

## The Effectiveness of Grammar Translation and Direct Method in Teaching English literature: A Quantitative Study of EFL Students at University of Benghazi

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### Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and the Direct Method (DM) in teaching English literature from the perspectives of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students at the University of Benghazi, Al-Abyar Branch. The study aims to identify students' perceptions of these two pedagogical approaches and determine which method better supports comprehension, classroom engagement, and language development.

A quantitative research design was employed using a structured questionnaire consisting of eight closed-ended items based on a four-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was administered to a purposive sample of 40 sixth-semester students enrolled in the English Department. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages.

The findings indicate that students generally recognized the instructional value of both teaching methods. The Grammar Translation Method was perceived as effective in facilitating the understanding of difficult literary concepts through the use of the learners' first language and explicit grammar instruction. In contrast, the Direct Method received more favorable responses regarding students' active participation, target-language use, visual support, and error correction techniques. Overall, the results suggest that while the Grammar Translation Method enhances comprehension of complex literary texts, the Direct Method provides a more interactive and communicative learning environment.

The study concludes that combining the strengths of both methods may offer a more balanced and effective approach to teaching English literature in higher education. It recommends increasing the use of learner-centered instructional strategies, contextualized vocabulary teaching, visual aids, and communicative classroom activities to improve students' engagement and academic achievement.

### Introduction .1

Teaching English literature plays a vital role in developing students' linguistic competence, critical thinking, cultural awareness, and analytical skills. As an essential component of English language education, literature exposes learners to authentic

language use, diverse cultural perspectives, and various literary genres that enhance both language proficiency and intellectual development. Consequently, selecting appropriate pedagogical approaches is fundamental to achieving meaningful learning outcomes in English literature classrooms

Over the past decades, English language teaching has undergone significant changes due to the emergence of learner-centered educational theories and advances in instructional technology. These developments have encouraged educators to move beyond traditional teacher-centered practices toward more interactive approaches that actively engage students in the learning process. As a result, university instructors increasingly employ a variety of teaching methods to address learners' diverse needs and improve their comprehension and interpretation of literary texts

Among the most widely used instructional approaches are the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and the Direct Method (DM). The Grammar Translation Method emphasizes the study of grammar rules, translation, vocabulary memorization, and the use of learners' first language to facilitate comprehension. This method is particularly useful when teaching complex literary texts that require detailed linguistic and grammatical analysis. In contrast, the Direct Method encourages exclusive use of the target language, promotes oral communication, and develops students' language skills through interaction, contextual learning, and meaningful classroom activities. Although both methods have distinct pedagogical advantages, their effectiveness may vary depending on learners' educational backgrounds, language proficiency, and instructional context

Recent studies have emphasized that no single teaching method is universally effective for all educational settings. Instead, successful literature instruction depends on selecting teaching strategies that correspond to students' learning needs, course objectives, and classroom environment. Furthermore, higher education institutions are increasingly integrating interactive learning strategies and technology-enhanced instruction to improve student engagement and academic achievement in literature courses

In the Libyan context, English literature remains a core component of undergraduate English language programs. However, empirical research examining the effectiveness of different pedagogical approaches in teaching English literature is still limited, particularly within Libyan universities. Most previous studies have focused on language skills such as grammar, reading, writing, and speaking, while relatively little attention has been given to literature instruction and students' perceptions of teaching methods

Therefore, this study investigates the effectiveness of the Grammar Translation Method and the Direct Method in teaching English literature from the perspectives of sixth-semester students in the Department of English at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Al-Abyar Branch, University of Benghazi. Using a quantitative research design, the study seeks to compare students' perceptions of both teaching methods and identify which instructional approach better supports comprehension, classroom engagement, and effective learning. The findings are expected to contribute to the improvement of literature teaching practices and provide useful recommendations for English language instructors and curriculum developers in higher education

## **2. Literature Review**

Teaching English literature has received considerable attention in English language education due to its significant role in developing learners' linguistic proficiency, critical thinking, cultural awareness, and interpretive abilities. Over the years, researchers have examined a wide range of pedagogical approaches to determine the most effective methods for promoting students' engagement and improving learning outcomes in literature classrooms. The existing literature suggests that the effectiveness of any teaching method depends on its ability to encourage active participation, facilitate comprehension, and accommodate students' learning needs.

### **2.1 Grammar Translation Method**

The Grammar Translation Method (GTM) is one of the oldest and most influential approaches to foreign language teaching. It emphasizes the explicit teaching of grammar rules, vocabulary memorization, and translation between the learners' first language and the target language. In literature classes, GTM enables students to analyze complex texts, understand grammatical structures, and interpret literary language accurately. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), this method remains valuable in contexts where students require detailed linguistic analysis and where reading comprehension is a primary instructional objective.

Despite its strengths, GTM has been criticized for encouraging passive learning and limiting students' opportunities to communicate in the target language. Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2020) argue that excessive reliance on translation may reduce learners' communicative competence and discourage spontaneous language use. Nevertheless, many higher education institutions continue to employ GTM because of its effectiveness in teaching complex literary texts and developing reading skills.

### **2.2 Direct Method**

The Direct Method (DM) emerged as a response to the limitations of Grammar Translation. It encourages exclusive use of the target language in the classroom and promotes language acquisition through interaction, questioning, demonstration, and contextual learning. Rather than relying on translation, teachers present vocabulary and concepts using visual aids, examples, and real-life situations.

Brown (2015) emphasizes that the Direct Method creates an interactive learning environment that improves students' speaking, listening, and critical thinking skills. Similarly, Harmer (2015) notes that meaningful communication increases learner motivation and supports long-term language retention. In literature classes, the Direct Method encourages students to discuss literary themes, express personal interpretations, and engage actively with texts instead of memorizing information.

### **2.3 Teaching English Literature in Higher Education**

Teaching English literature at university level requires instructional approaches that integrate linguistic competence with literary analysis. Literature courses aim not only to improve language proficiency but also to develop students' abilities to evaluate texts critically, appreciate different cultures, and interpret multiple perspectives.

Modern pedagogical theories emphasize learner-centered instruction, collaborative learning, and classroom interaction. According to Kumaravadivelu (2020), effective literature teaching should combine textual analysis with discussion, reflection, and active participation. Likewise, Mayer (2020) highlights the educational value of multimedia resources in facilitating comprehension and increasing students' engagement with literary texts.

#### **2.4 Previous Studies**

Several empirical studies have investigated the effectiveness of different teaching methods in higher education. Sajjad (2010) reported that university students considered lecture-based instruction effective for delivering theoretical knowledge, while group discussions enhanced participation and critical thinking. Farashahi and Tajeddin (2018) found that interactive teaching strategies, particularly simulations and case-based learning, were more effective than traditional lectures in developing students' problem-solving and interpersonal skills.

Johnson and Christensen (2017) demonstrated that integrating multimedia into university instruction improved students' engagement and knowledge retention compared with conventional teaching approaches. Furthermore, Fisher, Frey, and Hattie (2018) concluded that active learning strategies significantly improve students' academic achievement and motivation.

Although previous studies have examined a variety of instructional approaches, limited research has focused specifically on comparing the Grammar Translation Method and the Direct Method in teaching English literature within Libyan universities. This gap highlights the importance of the present study, which investigates students' perceptions of these two pedagogical approaches at the University of Benghazi and contributes empirical evidence to the growing body of literature on English literature instruction in higher education.

#### **2.5 Research Gap**

A review of previous literature indicates that most studies have focused on teaching English language skills such as grammar, reading, speaking, and writing, whereas relatively few have examined teaching methods in English literature courses, particularly in the Libyan higher education context. Moreover, comparative research investigating the effectiveness of the Grammar Translation Method and the Direct Method among Libyan EFL university students remains scarce. Therefore, the present study seeks to address this gap by exploring students' perceptions of both teaching methods and identifying their relative effectiveness in improving comprehension, classroom engagement, and learning outcomes.

#### **Research Questions**

1. What are students' perceptions of the Grammar Translation Method in teaching English literature?
2. What are students' perceptions of the Direct Method in teaching English literature?
3. Which teaching method is perceived as more effective by EFL students .

#### **Objectives of the Study**

- To investigate students' perceptions of the Grammar Translation Method.
- To investigate students' perceptions of the Direct Method.
- To compare the effectiveness of both methods.

- To provide recommendations for improving English literature instruction.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant because it contributes to the growing body of research on teaching English literature in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, particularly within Libyan higher education. It provides empirical evidence regarding students' perceptions of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and the Direct Method (DM), thereby addressing the limited research available on pedagogical approaches to teaching English literature in Libya.

The findings of this study are expected to benefit several stakeholders. First, English literature instructors may use the results to select and implement more effective teaching strategies that enhance students' comprehension, classroom participation, and critical thinking. Second, curriculum developers and academic departments may benefit from the findings when reviewing and improving English literature courses and instructional practices. Third, educational policymakers may use the study as a reference for promoting learner-centered approaches and professional development programs for university instructors.

Furthermore, this study provides a foundation for future research by encouraging scholars to investigate additional teaching methods, larger and more diverse samples, and different educational contexts. Consequently, the study contributes both theoretically and practically to improving the quality of English literature instruction in higher education institutions.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Design**

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design to investigate the effectiveness of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and the Direct Method (DM) in teaching English literature. A quantitative approach was considered appropriate because it enables the collection and analysis of numerical data to examine students' perceptions of the two instructional methods objectively.

### **3.2 Research Setting**

The study was conducted at the Department of English, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Al-Abyar Branch, University of Benghazi, Libya. The research focused on English literature courses offered to undergraduate students during the sixth semester.

### **3.3 Participants**

The participants consisted of 40 sixth-semester students enrolled in the English Department during the 2024–2025 academic year. A purposive sampling technique was employed because the selected students had already completed several English language and literature courses and possessed sufficient experience to evaluate the teaching methods investigated in this study.

### **3.4 Research Instrument**

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher based on the objectives of the study and relevant literature. The questionnaire consisted of two sections:

- **Section A:** Grammar Translation Method (4 items).
- **Section B:** Direct Method (4 items).

Responses were measured using a four-point Likert scale:

- Strongly Agree (4)
- Agree (3)
- Disagree (2)
- Strongly Disagree (1)

The questionnaire was designed to examine students' perceptions regarding classroom practices associated with both teaching methods.

### 3.5 Validity and Reliability

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by specialists in English language teaching and applied linguistics. Their comments and suggestions were incorporated before the final administration of the instrument. The questionnaire items were revised to improve clarity, relevance, and consistency with the study objectives.

### 3.6 Data Collection Procedures

The questionnaire was administered to the participants during regular class sessions after obtaining their voluntary consent. Students were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that their responses would remain anonymous and would be used solely for academic research. All completed questionnaires were collected immediately after completion.

### 3.7 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for each questionnaire item to summarize students' responses and compare their perceptions of the Grammar Translation Method and the Direct Method. The findings were presented in tables and interpreted according to the objectives and research questions of the study.

### 3.8 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to accepted ethical standards in educational research. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from all participants, confidentiality was maintained throughout the study, and no identifying personal information was collected. The data were used exclusively for academic purposes.

## 4. Results

This section presents the findings of the study based on students' responses to the questionnaire. The results are organised according to the two instructional approaches investigated: the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and the Direct Method (DM). Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were used to analyse the data.

#### 4.1 Results of the Grammar Translation Method

The findings indicate that students generally held positive perceptions of the Grammar Translation Method. As shown in Table 1, 65% of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed that their instructors used the students' first language to explain difficult literary concepts, suggesting that the use of the mother tongue facilitates comprehension of complex texts. Similarly, 77.5% of the respondents agreed that grammar explanations helped them understand complex English sentences.

However, students expressed less positive attitudes toward memorizing vocabulary without contextual use. More than half of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with this practice, indicating that vocabulary learning is more effective when words are presented within meaningful contexts.

Overall, the findings suggest that the Grammar Translation Method remains effective in supporting students' comprehension of literary texts through explicit grammar instruction and the strategic use of the learners' first language.

**Table 1**

*Students' Responses to the Grammar Translation Method (Question 1)*

| Response          | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Strongly Agree    | 7         | 17.5           |
| Agree             | 19        | 47.5           |
| Disagree          | 6         | 15.0           |
| Strongly Disagree | 8         | 20.0           |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>40</b> | <b>100</b>     |

#### Interpretation

The majority of students (65%) agreed or strongly agreed that their instructors used the learners' first language to explain difficult literary concepts, indicating that the Grammar Translation Method supports students' comprehension of complex texts.

**Table 2**

*Students' Responses to the Grammar Translation Method (Question 2)*

| Response          | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Strongly Agree    | 4         | 10.0           |
| Agree             | 17        | 42.5           |
| Disagree          | 12        | 30.0           |
| Strongly Disagree | 7         | 17.5           |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>40</b> | <b>100</b>     |

#### Interpretation

More than half of the participants (52.5%) reported that teachers relied on the students' native language to explain difficult concepts.

**Table 3**

*Students' Responses to the Grammar Translation Method (Question 3)*

| Response | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|----------|-----------|----------------|
|----------|-----------|----------------|

|                   |           |            |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Strongly Agree    | 13        | 32.5       |
| Agree             | 18        | 45.0       |
| Disagree          | 6         | 15.0       |
| Strongly Disagree | 3         | 7.5        |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>40</b> | <b>100</b> |

### Interpretation

A total of 77.5% of students believed that grammar explanations facilitated their understanding of complex English sentences

**Table 4**

### Students' Responses to the Grammar Translation Method (Question 4)

| Response          | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Strongly Agree    | 7         | 17.5           |
| Agree             | 11        | 27.5           |
| Disagree          | 15        | 37.5           |
| Strongly Disagree | 7         | 17.5           |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>40</b> | <b>100</b>     |

### Interpretation

Most students (55%) disagreed with memorising vocabulary without contextual use, suggesting a preference for contextualised vocabulary instruction.

### 4.2 Results of the Direct Method

Students also reported positive perceptions of the Direct Method. Approximately 67.5% agreed that teachers effectively used visual aids and real-life examples to explain vocabulary and literary concepts. Furthermore, 75% indicated that teachers encouraged students to communicate in English by asking questions and requiring complete responses.

The most highly rated practice was error correction. A total of 80% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that teachers used different correction techniques, including self-correction and peer correction. This finding suggests that students value constructive feedback and interactive classroom practices.

These results indicate that the Direct Method promotes classroom interaction, increases students' participation, and enhances their confidence in using English during literature lessons.

**Table 5**

### Students' Responses to the Direct Method (Question 1)

| Response          | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Strongly Agree    | 14        | 35.0           |
| Agree             | 13        | 32.5           |
| Disagree          | 8         | 20.0           |
| Strongly Disagree | 5         | 12.5           |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>40</b> | <b>100</b>     |

### Interpretation

Approximately 67.5% of students positively evaluated the use of visual aids and real-life objects in teaching English literature

**Table 6**

**Students' Responses to the Direct Method (Question 2)**

| Response          | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Strongly Agree    | 11        | 27.5           |
| Agree             | 19        | 47.5           |
| Disagree          | 6         | 15.0           |
| Strongly Disagree | 4         | 10.0           |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>40</b> | <b>100</b>     |

**Interpretation**

Three-quarters of the respondents (75%) agreed that teachers encouraged communication in English by asking questions and requiring complete responses.

**Table 7**

**Students' Responses to the Direct Method (Question 3)**

| Response          | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Strongly Agree    | 12        | 30.0           |
| Agree             | 13        | 32.5           |
| Disagree          | 11        | 27.5           |
| Strongly Disagree | 4         | 10.0           |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>40</b> | <b>100</b>     |

**Interpretation**

The majority of participants (62.5%) positively evaluated teachers' use of the target language during instruction.

**Table 8**

**Students' Responses to the Direct Method (Question 4)**

| Response          | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Strongly Agree    | 12        | 30.0           |
| Agree             | 20        | 50.0           |
| Disagree          | 2         | 5.0            |
| Strongly Disagree | 6         | 15.0           |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>40</b> | <b>100</b>     |

**Interpretation**

Error correction received the highest level of agreement, with 80% of the students indicating that teachers used effective correction techniques, such as self-correction and peer correction

### 4.3 Comparison of the Two Teaching Methods

A comparison of the findings reveals that both teaching methods contribute positively to learning English literature; however, each method serves different instructional purposes. The Grammar Translation Method was perceived as more effective in facilitating comprehension of difficult literary texts through translation and grammar

explanation. In contrast, the Direct Method was viewed as more effective in promoting active learning, classroom interaction, target-language use, and student engagement.

Overall, the findings suggest that integrating the strengths of both methods may provide a more balanced and effective pedagogical approach to teaching English literature in teaching.

## 5. Discussion

The present study examined students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and the Direct Method (DM) in teaching English literature at the University of Benghazi, Al-Abyar Branch. The findings indicate that both instructional approaches contribute positively to students' learning; however, each method demonstrates distinct pedagogical strengths.

The results revealed that the Grammar Translation Method was particularly effective in facilitating students' comprehension of difficult literary texts. Most participants reported that the use of their first language and explicit grammar instruction helped them understand complex vocabulary, sentence structures, and literary concepts. This finding supports the view of Richards and Rodgers (2014), who argue that the Grammar Translation Method remains valuable in contexts where reading comprehension and detailed textual analysis are central learning objectives. Likewise, Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2020) acknowledge that, despite its limitations in developing communicative competence, GTM can effectively support learners in understanding linguistically demanding texts.

In contrast, the Direct Method received more favourable evaluations regarding classroom interaction and language use. Students reported that teachers encouraged communication in English, used visual aids, and employed various error-correction techniques that promoted active participation and increased learners' confidence. These findings are consistent with Brown (2015), who emphasises that learner-entered and communicative approaches enhance students' motivation and language proficiency. Similarly, Harmer (2015) suggests that meaningful classroom interaction creates opportunities for authentic language use and improves long-term learning outcomes.

The findings also indicate that students do not perceive the two teaching methods as competing approaches but rather as complementary instructional strategies. While the Grammar Translation Method supports comprehension of complex literary texts through translation and grammatical explanation, the Direct Method enhances communication, participation, and learner autonomy. This suggests that combining the strengths of both methods may provide a more comprehensive approach to teaching English literature in higher education.

Furthermore, the results align with previous studies that advocate the integration of traditional and interactive teaching strategies. Johnson and Christensen (2017) reported that interactive instructional practices increase student engagement and improve knowledge retention, whereas Fisher, Frey, and Hattie (2018) concluded that active learning contributes significantly to academic achievement. The present study extends

these findings to the Libyan higher education context by providing empirical evidence regarding students' perceptions of literature teaching methods.

Despite these valuable findings, the study has certain limitations. The sample consisted of only forty students from one department at a single university, which may limit the generalisability of the results. In addition, the study relied solely on questionnaire data and did not include classroom observations or interviews that could provide deeper insights into students' learning experiences.

Overall, the findings suggest that effective literature instruction should not rely exclusively on one teaching method. Instead, university instructors should adopt a balanced pedagogical approach that combines the analytical strengths of the Grammar Translation Method with the communicative and interactive features of the Direct Method. Such integration is likely to enhance students' comprehension, participation, critical thinking, and overall academic performance in English literature courses.

## 6. Conclusion

This study investigated the effectiveness of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and the Direct Method (DM) in teaching English literature from the perspectives of sixth-semester EFL students at the University of Benghazi, Al-Abyar Branch. Using a quantitative descriptive research design, the study explored students' perceptions of the two instructional approaches and examined their contributions to comprehension, classroom engagement, and language learning.

The findings revealed that both teaching methods play important roles in English literature instruction. The Grammar Translation Method was found to be particularly effective in facilitating students' understanding of complex literary texts through the use of grammar explanation and the learners' first language. In contrast, the Direct Method was perceived as more effective in promoting classroom interaction, encouraging communication in English, increasing student participation, and improving learners' confidence through the use of visual aids and varied error-correction techniques.

The results demonstrate that neither method should be viewed as universally superior. Instead, each approach addresses different aspects of the learning process and contributes to achieving specific instructional objectives. Therefore, integrating the strengths of both methods can provide a balanced pedagogical framework that enhances students' linguistic competence, literary comprehension, critical thinking, and overall learning experience.

This study also contributes to the limited body of research on teaching English literature in the Libyan higher education context. The findings provide practical implications for English language instructors, curriculum designers, and educational policymakers seeking to improve literature instruction through evidence-based teaching practices. Future research is recommended to include larger samples from different Libyan universities, employ mixed-methods research designs, and investigate the impact of additional pedagogical approaches and technology-enhanced learning on students' achievement in English literature.

## 7. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. English literature instructors should adopt a balanced instructional approach that integrates the strengths of both the Grammar Translation Method and the Direct Method to improve students' comprehension, language proficiency, and classroom engagement.
2. Teachers are encouraged to increase the use of the target language during literature classes while providing limited and purposeful use of the students' first language to explain particularly difficult literary concepts when necessary.
3. Literary vocabulary should be taught through meaningful contexts, authentic literary texts, and communicative activities rather than through isolated memoization.
4. Instructors should incorporate interactive teaching strategies such as pair work, group discussions, classroom presentations, and collaborative learning activities to promote students' critical thinking and active participation.
5. The use of visual aids, multimedia resources, and digital learning technologies should be expanded to facilitate students' understanding of literary texts and increase classroom motivation.
6. English literature curricula should be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect contemporary pedagogical practices and the learning needs of university students.
7. Professional development programs and workshops should be organised for university instructors to enhance their knowledge of modern literature teaching methodologies and learner-entered instructional strategies.
8. Future studies should investigate the effectiveness of additional pedagogical approaches, such as Communicative Language Teaching, Task-Based Language Teaching, and technology-enhanced learning, in teaching English literature.
9. Further research involving larger samples from different Libyan universities is recommended to improve the generalisability of the findings and provide broader evidence for educational decision-making.
10. Future researchers are encouraged to employ mixed-methods research designs by combining questionnaires with interviews and classroom observations to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of students' learning experiences and teachers' instructional practices.

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