



Exploiting Generative-Transformational Concepts in Teaching the Arabic Language

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Abstract:

Linguistic knowledge formed a basic theoretical background in the field of language teaching and learning, and if we look at what the traditional transformational school came up with, we find that it goes beyond describing the external form of the language; That is, the surface level to the deep level, criticizing structuralism and its formal approach to linguistic analysis. It is based on logical, philosophical and psychological foundations, and thus it falls within the linguistics of ability, and aims to describe and explain the mechanisms of igniting the human mind in the processes of language production and interpretation.

Among the applications of this name product in the Arabic language teaching ceremony, we find that it describes education as the learner's acquisition of song proficiency that enables him to produce a huge number of beauties from a very limited number of phonemes. The learner is seen as the focus of the educational learning process, and that he is creative because he relies on this latent intellectual energy, the effect of which appears in the performance.

Keywords: Grammar, generation, deep structure, surface structure, acquisition; educational, linking, expansion, arborization

Exploiter les concepts génératifs-transformationnels dans l'enseignement de la langue arabe

Résumé :

Les connaissances linguistiques constituent un fondement théorique essentiel dans le domaine de l'enseignement et de l'apprentissage des langues. Si l'on examine les travaux de l'école transformationnelle traditionnelle, on constate qu'ils vont au-delà de la description de la forme externe de la langue, c'est-à-dire du niveau superficiel au niveau profond, critiquant le structuralisme et son approche formelle de l'analyse linguistique. Elle repose sur des fondements logiques, philosophiques et psychologiques, et s'inscrit donc dans le cadre de la linguistique des capacités. Elle vise à décrire et à expliquer les mécanismes qui stimulent l'esprit humain dans les processus de production et d'interprétation du langage.

Parmi les applications de ce produit phare dans l'enseignement de la langue arabe, nous constatons qu'il décrit l'éducation comme l'acquisition par l'apprenant d'une maîtrise du chant qui lui permet de produire un grand nombre de beautés à partir d'un nombre très limité de phonèmes. L'apprenant est considéré comme le centre du processus d'apprentissage éducatif, et il est créatif car il s'appuie sur cette énergie intellectuelle latente, dont l'effet apparaît dans la performance.

Mots-clés : *grammaire, génération, structure profonde, structure superficielle, acquisition ; éducatif, liaison, expansion, arborisation*



Introduction:

The advancement and promotion of the Arabic language is one of the key concerns for those engaged in the field of education and training. The openness to linguistics and its integration into the teaching of Arabic in all its components has become a pedagogical and educational project through which the realities of the language are revealed, including methods of teaching and ways of acquisition.

Linguistic theories have diversified in their conceptual frameworks and modes of operation, bringing about profound changes in the cognitive landscape. This development has led to the emergence of several linguistic branches, among them *educational linguistics*, which encompasses two important terms: linguistics and didactics. The latter is the result of an interaction between the theoretical dimension represented by general linguistics and the applied dimension represented by applied linguistics, of which didactics is a central concern. This raises the questions: What is the relationship between linguistics and didactics? And how can various linguistic approaches be utilized in teaching the Arabic language?

1. The Relationship between Linguistics and Didactics:

Linguistics constitutes a fundamental reference field in linguistic and educational research. It provides a framework of linguistic concepts and analytical methods, as the questions posed by specialists in didactics are, at their core, grounded in the epistemological foundations of linguistics. Linguistics offers the educational researcher the possibility to think critically about the subject matter, its structures, and the methodologies that govern it—especially since many

educational models for language teaching are based on linguistic theories and approaches.

The linguist studies natural languages to understand their phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and lexical systems, as well as the transformations that may affect their structural organization. In contrast, the pedagogue seeks to identify the means and methods to address the difficulties learners encounter when studying a given subject or language.

Linguistics equips the language teacher with a conceptual framework and analytical tools, enabling them to understand how language is acquired through various linguistic theories. It also helps them recognize learner characteristics by relying on *psycholinguistics*.

A researcher in didactics can work with linguistics on two levels:

- **Theoretical level:** Linguistics provides a theoretical framework that allows for the understanding and study of numerous linguistic issues.
- **Methodological level:** Linguistics offers procedural tools that assist in analyzing and interpreting linguistic phenomena.
- Moreover, linguistics can benefit the didactic researcher on the psychological level, as psycholinguistic theories can be applied to the processes of language acquisition and learning.ⁱ

1. Teaching Arabic Language Didactics

Teaching Arabic Language Didactics refers to the educational field concerned with all aspects related to teaching the components of the Arabic language subject, such as literary texts, linguistic lessons, composition, and



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expression. It focuses on transforming linguistic knowledge from its general framework into a specific, pedagogical framework suitable for teaching.

2. Approaches to Language Teaching:

Throughout the history of language teaching and learning, several linguistic approaches have emerged, leading to the development of various methods and pedagogical frameworks consistent with each approach. Among the most relevant to our topic is the generative-transformational approach.

2.1 The Generative-Transformational Approach:

Noam Chomsky starts from a fundamental principle stating that language is an abstract mental space governed by internal systems, and that linguistic competence is an innate, natural ability.

Chomsky relies on a holistic method in linguistic research in particular, and in mental research in general. This method represents a shift in focus—from covering data and materials to exploring the depth of interpretation. This shift introduces a new conception of linguistic inquiry based on reasoning and abstraction.

Chomsky thus transcended the description of the external form of language (the surface level) to reach the deep level, criticizing structuralism and its formal analytical method. His approach stems from logical, philosophical, and psychological foundations. Consequently, linguistics, according to him, belongs to the field of competence linguistics and aims to describe and explain the mechanisms

of the human mind in the processes of language production and interpretation.

2.1.1 Language Acquisition According to Chomsky:

Chomsky developed a new model for thinking about language, which generated several key issues, mainly focusing on external behavior. This model is based on the following fundamental assumptions:

Language acquisition does not occur through listening, imitation, repetition, or reinforcement.

This is incorrect for two reasons:

- a) If that were true, language acquisition would require a long time, while we observe that a child masters their native language within the first three or four years of life—at an age when their intellect and reasoning are still limited.
- b) Reality disproves this hypothesis: by the age of five, or even earlier, a child can produce creative sentences in different contexts.

The capacity for acquisition exists in humans from an early age and is absent in animals. This ability is manifested in:

- a) The linguistic "errors" children make are not real mistakes; rather, they indicate that the child is actively learning and that their linguistic system is functioning efficiently.
- b) The ability to use structures and sentences never heard before.
- c) The ability to acquire any human language without distinction, which demonstrates that the child possesses universal grammatical rules beforehand. ⁱⁱ



Soumission : 12/04/2024 Acceptation : 29/07/2025 Publication : 15/08/2025

Chomsky thus discovered the human capacity for language acquisition, noting that all natural languages share the same fundamental properties and that language is an inherited trait forming part of our genetic structure. We do not learn language; we acquire it, because linguistic knowledge is innate and embedded within our physical and psychological being. The child is born with an innate understanding of specific universal grammatical principles shared by all languages, which enables them to acquire their mother tongue.

When analyzing language acquisition, Chomsky identified the following observations:

- a) Every normal child acquires language effortlessly through simple exposure to their linguistic environment.
- b) When acquiring their language, the child gains linguistic competence—an implicit knowledge of grammatical rules that allows them to produce an infinite number of novel and meaningful sentences, understand them, and judge their grammaticality.
- c) The child not only acquires linguistic competence but also the communicative function of speech, possessing what is called communicative competence.
- d) The characteristics of the acquired language must not exceed the child's cognitive capacity to process and internalize them; otherwise, acquisition would be impossible.

2.2 Characteristics of the Generative-Transformational Theory:

The main characteristics of this theory can be summarized as follows:

- a. Chomsky believes that a mental reality underlies linguistic behavior.
- b. Every actual linguistic performance conceals an implicit knowledge of certain grammatical rules.
- c. Human language, according to this approach, is a unique mental system—a cognitive phenomenon that derives its reality from the notion of language as a tool for expression and thought.
- d. The child, by selecting the grammatical system specific to their mother tongue, demonstrates creativity by producing new structures never heard before and by understanding unfamiliar constructions used by others.
- e. Language is an open skill, not a closed one; anyone who acquires it can produce and comprehend sentences they have never previously encountered.
- f. The stimulus-response theory is, in Chomsky's view, inadequate and limited, as it forms a closed circle incapable of providing a sufficient explanation for actual language use. ⁱⁱⁱ

3. Exploiting Generative-Transformational Concepts in Teaching the Arabic Language:

The generative theory does not consider specific grammatical rules as its subject of study; rather, it focuses on describing and analyzing linguistic competence. From this perspective, describing language according to generative linguistics encompasses the essential aspects of situation, use



Soumission : 12/04/2024 Acceptation : 29/07/2025 Publication : 15/08/2025

by speakers, and the methods of learning and teaching language. This comprehensive view requires the development of three interrelated theoretical frameworks: the theory of linguistic competence, the theory of linguistic performance, and the theory of language acquisition.^{iv}

Generative–transformational linguistics is rich in concepts that can be applied in the educational field, especially in teaching the Arabic language. The most significant of these include:

3.1. Grammar:

Chomsky based his grammatical model on several key hypotheses:

- **Grammar as competence:** It is a finite set of formal rules that enables the ideal speaker–listener to produce sentences they have or have not previously uttered. These rules also allow them to distinguish grammatical sentences from ungrammatical ones. Competence is complemented by performance, which represents the actual realization of these internalized rules.
- **Grammar as sentence-based:** The sentence is regarded as the primary linguistic unit that governs all others. From it, its components are derived through the principle of immediate constituent analysis.
- **Grammar as generative:** From a finite number of sentences, an infinite number can be generated and produced. Based on this hypothesis, two structures of the sentence are distinguished:

- Deep structure: An abstract formal representation.
- Surface structure: The realized form, produced through a set of rules (transformations that may be optional or obligatory, simple or complex).

3.2. The Sentence:

The sentence has been defined as a composition of two words in which one is predicated of the other whether it conveys complete meaning, as in *Zaydun qā'imun* (Zayd is standing), or not, as in *in yukrimni* (if he honors me), which is incomplete until followed by its response. Thus, the sentence is broader in scope than utterance itself. ^v

Traditional grammarians emphasized the predicative relationship and the concept of meaningfulness in defining the sentence. Modern linguists built upon this, defining it as a set of words forming an independent unit that conveys a complete meaning upon which silence is acceptable. ^{vi}

From a linguistic standpoint, the sentence is a syntactic construction composed of lexical units governed by morphological, syntactic, and semantic rules. It constitutes the main focus of syntax in the generative theory.

The generative-transformational school defines the **basic sentence** as possessing the following five features:

- 1- It is **simple**.
- 2- It is **complete**.
- 3- It is **explicit**.
- 4- It is **affirmative**.
- 5- It is **positive**.

Any sentence that lacks one of these properties is considered a **derived** or **subordinate** sentence. For example, the sentence *Kataba al-talibu al-darsa* (The



Soumission : 12/04/2024 Acceptation : 29/07/2025 Publication : 15/08/2025

student wrote the lesson) possesses all five of these characteristics.

The sentence, therefore, is one of the essential linguistic concepts that teachers must emphasize in their interaction with learners. This is because any text used as a teaching tool is, by nature, a linguistic construct made up of a series of coherent and interconnected sentences.

3.3. Generation:

Generation (at-tawlid) is one of the key concepts introduced and developed by generative-transformational grammar. It refers to the ability to produce an unlimited number of sentences from a limited set of grammatical rules in any given language, to understand them, and to distinguish them from ungrammatical forms. ^{vii}

Generation regulates sentences according to the potential grammatical rules of a language. Thus, the generative rule is an integral part of the system responsible for producing sentences. The concept of generation encompasses the process of determining and formalizing all possible sentences within a language.

The rules take a **mathematical form**, represented through a series of successive symbols called **rewrite rules**, where each symbol is rewritten from right to left. The researcher can derive (generate) starting from \mathcal{C} as the initial symbol, expanding its various elements at different levels until the sentence is generated ^{viii}, noting that \mathcal{C} first branches into a **nominal compound** and a **verbal compound**, and each compound in turn branches into its constituent elements. These rules can be represented as follows:

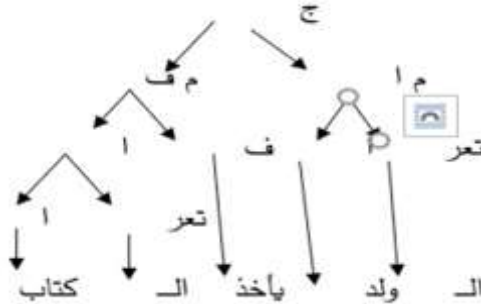
ج	← م + م ف	ف	← يأخذ. يقرأ
م ا	← تعر + اسم	ا	← ولد. كتاب
م ف	← ف + م ا	تعر	← ال

By applying the lexical rules that allow the replacement of each symbol (appearing on the left), a set of sentences can be derived following the pattern "يأخذ الولد الكتاب" (**The boy takes the book**).

To obtain other sentences, it is sufficient to replace these symbols with the corresponding lexical units, gradually, until reaching the final structure of the sentence. Accordingly, the previous example can branch into eight sentences:

- 1- الولد يأخذ الكتاب (The boy takes the book)
- 2- الولد يقرأ الكتاب (The boy reads the book)
- 3- الولد يأخذ الولد (The boy takes the boy)
- 4- الولد يقرأ الولد (The boy reads the boy)
- 5- الكتاب يأخذ الولد (The book takes the boy)
- 6- الكتاب يأخذ الكتاب (The book takes the book)
- 7- الكتاب يقرأ الولد (The book reads the boy)
- 8- الكتاب يقرأ الكتاب (The book reads the book)

Chomsky formulated this process in the form of a syntactic tree that illustrates the different branchings that occur within the sentence.



The teacher can make use of the concept of generation in many components of the Arabic language, especially in the reading text, as it is one of the main sources contributing to the quality of both oral and written expression. It also serves as a fundamental entry point to the linguistic lesson, since examples on which the lesson is based can be derived from it. Focusing on the text helps develop the learner's expressive and communicative abilities.

For example, the teacher may present an image from the textbook within a reading text that can generate numerous sentences, engaging the learners to demonstrate their cognitive and perceptual abilities in producing infinite sentences – considering the text as one of their most important linguistic resources.

4. Transformation:

Transformation is a grammatical process applied to a sequence that possesses a syntactic structure and belongs to a new sequence with a derived syntactic structure. It is a relationship that connects two representations: an initial abstract representation, which is the **deep structure**, and a derived final representation, which is the **surface structure**.^{ix}

Let us consider the following sentences:

- a. أكل الرجل التفاحة (The man ate the apple)
- b. الرجل أكل التفاحة (The man ate the apple)
- c. التفاحة أكلها الرجل (The apple was eaten by the man)

Sentences **b** and **c** are transformations of sentence **a** through an operation that moves the noun "الرجل" in **b** and "التفاحة" in **c** to the beginning of the sentence. This process leaves a pronoun in the place previously occupied by the noun undergoing the transformation, as observed in **b** and **c**.

This is one of the concepts that can be utilized in teaching the Arabic language, as it helps the learner develop the skill of **transformation**, enabling them to understand the structural changes that occur within a sentence and to practice converting one syntactic form into another — such as transforming a **verbal sentence** into a **nominal sentence**, or changing an **active voice** sentence into a **passive voice** one, or converting a **positive** sentence into **negative** or **interrogative** form.

This can be illustrated through the following examples, which can be effectively used in Arabic language teaching:

4.1. Transformation by Deletion:

This type of transformation occurs by deleting one or more elements of the sentence. It can be represented by the symbolic rule: $ص + س \rightarrow ص + ع + س$.

There are several cases in which sentences are transformed through deletion. For example:

1. قرأ الطالب النص (The student read the text)
2. قُرئَ النص (The text was read)

Here, the transformation occurred by deleting the subject.

In addition, a linguistic element may be deleted through transformation if it is identical to another element.



Soumission : 12/04/2024 Acceptation : 29/07/2025 Publication : 15/08/2025

Accordingly, the sentence قام زيد وسعيد (Zayd and Saeed stood up) is a transformation of قام زيد وقام سعيد (Zayd stood up and Saeed stood up) by deleting the repeated elements.

It is also worth noting that most of the elements of a sentence can be deleted, leaving only one, as in answering the question من خرج من الدار؟ (Who left the house?) with زيد (Zayd).

Here, زيد is the result of a transformation by deletion applied to the original sentence الذي خرج من الدار هو زيد (The one who left the house is Zayd).

However, recognizing such a transformation requires the presence of a linguistic context indicating it—such as when the transformed sentence follows an interrogative sentence, as in the example above.

4.2. Transformation by Addition:

This type of transformation occurs when a sentence is transformed into another by adding one or more linguistic elements. It can be represented as: $ص + ع + س \rightarrow ع + س$. There are many examples of this type; for instance, transforming an affirmative sentence into a negative one by adding a negation particle:

- غادر الطالب (The student left) \rightarrow ما غادر الطالب (The student did not leave).

Or by adding an interrogative word to a declarative sentence:

- قام محمد (Muhammad stood up) \rightarrow هل قام محمد؟ (Did Muhammad stand up?).

4.3. Transformation by Substitution:

This type of transformation occurs when one or more elements of a sentence are deleted and replaced by one or

more other elements. It can be represented by the following relation: $ص + س \rightarrow ع + س$.

An example of this type is the substitution of a noun with a pronoun. For instance, the sentence **الطالب غادر المكان** (The student left the place) can be transformed by substitution into **هو غادر المكان** (He left the place), by deleting **الطالب** and replacing it with the separate pronoun **هو**.

4.4.4. Transformation by Inversion (Change of Word Order):

This is a simple transformation that involves changing the position of one of the syntactic elements of the sentence. It can be represented as: $س + ع \rightarrow ع + س$. An example of this is the transformation from **يرحل الطالب غدا** (The student will leave tomorrow) to **غدا يرحل الطالب** (Tomorrow the student will leave).

In this example, the second sentence results from moving the adverb of time **غدا** from the end of the sentence to its beginning.

Transformation by inversion differs from the previous types of transformations in that it is mainly used for **rhetorical purposes**, arising primarily from **stylistic rules**. However, this type of transformation gives the resulting meaningful sentences additional functions, such as emphasizing or drawing attention to the element the speaker wants to highlight.

In the previous example, by bringing the word **غدا** to the beginning, the speaker intends to emphasize the **time** of the student's departure.

In conclusion, by employing these linguistic concepts, we can move learners away from rote memorization based on fixed and well-known examples, encouraging instead



Soumission : 12/04/2024 Acceptation : 29/07/2025 Publication : 15/08/2025

thinking over memorizing – thus enabling them to acquire a living language that allows for meaningful communication with others within their linguistic community.

The following table summarizes the main educational foundations between the behaviorist theory and the mental (generative–transformational) theory:

Foundations	Behaviorist Theory	Generative–Transformational Theory
1- Learning	It is a change in the observable behaviors of the learner.	It is the learner’s acquisition of linguistic competence, which enables them to produce an unlimited number of sentences from a very limited number of phonemic sounds.
2- Learner	The learner, according to behaviorists, is merely a responder to stimuli or a processor of information, and their role in the learning process is passive rather than active.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The learner is the core of the teaching–learning process. • Creative, as they rely on their innate potential energy, which manifests itself in performance.
3- Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He is the center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher is a guide

	<p>of the learning process and the one who controls it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He is responsible for creating an environment in which the student's behavior can be corrected and for reinforcing and modifying this behavior using the principles of behavior modification. • The teacher acts as an observer and supervisor of the individual learning process. 	<p>and facilitator through the renewal of learning situations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They seek ways to overcome differences among learners in order to enable them to acquire competencies.
<p>4- Learning Environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is designed by a committee of senior teachers. • In this environment, a connection 	<p>The general context is related to a set of variables connected to the students as a whole or to each of them individually.</p>



	<p>occurs between stimuli and responses, with appropriate reinforcement accompanying the occurrence of the correct response.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Variables related to the teacher and to the spatial and temporal framework of the classroom.• Variables connected to the socio-cultural and economic environment of the school.
5- Teaching Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presenting the content of the studied material.• Continuous practice through trial and error.• Reinforcement: through rewards such as social approval or acceptance of the learner's utterances.• Repetition: repeating the sounds heard from the teacher.	<p>Starting from addressing a problematic situation by using competence to reach a solution as the ultimate goal, through successive stages.</p>

Conclusion:

Teaching and learning the Arabic language requires mastering an understanding of the language itself and recognizing its linguistic characteristics and limitless potential.

The advancement of the Arabic language demands a policy based on breaking away from traditional concepts and methods rooted in rote learning, memorization, and a focus on quantity over quality, particularly concerning school curricula.

Teaching Arabic must be grounded in linguistic foundations, which form a key reference field for the teacher; it is indispensable, as acquiring such knowledge enables the teacher to develop a comprehensive vision of the structure of the linguistic system they are teaching.

Organizing content is one of the essential elements in language education, along with defining its objectives. Grammar, for instance, should not be confined to parsing and construction; rather, its function extends to understanding and interpreting the meaning of speech.

Grammar should be linked to practical usage, as knowing grammatical rules and principles is not the main goal – what truly matters is applying them according to authentic Arabic speech.

The aim of teaching grammar is not merely to memorize its rules or laws, but to help the learner acquire grammatical linguistic competence, enabling them to master the use of different linguistic structures.

The generative approach focuses on describing the linguistic competence specific to an individual, rather than languages themselves or their observable linguistic



Soumission : 12/04/2024 Acceptation : 29/07/2025 Publication : 15/08/2025

behaviors. In this perspective, it is not sufficient to merely describe languages; it is also necessary to explain how and why linguistic phenomena occur.

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Footnotes:

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