

# A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH AND ARABIC TENSES

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## ABSTRACT

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The study deals with the similarities and differences of Tenses in English and Arabic Tenses. The application to the language teaching and learning process. In this study the researcher focuses on the three main tenses of both languages namely simple Present Tense, simple Past Tense, and Future Tense, that is describing the verb systems of both languages based on to each tense. The data that support this study are obtained by applying a documentary technique that selected by reading some references related to the subject matters. The data are analyzed by using the theory of Contrastive Analysis to found out the similarities and differences of tenses in English and Arabic. The findings show some aspects of tenses in English are similar to those in Arabic. The differences are both English and Arabic has different number of pronoun. English consists of seven pronouns while Arabic pronouns are fourteen which influence the verb formation.

**Keywords:** *Contrastive Analysis, Tenses, English, Arabic.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Bilingualism is not the study of individual single languages, nor of language in general, but of the possession of two languages. James (1980:8) stated that bilingualism refers to the possession of two languages by an individual or society. Nowadays some countries use bilingual teaching. The purpose of this method is to accelerate the quality of education improvement toward students from various social groups so as to achieve alignment to mastering science and language.

Islamic Boarding School is one of the educational institutions in Indonesia that implement the bilingual method in learning systems with the aim to get the alignment quality of education, both at the national and international scope. In some boarding school, English and Arabic language are used in daily communication both among students, students and teachers, and among teachers in one area of boarding school.

Arabic is included to the Hebrew language family where most its speakers in the middle east. Arabic language has given a lot of vocabulary to other languages. For moslems, studying Arabic Studying Arabic is compulsory for moslems in order to help grasp the content of the Qur'an. As one of the international language, Arabic definitely has its own system and characteristics which makes it different from another language, for instance English.

Arabic is not complicated as it is continuously studied and practiced. Arabic learners should not hesitate to start speaking it. The problem is how to

improve the quality of the language seeing at the number of speaker who prefer to speak in English than in Arabic which still considered by most people especially students as the most difficult language even some students regard Arabic language into something scary. As the student who has studied in Islamic boarding school that implemented the bilingual method, the researcher assumes that the major factor causing the Arabic language seems very difficult for students is Arabic has many vocabularies (mufradat), variative synonyms and antonyms, the complexity of word changing from noun to verb, singular to plural form, and also the changes of final line (harakat) in each verb that affect its meaning.

The research questions of the present study are; what are the similarities and differences of Tenses in English and Arabic language? And, how are the similarities and differences of two languages applied in language teaching and learning?

### **Contrastive Analysis**

Contrastive Analysis is aimed at producing interned two valued typologies and found on the assumption that language can be compared (James, 1980:3). Contrastive Analysis compares two or more languages with the aim of describing their similarities and differences, providing better descriptions and better teaching materials for language learners. When people use a foreign language, they may make mistakes because of influence from our mother tongue, mistakes in pronunciation, grammar, and other levels of language. Being aware of

the differences between the mother tongue (L1) and the target language (L2) is needed in order to learn the correct use of the foreign language.

The background of the contrastive analysis as applied to the language teaching is the assumption that the native language plays a role in learning second language. Mother tongue influence is sometimes very obvious but when they refer to contrastive analysis, they think particularly of a systematic comparison of the mother tongue and the foreign language in order to describe similarities and differences, to identify points of difficulty which might lead the interference. (Johansson2008:10)

### **Tenses and Its main Types**

Time is independent Time is independent of language and is common to all human beings that conceptualised by many peoples, though not necessarily by all, as being divided into Past time, Present time and Future time. Tense can be defined as the linguistic expression of time relations and relevant aspects when these are realised by the verb forms. Tense systems are language specific and vary from one language to another both in the number of tenses they distinguish and in the ways in would be erroneous to imagine that the Past tense refers exclusively to events in present time and a Future tense to refer exclusively to events in Future time. Palmer in his book edited by Khafaji and Rasul (1965:1) stated that learning a foreign language is largely learning how to handle its verbal machinery properly. Verbs are consequently the central focus of the activities of human.

### *The main types of Tenses*

There are three main or basic tenses that found in many languages as the following:

1. Simple Present Tense: expresses expresses *daily habit* or *usual activity*. We use it to say that something happens all the time or repeatedly. The simple form also expresses *general statements of fact* or that something is true in general. It is not important whether the action is happening at the time of speaking.
2. Simple Past Tense: when the speakers used to talked about activities or situations that began and ended in the past.
3. Simple Future Tense: means that the action happens after the time of speaking. If one says: *Muhammad will go to work*, this means that he will go after some time (an hour, day, week, etc).

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study was conducted by applying descriptive qualitative method. The source of data were derived from some books of English and Arabic grammatical structure. The data were taken from sentences of both English and Arabic verbs tense. This study focused on the three main tenses of English namely simple Present tense, simple Past tense, and simple Future tense. And also three main tenses in Arabic namely simple Present tense, simple Past tense, and simple Future tense.

The data were analyzed to find out the similarities and differences of tenses in English and Arabic language and its application to the language teaching

and learning, by describing the data both English and Arabic verbs in terms of inventory, contrasting and comparing the tenses between English and Arabic language, finding out the similarities and differences of tenses in English and Arabic. After that, and conducting the results of the research.

## RESULTS

After describing, contrasting and comparing the data based on three main types of tenses, the writer conducted the similarities and differences of both English and Arabic tenses as the following.

The similarities are:

1. The verbs can be divided into two types namely transitive verb (فعلٌ معتدٍ) and intransitive verbs (لازمفعلٌ) either for English and Arabic language.

Transitive verbs are those which need direct object. For example:

- She closed the door

(Muhammad is opening the door) محمدٌ الباب يفتحُ

Intransitive verbs are those which are no required object. For example:

- Goats walk

(The best student) - أحسنُ التلميذُ

2. In English there are three main types of tenses as well as in Arabic, they are Simple Present Tense (المضارعُ فَعْلُ), Simple Past Tense (الماضِ فَعْلُ) and Future Tense (المستقبلِ فَعْلُ). All the tenses have their own adverb to indicate the time of speaking.
3. English and Arabic have the similarities in their verb functions.

- a. The simple present is used to state the general statement or fact, to indicate the habitual activities or an event that takes place at the moment of speaking and theoretical meaning when used in conditional sentences , expressing the future time.
- b. The simple past is used to express a completed activity (past time) and denote a prayer or a wish. This meaning is stated in English by the use of the infinitive or the auxiliary.
- c. The future tense is used to express the future time or predictions for something that we want to do. In Arabic, the word سوف/sawfa/ or the prefix *sa-*(سـ) are added to the front of the verb to indicate the future as well as in English that added Will/Shall before the verb to indicate the prediction or future time.

The differences are:

1. In Arabic language, the subject or pronoun influences the sentence. English only has singular and plural form while in Arabic language is singular, two persons form, and plural (more than two). Besides, the number of the pronoun is different, English consists of seven pronouns while Arabic pronouns are fourteen which influence the verb formation.
2. The tenses used in English and Arabic language have the same basic forms namely present tense, past tense, and future tense. In Arabic language, the verbs are classified based on the actor, the number of the actor itself and the gender.

3. In English, gender is classified into three classification namely male, female, and neutral. While in Arabic language, the genders admitted are male (مذكر) and female (مؤنث) only which are purposed to the human or animals and for the things.
4. English has the regular and irregular verbs neither in Arabic language.

### **The Application of the similarities and differences of both languages to Language Teaching and Learning.**

The findings of this study indicate that there are some similarities and differences of tenses in English and Arabic. These findings can be useful to the English teacher when they teach tenses for students whose mother tongue is Arabic language or vice versa. If students want to learn a foreign language, they will obviously meet with many kinds of learning problems dealing with its sound system, vocabulary, structure, etc. This is understandable since the student learning the foreign language speak their own native language, which has been deeply implanted in them as part of their habit. Very often, they transfer their habit into the target language learned, which perhaps will cause errors. Linguists try to find out the causes of the problems to be applied in language learning and teaching. They propose contrastive analysis that suggests the teachers to do it between the native language and the target language so as to predict the learning problems that will be faced by the students. Via contrastive analysis, problems can be predicted and considered in the curriculum.



The findings of this study are important for those students who study a second language or foreign language and for those who translate from a language into another. The findings of this study are also important for those Arab students who study English to compare English and their language (Arabic) or vice versa.

## DISCUSSION

The results above shows that both English and Arabic have some differences on its verb tenses. The tense of two languages may be similar on its functions but they have different way on its verb forming.

For example:

English	Arabic
Ann <b>takes</b> a shower <i>every day</i>	<p>اذهبُ إلى المدرسة كلَّ يوم</p> <p><i>/azhabuilāalmadrastikullāyaumin/</i></p> <p>(I go to school every day)</p>

The examples beside indicates the present time that expresses *daily habits* or *usual activities*. In **English**, the final *-s* and *-es* in **takes** and **goes**, and the occurrence of adverbs *every day*, *today*, and *usually* indicates the sentences as the present form. In **Arabic**, additional letters (prefixes and suffixes) that added in the words اذهبُ/*azhabu*/, يكتب/*yaktubu*/ and the changing of the ending vowel /a/ to the /u/, also the occurrence the adverbs /*kullāyaumin*/, /*shabāhan*/ indicates the sentences as the present form.

We know in English that I, You, She, He, They, We and It as the pronouns. Arabic has 14 pronouns or commonly called as *Dhomir*. If English only has plural and singular form, Arabic has singular, two persons form, and more of two or plural. The table below showing all the pronouns in Arabic.

As found by Khafaji (1972) in “Description and Contrastive Analysis of Tense and Time in English and Arabic” that the foregoing analysis and comparison of tenses in English and Arabic reveal various important aspects of the tense system of both languages. Two tenses may be formally similar, yet they are used in the two languages to indicate different functions.

## CONCLUSIONS

After analyzing the data, it can be concluded that both English and Arabic tenses have some similarities and differences. Both of them have three main types of tenses they are Simple Present Tense, Simple Past Tense and Future Tense , all the tenses have their own adverb to indicate the time of speaking and sometimes they use the same verb form in the same way, sometimes the two languages use the different verb forms in order to express the same meaning. The result of analysis shows differences both English and Arabic that have different number of the pronoun, English only has singular and plural form while in Arabic language are singular (فرد), two persons form (مثنى), and plural (جمع) or more than two.

## SUGGESTION

Based on the conclusions given, the following suggestions are needed to be considered in conducting the related research:

1. For another researcher try to find out the similarities and differences of both language and another languages in different theory of linguistics.
2. Hoped this research can help the learners, especially those who study English or Arabic as a foreign language should be more aware of the potential in making errors especially in using tenses.
3. For the teacher or lecturer especially those who teach English or Arabic as a foreign language ought to be aware of the similarities and differences through the contrastive analysis between English and Arabic. The teaching well-prepared for this contrastive study will lead the teacher in providing an efficient construction and less in making errors. The teacher may use this research as the guidance in language teaching.

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