

## Grammar and Translation Methods in Arabic Language Learning: Theory and Practice

**Intan afriati** ✉, Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, Indonesia

**Zuhir Ratmansyah**, Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, Indonesia

**Ardiman Fadhil**, Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, Indonesia

**Yudistira Iriandi Lesmana**, Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, Indonesia

✉ [intan.afriati@ar-raniry.ac.id](mailto:intan.afriati@ar-raniry.ac.id)

**Abstract:** This study aims to examine the effectiveness of grammar-translation methods in teaching Arabic through a literature study approach. This method is a classic approach that has been widely used in learning foreign languages, including Arabic, especially in traditional Islamic educational environments such as Islamic boarding schools and madrasas. The main focus of this method is on mastery of grammatical structures and the ability to translate texts, rather than on active communication skills. In the modern era that demands communicative and contextual language skills, questions arise about the relevance and effectiveness of this method in meeting the needs of contemporary learning. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a literature research design. Data was obtained from the analysis of various literature such as books, scientific journals, dissertations, curricula, and relevant previous research results. The data analysis technique is carried out in a descriptive-analytical manner, with steps of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The results of the study show that grammar and translation methods have advantages in terms of understanding language structure and access to classical texts, but are limited in the development of speaking and listening skills. Therefore, the effectiveness of this method is highly dependent on the context and objectives of the learning. In certain situations, this method can still be used strategically if combined with other, more communicative approaches. This study recommends a balanced methodological integration between structural and functional approaches so that Arabic language learning is more adaptive to the needs of the times.

**Keywords:** Grammar and translation, learning methods, arabic language learning.

**Received** February 10, 2025; **Accepted** May 14, 2025; **Published** June 30, 2025

Published by Mandailing Global Edukasia © 2025.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

### INTRODUCTION

Arabic has an important role as the language of Islamic religion, science, and culture. This language is not only a means of communication, but also the key to understanding the authentic teachings of Islam contained in the Qur'an, Hadith, and classical Islamic literature. In the context of Islamic education in Indonesia, Arabic is a compulsory subject at various levels of education such as Islamic boarding schools, madrasas, and Islamic universities (Asmuni, 2011; Rahmah, 2017). One of the main challenges in teaching Arabic is how to present effective learning methods, both in terms of grammatical comprehension

and communication skills. Among the various methods used, the *Grammar-Translation Method* (GTM) is one of the earliest and most widely used approaches, especially in the traditional Islamic educational environment (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). This method comes from a classical education system that prioritizes the learning of Latin and Greek through the analysis of grammatical structure and text translation (Brown, 2014; Howatt & Widdowson, 2004).

In practice, GTM emphasizes learning grammar rules (nahwu and sharaf), memorizing vocabulary, and translating sentences or texts from the target language to the mother tongue. The focus is on reading and writing skills, not on speaking or listening skills (Harmer, 2015; Larsen-Freeman, 2000). This causes GTM to often be considered a passive and non-communicative method (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983). However, for some Islamic educational institutions such as salafiyah Islamic boarding schools, this method is considered very effective because it is in line with the goal of understanding classical books in Arabic (Effendy, 2005; Al-Fauzan, 2010). In fact, historically, GTM has been the dominant method in traditional Arabic language education because it supports a textual and intellectual approach to religious sources (Muslich, 2010; Al-Qudsy, 2020). However, in the midst of the demands of globalization and modernization of education, the effectiveness of this method is beginning to be questioned. Students who study with GTM often have difficulty in applying Arabic in real contexts, such as dialogue, discussion, or oral presentations (Zawawi, 2015; Wahyuni, 2022). Therefore, communicative approaches such as *Communicative Language Teaching* (CLT) have begun to be widely developed in modern educational institutions to actively and contextually train language skills (Richards, 2006; Celce-Murcia, 2001).

Several studies also suggest an integrative approach, which is combining GTM with a modern approach so that learning still includes aspects of understanding structure and also the use of language (Fauzi, 2019; Mahmudah, 2021). Therefore, the study of the effectiveness of the GTM method is important, not only to assess its theoretical and practical relevance, but also to evaluate its possible integration with other approaches. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of grammar and translation methods in teaching Arabic through a library research approach. This study analyzes the theory, results of previous research, and practice of teaching Arabic in various educational contexts. The results of the study are expected to contribute to the preparation of Arabic teaching methods that are more adaptive, comprehensive, and in accordance with the needs of today's learners.

## **METHODS**

This research is library research, which is a type of research that is carried out through the review of literature sources to obtain data and information that is relevant to the focus of the research. The goal is to analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of grammar and translation methods in learning Arabic based on theoretical studies and previous research results. In literature research, the subject is not a specific individual or group, but a document or source of literature that is directly related to the focus of the study. These sources include textbooks, scientific journals, academic articles, dissertations, research results, as well as official documents relevant to the teaching of Arabic and grammar-translation methods. The selected source must have scientific validity, both in terms of author, publisher, and academic acceptance (Zed, 2008).

This research procedure is carried out through the following stages: 1) Identification of topics and problems based on the current needs of Arabic language learning; 2) Collection of literature from various sources such as libraries, academic databases (Google Scholar, DOAJ, ResearchGate), and national and international scientific journals; 3) Classification of literature based on the type of teaching method, language theory, educational approach, and context of use; 4) Critical analysis of theories and findings of previous research to assess the strengths, weaknesses, and relevance of

grammar and translation methods; 5) Systematic preparation of study results to formulate conclusions based on theoretical and empirical arguments (George, 2008).

Because this research is literature, the main research instrument is the ability of researchers to read, understand, manage, and analyze academic texts. The main resources used include: 1) Arabic and foreign language teaching theory books; 2) Articles in national and international journals related to grammar-translation methods; 2) Previous research that discusses Arabic language learning practices; 3) Language learning standards and Islamic education curriculum. Supporting instruments in the form of library search guides, literature classification systems, and reference management devices such as Zotero or Mendeley are also used to maintain citation accuracy.

The collected data is analyzed using a descriptive-qualitative analysis method, which is a technique used to describe, interpret, and evaluate information based on theoretical studies. The steps of analysis include: 1) Data reduction: selecting information that is relevant to the focus of the research; 2) Data display: arranging information in the form of thematic descriptions or comparison tables (if necessary); 3) Drawing conclusions: summarizing the advantages and disadvantages of grammar and translation methods and their implications in current Arabic language learning (Moleong, 2013) The analysis is carried out in a deductive and reflective manner, namely Relating theoretical concepts to practical reality based on the results of literature review, resulting in a synthesis of logical and argumentative thinking.

Research design is a systematic framework used to direct the course of research from beginning to end. In this study, the researcher used a qualitative research design based on library research, with a descriptive-analytical approach. This design was chosen because the main purpose of the research is to describe, analyze, and evaluate the theory and practice of using grammar and translation methods in Arabic language learning. Qualitative research is interpretive and seeks to understand phenomena in a deep and holistic context (Creswell, 2010). In this case, the researcher does not collect data directly from the field, but from valid written documents, such as academic books, scientific journals, previous research results, and other scientific reference sources. The researcher then analyzed the content of these various sources to obtain a complete and comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the grammar-translation method.

The descriptive-analytical design directs this study not only to present the information found in the literature, but also to critically analyze the advantages, weaknesses, and relevance of grammar and translation methods in the context of learning Arabic today (Sugiyono, 2016). The researcher classifies information, compares the views of experts, and draws theoretical conclusions that can be used as a basis for developing learning strategies. With this approach, the research is expected to be able to answer the formulation of the problem in depth and produce conceptual contributions in the field of Arabic teaching methodology. This design also makes it easier for researchers to trace the dynamics of the thinking of language education experts and compile them into a structured scientific synthesis.

In the context of library research, the term "participant" does not refer to individuals or respondents as in field research. On the contrary, the participants in this study are relevant and credible documents or sources of scientific literature, which are used as objects of study and analysis by the researcher (Zed, 2008). The sources used in this study include: 1) Books on the theory of teaching Arabic and foreign languages, both Indonesian and English; 2) National and international scientific journals that discuss Grammar-Translation methods, communicative approaches, and issues in Arabic language teaching; 3) Scientific papers such as theses, theses, and dissertations relevant to the focus of the study; 4) Curriculum and policy documents on language education from official or authoritative institutions.

The criteria for selecting participants (literature) in this study were determined based on: 1) Suitability of the topic with the focus of the research, namely grammar and translation methods; 2) The level of scholarly and credibility of the author and publisher;

3) The year of publication, preferably in the last 10–15 years to maintain relevance, although classical sources are also used when they are fundamental; 4) Availability of access, either through print and digital libraries such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, DOAJ, or national journal portals. By focusing on literature sources as the main participants, this study is expected to explore rich and comprehensive theoretical information, as well as to compile an in-depth synthesis of thoughts on the effectiveness of grammar-translation methods in Arabic language learning. The main instruments in this study are scientific literature documents classified based on certain indicators, as shown in the following Table 1:

**Table 1.** Research Instruments and Their Indicators

Instruments	Key Indicators
Teaching theory books	Methodological approaches, GTM principles, applications in the context of Islamic education
Journal articles	GTM effectiveness, GTM implementation results, integration of GTM with other methods
Previous research	Case studies, empirical findings, advantages and disadvantages of GTM
Official curriculum & standards	GTM's position in the curriculum, Arabic language competency demands, learning objectives

The steps in this study include the following systematic processes: 1) Determining the focus of the study, namely the effectiveness of grammar and translation methods (GTM) in learning Arabic; 2) Collect relevant literature from various reliable sources such as Google Scholar, DOAJ, and university libraries; 2) Conducting literature classification based on aspects of theory, practice, educational context, and findings; 3) Analyze the content of the literature using a descriptive-analytical approach; 4) Compile a narrative of the synthesis of the study results in a systematic and argumentative form that reflects the advantages and disadvantages of GTM. Each stage is carried out with academic prudence to ensure the validity and reliability of the results of this literature research.

Data analysis in library research is carried out systematically to process, interpret, and conclude findings from written sources (books, journals, documents, etc.). The steps are as follows: 1) Data preparation. The researcher collected data from relevant sources and from data that had been organized; 2) Data analysis techniques. At this stage, the researcher uses a critical analysis approach (Critical Analysis), namely evaluating the strengths, weaknesses and biases in the literature; 3) Conclusion: At this stage, the researcher draws conclusions from the results of library research that have been found.

## RESULTS

The Grammar-Translation Method (Thoriqoh al-Qawa'id wa al-Tarjamah) is a language learning approach that focuses on mastering grammatical rules as a foundation for developing reading, writing, and translation skills. This method is based on the premise that "universal logic" is the root of the universality of language, where grammatical structure is seen as an integral part of philosophy and logic. In this perspective, language learning is not only aimed at linguistic mastery, but also functions as a medium to train logical reasoning acumen and analytical skills in solving various problems (Abullah Saman, 2019). The learning process through this method is believed to be able to hone a systematic mindset as well as develop students' cognitive competencies.

This method begins by teaching and explaining grammar in separate and long explanations, supported by the known national language (Mahmud Kamil, 2003). In Abdulaziz's opinion, this method is the oldest known method of language teaching (Ummi Hanifah, 2012). The characteristics of the qawaid wa at-tarjamah method are as follows: 1) Focus on Grammar (Qawa'id); 2) Learning is centered on grammatical rules, including

verb conjugation, noun declination, and sentence structure; 3) Students memorize grammatical formulas and apply them in practice.

The Qawā'id wa at-Tarjamah method, better known among language practitioners as the Grammar-Translation Method, has long been the dominant approach in language classes not only in Indonesia but in many parts of the world. A characteristic of it is a deep reliance on translation: the source text, which often uses a target language such as Arabic, is translated into the student's native language, and then in the opposite direction. The measure of a student's success in this method is determined by how accurately they can describe the meaning of the text without losing grammatical details. With a great focus on written sentences, reading and writing skills are the first priority, while speaking and listening are seen as secondary, even tertiary, activities. As a result, textbooks usually opt for classical liturgy or literary prose that is rich in formal structure and layered sentences.

In such a learning process, the teacher is in almost total control. He serves as a pause between the language world and his pupils; All explanations, clarifications, and examples come from it. Her job is not just to teach sentences, but also to keep an eye on every punctuation, catch minor mistakes, and ensure that the word paradigm is memorized perfectly. The exchange of ideas between students almost never occurs, making the classroom more like a lecture arena than a dialogue forum. The exams given are usually linear and easy to assess: translate sentences, fill in blanks, or break down their structure into tables. Speaking skills, which in the context of everyday life become very important, in fact only appear in occasional conversations outside the classroom, and even then they are rarely assessed as an indicator of essential language skills.

The Qawā'id wa at-Tarjamah method, although it has been used for a long time, still offers a number of significant advantages. First of all, this method strongly upholds the regularity of the structure of the language, an approach that helps students understand the grammatical components—both nahwu and sharaf—in a systematic order. As a result, they were able to analyze classical Arabic texts, including the Qur'an, relatively easily. The second advantage is the simplicity of its application, especially when taught through religious books. Since the teaching is oriented directly to grammatical rules plus literal translation, this method is in line with the need to capture every nuance accurately, for example in Ibn Malik's work *Alfiyyah*, written in the 13th century. Third, syntax analysis exercises strengthen logical thinking, because students are used to detailing a sentence into subjects, predicates, and objects before going further (As-Sirjani, 2015).

However, these advantages are not without limitations. One of the most fundamental problems is the lack of training in oral communication skills, both speaking (*kalam*) and listening (*istima'*). Because the main attention is focused on formulas and translations, many students then feel awkward when faced with the need to interact verbally (Alwasilah, 2002). Second, the resulting translation often sounds rigid—even purely literal—because this method rarely considers the cultural context and writing style that lives in the target language (Newmark, 1988). Third, classes that are too monotonous, containing repetitive memorization and translation exercises, can collapse students' enthusiasm for learning over time (Brown, 2007).

## **DISCUSSION**

The Grammar Translation Method (GTM) still plays an important role in the teaching of Arabic, especially when students are trying to understand classical religious texts such as the Qur'an and Hadith. The main advantage of this method lies in its ability to give students a deep mastery of the structure of the Arabic language, especially from the angle of nahwu and sharaf. This approach proved effective for translating sacred texts literally, as it required precision of meaning and precision in recognizing each element of language. More than just translating, GTM encourages students to hone analytical logic because they are obliged to break down sentence structures and determine the function of each word in a systematic way.

However, GTM is not without its weaknesses, and a number of these shortcomings are increasingly visible in the midst of the current of globalization that continues to encourage the need for active communication skills. First, these methods tend to ignore speaking and listening skills. A chain of lessons that is mostly centered on reading and writing often leaves students stuck in situations where they are not prepared to speak fluently in Arabic. Second, the literal translation that characterizes this methodological can display a rigid and non-flowing meaning, because it rarely takes into account the broader cultural context and situation of the conversation. Third, the repetition of grammar rules and translations that are often monotonous, so that the enthusiasm for learning that should appear slowly fades.

Along with the increasing demand for more communicative and applicable language learning, a number of preliminary studies have shown that combining the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) with the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach is able to produce the balance desired by many educators. The combination of these two methods gives students the opportunity to digest the structure of language in detail, while practicing the listening and speaking skills that are the essence of daily communication. Thus, in the context of Arabic teaching in the twenty-first century, GTM does not need to be completely abandoned, but rather reformulated to align with more up-to-date integrative principles. Going forward, the research agenda should be directed towards broader empirical studies that explore the influence of GTM and CLT collaboration in various educational settings, ranging from traditional Islamic boarding schools to modern formal schools. This kind of investigation will be very useful to measure its impact on students' motivation and academic achievement, so that it can formulate an Arabic learning model that is not only effective in terms of material delivery, but also in harmony with today's social and technological dynamics.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the literature review conducted, it can be concluded that the Grammar and Translation Method (GTM) has a significant role in the teaching of Arabic, especially in the context of understanding classical religious texts such as the Qur'an and Hadith. The main advantage of this method lies in its ability to build a deep understanding of the grammatical structure of Arabic (nahwu-sharaf) as well as develop analytical skills and language logic. However, this method also has limitations, such as a lack of emphasis on oral communication skills, rigid translation, and the potential for boredom in learning. To overcome these limitations, the integration of GTM with a communicative approach (CLT) is considered an effective solution. This combination allows learners not only to master grammar but also to be able to use Arabic actively in a real context. Further research is needed to test the effectiveness of this integration in various educational settings, including Islamic boarding schools and formal schools, and to evaluate its impact on student motivation and learning outcomes. Thus, GTM remains relevant as the foundation of Arabic language learning, but it needs to be developed adaptively and innovatively to fit the demands of modern education that emphasizes a balance between structural understanding and practical skills.

## REFERENCES

- Afriati, I. (2023). Analysis Of Problematics In Arabic Language Morphology To Understand Mufradat In The Learning of The Quran and Hadith at Mts Teungku Chik Pante Kulu Aceh Besar District. *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 12(04), 883. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.30868/ei.v12i04.7375>
- Al-Fauzan, A. (2011). *Idha'at li Mu'allimi al-Lughah al-Arabiyyah li Ghairi al-Natiqina Biha*. Riyadh: Al-Arabiyyah lil Jami'.

- Alwasilah, A. C. (2002). *Pokoknya Sunda: Interpretasi untuk Aksi*. Bandung: Kiblat.
- Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. Pearson Education.
- Ibn Malik. *Alfiyyah Ibn Malik (Kitab klasik nahwu)*.
- Newmark, P. (1988). *A Textbook of Translation*. Prentice Hall.
- As-Sirjani, R. (2015). *Kaifa Tata'allam al-Lughah al-Arabiyyah*. Kairo: Dar al-Ma'rifah.
- Abullah Salman, Pengaruh Metode Qawaid dan Tarjamah Terhadap Kemampuan Membaca Nyaring Siswa MA Nurul Huda Munjul Cirebon, *El-ibtiakar*, 2019
- Al-Fauzan, A. (2010). *Ta'lim al-'Arabiyyah li Ghair an-Nāṭiqīn Bihā*. Riyadh: Maktabah al-Ma'arif.
- Al-Qudsy, F. S. (2020). Tradisi pembelajaran bahasa Arab di pesantren salaf. *Jurnal Al-Mudarris*, 5(2), 101–117.
- Asmuni. (2011). Strategi pembelajaran bahasa Arab di madrasah aliyah. *Jurnal Tarbawi*, 2(1), 1–15.
- Brown, H. D. (2014). *Principles of language learning and teaching (6th ed.)*. White Plains, NY: Pearson Education.
- Celce-Murcia, M. (2001). *Teaching English as a second or foreign language (3rd ed.)*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.
- Creswell, J. W. (2010). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (3rd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Effendy, A. F. (2005). *Metodologi pengajaran bahasa Arab*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Fauzi, A. (2019). Strategi integratif dalam pengajaran bahasa Arab berbasis pendekatan komunikatif. *Arabiyatuna*, 3(1), 45–60.
- Finocchiaro, M., & Brumfit, C. (1983). *The functional-notional approach: From theory to practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- George, M. W. (2008). *The elements of library research: What every student needs to know*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Harmer, J. (2015). *The practice of English language teaching (5th ed.)*. London: Longman.
- Howatt, A. P. R., & Widdowson, H. G. (2004). *A history of English language teaching (2nd ed.)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2000). *Techniques and principles in language teaching (2nd ed.)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mahmudah, U. (2021). Pengembangan metode pembelajaran bahasa Arab berbasis pendekatan campuran. *Lughatuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab*, 6(1), 29–44.
- Moleong, L. J. (2013). *Metodologi penelitian kualitatif (Revisi ed.)*. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Muslich, M. (2010). *Strategi belajar mengajar bahasa Arab*. Jakarta: PT Bumi Aksara.
- Rahmah, A. (2017). Relevansi pendekatan pembelajaran bahasa Arab di lembaga pendidikan Islam. *Jurnal Al-Ta'rib*, 5(1), 27–39.
- Richards, J. C. (2006). *Communicative language teaching today*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). *Approaches and methods in language teaching (3rd ed.)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sugiyono. (2016). *Metode penelitian pendidikan: Pendekatan kuantitatif, kualitatif, dan R&D*. Bandung: Alfabeta.
- Siregar, R. S. (2025a). Improving the Arabic Writing Skills of Students through the Application of Contextual Learning Methods at Dayah Irsyadul Abidin Qurani. *Indonesian Journal of Education and Social Humanities*, 2(1), 358–369.

- <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.62945/ijesh.v2i1.726>
- Siregar, R. S. (2025b). Principles of Subject-Based Arabic Curriculum Development: Language Skills Integration and Contextual Relevance. *DEEP LEARNING: Journal of Educational Research*, 1(2), 56-67. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.62945/deeplearning.v1i2.229>
- Siregar, R. S. (2025). Arabic Language Learning Culture in Salaf Islamic Boarding Schools: An Ethnographic Study of Linguistic Punishment Practices and Traditions. *ETNOPELAGOGI: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan*, 2(2), 1-9. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.62945/etnopedagogi.v2i2.722>
- Siregar, R. S. (2025). Evaluation of the Implementation of the Reading Literacy Program at SD Negeri 100190 Tarutung Bolak. *Journal of Indonesian Primary School*, 2(1), 240-250. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.62945/jips.v2i1.723>
- Wahyuni, S. (2022). Problematika pengajaran bahasa Arab di madrasah aliyah. *Jurnal An-Nahdloh*, 8(1), 66-78.
- Zawawi, M. (2015). Pendekatan komunikatif dalam pengajaran bahasa Arab. *Al-Fathin: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab*, 2(2), 88-97.
- Zed, M. (2008). *Metode penelitian kepustakaan*. Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia.
- أمي حنيفة الماجستير: مجلة لتعليم اللغة العربية والدراسة الإسلامية في طريقة القواعد والترجمة في تعليم اللغة العربية و تطبيقها, سبتمبر 2012