



## ***UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' RESPONSES TO USING ARABIC SYNTAX IN TEACHING ENGLISH SYNTAX***

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### ***Abstract***

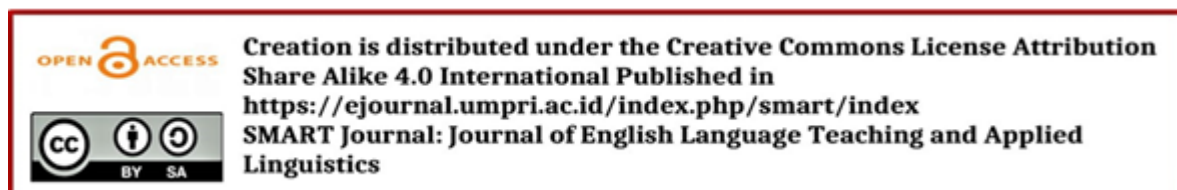
*This study explores students' responses to using Arabic syntax in teaching English syntax. This study employed a quantitative descriptive design. The findings revealed that all dimensions were responded positively. The affective dimension showed the highest mean score, indicating increased motivation, comfort, and engagement. Academic responses reflected perceived improvement in task performance and analytical skills, while cognitive responses demonstrated a strong understanding of syntactic rules. The results support the pedagogical value of L1-informed instruction in syntax-focused English teaching as a foreign language.*

**Keywords:** *Arabic Syntax, Grammar Teaching, English Syntax, Students' Responses*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The growing phenomenon of multilingual academic environments requires students to adapt to more than one linguistic system during the learning process. In Islamic higher education contexts, students who learn English often possess a strong background in Arabic, which influences how they process and understand the syntactic structures of other foreign languages. This linguistic background results in varied student responses, particularly related to syntactic transfer from Arabic to English, which may function as both a facilitative resource and a potential source of difficulty. Abdalhadi (2023) reports that Arabic-speaking learners demonstrate strong syntactic transfer patterns when acquiring English grammatical structures. Similarly, Junia (2025) highlights that Arabic influence is evident in English learners' sentence construction and writing patterns.

Previous studies have consistently identified significant typological differences between English and Arabic, especially in terms of word order, noun phrase structure, and clause formation (Siswoyo, 2016). Ibrahim (2022) explains that these structural differences



often lead to syntactic difficulties when students translate or analyze English sentences. In response to these challenges, Al-Hamzah and Dhayef (2022) argue that contrastive analysis between Arabic and English can assist learners in recognizing error-prone syntactic patterns. While these studies focus primarily on syntactic problems and errors, they provide limited insight into how students respond cognitively, affectively, and academically when Arabic syntax is deliberately used as a pedagogical resource in English syntax instruction.

From a cognitive perspective, the use of Arabic syntax in teaching English syntax can be understood through Cognitive Learning Theory and Cross-Linguistic Transfer Theory. Cognitive theory suggests that learners actively process new information by connecting it to existing mental schemata (Anderson, 2019). In this context, prior knowledge of Arabic syntax serves as a cognitive framework that supports learners in understanding English sentence structures. Ellis (2015) emphasizes that learners naturally draw on their first language as a cognitive resource when acquiring new grammatical systems, which can enhance comprehension and analytical awareness.

Affective responses to the use of Arabic syntax can be explained by Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis and L2 Motivation Theory. Emotional factors such as anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence play a crucial role in language acquisition (Krashen, 2009; Kurniawati, 2021). When instruction incorporates a familiar linguistic system, learners tend to experience reduced anxiety and increased emotional security, which in turn enhances motivation and classroom engagement (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2019). This supportive learning environment encourages more positive attitudes toward English learning.

From an academic perspective, Constructivist Learning Theory and Scaffolding Theory provide a relevant framework for understanding students' learning outcomes. Constructivism views learning as an active process in which new knowledge is constructed based on prior experience (Lantolf et al., 2015). In English syntax instruction, Arabic grammatical knowledge can function as scaffolding that helps students analyze, compare, and internalize complex syntactic structures more effectively. This approach supports improved task performance, analytical skills, and syntactic accuracy. Therefore, this study aims to describe university students' cognitive, affective, and academic responses to the use of Arabic syntax in teaching English syntax.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design to examine university students' responses to the use of Arabic syntax in teaching English syntax. This design was selected to objectively measure students' responses across cognitive, affective, and academic dimensions using numerical data derived from questionnaire responses.

The participants of this study were eight ( $n = 8$ ) university students with an Arabic language background. Although the sample size is relatively small, it was intentionally selected because this study functions as an exploratory and pilot-scale investigation. The primary aim was not statistical generalization but an initial examination of students' responses to an instructional approach that has been minimally explored in previous research.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, based on the following criteria: (1) students had received prior instruction in Arabic syntax, and (2) Arabic syntax was explicitly used as a reference in learning English syntax. These criteria limited the number of eligible participants but ensured the relevance of the data to the research objectives. In exploratory quantitative studies, small samples are considered acceptable for identifying preliminary patterns and informing future large-scale research. Therefore, despite its size, the sample was deemed sufficient for achieving the exploratory purpose of the study.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed based on relevant theories of cognitive learning, affective factors in language acquisition, and academic performance. The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). It consisted of 18 items, distributed evenly across three dimensions: cognitive (understanding and thinking strategies), affective (interest, comfort, and motivation), and academic (task performance and analytical skills).

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire underwent an expert validation process prior to data collection. The initial draft of the instrument was reviewed by experts in applied linguistics and language education. Each item was evaluated based on clarity, relevance to the research objectives, and suitability for university-level learners. The experts provided both quantitative ratings and qualitative feedback, identifying items that required

revision or refinement. Based on their recommendations, ambiguous wording was clarified, overlapping items were revised, and several statements were adjusted to more accurately reflect the role of Arabic syntax in supporting English syntax learning. Following these revisions, the instrument was considered to have adequate content validity.

The reliability of the questionnaire was examined using Cronbach's alpha to assess internal consistency. The analysis, based on responses from eight participants, yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.82, which exceeds the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70. This result indicates that the instrument demonstrates good internal consistency and is reliable for exploratory and pilot-scale quantitative research. However, future studies with larger samples are recommended to further strengthen the reliability of the instrument.

The questionnaire was administered after the implementation of Arabic syntax-based instruction in English syntax classes. To encourage honest and unbiased responses, students completed the questionnaire anonymously.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. Mean scores were calculated for each response dimension by dividing the total score by the number of respondents and items. The resulting mean values were interpreted using established Likert-scale interval criteria to determine the level of students' responses.

The formula of the mean used in the current research is:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum x}{n}$$

$\bar{x}$  : Mean

$\sum x$  : Sum

$n$  : Total Number

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

### **Finding**

This section presents the findings of students' responses to the use of Arabic syntax in teaching English syntax across cognitive, affective, and academic dimensions.

Table 1 Students' Responses in the Use of Arabic Syntax in Teaching English Syntax

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Number of items</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>	<b>Category</b>
Cognitive	6	4.11	Very Positive
Affective	6	4.25	Very Positive
Academic	6	4.17	Very Positive
Overall	-	4.18	Very Positive

As presented in Table 1, students demonstrated very positive responses across all measured dimensions. The cognitive dimension obtained a mean score of 4.11, indicating that students perceived Arabic syntax as a helpful tool for understanding English syntactic concepts. Many students reported that explanations became clearer when English structures were linked to familiar Arabic grammatical patterns. This connection allowed students to interpret new material more efficiently and reduced confusion when dealing with complex sentence structures. The findings suggest that Arabic syntax functioned as a cognitive reference point that supported comprehension and analytical thinking during English syntax learning.

The affective dimension recorded the highest mean score (4.25), indicating strong emotional responses toward the instructional approach. Students reported feeling more comfortable and confident when Arabic syntax was incorporated into English instruction. This sense of familiarity appeared to reduce anxiety and increase motivation, encouraging students to participate more actively in classroom activities. The results indicate that the use of Arabic syntax created a supportive learning environment in which students felt emotionally secure and more willing to engage with challenging grammatical material.

The academic dimension yielded a mean score of 4.17, which was also categorized as very positive. This result suggests that students perceived concrete academic benefits from the instructional approach. Students reported improved understanding of learning materials, better preparation for completing assignments, and increased confidence when facing evaluations. The use of Arabic syntax helped clarify difficult grammatical points and minimized misunderstandings that could hinder academic progress. Overall, the findings indicate that Arabic syntax served as an effective pedagogical support that enhanced students' cognitive understanding, emotional engagement, and academic performance in learning English syntax.

## **Discussion**

The findings of this study demonstrate that the integration of Arabic syntax into English syntax instruction elicited consistently positive responses from students across cognitive, affective, and academic dimensions. These results indicate that Arabic did not function as a source of interference; instead, it served as a meaningful instructional resource that supported students' learning processes in multiple ways.

*Cognitive Dimension*

The positive cognitive responses ( $M = 4.11$ ) suggest that students benefited from the opportunity to relate English syntactic structures to their existing knowledge of Arabic grammar. By drawing comparisons between the two languages, students were able to analyze sentence patterns more systematically and develop a clearer understanding of English syntax. This approach appeared to reduce cognitive load, particularly when students encountered complex grammatical constructions. The findings indicate that the strategic use of Arabic syntax helped students organize new information more effectively and strengthened their syntactic awareness, allowing them to process English grammar with greater confidence and accuracy.

*Affective Dimension*

The affective dimension produced the strongest response ( $M = 4.25$ ), highlighting the emotional impact of incorporating Arabic syntax into English instruction. Students reported feeling more relaxed and motivated when learning was connected to a familiar linguistic system. This emotional comfort reduced anxiety and encouraged students to engage more actively in classroom discussions and learning activities. When students felt supported and understood, they were more willing to ask questions and participate in syntactic analysis tasks. These findings suggest that affective factors play a crucial role in grammar learning and that instructional approaches acknowledging learners' linguistic backgrounds can foster more positive learning experiences.

*Academic Dimension*

The academic responses ( $M = 4.17$ ) indicate that students perceived meaningful improvements in their learning outcomes. The use of Arabic syntax helped students better understand instructional materials and complete academic tasks more effectively. Students felt more confident in analyzing English sentence structures and applying grammatical rules in assignments and assessments. This suggests that Arabic syntax functioned as an

academic scaffold that supported deeper engagement with English grammar. By bridging prior knowledge with new learning content, students were able to achieve more accurate and sustained learning outcomes.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the integration of Arabic syntax into English syntax instruction elicited consistently positive cognitive, affective, and academic responses from university students. The findings demonstrate that leveraging learners' prior linguistic knowledge can enhance comprehension, reduce learning-related anxiety, and foster greater motivation in grammar-focused English learning. Students also perceived meaningful academic benefits, including improved analytical skills and task performance, indicating that Arabic syntax functioned as an effective instructional scaffold. Overall, this study contributes empirical evidence supporting the pedagogical value of L1-informed instruction in tertiary EFL contexts and highlights the importance of strategically incorporating learners' linguistic backgrounds to promote more effective and inclusive syntax instruction. Future research with larger samples and experimental designs is recommended to further substantiate and extend these findings.

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