

Time, Tense, and the Verb Form in Arabic and English: A Contrastive Study

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Abstract

The study of the relationships between the verb-form and tense in connection to both the concept of time and the nature of the denoted action or event represents one of the fundamental aspects of any language. Both English and Arab grammarians talk about such a relationship and seriously intend to account for it. The main points the present study raises are (1) the way both teams of grammarians handle the topic, and (2) the Arab grammarians' earlier attempts to identify these notions and the descriptive account they have provided for the relationship between such notions. It is hypothesed that:

1. Arabic and English tend to show, according to their grammarians, an agreement in more than one respect of these notions.
2. The descriptive linguistic efforts of the Arab grammarians concerning the identification and description of time, tense, and verb-form have preceded those of the English grammarians.

1. Introduction

Almost all grammar books in English tend to count tenses and compare them to one another for the sake of showing the ways they are used or function and the different verb-forms that express tenses. Some grammarians, such as Eckersley and Eckersley (1960) for instance, count as many as 24 tenses, 12 are active and some other 12 are passive. A few such books, like Quirk and Geenbaum (1973), Quirk et al (1985), Lewis (1986), and Leech and Svartvik (1994) try to explicate the relationship between the time, tense, and the verb-forms. As for the textbooks of language teaching, Lewis (1986: 49) reports that he has never seen a textbook that attempts to discuss the notion of time at least systematically and coherently. "A discussion of this notion might involve such ideas as how we express the difference between completeness and incompleteness, point and period, simultaneous and

successive events, the similarities between Then (past) and Then (future)". This suggests that a discussion of the notion of time should involve the type of exploration one may consider, the type of time to be conceived, the way the different types of time can be expressed in words, and whether the different types of time and temporal relationships can be expressed through the use of structure or lexical items, like adverbs.

Generally, the time-tense relationship has been given much attention by the Arab scholars of grammar to the extent that the Arabic verb-forms may hardly be explained without a reference to such a relationship. As far in the history of the linguistic studies as the first and second centuries A. H., the Arab grammarians provided so good accounts of this relationship that both orientaissts such as Bergstrasser (2003) and

grammarians such as Wright (1967) continually highlight.

Arab scholars, however, could not have certain *formally* explicit remarks for such aspects as progressive and perfective, yet, they did refer to them in terms of time-tense relations by using certain auxiliaries like 'قد', 'س', and 'سوف' before the main verb-forms in their sentences.

One then could hypothesise Arabic and English tend to show, according to their grammarians, an agreement in more than one respect of these notions. The descriptive linguistic efforts of the Arab grammarians concerning the identification and description of time, tense, and verb-form have preceded those of the English grammarians.

2. Time and Tense in English

2.1 Time and Tense:

The word time is far more difficult to define, though all people experience it. Time, according to Quirk and Greenbaum (1973: 46), is a universal non-linguistic concept with three divisions *past*, *present* and *future*. For Quirk et (1985: 175), time can be thought of as a line, theoretically of non-finite length, on which the present moment is located as a continuously moving moment; anything ahead of this moment is in the future and anything behind it is in the past (Figure 1 below). This interpretation of the three divisions of time into past, present and future is at a *referential* level, i.e. a level of analysis outside the world of language. Time, then is "an element of our experience of reality" (Lewis, 1986; 47). Time is "what we measure with clocks, watches, and calendars, for example" (Fleming, 2003: online).

Lewis (ibid.: 48) thinks that there could be another conception of time in respect with the language one may use. It is the *psychological* time which refers to the

way language users perceive the action rather than 'what objectively happened'. According to this point of view, a language might not be analysed independently of its user's perception of what happened. Raiss (n. d.: 1) thinks that time does not exist; it is only there in human minds who could measure the idea of time by using clocks and calendars. For him (ibid.: 2), time, in English for instance, is seen as something relating to the point of now. It exists *now* (present), before *now* (past), after *now* (future), or timelessly (covering past, present and future) (see Table 1 below).

Furthermore, Michaelis (2006: 1) believes "humans conceive of time in terms of space, as shown by the language that we use to talk about temporal relations: we habitually speak of *stretching out* or *compressing* an activity, *heading toward* the future, *returning to* the past and so on.

Past	Present	Future
Timeless		

Table1. Divisions of Time

In this respect, Badri (1984: 27) states

Jespersion makes the idea of time closer to his readers' minds by drawing a line without width or thickness. This line begins with the past and ends with the future, ending the future line with an arrow to indicate continuity. The present is described as an unstable point of no dimension. It lies in the middle of the line and continuously moves towards the past.

He (ibid.: 28) adds that the present time is too short to be obviously noticed. Quoting Modern English Grammar vol. IV, he explains this idea via Figure 1 below:

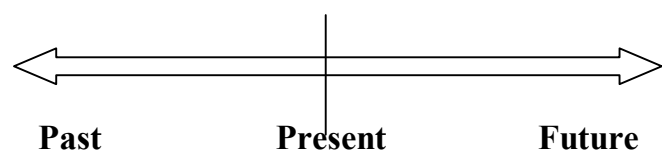


Figure 1 The Time-line

The timeline is a line (or, equivalently, an ordered set of points) that is unbounded at both ends and segmented into three parts: the past, the present and the future. The points on the timeline may be times by themselves or times paired with events (Michaelis, 2006: 1). At the level of *linguistic* analysis, the interpretation of the notion of time seems rather different. In relation to language, more precisely to the meaning of the verb, "it is useful to reformulate the threefold distinction" of time (Quirk et al., 1985: 175). The sense of 'present', for instance, changes to be inclusive rather than exclusive. Something may be said to be present if it has existence at the present moment with the possibility that its existence may also stretch into the past as well as to the future time. In the example below, the 'present' state of affairs of *Paris* does not only refer to the present moment but it has also obtained for numerous centuries in the past and may extend to an indefinite period in the future:

1-Paris stands on the River Seine.

This level of analysis is what Quirk et al. (ibid.: 176) call the *semantic* level. The use of the special form of the verb 'stands' signals the *tense* of the sentence that is primarily used to indicate the time at which the event takes place (Radford et al., 1999: 154). Tense is said to be the verb-form that indicates the time of the action ⁽¹⁾ denoted by that form. By tense, Leech and Svartvik (1994: 400) refer to the understanding of the correspondence between the verb-form and this concept of time whether past, present or future. When describing the meanings of the tenses, linguists have relied on a specific instance of the space-time analogy, i.e. the timeline. In the description of the various relationships among points on the timeline, only one type of relation counts as a tense relation; it includes the time when the linguistic act is occurring (Michaelis, 2006: 1).

Tense, then, is a technical term that refers to a kind of grammatical category. For Lewis, this category sometimes includes a morphological change in the base form of the verb. Quirk and Greenbaum (1973/1989: 30-2) differentiate between 'verb' as a formal class member or functional category. The former is a verb-form, which is a member of a verbal paradigm whereas the latter is a verb phrase, which is an element of a certain function and position within an intricate system. In this system, both the morphological makeup and the syntactic behaviour cooperate to give that verb phrase its meaning and use.

Lyons (1977: 682) states "the crucial fact about tense [...] is that it is a deictic category. A tensed proposition, therefore, will not merely be timebound, [...] it will contain a reference to some point or period of time which cannot be identified except in terms of the zero-point of the utterance". So, as Michaelis (2006: 1) thinks, like other linguistic reference points that are anchored in the 'here and now', the temporal zero-point can, under the appropriate conditions, be identified with times other than the time of speaking or writing.

2.1.1 Time-tense Correspondence

Tenses often express the relationship between speech-time and another interval of interest (Michaelis, ibid.). This interval is what Reichenbach (1947) refers to as *reference time*, which is in principle distinct from either the time of the utterance, i.e. speech-time, or the time of the situation that the speaker is describing, i.e. event-time. Reference time, according to Klein (1992:535), is "the time for which, on some occasion, a claim is made". Consider the following example:

1. a. I took a cab back to the hotel.
- b. The cab driver was Latvian.

In (2a), reference-time is a specific past time that both the speaker and hearer can identify, while in (2b) it is the time

established by (2a): the time of the cab ride. Thus, (2b) shows that “when a speaker makes a past-tense stative assertion, that person may vouch only for that portion of the state’s tenure that coincides with the mutually relevant interval” (Michaelis, 2006: 2)

Tense and time are related, but it is not a simple (one-to-one) relationship. That is, present tense, for instance, does not always mean present time; past tense does not always mean past time. The following simple present tense sentence rarely refers to the present time:

2. The sun rises in the east.

Fleming (2003: online) states that the relationship between tense and time is, in fact, quite complex. A past tense verb, for example, can refer to a future time:

Present	simple	he works
	continuous	he is working
	perfect	he has worked
	perfect continuous	he has been working
Past	simple	he worked
	continuous	he was working
	perfect	he had worked
	perfect continuous	he had been working
Future	simple	he will work
	continuous	he will be working
	perfect	he will have worked
	perfect continuous	he will have been working

3. If I had an exam tomorrow, I would study tonight.

Traditionally, grammarians divided the English tense in parallelism with time into three basic parts: *past, present and future*. Unfortunately, this is a common point of view among most of the textbook writers such as Eckersley and Eckersley (1960) and Liles (1971: 23). They often state that there are three tenses in analogy with the three divisions of time: past tense that indicates an action occurred during the past time, present tense that indicates an expression of action occurring at the present time, and the future as an action which will occur in the future time.

Thomson and Martinet (1980: 90) make a list of the active tenses with their possible aspectual implications.

Furthermore, Quirk et al (1985: 176) explicate this kind of time relations by relating both the past and the future to the moment of present, as in Figure 2. below:

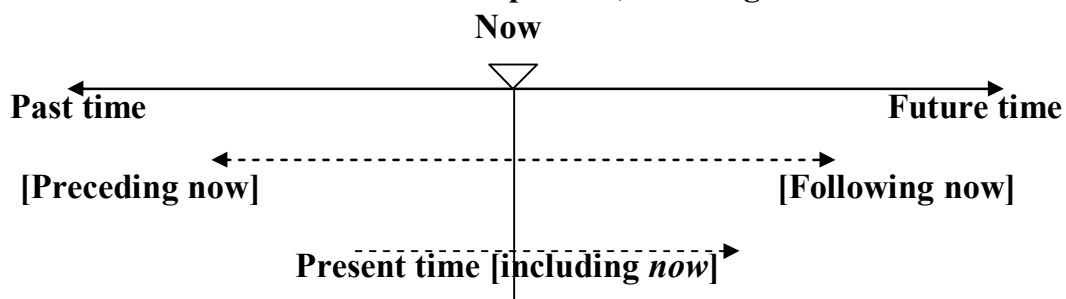


Figure 2 Past-now-future Time-relationship

Here, Quirk et al (ibid.) look at time as two divisions of past and future with the moment of the present dangling, minute by minute, between them. Therefore, every single moment is a future, present, and then a past moment; accordingly, ages are accumulated in the past passing through the present moments with no way to come back.. Nonetheless, at a *grammatical* level, “this threefold opposition is reduced to two, since morphologically English has no future form of the verb in addition to present and past forms” (Quirk et al., 1985: 176). Arguing against those who claim that future is a third tense, they (ibid.) maintain that the English tense is strictly a category, which is realised by verb inflection only. What is commonly called future tense is actually realised by some auxiliary verb constructions, such as will + infinitive, with no specific verb inflection.

This classification is common among grammarians nowadays. Radford et al. (1999: 285) confirm “English has a binary (i.e. two-way) system...Although this

distinction is traditionally said to be a past/present one, many linguists prefer to see it as a past/non-past distinction since the so called present tense form can be used with a future time-reference”:

4. Our guest *is arriving* at 3:00 p. m. tomorrow.

English is said to possess no formal future tense but, of course, it is possible to talk about future time (Lewis, 1986: 139). The only true English tenses are present and past; everything else usually referred to as tense is really a combination of tense, aspect, and/or modality. This replaces the common traditional practice that refers to all these combinations as tenses (Fleming, 2003: online)

2.2 Verb-Forms

English language uses a three verb-form paradigm for all tensed constructions: past, present, and past participle. According to Hornby (2004: 1504), this paradigm can be shown in Table 2. below:

	Present		Past		
	(base)	3 rd person	Present	Past	Past
Forms:	Stem	Singular	Participle	(tense)	Participle
Inflectional Suffixes:	nil	{-s 3d}	{-ing vd}	{-d pt}	{-d pp}
Models	Learn Choose set	Learns Chooses Sets	Learning Choosing Setting	Learned Chose set	Learned Chosen set

Table 2 The English Verb-form Paradigm

The present form includes the base-form and s-forms whose choice depends upon the number of the subject, whether singular or plural. It also includes present participle which is the -ing form that may follow any of the seven forms of be: *am, is,*

are, was, were, be, or been, to make continuous or progressive verb phrases. Consider the following examples:

5. They *were writing* letters.
6. She must have *been sleeping*.

As for the past form, it is either a past or past participle; each has its own uses whether alone or combined with other verb-forms. Further- more, Stageberg (1981: 140) identifies verbal and non-verbal verb-forms. Surely, he refers to what Quirk and Greenbaum (1973: 43) called the finite and non-finite verb-forms.

For Quirk and Greenbaum (ibid.: 30), English has a maximum of five verb-forms: base, -s form, -ing participle, past, and past participle and a minimum of three: base, -s form, -ing participle. The latter case refers to cases where the base, past, and past participle are formally alike, for instance, the verbs set, and put, etc.

According to Quirk and Greenbaum (1973: 46) and Leech and Svartvik (1994: 400), tense refers to the relationship between the concept of time and the structural form of the verb that indicates the time of the action denoted by that form. Accordingly,

1. Modal	modal + base form	must examine
2. Perfective	have + -d pp	have examined
3. Progressive	be + -ing vd	is + examining
Passive	be + -d pp	is examined

Thus, a minimum verb phrase possibly consists of a single verb form like 'examine' while a maximum one possibly consists of a combination of fixed order of these four basic constructions as in: 'may have been being examined'. Relevant to the present study is the use of the range of such constructions. While the first and the last constructions describe modality and passive voice of the English verb phrase, the second and third ones refer to its aspect.

Quirk and Greenbaum (1973: 46) identify *aspect* with the manner in which the verbal action is experienced or regarded, perfective (complete) or non-perfective or progressive (incomplete). Hence, what Thomson and Martinet (1980: 90) list above as the English active tenses actually include

there is a verb-form to indicate the past tense, -ed form in English for instance, and another for present tense, base- or -s form, but there is no specific verb-form for the future tense; it is, thus, called as future time not future tense.

2.2.1 Auxiliaries and Aspect

In contrast to full verb forms stated in Table 2 above, there are sets of 'helping verbs' or auxiliaries. According to Quirk et al. (1985: 120), these include primary auxiliaries such as be, have, and do and modal auxiliary verbs such as will, shall, could, etc.

Furthermore, the verb phrase is either finite or non-finite. A finite verb phrase is, according to Quirk et al. (ibid. 151), is either simple or complex. The latter shows just four basic constructions (with the verb *examine* as a model):

their possible aspectual implications; they are past and present tenses in their simple, progressive and perfective aspects. This evidently widens the spectrum of the possible time tense relationships that English language can describe.

3. Time and Tense in Arabic

There are many classifications for the Arabic verb-forms, according to their relationship to both time and tense. These classifications are mostly relating the verb-forms to the notion of time, or what is commonly called the 'philosophical time'. This point seems so controversial in grammar that grammarians often tend to put forward their claims for debate and provide their burden of proof to support this rather than that claim. Generally,

grammarians of English and Arabic alike seem to account time-tense relationship on the same bases:

1. Philosophical time or what Quirk et al (1985) call referential time
2. Tense and verb-form

Additionally, some Arab scholars, such as al-Tabaatebaai' (1983), identify a third basis for this relationship. He adds the classification of tense according to the existence and nonexistence of the action indicated by the verb.

3.1 Time-tense Correspondence

There are different time divisions due to viewpoints among Arab scholars. They seem to believe that the analysis of time is essential to a better understanding of the relationship between the form of the verb and the tense that form indicates. The other basis of tense classification is according to the form of the verb. In this respect, there are more than one view adopted by different grammarians. Below are some of such views

3.1.1 Tripartite Division

Although Arab scholars are of different views concerning the relationship between time, tense and the verb-form, they generally agree that time is of three divisions: past, present, and future. The Arab poet says ⁽²⁾: *Three days are but the whole ages*

They are just today, yesterday and tomorrow.

According to Seebawayh (1966: 35), the Arabic verb ⁽³⁾, "implies time", as in:

7. ذهب زيد (Zaid went.)

8. سيذهب زيد (Zaid will go.)

Thus, it is stated that the verb refers to what had passed and what has not as well. It also indicates that an event will occur. The verb 'ذهب', for example, indicates a past event in a past time; however, if one says 'سيذهب', the

verb would suggest that an event is to come in the future.

Similarly, Ibn Ya'eesh (n. d.: 4) states that verbs conform to time configuration. Time is essential for the actions indicated by the verbs; as actions exist, time exists and vice versa. Verbs, therefore, are divided in accordance with time and they only exist in terms of it. Time is tripartite: past, future, and present, as the product of the movements of the universe, i. e., a past movement, one to come, and a third separating the two. Verbs, in consequence, have come to be three: past, future and present.

The past verb refers to some action no longer occurs and is spoken about in a time later than the time of its occurrence. This is the gist of Ibn Ya'eesh's (ibid.) statement about the association of an action with an aspect of time before the speech event. Hence, association is meant to be with the *action* not with the *time* of the reported statement, otherwise, time relations would be corrupted. The future verb has no existence before the time of speaking; a speech event may predate the event of its occurrence. The present is what the future reaches and, hence, it is so shortly related to the past that the speech event precedes the time of its occurrence.

In this respect, citing al-Anbari, Abdulhameed (n. d.: 237) provides a proof to support the same point of view. al-Anbari thinks that in their endeavour to use the infinitive (the tenseless base-form), the Arabs have found it common to *all tenses* and it shows no specific reference to the time of actions. Thus, they derive from it, in parallelism with the three times: past, present, and future, three types of verbs: past, present, and future, respectively. This is the viewpoint of al-Kufa school of grammar.

Some specialists, furthermore, divided the verb-form into past, future, and constant. This view represents a kind of further development in the concept of tense than the former concepts that divided verbs into past and future only. In this respect, az-Zajjaji (1957: 21-2) states, "verbs are of three kinds: past, future, and present which could be the constant". The past is what happened yesterday such as 'قام' (stood up) and 'قعد' (sat down), etc, while the future is what will happen tomorrow, such as 'أقوم' (I will stand up (tomorrow))

However, as-Samarrai' (1966: 17) thinks that az-Zajjaji uses the term 'constant' to refer only to the present whereas the Kufis use it to refer to the nominal participle, both present and past. In this regard, az-Zajjaji restricts this term to the present. However, az-Zajjaji does not agree with his opponents from Basra School that the imperative is a verb-form. This suggests that the constant is only a verb for az-Zajjaji but it is a verb as well as a verbal noun that functions as a verb for the Kufis.

Arab grammarians link the present to the future tenses because the present is too short to be identified alone; it is related moment by moment to the future on the one hand and the past on the other. The present is a mobile short-aged moment of time that dangles between the other two times. Accordingly, there is no difference between the present and the future verb-form (Ibn-Assarraaj, n. d.: 27; az-Zajjaji, 1957: 21-2; as-Samarrai', 1966: 17; Nooroddin, 1984: 44).

9. زيد يقوم (اليوم) (Zaid is standing now/ today)
10. زيد يقوم (غدا) (Zaid is standing tomorrow).

The Kufis, most prominently al-Farra', do not use a term to refer to such a

verb-form. al-Samarrai' (1966: 18, 21, 28, 32) states that they use the term 'مستقبل' (future) to refer to the time of the action and the formula 'يفعل' /jefælu/ (=does) as a verb-form in the same way they use 'ماض' (=past) to indicate the past time of the action and the formula 'فعل' /feæle/ (=did) as a verb-form.

For as-Samarrai' (ibid.: 17-8), the Basris, or Basra School, suggested the term 'مضارع' to refer to the formula 'يفعل' /jefælu/ (=does) which denotes both the present and future tenses referring to actions in the present and future times respectively (see also al-Makhzoumy (1964: 123-5) and Wafi (1967: 42).

Hence, there seems to be no one-to-one correspondence between the verb-form and the time of the action, especially in the present tense. Furthermore, the Basris have, successfully enough, solved such a problem via the use of the term 'مضارع' to account for the mutual verb-form used to express both times of actions; present and future. Futurity, however, could be indicated by the use of 'س' or 'سوف' or any other auxiliary referring to future. This relationship could be represented in the following forms:

- 'فعل' /feæle/ : 'قام' (stood up), 'قعد' (sat down) (past)
- 'يفعل' = ي, ن, ت, أ, 'فعل' /jefælu/ : زيد يقوم (present)
- 'يفعل' = ي, ن, ت, أ, 'فعل' /jefælu/ + 'س' or 'سوف' = زيد سيقوم / سوف يقوم (future)

Yet, both the Kufis and Basris agree that Arabic has two basic formulae for past and present verb-forms, which are 'فعل' /feæle/ and 'يفعل' /jefælu/. Meanwhile, some of the Kufis, like az-Zajjaji, make the short story long and complicated matters when they suggest the use of the 'constant' tense to refer to a kind of timeless action (see Table 1 above). Thus, instead of

solving the problem of the verb-form indicating actions in the future time, they add another time, i. e., the timeless, that requires another verb-form to denote the actions wherein.

3.1.2 Dual divisions

3.1.2.1 Past-present

There is a strong link between the verb-form and tense in relation to time; this link is not a characteristic of Arabic only. al-Makhzoumy (1964: 148) states that this link "is an aspect of the verb in its older stages and not a characteristic of Arabic as Wright (1967) claims. English scholars found that Old English used only simple present and simple past to express various ideas about past, present, and future times".

al-Makhzoumy, then, is one of the Arab scholars who call for dividing Arabic tenses into past and present. analogously with those of Old English. He (ibid.) further adds that tenses in Modern English has much developed to include several aspects such as simple, progressive, and perfect of the same tense; he wonders whether Classical Arabic had developed as well or not! In fact, Classical Arabic did develop such kind of aspects, though not separately written down in f forms of rules.

3.1.2.2 Past- Future

Some scholars think that the verbs could be divided into two categories: past and future ⁽⁴⁾. Ibn Ya'eesh (n. d.: 40) states that certain scholars deny the present tense or any verb-form for an action belonging to the present; thus, if such a tense happens to exist, it will be past; otherwise it will be future, i. e., there is not any third tense.

Furthermore, as-Samarrai' (1966: 16) states that az-Zajjaji defines verbs as forms (words) that refer to past or future actions or times such 'قام' (stood): 'يقوم' (stand/s) and 'قعد' (sat): 'يقعد' (sit/s), etc. as-Samarrai' (ibid.) states that az-Zajjaji's definition of verbs limits the verb to the past and future and he considers the present to be, actually, future because as soon as one gets out of it, it becomes within the past. Hence, it is used in the same way for the future, as in 10 and 11, for example.

3.2 Real and Unreal Tenses

Tense, for at-Tbatebaai' (1983: Ch. 3), can be divided into two types: real and unreal. Real tenses include tenses referring to actions that exist, i. e. the present, and to actions that have existed but not any more, i. e. the past. Unreal tense refers to future actions that have not existed yet. This suggests that non-existent tenses are both past and future (See Figure 3. below).

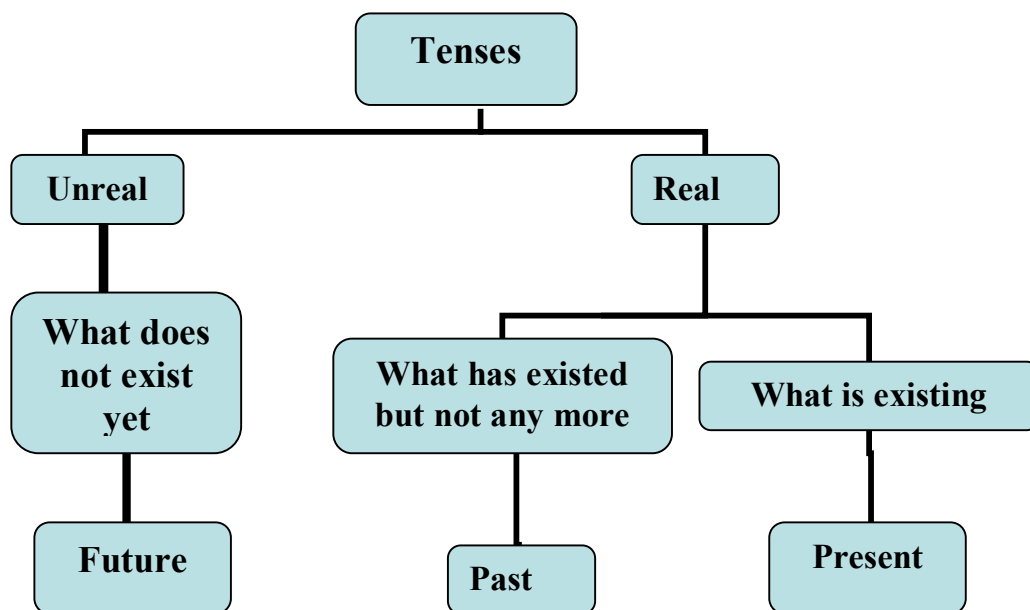


Figure 3 Time-Existences of Actions

Furthermore, at-Tabatebaai' (ibid.) identifies two types of non-existent actions: actions that came to exist but not any more, like actions in the past tense, and actions that have never come to exist, like actions in the future tense. Real tenses are realised by existential verb-forms of real actions: past and present, whereas unreal tenses. On the contrary, the future tense has no specific verb-form; it can only be identified by the virtue of its structure in some larger units of grammar. In relation to the moment of speaking, i.e. speech-time, rather than to the time of event, i.e. event-time, tenses can be seen as:

- The present tense refers to an action that is being done at the moment of speaking (now),
- The future tense refers to an action that is before the time of speaking, and
- The past refers to an action that is after the time of speaking.

Comparing this to figure 2 above, one could realise the reversed directions of the movement of the action in relation to the speech-time and event-time. For the unreal non-existent future action to be really existential, it should creep through the present moment. Since the present is too short to be separated from the future, these two tenses have been given the same form of verb. A moment later, the action would come to be non-existent past. This relationship can be explicated by relating the action indicated by the verb-form to the moment of uttering that verb. Actions, then, come to be at the moment of speaking, before, or after it. As shown in Figure 4 below, what is before the moment of speaking will be the future, what is at this moment is the present, whereas what is after that moment is the past. Actions here move opposite the direction of the time of speaking.

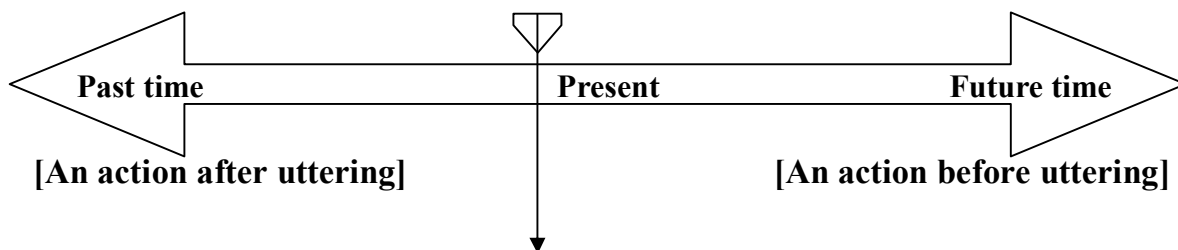


Figure 4 Time-action Relationships

3.3 More than a Tense in One

Reporting some of the views concerning tense-time relationships, al-Makhzoumy (1964: 145) states that Wright (1967: 51) believes that the Arabic verb-forms are only two; one expresses an action that began and ended in relation to other actions and the other expresses an action that began but does not end yet. Commenting on Wright (ibid.), al-Makhzoumy (ibid.) states

that Arabic, for Wright, unlike English, does not have formulae but that of 'فعل' /feʕle/ to express simple past, past perfect, or past imperfect (progressive). Besides, it has but the formula of 'يفعل' /jefʕle/ to express both present and future. Thus, Arabic has neglected tenses within any of its tenses, as it does not have enough verb-forms. It has no ability to express its users' minute thoughts and ideas related to the

scope of time within which an action, or more contiguous actions, may occur. For al-Makhzoumy (ibid. 145-6), Wright thinks that the Arab grammarians were not successful in realizing the way their language expresses such aspects as simple, perfective, or imperfective in any of the past, present, or future tense. Instead, they devoted too much time describing (philosophical) time in relation to past, present, and future, if there is any, verb-forms.

3.3.1 Aspect and Modality

Advocating Arabic in the respect of aspect and modality, the researchers could present three points:

- 1) Apparently, it seems that Wright (1947) has reached this *unfair* conclusion throughout studying some Arabic grammar books for the beginners such as that of Ibn-Aqeel (1988) and Ibn-Hushaam (1987) and neglected the Arabic grammar resources of heavy reliance.
- 2) For most grammarians, both English and Arabic tend to use two verb-forms, past and present, only to express all time relations.
- 3) As for complex tenses expressed by complex verb phrases '
 - a. English uses some other techniques like auxiliaries and time indicators or adverbs to express actions at a more complex level of time relations. Thus, in addition to the main verb, it uses verb phrases with perfective, progressive, and the progressive perfective combinations of tense like (have + -en), (be + -ing), and (have + been + -ing) respectively. For some grammarians, this is, in fact, a mixture of tense and aspect as two distinct grammatical categories.
 - b. Arabic behaves in the same way. It has its own adverbs and auxiliaries that accompany the main verbs to indicate such more complex relations. Hence, the Arabic verb phrase may contain auxiliaries like 'قد', 'كان', 'س', and 'سوف' that form one unit with the present or past form of the verb to express clusters of actions in the past

time or clusters of intentions in the future.

This view is supported by the idea that some Arab scholars have noticed the linguistic phenomenon of more than a tense in one. Notice the italic expressions in the following statement of Ibn-Ya'eesh (n. d.: 18) describing 'إِذَا' and 'إِذْ':

'إِذَا' and 'إِذْ' could suitably occur in *all past and future times*. 'إِذْ' is ambiguous in *all past times* and has no special tense rather than any other [to occur with]; thus, it is ambiguous at *all the future times* as well [emphasis added]

The realisation of 'all past times' and 'all future times' indicates a better understanding of the various tenses that should express such times. Emphasising this fact, Bergstrasser (2003: 89-90) states that what distinguishes Arabic from other Semitic languages is the specialisation and the variation of meanings in its verb-forms by using two means; one of such means is the use of auxiliaries such as *قد* in constructions like 'سيفعل', 'قد يفعل', and 'قد فعل'.

4. Conclusions

Throughout the present study, one could refer to the following conclusions, which serve to verify its hypotheses concerning the agreement between Arabic and English in more than one respect of the notions of time, tense, and the verb-form and concerning the descriptive linguistic efforts of the Arab grammarians in the identification and description of these notions.

1. Ancient as well as modern grammarians of Arabic and modern grammarians of English have found the link between tense and time and mostly believe that tense, in parallelism with time, is tripartite: past, present, and future.

2. The concept of tense has formally developed with time to include some other grammatical categories such as aspect, mood, and modality, i.e., the study of more than a tense in one.

3. Though at different ages, both Arab and English grammarians do agree that

the present tense is a mobile moment across the line of time and that every single moment moves out of the future through the present moment to be gradually within the past.

4. Tense is related to verb-forms, in the same way a verb is related to its verb phrase, in terms of a functional, as opposed to a formal, category. In other words, tense is a functional category, which is a characteristic of the verb phrase within its sentence. Yet,

- Only do some grammarians of both sides have realised this distinction
- Arab grammarians use the term 'فعل' (=verb) to refer to both formal as well as functional categories, i. e., to verb-form and tense respectively.
- The Arabic term 'زمن', again, is mostly ambiguous as it may refer to 'time' and 'tense' in English, though some Arab grammarians use 'الزمن' (=tense) and 'الزمن الفلسفي' (=time).
- Time is a non-linguistic universal, referential or philosophical, and psychological notion, which often shows no correspondence with tense as a grammatical category in both languages.

5. The Arab grammarians have proved their authenticity in description and analysis that mostly go beyond dispute earlier than the descriptive efforts of the English grammarians. Among such efforts, there has been the study of the relationships between the verb-form and tense in connection to both the concept of time and the nature of the denoted action or event.

6. Though the Arab grammarians have their prominent contribution not only in this respect but also in the identification of past and present tenses that are used for non-past and non-present respectively, they have not devoted separate sections in their grammars for the identification and description of such notions as aspect, mood and modality. They have investigated this particular notion in terms of mere verb-form, verb-forms, and auxiliaries, and of the adverbial time indicators in actual sentences. Yet, their

efforts need to be restudied in terms of such notions to highlight their serious efforts in this regard.

Notes:

(¹) whenever the word 'action' is used it refers to action or event or any other denotation a verb may carry.

(²) The researchers' translation of the Arabic verse:

ثلاثة أيام هي الدهر كله
وما هن إلا الأمس واليوم والغد

(³) Arab scholars usually use the term 'verb' to refer to both verb-forms and tenses. In the present study, the term 'verb-form' is used to the formal category of 'verb' only while the term 'verb' is almost always used, as it mostly used by the Arab scholars, to refer to tense as a functional category of the verb-form.

(⁴) The Arabic literature gives as many instances of the way of understanding time and dividing it into two parts only. For Saidu-Ahal (1980: 163), Imam Ali (peace be upon him) refers to the idea that time is either past or future in some of his wise sayings such as
يا ابن آدم لا تحمل همّ يومك الذي لم يأتك على همّ يومك الذي أتاك.

Consider also the Arab poet saying:

عجبا للزمان في حالتيه
وبلاء وقعت منه إليه
ربّ يوم بكيته فيه فلما
صرت في غيره بكيته عليه

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