisor who helps teachers and provides them with advice. The supervisor is an experienced and qualified form teacher. (p.11)

The MoE created special criteria to nominate an educational supervisor, such as having a master degree in his academic field or in the field of education, or alternatively the diploma of educational sciences, which usually comes after a first degree. In addition, the supervisors should have worked previously as teachers of Arabic in order to support academic knowledge with practical experience.

8.3 Educational management

The following pages will include the responses of teachers of Arabic related to the role of educational supervision in causing students' weaknesses in grammar triangulated with teachers' opinions as reported in the interviews.

8.3.1 The shortage of education supervisors of Arabic

The number of educational supervisor should be adequate to cover all schools in the region effectively. This is because each teacher needs to be visited at least twice a year. One of the education supervisors was asked about the number of teachers and supervisor 2 from directorate B. said:

In my record, there are 160 teachers of Arabic and we are just two supervisors to cover all schools. By the way the number of the schools in my directorate is 60 schools and we have to visit all these schools to attend and watch some lessons in order to give the teachers some guidance and advice in their teaching.

This statement reveals that the number of education supervisors are not adequate to make the supervision effective, simply because each supervisor will be responsible of 30 teachers. That means the time given to every teacher might not be enough to achieve a very high degree of interaction. The shortage of education supervisors brought up the idea of complementary supervision. This idea depends on dividing the supervision between the supervisors of all subjects to the extent that the supervisors

of Arabic can supervise the teachers of other subjects and vice versa. The perceptions of teachers are presented in table 8.1.

Table (8.1)
The shortage of education supervisors of teachers

No	Item	A		UN		DA	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1	The shortage of education supervisors of Arabic, which prevents the efficiency of educational supervision	75	55.6	10	7.4	50	37

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

The table indicates that half the teachers of Arabic considered the shortage of education supervisors one of the reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar. The reasons vary. The first one is their desire to pass on blame. The second reason might be the nature of their relationship with the educational supervisor which is not based on co-operation and trust. Teachers of Arabic in general have an impression that any comment from the education supervisors equals criticism.

The relationship between teachers and education supervisors is based on sense of a suspicion because the teachers usually think that education supervisors visit them and observe their performance in the role of examiners. Such a relationship will make it difficult to create successful co-operation.

If we look at the table again, we realise that 37 per cent of teachers of Arabic did not consider the shortage of education supervisors one of the reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar. It seems that teachers of Arabic do not want more supervisors to be nominated by the MoE because that will increase the chance for

additional visits to them by the education supervisors. And of course they are not keen on supervisors' visits.

During the teachers' interviews, it was clear that they do not like education supervisors to visit them and when asking them why, the answers were focused on the gap between the theoretical criticism made by the supervisors and what is really going on inside the classroom.

Teacher 8 from school N said:

When the educational supervisor visited me for the first time, I expected a lot of advice and guidance especially as I was new teacher who always needs advice and guidance. The supervisor wanted to see my preparation book and the marks' record to sign them as a formal procedure. The only advice he gave was to take in to account giving all students an opportunity to participate the learning activities. When I said to him the class consists of 36 students and the whole time of the lesson is 45 minutes, which is not adequate to apply this advice, he said: it is a different issue

The statement above indicates that teachers' expectations from education supervisors are different from what they really get as a result of educational supervision. It also reflects the insufficiency of formal procedures to help teachers to develop their performance, because the supervisors are supposed to give teachers more support and advice regarding teaching skills and even academic knowledge whenever it is needed, since they are experienced people.

This statement raised the issue of class size in the light of limited time and many educational requirements such as individual differences and opportunities for all students to participate in learning activities. The education supervisors mentioned that the current number of supervisors is not helpful to do the supervision effectively.

Supervisor 4 from directorate B explained that by saying:

I cover twelve schools not just as supervisor of Arabic teachers but as a supervisor of all subjects which puts me with big challenge especially when I attend maths or science lessons.

The statement reflects the dissatisfaction of supervisors about the complementary supervision as well as the shortage of supervisors. It also supports the teachers' responses about the shortage of supervisors. (See chapter one, P 23).

8.3.2 The shortage of supervisors' visits to the teachers of Arabic

The writer asked the education supervisors about the number of visits that should be made to the teachers of Arabic. The majority of them stated that two visits are paid throughout the year. Supervisor 3 form directorate C explained this by saying:

The visits of the supervisor are formally four, but in reality only two visits are done due to the shortage of education supervisors

Table (8.2)

The shortage of supervisors' visits to the teachers of Arabic

No	Item	A		UN		DA	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
2	The shortage of educational supervisions' visits to the teachers of Arabic	77	57	4	3	54	40

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

The table indicates that 57 per cent of teachers of Arabic would like more visits to be arranged by the education supervisors in order to improve their teaching abilities. The reasons behind this percentage could be teachers' desire to improve their skills and to solve the problem of students' weaknesses, since they believe in supervisors' proficiency. The normal number of the supervisions' visits is between one and four during the academic year, so the chance of observing grammar lesson by the

supervisor is very limited and therefore, the teacher will miss any advice or guidance that may help to improve teacher's skills in teaching grammar.

The percentage of teachers who disagreed (40 per cent) needs to be discussed because it gives an impression that there is a strong trend amongst teachers of Arabic against any additional visits by the education supervisors. Such a trend could be interpreted by the lack of conviction that educational supervision is effective. It might also be due to the lack of teachers' confidence to be under assessment because the assessment will raise their weaknesses.

8.3.3 The rarity of supervisors' visits that cover grammar lessons

It was clear from the interviews with education supervisors that there is a shortage of supervisors' visits in general. That is partly due to the shortage of the supervisors in the light of increasing numbers of teachers. Whilst hundreds of extra teachers are employed every year, there are no new supervisors to cover the increasing numbers of teachers. Most of the supervisors stated that they can attend only one grammar lesson with teachers of Arabic throughout the academic year which is not enough –according to the supervisors- to assess teacher's performance in grammar. In particular, supervisor 5 from directorate A said:

The maximum number of the visits that I can make to the teachers is two visits and when it comes to grammar lessons, just one lesson could be appropriate. With some teachers I can not even make this one visit, say for example that the teacher had a sick leave before I come to his school, I will miss that grammar lesson. In some other cases the teacher might decide to change the lesson from grammar to reading or composition because he or she finds them easier than grammar especially if the teacher is under assessment

The quotation above makes it clear that teachers of Arabic do not like to be under assessment during grammar lessons, a self-consciousness and lack of self-confidence which is understandable. It might also be due to their belief that the students will not be able to participate and co-operate as expected by the supervisors. The teachers might also lack confidence in their ability to teach grammar successfully in front of the supervisor who always write on his notebook all the negative points about the lesson. The perceptions of teachers regarding the rarity of visits covering grammar are presented in table 8.3.

Table (8.3)

The rarity of supervisors’ visits that cover grammar lesson

No	Item	A		UN		DA	
3	The rarity of supervisors’ visits which covers grammar lessons	F	%	F	%	F	%
		91	67.4	4	3	40	29.6

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

Before any interpretation for this result, we need to remember that the average of the supervisions’ visit is officially four. But, the actual number is just two visits during the academic year and this average might give a clear indication about the rarity of seeing grammar lessons by the education supervisors of Arabic.

Arabic language as a school subject consists of four textbooks to be taught by one teacher. If the supervisor visits him to assess his performance, the chance of covering grammar lesson will be very limited. That makes it difficult even for the supervisors to realise the actual levels of teachers in terms of grammatical knowledge.

The importance of supervisors' attendance to grammar lessons comes from the fact that supervisors are the effective link between teachers and the MoE. They can transfer the image of teachers' knowledge of grammar in detail and officially if the supervisor's report about a particular teacher reveals that he or she is not able to teach, that teacher should not teach any more.

One of the possible reasons for the rarity of grammar lessons attended by the supervisors is that teachers of Arabic themselves are not keen to be assessed by the supervisor during grammar lesson because of the lack of students' participation in class activities. This lack of students' participation would be considered a negative point in the lesson.

The writer witnessed that many teachers used to cancel grammar lesson and give art, reading, or composition lesson in the presence of the educational supervisor. Teachers of Arabic themselves try to avoid grammar lessons as a basis of their assessment.

The supervisors know that teachers in general do not like to be assessed through grammar lessons and when asking them during the supervisors' interview about the reasons behind this trend, they focused on two reasons.

The first reason is the teachers lack confidence that they will do well in front of the examiner and if they had a chance to choose any other lesson, they will not hesitate to get that choice. This confirms the depth of the malaise and the ways in which it is covered up. Not only do teachers lack confidence in their own abilities but they avoid doing anything about it.

The second reason is teachers' worries about the lack of students' participation in grammar lesson since the supervisor usually takes into consideration students' participation as one of the assessment criteria.

Supervisor 1 from directorate A said:

I do not have any previous arrangement with teachers of Arabic to be visited because I am a part of the supervisory team in the directorate of education and learning. The timetable of our visits depends on the availability the transportation method and the location of the schools, so we used to try our best to cover as schools as we can in every working day. If the choice is mine, I prefer to assess teachers of Arabic by their ability in grammar because I believe the one who can teach grammar successfully will be able to teach other branches of Arabic successfully as well.

I know that some teachers of Arabic used to cancel grammar lesson and give other subjects in my presence. To overcome this situation I started looking at the formal timetable in the school which is available usually in the head teachers' office in order to know exactly what the lesson is.

The statement above reflects many issues related to the relationship between the supervisor and the teachers and to the nature of the supervision system itself. It reflects that the visits of the education supervisors are random because there was no previous arrangement between teachers of Arabic and education supervisors, so the chance of observing grammar lesson by the supervisor is rare.

Finally, the statement indicates that teachers of Arabic are not willing to be evaluated by the supervisors according to their performance in grammar. That reflects two points. The first point is that teachers of Arabic are not confident in their performance in grammar, so they fear that the evaluation will not do any favours for them. The second point is that the participation of students in grammar will not be as active as

their participation in other branches of Arabic like reading, composition and literature. Teachers do not like to be assessed through grammar lessons; they like to be assessed in any other Arabic lesson.

8.3.4 The lack of teachers' conviction in the complementary supervision

Due to the shortage of the supervisors who can cover all teachers in the MoE, there was a solution created called the complementary supervision. According to supervisors, this system is based on getting the supervisors involved in all school subjects and teachers so that the supervisor of Arabic can supervise the maths teacher and vice versa. The problem with this system is that the concentration is on the teaching methods and class management without any attention to the academic knowledge of the subject. Most of the teachers asked suspiciously about the ability of this system to work and when asked why they are not happy with it, they raised the point of specialisation. For example, teacher 9 from school M said:

I might need to ask the supervisor something related deeply to the grammar, I do not think that maths teacher or history teacher will know the correct answer. Even if the teacher made many mistakes, the supervisor of geography for instance will not be realising these mistakes. In this way the whole process of supervision will be useless and waste of time.

That view is typical of teachers who do not believe in complementary supervision. Teachers' perceptions about this matter are revealed in table 8.4.

Table (8.4)

The lack of teachers' conviction in a complementary supervision

No	Item	A		UN		DA	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
4	The lack of teachers' conviction in a complementary supervision which enables the supervisors who are not specialised in Arabic to supervise the teachers of Arabic	109	80.7	13	9.6	13	9.6

A: Agree

UN: Uncertain

D: Disagree

F: Frequencies

The complementary supervision system in Jordan started in 2000 and the basic idea of this system is that any educational supervisor can supervise teachers no matter what his or her field is. The system was created to overcome the shortage of education supervisors, and at the same time to reduce the costs of nominating and training new education supervisors not enough attention was paid towards the quality of the supervision.

The complementary system is based on allocating one supervisor for every five to ten schools in the same area. Those schools must be close to each other. The supervisor is responsible of supervising all teachers in his area not just teachers of Arabic.

The complementary system enables the supervisor of science for example to supervise teachers of Arabic and vice- versa, so the academic field does not matter according to this system. Teachers of Arabic are not convicted or satisfied about this system because they expect education supervisors to give them a guidance and advice not just in educational matters but also in academic knowledge, in which they feel insecure.

Teachers of Arabic do not accept being supervised by the supervisors of other subjects because they think it will be difficult for those supervisors to deal with Arabic grammar and its' particular teaching styles effectively.

Teacher 8 from school K said:

I will say it frankly, if the education supervisors of Arabic can not do their task successfully, how can we expect the supervisors of other subjects to do so. Suppose that I have an academic question related to the grammatical knowledge, logically the supervisor of maths or Islamic education for example will not be able to give me the correct answer, simply because it is out of his academic field

The statement above indicates that teachers of Arabic need academic advice and guidance. We have noted how deep seated is the lack of knowledge of Arabic grammar. This suspicion is as much due to the ignorance of subject matter and the need to rectify this as to any sense that other people of less authority are intending on their subject specialists.

8.3.5 The supervisors' visits do not cover the academic year effectively

The effective supervision requires an adequate number of supervisors which is not available in the case of Jordan and that causes several problems such as the shortage of visits and the lack of effective distribution for the visits over the academic year. For instance the only two visits might be arranged in the first term of the year which makes it impossible to the supervisor to follow up any improvement of teachers' performance. The supervisors in general stated that due to the transportation system which limits their visits, they need to cover more than one school in one day in order for them to finish their programme of visits arranged by their head of supervision's department. Teachers' responses regarding the distribution of the visits are presented in table 8.5.

Table (8.5)

The supervisors’ visits do not cover the academic year effectively

No	Item	A		UN		DA	
5	The supervision visits do not cover the academic year effectively	F	%	F	%	F	%
		93	68.9	15	11.1	27	20

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

The table indicates that teachers of Arabic considered that the supervisions’ visits are not distributed effectively over the academic year. On the other hand 20 per cent of teachers tell that the supervisors’ visits are adequate and cover the academic year, as if the fewer visits the better. In fact both the supervisors and teachers need more visits because the interaction between them can not be of any significance with just two visits a year.

The education supervisors agreed that supervisors’ visits are not distributed on the academic year effectively but the reason is the shortage of these visits which is two visits. Supervisor 4 from directorate B said:

I used to visit the teachers twice, at the beginning and at the end of the academic year. I agree that there should be more visits but the timetable is very tight due to the increasing number of teachers.

This statement is considered clear confession by supervisors that educational supervision is not effective system to improve teachers’ performance and that emphasised the need to review that system as a whole.

8.4 Supervisors efficiency

As explained earlier in this chapter, the criteria of nominating education supervisors are based on the need to choose skilful supervisors. The reality of this theoretical point has been examined in terms of several the following issues:

8.4.1 The lack of interaction between teachers and education supervisors

There is no doubt that teachers prefer not to do their job under observation either by the supervisor or by head teachers and that feeling might prevent co-operation between teachers and supervisors. The table 8.6 showed teachers’ perceptions about the interaction between them and the supervisors.

Table (8.6)

The lack of interaction between teachers and supervisors

No	Item	A		UN		DA	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
6	The lack of interaction between teachers of Arabic and education supervisors	90	66.7	7	5.2	38	28.1

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

The table above indicates that two thirds of teachers of Arabic felt there was a lack of interaction between the teachers of Arabic and their education supervisors. The relationship between teachers of Arabic and education supervisors is not one of trust. During the interviews with education supervisors, one of them said that in a particular school, there was a new teacher who had to be evaluated by educational supervisor. Before the lesson started, the teacher became very worried and decided to leave the school. Although this was an individual case, it indicates the nature of the relationship

between teachers and education supervisors; the fear of their approach and the assumption that they will be critical and judgmental.

The question is what are the reasons behind this opinion among teachers in general. We can understand the reasons of such opinions better when we know that the evaluation of teachers by the supervisor affects his career in terms of whether he is allowed to carry on teaching or whether he has to change to another career inside the MoE. It is enough for all teachers in Jordan to develop a negative attitude towards the supervisors that in a few cases the supervisor's report after observing one lesson with a particular teacher ended the teacher's career. Where there is not enough confidence for such a report, we can imagine the bad effect of the report on the morale of teachers.

It is worthwhile mentioning that 28.1 per cent of teachers of Arabic did not consider the lack of interaction between them and the supervisors one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar. It could be the teachers' conviction that educational supervision as a whole is not effective to improve teachers' performance that it does not matter. It might also be the teachers' desire not to be under examination or evaluation so they try to ignore any advice given to them by the supervisor.

When asking teachers of Arabic about the extent of the co-operation and interaction between them and the education supervisors, the majority of them showed that there is a certain degree of interaction with the supervisors but they are not satisfied with it. They mentioned that the supervisors used to raise the negative points in teachers' performance and ignore the positive points. Teacher 6 from school J said:

When I started teaching Arabic, I was very keen to improve my teaching skills and I thought this improvement might come from the educational supervision system. After the first year in my career I discovered that educational supervision is a kind of formal procedures with no real effect on the teaching field simply because the supervisor's visits do not exceed four per academic year. During those visits, the supervisor insisted to raise the negative points and ignore the positive points. It is fair to raise the negative practices in my teaching because that will help me to avoid them in the future but I think the positive practices should be raised and reinforced. For example one of the grammar lessons that given with the presence of the supervisor contained two grammatical mistakes in the context, I corrected them and after the lesson we had a discussion -me and the supervisor- he did not even mention the correction of those mistakes.

The statement above indicates that some of teachers of Arabic admitted that their performance in teaching need to be developed. It also indicates that the teachers' expectations from supervisors are more than what they can really achieve. They expect to improve their performance according to the advice and guidance given to them by their supervisors. In reality, the teachers are disappointed because they did not find what they are looking for. It is, however, interesting to note that the lack of confidence by teachers in their command of the subject is again revealed.

The statement also reflects that education supervisors in general concentrate on the negative practices amongst teachers of Arabic and ignore the positive ones. It was clear that some teachers do accept criticism if it will help improve their performance.

The writer believes that, if the relationship between teachers of Arabic and education supervisors remains as a relationship between examiner and student, the process of supervision as a whole will not be effective in developing teachers' skills and knowledge in teaching grammar,

The education supervisors considered the relationship between them and teachers of Arabic very friendly and the interaction between them is very acceptable. The writer would say that education supervisors try to appear as ideal example, but in reality they could not hide their feeling of superiority compared with teachers. That was clear during the interviews with education supervisors.

Supervisor 5 from directorate C said:

I really consider the relationship between me and teachers of Arabic, those I supervise a friendly one, and I also believe that the interaction between me and them is very acceptable because I treat them as colleagues and they usually follow whatever advice and guidance I give them

The first impression of the statement above shows that every thing seems to be fine in terms of the supervision system, since the relationship between teachers and supervisors is friendly and the interaction between both sides is very acceptable from the supervisors' point of view. From the way of wording is put we can tell that supervisors feel they are here to correct and guide while teachers should just follow the supervisors' advice and guidance.

In addition, the supervisors did not ask themselves why teachers of Arabic need to follow their advice and their guidance? The role of education supervisors in evaluating the teachers and their performance might lead the teachers to act positively and to follow the advice and guidance of the supervisors. At the end of the academic year, the reports of teachers' performance and evaluation always start from the education supervisors so how can we expect them to do anything but act and respond to the supervisors' advice, however reluctantly.

8.4.2 The concentration of supervisors on formal procedures

The majority of teachers have criticised the supervisors because they concentrate usually on the formal procedures of their job which reduces the effectiveness of practical supervision. The first thing that supervisors want is to see the teachers' preparation book and the marks record. Teacher 7 from school N said:

They hardly ask to see a random sample of students' work which can give them clear image about the quality of teachers' teaching rather than looking at the preparation book. The head teacher always checks this book for at least once a week. The supervisors can also take part in the lesson practically so teachers can copy their superior methods of teaching.

The statement above raised a very interesting issue which is how to make the supervision effective. It also raised the need for supervisors training in order to achieve the goals from supervision. It indicates a real desire from the teachers to change the roles for a while between them and the supervisors who always tell and advice theoretically what makes effective teaching. Teachers want their supervisors to practice the teaching of grammar instead of advising. Teachers' perceptions about this matter are presented in table 8.7.

Table (8.7)

The concentration of supervisors on formal procedures

No	Item	A		UN		DA	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
7	The concentration of education supervisors on a formal procedures	112	83	3	2.2	20	14.9

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

The table indicates that 83 per cent of teachers of Arabic are not satisfied with the supervisors' performance during their visits because they concentrate on formal procedures. Those formal procedures include checking the preparation book, which is compulsory for teachers of all subjects. Teachers will not accept the advice and guidance given to them by the supervisors because they think negatively about them. They might consider them incompetent of doing an impossible job; they might think that supervisors want them to be perfect in every thing. The teachers relate it all to the supervision system that shapes the role of educational supervisor in a way that develops negative attitudes towards him or her. They do not seem to consider that supervisors could give practical advice.

During the interview with teachers of Arabic, they stated that concentrating on the formal procedures would not help to achieve the objectives of supervision. The teachers have been asked what are the most popular points taken into account by education supervisors when they evaluate your performance?

The majority of them mentioned things like the preparation book, blackboard organising, and the use of any available audio visual aids and finally they mentioned

students' participation in class activities as indicators of good performance by teachers of Arabic.

Teacher 9 from school K said:

I can tell you that in all visits of the educational supervisor, he used to ask me about the preparation book and the students' marks record and he used to guide me how to organise the board. I believe that all of these issues are not as important as guiding me to the new books and articles in teaching styles

It is clear from the statement that instead of constructive advice by the supervisors on the subject matter, which is the real problem, all they do is to make comments on the ordinary and everyday matters of teaching.

The statement above indicates that teachers of Arabic are not satisfied with their supervisors in terms of concentrating on the same issues all the time. They also mentioned that the supervisors used to focus on unimportant matters, which will not improve the teachers' performance. Are teachers of Arabic really interested in reading new books and articles related to teaching styles especially they complain about the heaviness of their teaching load and the additional duties given to them by schools' head teachers?

The reasons behind this opinion might be the teachers' desire to put the responsibility of students' weaknesses on any side except themselves.

8.4.3 The deficiency of education supervisors

There is a big concern about Arabic grammar, which was clear from the recommendations of the ERP, but it is neglected in the criteria of choosing the supervisors and this could be considered one of the contradictions between the theory and the practice of the educational reform plan. Teachers’ perceptions about the deficiency of their supervisors are in table 8.8.

Table (8.8)
The deficiency of the supervisors in their field

No	Item	A		UN		D	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
8	Insufficiency of supervisors’ proficiency in their field	67	49.7	21	15.6	47	34.8

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

The table shows that half the teachers of Arabic felt that supervisors, the so-called experts, were not proficient in their field. This suggests a lack of connection with the policies and decisions of the MoE. If they criticise the proficiency of education supervisors, it will mean that they do not trust the way they are appointed.

One of the previous questions was about the concentration of the supervisors on formal procedures when they visit the teachers. 83 per cent of the teachers criticised the performance of education supervisors because of that concentration on formal procedures. That triangulates the current findings and both issues support the argument that teachers are not satisfied with the performance of the supervisors.

During the interviews with teachers of Arabic, the criticism of education supervisors was clear in terms of their lack of proficiency in their academic field. Nine teachers out of fifteen agreed that the education supervisors are not well enough qualified to improve the quality of teaching grammar because they need a wide and solid knowledge of grammar, let alone how to solve the problems of pupils not understanding it. For example, teacher 2 from school F said:

I would like to say it sharply, although some people will not accept my opinion; the education supervisors in general are not fully qualified to perform their task in improving the quality of teaching Arabic language including grammar. It is needless to say that the majority of them do not meet the criteria of MoE such as having the second degree either in education or in an academic field.

In our directorate, we have four education supervisors and just one of them had a master degree in Arabic language. Moreover, he did his master degree after being nominated as an educational supervisor, which means he did not meet the conditions of being a supervisor at the time of nomination

The statement of that teacher reflects the extent to which teachers of Arabic do not trust the policy of nomination the education supervisors and also the extent of interaction between teachers and supervisors in the teaching field. It is clear that there is a gap between what teachers expect from the supervisors and the actual performance of the supervisors. Even the supervisors themselves manifested their dissatisfaction about the complementary supervision because no body can assume that he is skilful and expert in all school subjects.

8.4.4 The carelessness of supervisors in the interchange of experience between teachers of Arabic.

The interchange of experience, a dialogue between the teachers of Arabic can be arranged by education supervisors in order to enable them to learn from each other.

Teachers can learn a lot from each other and the role of educational supervisor should take into account the interchange of experience between teachers of Arabic. By observing each other's teaching, they will get the advantage of seeing both positive and negative points. They can copy and develop the positive points and avoid the negative ones. Teachers were asked in the questionnaire about the concern and attention of their supervisors towards the interchange of experience and their responses are in table 8.9.

Table (8.9)

The carelessness of supervisors in interchange of experience between teachers of Arabic

No	Item	A		UN		D	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
9	The carelessness of education supervisors in the interchange of experience between teachers of Arabic	83	61.5	13	9.6	39	28.8

A: Agree
UN: Uncertain
D: Disagree
F: Frequencies

The first question to be asked in this aspect is what is experience interchange? The interchange of experience is a process of transferring the teachers' experiences from one teacher to another. There is no doubt that every teacher has different levels of skills, abilities and knowledge and one of the shortest ways to improve teachers skills and knowledge is to arrange visits between teachers of Arabic themselves to watch or observe the real and actual educational processes. In this way, teachers would benefit from strong points in the performance of other teachers and even from the weak points by avoiding them in their own teaching.

The chance of having such an arrangement between teachers of Arabic made by the supervisors to witness each other could be practical teacher training, which is more beneficial than the usual training programme focused on theoretical knowledge rather than the practical.

The writer was an Arabic teacher for eight years, yet he had no chance to watch a real grammar lesson presented by any experienced teacher or by a supervisor in order to have an example of good teaching. This is the case for all teachers of Arabic. The only guidance given to the teachers was the theoretical guidance such as how to write the examples on the board, read them clearly and let the students read them and so on. The teachers therefore will have to find their own ways to teach grammar. They will try more than one style to present grammar lessons with no clear idea how to deal with the class until they find one that suits them. This is not guaranteed to be the best. The majority of teachers of Arabic agreed that there is a lack of interchange of experience between teachers of Arabic because they need such an interchange to support their performance and every one of them wants to improve his or her performance.

The result indicates that teachers of Arabic admitted indirectly that they need to improve their performance, which also suggests that their current levels of performances in teaching are not strong enough to teach grammar effectively.

8.5 Summary

This chapter showed that teachers chose several reasons as the most important ones for students' weaknesses in grammar. These reasons are:

1. The concentration of education supervisors on formal procedures such as signing the preparation book and marks record.
2. The lack of teachers' conviction in a complementary supervision, which enables the supervisors who are not specialised in Arabic to supervise the teachers of Arabic.
3. The supervisors' visits do not cover the academic year effectively.
4. The rarity of supervisors' visits especially those which cover grammar lessons.
5. The lack of interaction between teachers and education supervisors.
6. The carelessness of education supervisors in the interchange of experience between the teachers of Arabic.

Chapter Nine

Conclusion and recommendations

Chapter Nine

Conclusion and Recommendations

9.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the reader with the conclusions of the study related to the main themes of the findings, and the recommendations that might contribute to the development of grammar teaching in Jordan. The chapter also presents areas for further research, which were derived from the findings of the study.

It is clear to the researcher that students' weaknesses in Arabic grammar are a serious and complex problem in the educational field, not just in Jordan but in all Arabian countries. In addition, it is one of the global educational problems because grammar in all languages is a problematic matter. English grammar in its developed academic form is considered difficult for both native and non-native speakers of English. Further more, it is difficult even for the English teachers to teach grammar well (Brandley 1999).

The main aim of this study was to explore the reasons behind students' weaknesses in grammar from the point of view of students, educational supervisors and the teachers of Arabic language who are involved in teaching grammar. At the same time the intention was not just outline opinions but analyze their inner meanings. The following factors were examined as reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar:

- Students as a central party targeted by textbooks, teachers and educational supervisors in order to improve their grammar.
- Grammar textbooks as the tool of knowledge delivery.

- Teachers of Arabic as a creative component and the teaching methods, used by teachers.
- Educational supervisors who are in touch with Arabic teachers giving them guidance and advice regarding the teaching of Arabic in general and grammar in particular.

All parties who are involved in grammar teaching were about specific issues that might affect students' performance negatively and questioning the parties via a triangulation method that included questionnaires and interviews. In both questionnaire and interview, the participants were asked about the role of students, teachers and teaching methods and finally about educational supervision.

The data obtained via questionnaires and interviews were analyzed according to a combination quantitative and qualitative means because it was mentioned in the literature that the best piece of research is one which combines between quantitative and qualitative approach. Allam, and Skinner, (1991). All results were analyzed carefully, balancing some against others to avoid taking anything for granted. One of the findings that emerged was the propensity for teachers to be defensive; despite this they revealed a strong sense of their own inadequacies, and a lack of belief in their own professionalism.

The significance of this study comes partly from the comprehensive nature of the data and from the sensitive areas it has touched to clarify the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar. One of the main points in the argument is that the latest educational reform that started in 1987 was just concerned with formal procedures with little concern with evaluating the real development of education, especially the problem of students'

weaknesses in grammar. The expenditure of resources and the learning of what “ought to” take place has had few beneficial results, and the first step in doing something about the continuing problem is to acknowledge this fact.

The critical nature of the study leads it to question the rigidity of MoE about the use of one teaching method for grammar, which is the inductive method, and the ignoring of any other method no matter what the research evidence showed about mixed methods and their effectiveness on students’ performance (Bennett et al 1976). The study also criticized the levels of teachers of Arabic in grammar. The teachers of Arabic showed to some extent that teachers’ knowledge of grammar is not up to the level of high competence to teach grammar effectively. It was clear that not every Arabic teacher could teach grammar successfully.

The aspects of students’ weaknesses in grammar are the lack of students’ ability to read correctly an Arabic text, and the lack of their ability to write and speak standard Arabic as an application of grammatical knowledge. The findings of the study showed that there are several reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar but there are some strong reasons closely related to the heart of the problem. In these circumstances the researcher considered many factors as one of the possible reasons for students’ weaknesses in grammar, and considered the relation of one to the others.

9.2 Reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar related to the students

Students are the targets of teaching and when it comes to grammar teaching students are supposed to play an active role. They are not just passive receivers of knowledge. They need to have the benefit of all available opportunities to learn new knowledge. In reality, the findings of the study showed how strong is the effect of students' motivation and desire to learn. The reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar are listed in a descending order starting from the strongest.

9.2.1 Students' belief that the formal assessment for students' achievement is lax

89.6 per cent of the teachers considered this examination slackness as one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar. They put the responsibility of students' weaknesses in grammar on the MoE who produced the formal instructions for success and failure in a way that encourages students not to work hard. One of the signs of the leniency of these examinations is that the percentage of failed students is not allowed to be more than 5 per cent of the whole class. Such an instruction will develop an impression amongst students that at the end of the year they will succeed. In the tenth grade, students are successful and will transfer to the next stage no matter how good or bad their efforts are. The reason behind teachers' tendency to criticize the MoE is that their social status as teachers is affected by students' success and failure to the extent that students are capable of taking many actions against the teachers including violence. This deserves separate research to find out the reasons behind it but it is an indication of the lack of respect for the status of teachers.

When the students were asked about the same issue, 36.3 per cent of them agreed with it. They were not expected to respond in such a way because it is to some extent in their interest to continue to progress whatever their performance. And yet, they could also see the undermining affect of the system that as a whole had given up addressing the issue.

9.2.2 The lack of previous knowledge of grammar amongst students

The knowledge of grammar and the ability to apply it in different activities is an accumulating process because grammar looks like a chain that has many series connected to each other and if you want to reach any one you have to reach the previous one. For instance, before getting to the signs that tell this word is verb or noun, the learners need to know the parts of Arabic speech. Arabic grammar is taught through separate textbooks from grade eight aged 14 years and the connection between the grammatical material in this grade and grade nine, for example, is not clear. The recognition of this reason by teachers reached 89.6 per cent, which is similar to the previous reason. When asking the students about it, 41.3 per cent of them agreed with it, which is considered a clear indication by students. This confession might due to the idea that grammar is a difficult and complex subject and one cannot understand in as the same as any other subjects.

9.2.3 Students' belief that grammar is difficult to understand

This reason achieved 84.5 per cent of teachers' acceptance considering it one of the major reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar. When asking students about this reason, 41.7 per cent of them agreed with it. This result might due to the psychological obstacle between students and grammar and this obstacle makes no improvement on

students' levels whatever the effort of teachers and parents. The obstacle has to be removed from students' minds either by starting with easy and simple subjects or teaching grammar through stories, which students like.

9.2.4 Students' carelessness with previous preparation

According to the inductive method, which is used to teach grammar in Jordan, students are supposed to derive grammatical rules from the examples, and it is difficult for them to do so unless they prepare their lessons in advance. 83.7 per cent of the teachers agreed with this reason and when asking students about it, 32.8 per cent of them agreed with it.

Teachers were expected to blame students for the weaknesses in grammar but students were not expected to confess that they ignore previous preparation. About one third of them agreed that there is an avoidance of preparing grammar lessons and that contributes to their weaknesses in grammar.

9.2.5 Students' dependence on memorizing of rules without practicing them

82.2 per cent of the teacher agreed with this reason as one of the major reasons for the weaknesses in grammar, and 28.8 per cent of the students agreed with it. One of the important implementations of this result is that teachers argued that student learn grammar effectively in terms of the theoretical knowledge but when it comes to the practical activities, students are not doing well. It also indicates that students tried to defend themselves from this charge because the majority of them disagreed with the reason. They would say they are good in grammar; they have the knowledge and the ability to apply that knowledge, they might also say this reason is not one of the major

reasons for weaknesses in grammar because we do not have even sufficient knowledge of grammar.

9.2.6 The lack of parental encouragement to use standard Arabic by students

80 per cent of the teachers agreed with this reason, whereas 40.4 per cent of students agreed with it. This reason is an important one of for students' weaknesses in grammar and that is because whenever there is an application of the rules, the knowledge will remain longer in students' mind. And if they learn grammar just to pass the exams, they will soon forget what they learnt because rote learning is not enough to master grammatical knowledge and practice it. Pupils start with a poor basis. This reflects not just the lack of parental interest but the fact that there are essentially two different types of Arabic, that used at home and that in school.

9.2.7 The crowdedness of classrooms

When asking the teachers of Arabic about this reason, 68.8 per cent of them agreed it was one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar, and 48.1 per cent of the students agreed with it. The result here reflects a need to have new buildings that meet the right conditions of class size in order to make the teaching and learning process effective and beneficial for both students and teachers. Small and ill-equipped classes also reinforce the habits of rote learning and dependence on textbooks.

9.2.8 Students' belief that mastering of Arabic grammar will not give them additional advantages in their jobs

A third of the teachers (66.6 per cent), agreed with this statement as one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar and 32.3 per cent of the students agreed with it.

This result indicates that there is no strong motivation amongst students to learn grammar because there is no real benefit to be achieved by mastering it. Improving the motivation to learn grammar could be made by clear arrangement between the schools' administration and the teachers of Arabic say for instance to give special certificate or prize for the students who achieved well in grammar. For the long term motivation the MoE can arrange with the authorities of employment to allocate some additional points in jobs' applications for the candidates who can use Arabic grammar in a reasonable way.

9.2.9 Students' carelessness with grammar homework

Once again, more than half the teachers considered it one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar and when asked about it, 23.5 per cent of students agreed with it. The researcher believes that students' carelessness with grammar homework is not limited to Arabic grammar and it is a real problem in the educational field. As a whole it was clear that students' carelessness with grammar homework is due to the lack of students' motivation towards grammar learning because they are not using it as their daily language. Instead, they use colloquial Arabic.

9.2.10 The lack of students' desire to learn grammar

Students' motivation to learn Arabic grammar is not strong enough to encourage them to work hard. They will not do their best to achieve the theoretical knowledge and the ability to apply this knowledge. 63 per cent of the teachers agreed with the above statement as one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar. When asking the students about the same reason, 24.3 per cent of them agreed with it and yet the question

is whether students' desire to learn grammar not that strong, given the lack of preparation or homework.

It was clear that students are not using the grammar they learn either in their speech or other activities, and they do not feel they have any additional advantages by mastering Arabic grammar. In the light of that students are not expected to be highly motivated to learn formal grammar.

9.2.11 Students' belief that the use of colloquial Arabic could be an alternative to standard Arabic

A small majority of teachers' (54.8 per cent) agreed with this reason for students' weaknesses in grammar and 40.1 per cent of the students agreed with it. This result indicates that it is always difficult to isolate students from the general environment around them. Standard Arabic, which has an application of grammar, is not used in the daily language so students have a conviction that there is no need for grammar if they can communicate with other people without it.

It was clear from the findings of the questionnaire and the interview that the use of colloquial Arabic instead of standard Arabic creates negative convictions and attitudes amongst students towards grammar in general. This replacement is called sometimes the duplication of language as Khodir (1998) called it.

What makes it strange is that the duplication of standard and colloquial Arabic has been discussed in 1974 by the conference of the Arabic experts in Amman, and the same reason was discussed in 1977 by the cultural seminar of the Jordanian council of Arabic. That seminar was especially allocated to discuss the reasons for students' weaknesses in Arabic grammar amongst Jordanian students. Despite the effort to solve the problem, it remains even after the latest educational reform that started in 1987. After eleven years of the educational reform, Khodir (1998) mentioned that students' levels in Arabic grammar are low.

9.2.12 The lack of students' attention to grammar lessons

This reason achieved 50.4 per cent of teachers' agreement and 20.2 per cent of students' agreement. Such a result might due to the general carelessness amongst students towards learning grammar because they are not using it in their daily language, and there is no advantage of mastering it. The result also might due to the teaching methods used by teachers. They might be not attractive to the students. For instance there is no use of audio visual aids, which attract students' attention and enhance the tradition atmosphere of teaching and learning.

It is worth saying that the lack of students' attention during grammar lessons is related also to the lack of parents' encouragement to the children because they are from different backgrounds economically and socially. Students are expected to have a certain lack of attention, but the creative teacher is the one who can deal with different and difficult situations successfully.

9.3 Reasons for the weaknesses in grammar related to grammar textbooks

Grammar textbooks are considered one of important components in the teaching of grammar because teachers and students have to stick to them no matter if it is suitable for students' levels or not. It is laid down by the MoE and teachers have no choice. There are four major reasons related to the textbooks that are seen to be difficulties.

9.3.1 The absence of teachers' participation in the compilation of grammar textbooks

The teachers of Arabic are in touch with their students so they are the only ones who can decide a suitable material for students' levels. In actual fact, the MoE nominated a group of 'experts' to choose the grammatical material. Most of the experts are University lecturers and there is huge gap between their expectations of students and the real levels of students. 71.8 per cent of teachers agreed with this reason for students' weaknesses in grammar considering that their participation in grammar textbooks will reduce the problem. Students can easily realize that teachers are not participating in establishing the textbooks because the authors' names and occupations are listed at the beginning of the textbook. When asking students about this reason, 47.7 per cent of them agreed with it.

Depending on that, the MoE can find some suitable arrangement to give some distinguished teachers an opportunity to participate in the compilation of grammar textbooks, which might make them nearer to the actual expectations of students, and recognize the real nature of the problem.

9.3.2 The lack of concentration on speaking skills

As a connection between theory and practice, there should be some speaking activities in the grammar textbooks. The real situation is that there are no speaking activities included in grammar textbooks for grades eight, nine and ten. 61.4 per cent of teachers agreed with this reason and 46.7 per cent of the students agreed with it. It is worth mentioning that the current textbooks came as one of the outputs of the latest educational reform started in 1987, which means that even after the latest educational reform, grammar textbooks need more attention to make them effective and beneficial for students.

9.3.3 The lack of gradual development from easy and simple to the difficult and complex

57 per cent of teachers considered it one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar, whereas 54.6 per cent of the students agreed with it. This result indicates that there is no logical order when choosing and arranging the grammar subjects in the textbooks. Grammar is known between students as a difficult matter and one of the ways to facilitate it in students' eyes is to start with the easiest subjects and develop from there.

9.3.4 The lack of connection between grammar and students' daily language

It was mentioned that students use colloquial Arabic in their daily language, thus there is no strong connection between the grammatical knowledge demanded at schools and the daily language in use. 55.6 per cent of the teachers agreed with this reason and 45.9 per cent of the students agreed with it. This result showed that there should be a strong

connection between grammatical material and students' daily language. Otherwise, students will develop a feeling that grammar is not important for their life.

9.4 Reasons for students' weaknesses related to teachers and teaching methods

Teachers and their teaching methods play an important role in shaping students levels of performance. Thus this study explored the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar related to teaching styles. There are however, eleven reasons that attracted more than 50 per cent of responses of the participants. These reasons will be explained in descending order of importance.

9.4.1 The burdening of teachers with additional duties

Teachers of Arabic have some additional duties to do in the Jordanian schools such as school media, school assembly and class responsibilities. These additional duties might form an obstacle facing the teachers which prevents them or her from doing their main job properly. 83.7 per cent of the teachers agreed with this reason and 74.1 per cent of the students, a highly proportion, surprisingly sympathetic, agreed with it. This reason indicates that both students and teachers believe that the teachers of Arabic should be spared from doing the additional duties that add to the heavy load for them and distract them from the main task. Unlike any other teachers, the teachers of Arabic have to teach four textbooks and each one of them has its own preparation and homework, which makes it difficult for them to follow up their students effectively in the light of doing the additional duties. Whenever the teachers have a pause between the sessions, they can spend it marking students' works instead of doing additional duties.

9.4. 2 The weight of weekly teaching load for the teachers of Arabic

Both teachers and students were asked about the teaching load on the teachers. 82. 2 per cent of the teachers agreed they have a heavy load which is not surprising. They are expected to agree because they compare themselves to their colleagues who teach from one textbook, while the teachers of Arabic teach four textbooks. 34.5 per cent of the students agreed with the reason. The result showed that if we want good performances from teachers, then we have to put them in better circumstances. The result also showed that there was no satisfaction amongst teachers of Arabic about their jobs.

9.4.3 The lack of using standard Arabic by the teachers of other subjects

It was explained that one of the important applications of grammar is the use of standard Arabic in everyday conversation and in other academic circumstances. In reality the teachers of other subjects such as history, geography and other subjects do not use standard Arabic in their teaching, so even if the teachers of Arabic used standard Arabic, students will need time to adjust to the different levels of language used in the same day.

81.5 per cent of the teachers agreed with this reason and 58.6 per cent of the teachers agreed with it. The result showed that students need the teachers of other subjects to use standard Arabic in their teaching in order to give a good example of language use and also to protect students against confusion about the use of different levels of language.

9.4.4 The lack of following up grammar homework by the teachers of Arabic

One of the roles of the homework is to reinforce the knowledge in students' minds so they will not forget it easily. In the case of Arabic teachers, it is always difficult to follow up the homework because they teach four textbooks, which have to be covered throughout the academic year, and teachers also have an additional duties to do at schools. However, 74.1 per cent of the teachers agreed with this reason and 34.4 per cent of the students agreed with it. The result indicates that students will miss the advantage of having grammar homework. The homework will not be checked by teachers to correct the mistakes and to connect them with grammatical rules.

9.4.5 The lack of using audio visual aids in grammar teaching

It was mentioned that there is a psychological obstacle between students and grammar and one of the methods to get rid of that obstacle is to use audio visual aids because they could attract students' attention. The perceptions of teachers and students in this connection were close. 68.1 per cent of the teachers agreed with the reason and 64.1 per cent of students agreed with it. The result indicates that both teachers and students considered this reason one of the major reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar, not so much the audio visual aids themselves but what they symbolize.

9.4.6 Unavailability of audio visual aids at schools

63 per cent of teachers and 70 per cent of students' thought that few facilities in terms of educational technology were available. This result also indicates that students are keen to use audio visual aids. The desire for change from routine lessons was clear.

9.4.7 The lack of grammatical knowledge amongst the teachers of Arabic

This is one of the most surprising results. 59.3 per cent of teachers agreed with the reason, which is a strong confession of the low level of academic knowledge. This might be because of the limitation of the grammatical modules given to them at the Universities. 22.9 per cent of the students agreed with the reason and there is a gap between teachers' and students' perceptions. Students might be embarrassed to criticize their teachers in terms of academic knowledge; they are probably unaware of it. Thus the system of inadequacy perpetuates itself. By the time that students are at University and training to be teachers it is too late to teach a thorough knowledge of standard Arabic.

9.4.8 Teachers of Arabic are not satisfied about their job conditions

59.2 per cent of the teachers agreed with this reason and 24.1 per cent of the students. Professional satisfaction is one of the important conditions for the successful work. One of the important signs for the dissatisfaction is the noticeable transfer from teaching at schools to other jobs, the crises of which need to be explored further.

9.4.9 The lack of diversity in teaching methods

It was mentioned that grammar is taught at the Jordanian Universities by the inductive method and there is no flexibility that enables teachers of Arabic to choose any other method. The only chance that teachers have for flexibility is to take his or her own initiative. This responsibility is daunting; given the control of the MoE and supervisors.

When asking the teachers about the lack of diversity in teaching methods, 58.5 per cent of them agreed with it. The result showed that teachers were keen to change the current teaching method because students get bored with it as it is routine and inflexible.

9.4.10 Teachers of Arabic do not correct students' oral mistakes

More than half of the teachers (51.1 per cent) agreed with the above statement as one of the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar, and 28.1 per cent of the students agreed with it. This result indicates that teachers might not have enough time to correct all oral mistakes of students because they are always worried about the time and they have to finish grammar textbooks. Students' perceptions showed that they are not very keen to criticize their teachers because they do not want to embarrass them. Nor do they wish to have their own limitations exposed. Questions might reveal their mistakes and lack of knowledge. They prefer to keep silent and invisible.

9.4.11 The procedures of teachers nominating do not consider teachers' quality

To be nominated as a teacher of Arabic in Jordan, the applicant needs simply to have bachelor degree in Arabic from one of the Jordanian Universities or any recognized University. The teachers of Arabic stated that after they applied to the Civic Center, they needed to wait for a few months to see the names of the selected teachers in the national newspapers. These procedures did not involve any academic test or specialized interview to choose suitable teachers, which makes it possible to choose many teachers who are not able to teach grammar effectively.

9.5 Reasons for the weaknesses related to the educational supervisors

This section presents the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar related to the educational supervisors.

9.5.1 The concentration of educational supervisors on a formal procedures

83 per cent of the teachers of Arabic criticized the performance of educational supervisors because they usually concentrate on formal procedures such as looking at the preparation book, signing the marks' record and sometimes writing the aims of the lesson on the board. This result showed that teachers are not satisfied with the supervisors' role, which means their expectations from them are higher than what is actually achieved. The teachers' expectations from supervisors and the supervisors' expectations from students need separate research because it might help to bridge the gap between them and it might also help to build on a more trusting relationship between teachers and educational supervisors.

9.5.2 The lack of teachers' conviction in complementary supervision

The complementary supervision, which was started in 2000 in order to overcome the shortage of educational supervisors, does not work. Teachers consider this supervision system does nothing to altercate the weaknesses in the general system of teaching grammar.

9.5.3 The supervisors' visits do not cover the academic year effectively.

This result is interesting because teachers were not expected to ask for more supervisors' visits. The relationship between teachers and educational supervisors is one of the critical

issues because teachers always think that the educational supervisor visits the teachers just to criticize and raise the negative points about them and their teaching styles and behavior. This result shows that the relationship between teachers and educational supervisors needs to be reviewed in order to build it on a more trusting basis.

9.5.4 The rarity of supervisors' visits which cover grammar lessons

The visits of educational supervisors to the teachers to cover grammar lessons only seem to happen accidentally; that is because the visits are arranged with the school's administration and there is no guarantee that the teacher will be teaching grammar at that particular session. In many cases, teachers of Arabic arrange with the students to give them the same lesson that he gave last time in order to show the educational supervisor that students are doing well and that his teaching of grammar is successful.

In some other cases the teacher of Arabic might cancel a grammar lesson and give students a composition lesson to avoid too much criticism by the supervisor which could occur if he gave a grammar lesson. 67.4 per cent of the teachers agreed that educational supervision does not cover grammar lessons as needed.

9.5.5 The lack of interaction between teachers and supervisors

A third of the teachers reflected the complexity of the relationship between teachers and supervisors and the sensitivity of that relationship. The main aim of educational supervision is to give the teachers full support and guidance in order to practice the best teaching. Therefore, this result indicates that teachers and supervisors are not dealing

with each other co-operatively and if this is the case, the interaction between teachers and supervisors will not reach the level that is planned by the educational policy makers.

9.5.6 The lack of implementing the policy of the exchange of experience between teachers of Arabic

Teachers can learn a lot from each other. They can have insights into the teaching practices of distinguished teachers and avoid undesirable practices. The educational supervisors can arrange some visits between the teachers of Arabic to attend grammar lessons and observe the performance of each other. These visits might help the teachers of Arabic to develop their performances better than some training programme that are not preferred by teachers.

9.5.7 The shortage of the supervisors' visits during the academic year

It was surprising that 57 per cent of the teachers agreed with this reason for students' weaknesses in grammar. It is surprising because the relationship between teachers and supervisors was a critical issue and teachers were expected not to ask for more visits by the supervisors. Given these were little more than either negative criticism on formalities. One of the possible interpretations for this result is that the teachers actually wanted to develop their confidence and that they are aware of their limitations. Any real and practical help would be appreciated.

9.5.8 The shortage of education supervisors of Arabic

55.6 per cent of the teachers considered the shortage of educational supervisors as one of the background reasons for the general state of students' weaknesses in grammar and this result was supported by the opinions of the supervisors themselves through the interviews. This result indicates that there is a need to nominate more supervisors in order to make the educational supervision an effective process.

It was clear that all teachers, students and the educational supervisors agreed with a number of particular reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar. They are unhappy with the stress on constant formal assessment because it contradicts with the accumulative nature of grammar learning. The subject made dry as if the only real point on it was to be tested. Formal assessment also allows students to pass easily without having actual knowledge of grammar, as if there were no utility of standard Arabic. This issue is strongly connected with the lack of previous knowledge of grammar amongst students. If the examination system was applied rigorously the lack of standard would be clearly revealed. We have, therefore, a series of contradictions. The central control of the MoE inhibits teachers' sense of autonomy excitement, and yet the complexities of the arrangement, from textbooks to supervisors, make little impact.

There are also some deep-seated problems which permeate the whole education system. The formal procedures of nominating teachers are lax. They allow unskillful teachers to be involved in teaching grammar which needs certain and solid academic knowledge of grammar as well as practical knowledge. This issue is also strongly connected with the

lack of grammatical knowledge amongst the teachers of Arabic. This is reinforced by the lack of support in standard Arabic by other teachers.

All parties stressed the students' belief that they can easily use colloquial Arabic, where there is no rigid grammar instead of standard Arabic. This issue is connected with the lack of encouragement of students to use standard Arabic either by parents or teachers.

The lack of both availability and use of audio visual aids in grammar teaching is strongly connected with the lack of diversity in teaching methods of grammar. This lack of diversity in the teaching methods makes students and even teachers bored of the routine which is imposed.

Concern was also expressed about the shortage of educational supervisors and their sparse visits to the teachers of Arabic who always need advice and guidance. More surprisingly, the blame was also on the lack of supervisors' efficiency especially in the light of "complementary supervision" that does not pay attention to the subject matter.

There was also clear blame for the heavy load of teaching and additional duties burdened on the teachers of Arabic who teach five textbooks. There are many matters to be addressed in which is a deep and widespread problem. But the greater concern is the association of standard Arabic with routine, formal assessment, boredom and imposition of strategies on teachers whose confidence is diminished. It will take a great deal of effort to make the learning of standard Arabic something to be relished and felt to be worthwhile.

6.9 Recommendations

There are several recommendations that can be made depending on the results of the study to solve the problem of students' weaknesses in grammar; these recommendations could be summarized as follows:

- To encourage the teachers of Arabic to review and improve their performance by recording their lessons on videotapes and watching them to realize their weaknesses so they can overcome these weaknesses.
- To develop a new policy for the nomination of teachers' by the MoE, in order to choose the suitable person who is able to teach grammar. Having a degree does not necessarily mean the holder of that degree is able to teach.
- To encourage the idea of experiential interchanges between the teachers of Arabic. Developing the teamwork system, rather than an individual one can do that. That will give all teachers the advantage of being members of a team. This cooperation can be generalized not just on the schools' level but also on the whole directorate of education and learning.
- To consult the teachers of Arabic about the necessary audio visual aids that can be used in grammar teaching to attract students' interest in learning grammar effectively.
- To provide the teachers of Arabic and the supervisors alike with special training about the latest teaching methods of language and grammar in particular, taking the advantage of the Internet.
- To consult both teachers and supervisors about the most difficult subjects in grammar textbooks and then provide them with a special course to bridge the gap in their academic

knowledge. The participation of the supervisors will help the teachers avoid any embarrassment about being taught grammar after years of teaching. This course might help also to bridge the gap and build a new healthy relationship between teachers and supervisors.

- To make as much as possible of standard Arabic amongst students, teachers of Arabic, teachers of other subjects and the mass media because standard Arabic is an application of grammar. This can be achieved by developing a rewarding system for students and teachers, which makes the users of standard Arabic feel they are distinguished.

- To review the content and the size of grammar textbooks in order to reduce the grammar subjects. That is because when students learn and master five units of grammar, they will be able to use this knowledge, but if there is twenty units of grammar to be learnt the quality of teaching and learning will not be the same. At the same level of importance, the textbooks should include speaking activities, using standard Arabic.

- To consult distinguished teachers of Arabic who are well known in terms of their superior performance about grammar material since they can decide what is suitable for students' levels better than the national team of compilation.

Areas for further research

This study explored the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar and it showed that the following topics need to be studied in separate research:

- The relationship between admission policies at Jordanian Universities and the weakness of students' teachers.

- The obstacles of using standard Arabic by students at the basic stage. If we know these obstacles we might have a chance to overcome them and to make more of the practical activities through using standard Arabic.
- The students' violence against teachers, and the reasons for it.
- The procedures of teachers' nomination in the light of the quality assurance system which is based on putting the suitable person in the suitable position.
- The effect of colloquial Arabic on students' writing in Jordan.
- Teaching Arabic grammar through students' writing.
- The need for training program for the education supervisors. This new training should take into account the perceptions of teachers and supervisors as well as the head teachers because the head teacher seems to be a permanent supervisor at school.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1.

Open Question directed to students, teachers and supervisors

Please answer the following question by circling the appropriate choice:

Do you think that student' achievement in Arabic grammar is low?

- 1. Yes** **2. No**

If yes please give the reasons.

[illegible]

Appendix 2

Students' and Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear the participant:

I am a research student with Professor Cedric Cullingford at the University of Huddersfield in the UK, searching in the teaching methods of Arabic language. I have a great hope to get the benefit of your valuable opinions.

This questionnaire is a part of my research. It will take you (10-15) minutes. This short time will be very useful for my research, and your help will be highly appreciated, so please deal with it as accurate as you could, and be confident that your identification will not be known in any case.

All information in this questionnaire will be used for the research purposes only. You will be asked just to put, (✓) under the appropriate choice. The choices are:

Strongly agree: If you are in full agreement with the statement.

Agree: If you agree with the statement but not strongly.

Uncertain: If you are not sure about your opinion.

Disagree: If you are not in agreement with the statement.

Strongly disagree: If you are totally against the statement.

Please note: The last section of the questionnaire is only for teachers.

Thanking you in advance for your co-operative

The researcher: Hatem Ahmed Al-qudah
School of Education and Professional Development

University of Huddersfield

General Information

Student:

A. Age

- 1. 14 years ()
- 2. 15 years ()
- 3. 16 years ()

B. Grade

- 1. Eight ()
- 2. Nine ()
- 3. Ten ()

C. Gender

- 1. Male ()
- 2. Female ()

Teachers

A. The directorate of Education and learning:

- 1. Almazar the south ()
- 2. Alqasr ()
- 3. Alkarak the centre ()

B. The gender:

- 1. Male ()
- 2. Female ()

C. The highest qualification:

- 1. Diploma of community college ()
- 2. Bachelor of Arabic language ()
- 3. Diploma in education (after BA) ()
- 4. Master ()
- 5. Ph.D ()

D. Years of experience in teaching Arabic

- 1. Less than 5 years ()
- 2. Between 5-10 years ()
- 3. Over10 years ()

The following issues are suggested reasons for students’ weaknesses in Arabic grammar, please tick the boxes according to your conviction.

The dimension of student:

NU	Item	SA	A	UN	D	SD
1	Students’ belief that the use of colloquial Arabic could be alternative to standard Arabic					
2	Students’ carelessness in previous preparation for grammar					
3	The lack of students’ desire to learn Arabic grammar					
4	The students’ belief that Arabic grammar is difficult to understand					
5	Students’ dependence on memorising grammatical rules without practising them					
6	The lack of parents’ encouragement to use standard Arabic by students					
7	Students’ sense that the formal assessment for students’ achievement, given by the MOE is lax					
8	The lack of previous knowledge of grammar among the students					
9	The lack of students’ attention to grammar lessons					
10	The crowdedness of classrooms with a students					
11	Students’ carelessness with a grammar homework					
12	The students’ sense that mastering Arabic grammar will not give them exceptional advantages in their future careers					

The dimension of grammar textbook:

NU	Item	SA	A	UN	DA	SD
13	The difficulty of grammatical material compared with students’ levels					
14	The absence of connection between grammatical material and students’ daily language					
15	The lack of concentration on speaking skills in grammar textbook					
16	The insufficiency of grammar weekly lessons to teach Arabic grammar effectively					
17	The absence of teachers’ participation in the compilation of grammar textbook					
18	The lack of gradual development from easy and simple knowledge to the difficult and complex					

The dimension of teacher and teaching methods

NU	Item	SA	A	UN	DA	SD
19	The weight of weekly teaching load					
20	The burdening of teacher of Arabic with an additional duties (school media, weekly alternation and class responsibilities)					
21	The lack of following up students' homework by teacher					
22	The lack of using standard Arabic during grammar lessons					
23	The lack of using standard Arabic by the teachers of other subjects					
24	Unavailability of audio visual aids which facilitate grammar teaching					
25	The lack of using audio visual aids in grammar teaching					
26	The lack of students encouragement by teacher to use standard Arabic					
27	Students are not given equal opportunities in class participation					
28	Teachers of Arabic do not prepare carefully for grammar lessons					
29	The lack of grammatical knowledge amongst teachers of Arabic					
30	The lack of diversity in teaching methods of grammar					
31	The difficulty of controlling the class					
32	Teachers of Arabic do not correct students' oral mistakes					
33	Teachers of Arabic do not correct students' written mistakes					
34	Teachers of Arabic are not satisfied about their job conditions					
35	Teaching grammar in separate textbooks					
36	Teachers of Arabic insist on using the dictation method which gives central role for the teachers					

The dimension of educational supervision

NU	Item	SA	A	UN	DA	SD
37	The shortage of educational supervisors to the teachers of Arabic					
38	The shortage of supervisors' s visits during the academic year					
39	The rarity of a supervisor's visits which cover grammar lessons					
40	The lack of interaction between Arabic teachers and educational supervisors					
41	The concentration of educational supervisors on a formal procedures (Preparation book, organising the board)					
42	The lack of teachers' conviction in the complementary supervision.					
43	The supervisors' visits do not cover the academic year effectively					
44	The deficiency of educational supervisors in their field					
45	The carelessness of educational supervisors in the interchange of the experience between teachers themselves					

OTHER REASONS:

If you think that there are any other reasons of students' weaknesses in Arabic grammar, please write them bellow:

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Appendix 3

Students' interview

A. General information

- Grade ()
- Age ()
- Gender ()
- DEL ()

B. The questions:

1. What is your favourite subject at school?
2. Why do you like that subject?
3. What is the subject that you never like?
4. Why do you feel so towards that subject?
5. In your opinion, is it necessary to learn Arabic grammar? (If not, why?)
6. How many hours you spend every day watching TV?
7. Do you prefer to watch TV programmes that use standard Arabic? (If not, why?)
of grammar?
8. Do you think that grammar textbook you are taught now is suitable for students' levels? (If not, why?)
9. Did you finish grammatical material allocated for this term? (If not, why?)
10. Did you find any difficult units in grammar textbook? If yes, please give some examples.
11. How often the teacher of Arabic presents the examples that includes grammatical rules?
12. How many minutes that teacher spends in presenting the grammatical examples?

14. Deriving the rules from the examples needs previous preparation, so do you prepare your grammar lessons in advance?

15. Do your Arabic teacher use standard or colloquial Arabic in presenting grammar lessons?

16. To what extent Arabic teacher encourages the students to use standard Arabic as an application of theoretical grammar?

17. Do your Arabic teacher corrects all of your grammatical mistakes in both reading and writing activities?

- If you have any further comments or suggestions to overcome students' weaknesses in grammar, please feel free to explain them in details:

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Appendix 4

Teachers' Interview

A. General information

- Experience ()
- Age ()
- Gender ()
- DEL ()
- Qualification ()

B. The questions:

1. How long you have been teaching Arabic language?
2. Would you please describe the procedures of nominating you as Arabic teacher?
3. Have you presented with an academic test as a condition of being Arabic teacher?
4. Have you presented with specialised interview in order to be a teacher?
5. How often do you present grammar lessons?
6. Why do you tend to present it this way?
7. Did you try to use any other methods of teaching grammar? (If not, why?)
8. Would you please evaluate the level of your students in grammar?
9. How many lessons do you teach weekly?
10. Are there any additional tasks that you are asked to do in the school? (please identify them)
11. Are you satisfied with your weekly teaching load?
12. To what extent you use standard Arabic in your teaching of grammar?
13. To what extent do you encourage students to use standard Arabic?

14. Which audio visual aids are available at your school?
15. To what extent you use them in grammar teaching?
16. In which ways you guarantee that all students will take part in class activities?
17. How do you evaluate the levels of grammatical knowledge of teachers?
18. To what extent that class control affects students' performance in grammar?
19. Do you have enough time to correct all written and oral grammatical mistakes made by students?
20. What is the relationship between students' weaknesses in grammar and the lack of their previous preparation?
21. What is the relationship between students' weaknesses in grammar and their conviction of grammar difficulty?
22. Would you please clarify the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar related to the formal assessment given by the MOE?
23. How many students are they in the class you teach?
24. How helpful is that number to teach grammar effectively?
25. What is the relationship between students' weaknesses in grammar and the lack of their attention to grammar lessons?
26. What are the benefits of mastering Arabic grammar for students?
27. To what extent you find grammar textbook suitable for students' levels?
28. Are there any speaking skills included in grammar textbooks?
29. As an Arabic teacher, did you have a chance to participate a compilation of grammar textbooks?
30. Are you satisfied with a gradual development of the textbooks from easy and simple knowledge to the difficult and complex?
31. Did you attend any pre-service teacher- training programme?

- If yes, please identify them bellow:

32. Did you attend any in- service teacher-training programme?

- If yes please identify them bellow:

33. What is the relationship between students’ weaknesses in grammar and the use of colloquial Arabic in the mass media?

34. Can you finish grammatical material which is allocated for each term?

- If not, why?

- If you have any further comments regarding the reasons behind students’ weaknesses in Arabic grammar, please explain them in details:

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Appendix 5

The Supervisors' Interview

A. General information

- Experience ()
- Age ()
- Gender ()
- DEL ()
- Qualification ()

B. The questions:

1. What are the procedures of compilation grammar textbooks?
2. What is your role as educational supervisors in these procedures?
3. Do you think is necessary to give the supervisors an opportunity to take part in the compilation of the textbooks? Please give the reasons for your opinion.
4. Is there any relation between students' weaknesses in grammar and the absence of supervisors' participation in grammar textbooks? Please explain?
5. Is there any role for the teachers to participate in grammar textbooks?
6. Do you support teachers' participation in grammar textbooks? Please give the reasons for your answer.
7. Is there any relation between students' weaknesses in grammar and the absence of teachers' participation in grammar textbooks?
8. To what extent grammar textbooks are suitable for students' levels?
 - Grade eight
 - Grade nine

- Grade ten.

9. Do the MoE ask you for any feedback regarding the textbooks?
10. To what extent Arabic teachers are co-operative with your effort as a supervisor?
11. What are the procedures of nominating the teachers of Arabic?
12. Do you think it is necessary to present the candidates for the post of Arabic teacher with an academic test? Please give your reasons.
13. Do you think it is necessary to present the teachers with specialised interview?
14. Do you think that every teacher of Arabic is able to teach grammar effectively?
15. How many visits you are supposed to make to the teacher every year?
16. Do you think that this number of visits is adequate to improve grammar teaching?
17. How many grammar lesson you attend with the teacher of Arabic every year?
18. Do you think it is adequate to improve grammar teaching?
19. What are the procedures of grammar lessons that you attend with teachers.
20. Do you think that students are able to derive the rules without previous preparation?
21. To what extent the teachers you visit use standard Arabic applying its grammatical rules?
22. How do you relate students' weaknesses in grammar and the lack of using standard Arabic by teachers?
23. Are there any speaking skills included in grammar textbooks to apply the theoretical knowledge of grammar?

24. Do you allow teachers to use deductive method in grammar teaching? Please give the reasons for your answer.

25. To what extent audio visual aids are used in grammar teaching?

26. How do you relate students' weaknesses in grammar to the lack of using audio visual aids in grammar teaching?

27. In general, what are the reasons for students' weaknesses in grammar?

If you have any comments or recommendation that might improve grammar teaching please feel free to explain them:

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Appendix 6

Division of the interviews' sample

Directorate	Students		Teachers		Supervisors	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Al-Karak	3	2	2	1	2	-----
Al-Mazar	3	4	2	2	2	1
Al-Qasr	2	1	2	1	2	-----
Total	8	7	6	4	6	1