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The Effectiveness of the Flipped Classroom Learning Strategy in Learning Arabic Grammar Towards Academic Achievement Among UNRWA's Students

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to implement the flipped classroom strategy in teaching Arabic grammar to verify its effectiveness on the academic achievement of a purposively selected sample of ninth-grade students at a UNRWA school. An 8-week quasi-experimental study was conducted with an experimental group (n= 39) that learned using the flipped classroom strategy compared to a control group (n= 37) that learned using traditional blended learning. The experimental group learned by watching videos uploaded on Facebook before attending class for each lesson, while the control group watched the same videos in the computer lab during the lesson. Data were collected through pre-test and post-test academic achievement assessments, and covariance (ANCOVA) analysis was used to analyse the collected data. The post-test results showed that the flipped classroom strategy improved students' academic achievement in Arabic grammar, with statistically significant differences favouring the experimental group over the control group. The researchers recommended conducting studies on the impact of this strategy focusing on gender differences.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

التحصيل الدراسي
قواعد اللغة العربية
الفصل الدراسي المقلوب

ملخص

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى تطبيق استراتيجية الصف المقلوب في تدريس قواعد اللغة العربية للتحقق من فاعليتها في التحصيل الدراسي لعينة مختارة لهذا الغرض من طلبة الصف التاسع في إحدى مدارس الأونروا. أجريت دراسة شبه تجريبية لمدة 8 أسابيع على مجموعة تجريبية (ن = 39) تعلمت باستخدام استراتيجية الصف المقلوب مقارنة بمجموعة ضابطة (ن = 37) تعلمت باستخدام التعلم المدمج التقليدي. تعلمت المجموعة التجريبية من خلال مشاهدة مقاطع الفيديو التي تم تحميلها على الفيسبوك قبل حضور الفصل لكل درس، بينما شاهدت المجموعة الضابطة نفس مقاطع الفيديو في مختبر الكمبيوتر أثناء الدرس. جُمعت البيانات من خلال تقييمات التحصيل الدراسي قبل وبعد الاختبار. تم استخدام تحليل التباين المشترك (ANCOVA) لتحليل البيانات التي تم جمعها. أظهرت نتائج الاختبار البعدي أن استراتيجية الصف المقلوب حسَّنت من التحصيل الدراسي للطلاب في قواعد اللغة العربية، مع وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية لصالح المجموعة التجريبية على المجموعة الضابطة. وأوصى الباحثون بإجراء دراسات حول أثر هذه الاستراتيجية مع التركيز على الفروق بين الجنسين.

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1 Introduction

The grammar of the Arabic language is difficult to understand, especially in terms of syntax. It is specialised in determining the function of each word within the sentence, adjusting the word endings, analysing them (Atta, 1990), and representing and extracting them from a useful sentence(Shareer, 2017). Since students find it difficult to learn and apply grammatical rules which causes a decrease in their academic achievement in this subject, this calls for re-evaluating new methods to enhance the learning and teaching process (Karwan, 2012).

Recently, teaching techniques have evolved to suit students' learning methods in the modern era (Kenna, 2014). Blended learning is one of the contemporary methods used in the educational process in the modern era; it blends the characteristics of both traditional classroom teaching and online learning in an integrated model that benefits from the maximum available technologies for each (Al-Shammari & Al-Massad, 2018; Al-Zuaini & Al-Kafaji, 2017).

Flipped classroom learning is one form of blended learning that involves rotating the traditional face-to-face learning practices to an online setting outside the classroom (such as at home) through videos. This shift of learning activities outside the school through videos distinguishes the flipped classroom, allowing students to choose where they receive content online according to each student's speed and abilities (Staker & Horn, 2012). The use of videos in explaining course material has been proven to help students understand and comprehend, leading to an improvement in their performance and achievement (Wanssey, 2009).

In this study, the effectiveness of the flipped classroom strategy in teaching Arabic language grammar on the academic achievement of a sample of ninth-grade students was verified compared to traditional blended learning relying on conventional technological methods. While the flipped classroom model is compared to the traditional learning environment in most previous studies, this study compared learning using the flipped classroom strategy with the conventional blended learning approach.

1.1 Background

Arabic language is one of the fundamental subjects taught in the primary stage in Arab countries (Hamadina & Khaled, 2011), and it is the first official language that Jordanian students need to use in various institutions in Jordan (The Ministry of Education, 2013a). Therefore, students in the upper primary stage must master basic Arabic language skills to use it easily, develop their learning, and increase their proficiency (Hussein, 2015). To master Arabic language skills, students should be able to use the grammar of the language, apply it in everyday situations, and acquire a set of specific applications (The Ministry of Education, 2013a).

Language grammar and linguistic applications are considered one of the main aspects of Arabic language for the upper primary stage (Kokhn & Yanes, 2011), especially in the eighth and ninth grades, where syntax is taught. The focus of this type of grammar is to enable the student to determine the function of each word within the sentence, adjust the endings of words with appropriate sounds, know how to inflect them based on their position in the sentence (Nehme, 1982), represent them in meaningful sentences, and extract similar examples. (Shareer, 2017).

Due to the importance of grammar in the Arabic language among other branches (The Ministry of Education, 2013a), the Ministry of Education proposed new and appropriate teaching strategies within the general framework and the general and specific objectives of the Arabic language subject for the basic and secondary education stages in 2013 to teach the grammar subject. These strategies are directed toward the knowledge economy to keep pace with the developments of the modern era employing supportive technology for the educational process and focusing on a learner-centred approach (The Ministry of Education, 2013b). However, many teachers do not apply these strategies while some apply just a portion of them (Kokhn & Yanes, 2011).

Most of the teaching strategies used in teaching Arabic grammar rely on old traditional methods (Tamime, 2006, p. 5) that primarily depend on the teacher's role in the theoretical method based on instruction and demonstration that do not rely on the self-learning method (Zair & Ayez, 2011; Jaber, 2016)

Instead of students being the focus of the educational process and actively participating in acquiring knowledge (Alsancak Sirakaya & Özdemir, 2018; Serhan, 2019), their role is limited to listening to the teacher's explanation, asking questions, and copying from the board (UNRWA, 2014). They can rarely participate in a class or engage in peer or group work (Saudi, 2018; UNRWA, 2014). As a result, students' roles become passive, focusing on memorising the material and succeeding in exams (Al-Rish, 2013). On the other hand, many teachers do not rely on technology in learning due to the large number of students in a single class (UNRWA, 2011).

The use of traditional methods in teaching Arabic language grammar, which does not rely on modern learning methods, is one of the reasons for the problem of weak academic achievement in Arabic language grammar among students (Zair & Ayez, 2011). Despite UNRWA's pride in its accomplishments in its educational system, there is an increasing recognition within and outside the agency of the need for educational reform; because the results of academic achievement monitoring tests across the agency reflect a decline in students' level of proficiency in Arabic language grammar in the upper basic stage (Al-Anati, 2014; UNRWA, 2011, 2019).

1.2 Problem Statement

Despite attempts to facilitate learning Arabic language grammar (Nahar, 2010), students still face difficulty understanding and applying it through classroom activities related to linguistic structures, correct word endings, and sentence construction (Musa & Hamid, 2015). This weakness is manifested in the students' lack of willingness to interact in Arabic language classes and avoidance of performing parsing exercises. In addition to their declining achievement to the extent that they have become disinterested in using and learning it, and underestimating its use (Al-Dabour, 2012) (Al Dailami, 2004).

The results of the national test to assess the quality of education conducted by the Ministry of Education in Jordan annually for primary-stage students since 2000 revealed a clear decline in the students' averages in the skill of Arabic language grammar among other language skills (Al-Anati, 2014; UNRWA, 2011, 2019). The results showed that the average performance of eighth-grade students in Arabic grammar skills was lower than other language skills such as reading and writing in 2007, 2010 (Al-Anati, 2014) and 2019 (UNRWA, 2019). The report also indicated a gradual and clear decline in the skill of Arabic language grammar over the years (2013, 2016, 2019); where the average performance of students in 2013 was 62% at the UNRWA level, 59% in 2016, and 57%. in 2019. At the kingdom level, the percentages were (50%), in 2013 (49%), in 2016 and (51%) in 2019 (UNRWA, 2019). As long as these results show a decrease in the skill level of eighth-grade students in Arabic grammar, the ninth-grade results will show a reduction in the skill of syntax grammar.

Owing to the decrease in students' average levels of Arabic grammar skills compared to other skills, the Development Centre of the Relief Agency recommended focusing on Arabic grammar skills, especially in the expression of educated grammar, where the percentage was (49%). while the percentage for the aspect of knowing, distinguishing, and giving examples of educated literacy concepts was (51%) (UNRWA, 2019).

1.3 Research Objective

Since new teaching strategies are used to improve students' academic achievement, modern strategies must be used to help students understand and master Arabic grammar (Tamime, 2006). Therefore, this study aimed to create an instructional design using the flipped classroom strategy to learn Arabic language grammar. The purpose was to confirm whether there was a statistically significant increase or improvement in academic achievement among ninth-grade students in the upper basic stage in Arabic language grammar.

2 Methodology

This study relied on quantitative data that was processed using quantitative descriptive statistics. Since this study aimed to determine the effectiveness of using the flipped classroom strategy on students' academic achievement, it was necessary to use a quasi-experimental research design

consisting of a control group and an experimental group to demonstrate the difference between them and verify the effectiveness of the strategy used (Baker, 2017).

This quantitative study was designed to compare the flipped classroom with conventional blended learning models, which employ technology inside the classroom. The study aimed to verify the presence of statistically significant differences in the post-test results between the control and experimental groups. Therefore, a Nonrandomized Control Group, Pretest-Post-test Design was adopted, which is one of the most used quasi-experimental research designs in the field of educational research, and it is represented as follows in Figure 1.

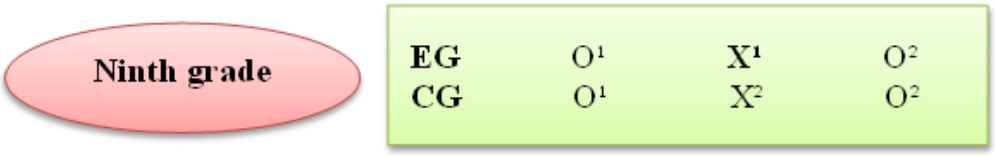

Figure 1. *The Pretest-Post-test Design of Nonrandomized Control Group*

Whereas:

- EG: Experimental Group.
- CG: Control Group.
- O^1: Pre-Test of Arabic Grammar.
- O^2: Post-Test of Arabic Grammar.
- X^1: Treatment (Flipped classroom).
- X^2: Traditional (Blended Learning).

The researchers formulated the alternative hypothesis (There is a significant difference in academic achievement between the experimental group and the control group of ninth-grade students in the post-test mean after adjusting the scores in the pre-test in learning Arabic language grammar).

2.1 Sample

The sample was selected from two groups (experimental and control) purposively; as this study is quasi-experimental, thus the sample cannot be taken randomly because this type of research does not provide complete control over sample selection (Ary et al., 2010).

The purposive sample was selected based on several criteria, the most important of which was the availability of computer devices or smartphones besides a good internet connection. The sample was chosen from ninth-grade female students in one of the UNRWA schools in Zarqa City within two groups; the first was an experimental group consisting of (39) students, and the other was a control group including (37) students.

2.2 Procedures

The data for this study was collected using a pre-test and a post-test tool of multiple-choice type for the Arabic language grammar for the ninth grade. Internal validity, content validity, and test reliability were verified. A pre-test was conducted at the beginning before implementing the intervention in each group and monitoring the results. The researcher compared the pre-test and post-test results after the eighth week of intervention.

In the intervention, the flipped classroom strategy was applied to the experimental group by teaching (4) Arabic language lessons for the ninth grade. The researchers provided the educational material and posted links to related instructional videos approved by UNRWA on the Facebook platform. In contrast, the blended learning strategy was applied to the control group by teaching the same lessons given to the experimental group during the same period.

2.3 Instructional Design

The flipped classroom approach provides teaching and learning activities where students watch the lesson through an online video outside the classroom and inside the class, they engage in practical activities. Online lessons allow students to familiarise themselves with the material before coming to the class, enabling them to work together during class time that was supposed to be spent on lectures. Therefore, creating a flipped classroom learning model is significant because it greatly impacts the learner's educational environment (Mehring, 2016).

The researchers relied on the ADDIE instructional design model in creating a curriculum that aimed at producing specific learning outcomes and changes in academic achievement for ninth-grade students in learning Arabic language grammar. The researchers structured, organised, and sequenced the content in exact ways based on expected learning outcomes (Eltahir, 2017) and on the analysis of learning needs and objectives, as well as on systematically building specific lessons (content) (Dick et al., 2005)

The use of the ADDIE model helps in organising the collaborative procedures related to instructional design (Branch, 2009). It includes five stages: analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation. The researcher followed the procedures demonstrated in Figure 2 in each stage.

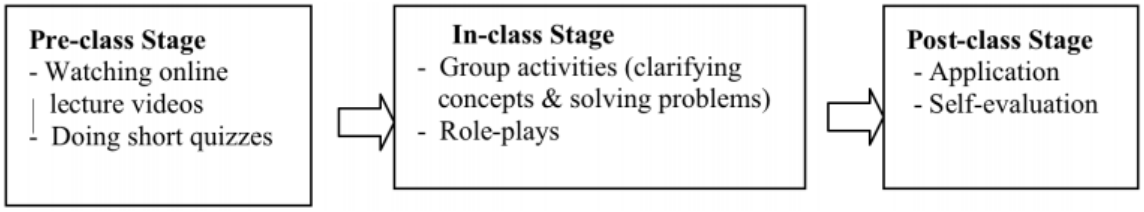

Figure 2. *Course Design of Flipping a Class (adapted from (Estes et al., 2014).*

2.4 Data Analysis

Since the groups were non-randomly selected, the researchers verified the equivalence of the two groups before conducting statistical analyses and considered the equivalence of individuals in the two groups in terms of characteristics and variables that affect the dependent variable that should be observed through the experiment. Adjusting these characteristics before starting the experiment ensures the true impact of the independent variable on the dependent variables without the influence of any other factor. Therefore, the researcher statistically processed the data using independent sample t-test analysis. The results showed a significant and statistically meaningful difference between the mean scores of the control group and the experimental group in the pre-test, whereas there was a small and statistically non-significant difference between the two groups in the post-test for the same variable as clear in Table 1

Table 1. *T- Test results for pre-test and post-test*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
								95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Total_Pre	Equal variances assumed	.811	.371	3.518	74	.001	2.647	.753	1.148	4.147
Total_Post	Equal variances assumed	.365	.548	-1.166-	74	.247	-1.010-	.866	-2.735-	.716

Due to the inequality between the two groups and the differences between the groups based on the pretest, a one-way ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance) was adopted to test the research hypothesis (Horn, 2015). The pretest is a Covariance variable. It was considered an extraneous variable in ANCOVA because it may impact the research results. As a result, its effect on the research results must be eliminated and attributed to the independent variable. When the difference between the groups is attributed to a difference in the baseline (pretest), ANCOVA has been used to adjust the differences and eliminate the effect (Jamieson, 2004).

The researchers conducted some specific statistical analyses to verify the fulfillment of ANCOVA test conditions, as it is necessary to verify the assumptions of ANCOVA before its application. These analyses included normal distribution, homogeneity of variance, the linear relationship between the Post-test variable and the covariate variable, independent sample randomness, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrix, and the independence of the independent variable and the covariate variable. The researchers found that all conditions were met.

3 Findings

The researchers used an ANCOVA test after verifying the assumptions and considering the pre-test as an extraneous variable between the two groups to test the alternative research hypothesis. The results of the ANCOVA test showed a significant difference in the mean of the post-test in academic achievement between the groups while controlling the pre-test [F (1.73) = 12.447, p = 0.001]. It was observed in Table 2 that the partial Eta squared value indicated a large effect size (η^2 = 0.146) between the experimental and control groups in the Arabic language grammar, compared to Cohen's guidelines in 1988 where (0.01 - small effect, 0.06 - medium effect, 0.14 - large effect) (Li & Chen, 2009).

Table 2. *ANCOVA of Test Between-Subjects Effects on Academic Achievement*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	358.112a	2	179.056	18.290	.000	.334
Intercept	363.526	1	363.526	37.133	.000	.337
Total_Pre	338.755	1	338.755	34.602	.000	.322
Group	121.857	1	121.857	12.447	.001	.146
Error	714.664	73	9.790			
Total	18931.000	76				
Corrected Total	1072.776	75				

a. R Squared = .334 (Adjusted R Squared = .316)

The effect size value was also used to describe how much of the variance in the dependent variable (academic achievement) is explained by the independent variable (flipped classroom). However, the ANCOVA results revealed significant effects of flipped classrooms on academic achievement, which amounted to (14.6%). Table 2 also shows a large value for R Squared, indicating the amount of variation that can be accounted for by the ANCOVA model, where (R^2 = .316), which is considered a large value as suggested by Cohen (1988) that a small R-value equals .02, a medium value is 0.13, and a large value is 0.26 (Li & Chen, 2009).

The researcher also verified the Estimated Marginal Means to control for the pre-test variable for each group. That indicates that the effect of the strategy used (flipped classroom) was the cause of the difference in students' grades after removing the differences between the two groups by removing the effect of the extraneous variable. The results are as in Table 3.

Table 3. *ANCOVA of Test Between-Subjects Effects on Academic Achievement*

			95% Confidence Interval	
Group	Mean	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
A	13.924a	.536	12.856	14.993
B	16.661a	.521	15.623	17.700

a. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: Total_Pre = 11.26.

using the flipped classroom and the other group that learned using integrated learning, with mean (M=14.81) for the control group consisting of (N=37), and (M=15.8) for the experimental group consisting of (N=39), the adjusted post-test means were (M=13.924) for the control group compared to (M=16.661) for the experimental group, as evidenced by the 95% confidence interval overlap between the two groups. By comparing the original means with the adjusted means, statistically significant differences in the post-test scores for the control and experimental groups are evident when considering the effect of the extraneous variable.

All the above results confirm the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis assumed by the researchers of the presence of statistically significant differences in the average of the post-test scores between the experimental group and the control group in favour of the experimental group after controlling the independent variable (pre-test) for each group. This hypothesis suggests that the effect of the strategy used (flipped classroom) was the cause of the difference in student grades after removing the differences between the two groups by eliminating the impact of the extraneous variable (pre-test). This conclusion confirmed the effect size shown by the results, as the results indicated that the effect size of this strategy on academic achievement was significant, as suggested by Cohen (1988).

4 Discussions

The hypothesis included the presence of statistically significant differences between the control and the experimental groups in academic achievement using the flipped classroom strategy. The current study proved statistically significant differences between the two groups for the group that learned using the flipped classroom compared to the general blended learning. These differences might have resulted from the nature of the flipped learning design. Although both strategies focus on integrating technology into education, designing instruction in a flipped classroom way that the student is prepared to learn assists in moving the learner from the initial level to the in-depth level of knowledge acquisition, retention, and mastery (Vygotsky, 1978).

Saunders (2014) and Sivan (2010) demonstrated that the learner's readiness for the lesson through scaffolding (videos) provided by the teacher (facilitator) before the actual time of the class and then engaging him in social interactions plays a fundamental role in developing cognition and knowledge acquisition. And it helps build shared meaning for the learner at both social and individual levels.

Vygotsky (1978) represented this meaning in the social constructivist theory that was adopted in the theoretical framework of this study through what he expressed in the Zone Proximal Development (ZPD). He argues that when individual learning is facilitated using technology before class time, and then the collaborative interaction between students is provided in the class, this leads to retaining the information for a long time and increases the understanding of students of concepts, which increases their academic achievement (Jones et al., 2010).

The results of the current study support the findings of Shareer (2017), Baluchi (2014), Khasawneh (2018), and Jwaifell (2018) studies that recommended replacing traditional methods of grammar learning with other modern ones based on the flipped classroom environment; because of its role in increasing academic achievement and improving the student interaction and participation. It provides students with the opportunity to prepare for learning before attending class.

4.1 Recommendations

Although there are many studies on the flipped classroom, more research is needed on the effect and effectiveness of the flipped classroom in Arabic grammar classes at all levels of education. Further research is recommended on using flipped classrooms to teach other language skills because there is little research in this area.

As long as this study has demonstrated the effectiveness of the flipped classroom strategy in learning Arabic grammar on academic achievement significantly, the researchers suggest conducting studies on the impact of this strategy on gender difference and trying to know the difference between males and females, besides, trying to figure out its effect on the individual's differences in students according to their academic levels.

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