

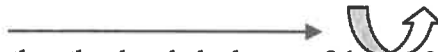
## VERBS IN ENGLISH AND ARABIC : A STUDY IN CONTRAST

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Comparison of two languages has been a fascinating thing. The writer of this paper, being a student of linguistics has attempted a contrastive study of the verbs in English and Arabic.

First, let me add a note what drew me to a deeper study of the two systems: It is the 'writing system' that led me to devote sometime for a deeper and closer look into the two languages.

The letters of the **English alphabet** are formed with **anti-clockwise movement** of the hand. Also we write English from **left to right**, for example, Yemen is a small country



On the other hand, the letters of the **Arabic alphabet** are formed with **clock-wise movement** of the hand. Also, we write from right to left, for example,



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



The nature of the two languages being such, the Arabic learners should take special care to learn the correct formation of English letters. If they follow the Arabic method of drawing clock-wise circles, when they write English letters, it will considerably reduce their speed and they will take a long time to complete writing tasks. The clock-wise movement is quick when one writes from right to left, but not so when one writes from left to right.

Contrastive linguistics was popular with ELT experts in the 60s. According to them, such a study has a lot of pedagogical implications. It was believed that a contrastive study paves way for a closer look into the systems of the languages being compared (the Mother Tongue and the Target Language) and enables the teachers to device suitable ways and means to teach the Target language effectively. This is especially more useful when the languages being contrasted / compared have very different systems.

But recently, the pedagogic implications of a contrastive study have been questioned. The ELT experts question the claims of contrastive analysis for effective teaching of FL/SL. So, this paper does not deal with the pedagogic aspect and aims at a study in contrast for its own sake.

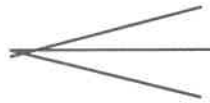
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No claims are made here to the exhaustiveness of the study as I had to confine myself to the 'data' (of Arabic language) made available to me by the 'informants', who are native speakers of Arabic.

## VERBS IN ENGLISH: FORM

### TYPES: 1. LEXICAL VERB



TRANSITIVE  
INTRANSITIVE  
LINKING

### 2. AUXILIARIES



PRIMARY AUXILIARIES  
MODAL AUXILIARIES

Many of the English verbs have five forms: The Base, the -s form, the Past, the -ing participle and the -ed/-en participle forms. Three of the five forms (the first three forms) indicate tense and are called **FINITE FORMS**. The other two forms, the -ing, -ed /-en participle forms are **NON-FINITE** and do not show tense. Thus, a lexical verb in English is inflected for 1) Simple Present Tense III person singular, (-s), 2) Past Tense (-ed) 3) Present participle (-ing) and 4) The Past Participle (-ed/-en)

Example: play	Base form
1) plays	-s added
played	-ed added
playing	-ing added
2) take	Base form
takes	-s added
taking	-ing added
taken	-en added

The verbs, which take '-ed' for the past tense, take the same suffix for the past participle form also. Such verbs are called '**regular verbs**'. The verbs, which do not take '-ed' for the past tense, take '-en' for the past participle. Such verbs are called '**irregular verbs**'.

## VERBS IN ARABIC: (FORM)

In Arabic, as in English, a verb is that word or group of words, which states what action takes or took place, or what situation exists or existed.

**TYPES:** Arabic has Lexical verbs but no Auxiliaries as in English. A verb has three forms for tense, but it does not have the forms equivalent to present and past participle forms in English.

1. Past ----- Feal Madhe *فعل ماضى\**
2. Present ----- Feal Modhrie *فعل مضارع*

## 3. Command/Request ----- Feal Amere فعل امر

The verbs get inflected for various tense forms. Besides this they are also inflected for Number and Gender.

Word	Past	Command	Present
1. Write	kataba كتب	aktob اكتب	yakatab يكتب
2. Take	akhada أخذ	khod خذ	yakhod ياخذ
3. Drink	shariba شرب	isharib اشرب	yasharib يشرب

- English letters of the alphabet are used throughout this paper to represent Arabic words. Symbol : indicates the sound is long.

**TENSES:**

“Arabic has four simple (i.e. one word) tenses: perfect indicative, imperfect indicative, imperfect subjunctive and imperfect jussive. We shall follow the common practice and call these, the perfect, imperfect, subjunctive and jussive respectively” (John Mace, 1999 : 16)

Perfect Indicative Tense ('Perfect')

The perfect expresses a completed action or state, usually situated in the past:

ذهب	Dehba	.He went / has gone
صار	Sara	He became / has become

Imperfect indicative tense ('Imperfect')

The imperfect expresses an action or state, usually situated in the present or near future

تذهب	Tadhab	She goes / is going, she will go
يظهروا	yadharon	They seem.

Imperfect Subjunctive ('Subjunctive')

“ The subjunctive expresses purpose, potential or will concerning the action of the verb ('He wanted to sell the house' 'Can you speak Arabic ?' 'I prefer you stay') (John Mace, 1999 : 24)

The subjunctive is formed from the imperfect by changing the endings only, as follows:

Imperfect	يكتب	yaktobo	he writes
Subjunctive	يكتب	yaktoba	(do)
Imperfect	نرجو	narju	we expect
Subjunctive	نرجو	narjua	(do)

We can note that the subjunctive is formed by changing the endings , to /

#### Imperfect jussive tense ('jussive')

"The jussive is formed from the subjunctive by changing certain of the endings only, as follows" (John Mace, 1999 : 26)

<u>Construction</u>	<u>Subjunctive</u>	<u>Jussive</u>
We find	najeda / نجد	najed نجد
He says	yakhola يقول	yakhol يقل
He comes	yajea يجيء	yajeء يجيء
We expect	narjoa / نرجو	narjoء نرجو
She forgets them	tansahum تنساهم	tnsahum تنسهم

#### ASSAHEEH AND AL MOATAL VERB الفعل الصحيح والمعتل

Assaheeh is a verb in which all the letters are consonants. It has three kinds.

1. **sa:lim** السالم It is a verb, which has no vowel letters at all and none of its letters is ( ء ) 'hamza'

ex: dhahaba ذهب went  
khataba كتب wrote

2. **mahmu:z** المهموز It is a verb in which one of its letters is ( ء ) 'hamza'. The 'hamza' can be at the beginning or at the middle or at the end as in the following:

ex:

akhada	اخذ	took
sa'ala	سال	asked
ka:ra'a	قرا	read (past)

3. **mudda:f** المضعف It is a verb in which one of the letters is doubled.

Ex: jarra جر pushed

### AL MOATAL VERBS الفعل المعتل

Al Moatal verb is a verb in which some of the letters are vowels, in contrast to assaheeh, which has no vowel letters. It has five kinds. They are:

1. **Al mithal verb** المثال

(First letter is a vowel) ex: wa'ada وعد promised

2. **Alagwaf verb** الاحرف

(The middle letter is a vowel) ex: gaool قول speech

3. **Alnagas Verb** الناقص

(The last letter is a vowel) ex: rami رمى throw

4. **Allafeef almakhron verb** اللفيف المقرون

(It has two combined letters) ex: howa هوى fall

5. **Allafeef almafrok h verb** اللفيف المفروق

(It has two vowel letters, which are separate) ex: wakha : وقى protect

### Al Mujaradh and Al Mazeed verbs المجرد والمزيد

1. **Al Mujaradh Verb** : It is a verb which has no extra letters. It can be measured with three letters ( ف ع ل ) (f, a, l) if it is a tri-verb. But it can be a verb with four letters also. If we omit one of its letters, it becomes meaningless.

Ex: Jama'a جمع collected  
Dahraga دحرج rolled

2. **Al Mazeed Verb** : It is a verb in which some of the letters are extra and even if we omit one of the letters, the verb remains meaningful.

Ex:

Astakharaja استخراج explored

The extra letters in this word : اس ت

### THE EXTRA LETTERS IN AL MAZEED VERBS

ا س ت ي م و ل ن ة ء  
A H A N A L A W A M A Y A T A S A A:

### AGREEMENT

1. **ARABIC** : Arabic verbs are inflected for gender and number in both Subjunctive and Objective cases. An Arabic verb agrees with its subject (noun or pronoun) in number and gender.

#### Masculine

Yaktub attalib add rs (The boy student  
writes the lesson)

يكتب الطالب الدرس

kataba add rs (The boy student  
wrote the lesson) At taliba katabat add rs

الطالب كتب الدرس

#### Feminine

Taktub attaliba add rs

تكتب الطالبة الدرس

(The girl student writes) attalib

الطالبة كتبت الدرس  
(The girl student wrote  
the lesson)

### SUBJECTIVE CASE

Come here (boy)

ta'a:l hu:na:

تعال هنا

Come here (girl)

ta'a:li hu:na:

تعال هنا

Come here (two boys &

Two girls)

ta'a:la hu:na:

تعالا هنا

Come here (many boys)

ta'a:lu hu:na:

تعالوا هنا

Come here (many girls)

ta'a:lna hu:na:

تعالن هنا

### OBJECTIVE CASE

He told me	hua kallamni	هو كلمني
She told you	hia kallamtuka	هي كلمتك
I told him	ana kallamtuhu	انا كلمته
He told her	hua kallamaha	هو كلمها
We told them	nahnu kallamnahum	نحن كلمناهم
They told us	hum kallamuna	هم كلمونا
You told him	anta kallamtuhu	انت كلمته

This is an important difference between the verbs of English and Arabic as English verbs are not inflected for number and gender.

Arabic has a word, 'saofa' سوف which is almost equivalent to the word, 'will' in English. Its uses are very limited, unlike the English, 'will', which is a modal auxiliary verb in English.

Hua saofa yakon doctor

هو سوف يكون دكتور

(He will be a doctor)

### FUNCTIONS OF VERBS –(ENGLISH)

Syntactically an English verb plays a **vital role**. Any English sentence without a finite verb (tense-showing verb) in it, is ungrammatical and unacceptable.

He is a teacher. \* He a teacher (ungrammatical)

Regarding the syntactic position of a verb in English, we can find that in all types of Declarative sentences, it is placed after the Subject. The pattern of an English sentence (declarative) is:

Subject +Verb+(Object)+(Complement)+(Adjunct) {Items in brackets are optional}

In interrogative sentences, there is a reversal of position and the verb is placed before the subject, as in,

Are you a student of this college?

Who gave you this pen ?

In imperative sentences (commands / Requests) also the verb occupies the initial position:

Stand up

Please open the window

### ARABIC

In Arabic, the verbs are not considered so vital as they are in English. Arabic permits statements and questions without a verb in them.

Ahmad doctor احمد دكتور

Ayn Mohammad? اين محمد ؟

When we come to the syntactic position of a verb, we find that Arabic permits the verbs either to be at the initial position or after the Subject. The first type of sentence, which begins with a verb is called 'Al jomlah Al faliah' ( الجملة الفعلية ) And the second type, in which the verb follows the Subject is called 'Al jomlah Alismiayah' ( الجملة الاسمية )

1. yaktobo Ahmad arresaleh      يكتب احمد الرسالة      (Ahmad writes the letter)
  2. Ahmad yaktobu arresaleh      احمد يكتب الرسالة      ( Ahmad writes the letter)
- (the underlined words are verbs)

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