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# **A SYNTACTIC AND SEMANTIC CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF PRESENT TENSE IN ENGLISH AND ARABIC LANGUAGE**

**BY**

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## Abstract

This research aims to carry out a syntactic and semantic contrastive analysis of present tense in English and Arabic language. The main goal of this study is to help in translation from English to Arabic. It, also, helps Arabic native language speakers who learn English as a second language in avoiding some interferences could happen when using Arabic present tense and English present tense. At the first, the paper investigates the meanings of some main concepts. These concepts are contrastive analysis, semantic analysis, morphemes, semantics of tense, tense and aspect, English tenses and aspect, Arabic tenses and aspect, aspects of English present tense, and aspects of Arabic present tense. Then, it tries to find the relationship between verb-form and verb-meaning as used in present tense in English and Arabic language in detail. It discusses the syntactic semantic values of present tense in English and Arabic. By the end of this research, we find that English has several grammatical forms describe the different aspects of present tense, whereas, Arabic has not this variety. Arabic uses lexis to cover the meaning. We, also, realized that the semantic relationship between form and meaning cannot be restricted. We should present the real implications of a text not the literal meaning.

**Keywords:** contrastive, analysis, present-tense, Arabic language, semantic, syntactic

## ملخص البحث:

يهدف هذا البحث إلى إجراء دراسة تقابلية نحوية ودلالية للفعل المضارع باللغتين الإنجليزية والعربية. الهدف الرئيسي من هذه الدراسة هو المساعدة في الترجمة من الإنجليزية إلى العربية. كما أنه يساعد الناطقين باللغة العربية الذين يتعلمون اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية في تجنب بعض التداخلات التي يمكن أن تحدث عند استخدام صيغة المضارع العربية وصيغة المضارع الإنجليزية. ففي البداية، تبحث الورقة البحثية في معاني بعض المفاهيم الأساسية. هذه المفاهيم هي الدراسة التقابلية، والتحليل الدلالي، والصرف، ودلالات الأزمنة، وزمن المضارع في اللغة الإنجليزية العربية. بعد ذلك، يكشف البحث عن العلاقة بين صيغة الفعل ومعنى الفعل كما هو مستخدم في المضارع في اللغتين الإنجليزية والعربية بالتفصيل. ويناقش القيم الدلالية النحوية في زمن المضارع باللغتين الإنجليزية والعربية. وفي نهاية هذا البحث، وجدنا أن اللغة الإنجليزية لها عدة أشكال نحوية تصف أزمنة مختلفة للفعل المضارع، بينما اللغة العربية ليس بها هذا التنوع؛ حيث تستخدم المفردات لتغطية المعنى. لقد أدركنا أيضًا أن العلاقة الدلالية بين الصيغة والمعنى لا يمكن تقييدها. فيجب أن نقدم المضامين الحقيقية للنص وليس المعنى الحرفي.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** المقارنة، التحليل، المضارع، اللغة العربية، الدلالات، النحو.

## 1. Introduction

This research aims to carry out a syntactic and semantic contrastive analysis of present tense in English and Arabic language. The main goal of this study is to help in translation from English to Arabic. It, also, helps Arabic native language speakers who learn English as a second language in avoiding some interferences could be happen when using Arabic present tense and English present tense.

Firstly, this paper investigates the meanings of some main concepts. These concepts are contrastive analysis, semantic analysis, morphemes, semantics of tense, tense and aspect, English tenses and aspect, Arabic tenses and aspect, aspects of English present tense, and aspects of Arabic present tense. Secondly, it tries to find the relationship between verb-form and verb-meaning as used in present tense in English and Arabic language in detail. It discusses

the syntactic semantic values of present tense in English and Arabic. Points of agreement and disagreement between English and Arabic are pointed in an attempt to make the syntactic semantic differences more comprehensible. This research aims to provide a better comprehension of present tense structure and its variant semantic implications.

## 2. Basic concepts

In this part, we focus on explaining some main concepts which support our study. Contrastive analysis and semantic analysis are the first concepts will be discussed. Then we will argue what is the meaning of tenses and aspects, and what are the differences between them. We will also explain the differences between English and Arabic tenses and aspects. By the end of this research, we will be fully aware of the main concepts which help us in understanding the main points and aim of this research.

## 2.1 Contrastive Analysis

The goal of contrastive analysis is to predict linguistic difficulties experienced during the acquisition of a second language. Difficulties in acquiring a new language are derived from the differences between the new language and the native language of a language learner. In this regard, errors potentially made by learners of a second language are predicted from interference by the native language. Such a phenomenon is usually known as negative transfer. Robert Lado (1957, p.2) asserts:

Individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings and the distribution of forms and meanings of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture — both productively and when attempting to speak the language and to act in the culture and receptively when attempting to grasp and understand the language and culture as practiced by natives.

Lado pointed to the transfer of the learner's mother culture norms to the foreign language learning process. The association between language and culture is considerably significant and should be given its due importance in foreign language learning situation. Second language errors may also be attributed to the influence of the first language habits. Moreover Pit Corder (1981, p.10) argues, "errors were predicted to be the result of the persistence of existing mother tongue habits in the new language." Transfer of the habits, forms and cultural norms of the learner's mother tongue to the target language leads to interference between the contrasting systems of the contact languages. This causes the emergence of some foreign language learning problems and the production of certain types of errors.

Thus, Lado claimed that the relation between difficulty and difference is close. He states:

We know from the observation of many cases that the grammatical structure of the native language tends to be

transferred to the foreign language ... Those structures that are similar will be easy to learn because they will be transferred and may function satisfactorily in the FL. Those structures that are different will be difficult because when transferred they will not function satisfactorily in the foreign language and will therefore have to be changed. (1957, pp.58-9)

A foreign language learner may produce a syntactically correct utterance which is understood by the native speaker to mean something different from what the learner has intended it to convey. In this respect, for example, is the use of the English utterance "thank you" by Arabic speaking learners of English. If an Arab learner is asked:

-Would you like to have some tea?

The most common answer is: Thank you.

To English man "thank you" in this context indicates that the person has accepted the offer, whereas he has actually intended it to mean that he would not accept the offer. This error, and others of the same type, occurs because of the literal translation of the similar mother-tongue situation.

So, contrastive analysis is a tool for studying languages in order to show the points of similarities and dissimilarities between two languages. Moreover, to show how these differences influence learning language. The main job of contrastive analysis is to predict the errors which may commit by learners of a new language. It, also, sets the factors of language interference. This helps linguistics to put the solution for such errors and how we can avoid it.

## 2.2 Semantic Analysis

Linguistic semantics is the study of meaning that is used to understand human expression through language. William Frawley (1992, p.189) defines linguistic semantics as, "the study of literal, decontextualized, grammatical meaning". According to Philip Kitcher(1989, p.35), "Semantics contrasts with syntax, the study

of the combinatory of units of a language (without reference to their meaning), and pragmatics, the study of the relationships between the symbols of a language, their meaning, and the users of the language." Semantic analysis is the process of relating syntactic structures, from the levels of phrases, clauses, sentences and paragraphs to the level of the writing as a whole, to their language-independent meanings. It also involves removing features specific to particular linguistic and cultural contexts, to the extent that such a project is possible.

### 2.3 Morphemes

In grammar, words are divided into morphemes. A morpheme is the smallest meaningful unit of form which is grammatically pertinent. A morpheme is not identical with a syllable. It may consist of a single phoneme such as 'a' and may consist of one or more syllables as in 'the' and 'between'. A morpheme may be free or bound. A free morpheme is one that can stand alone as a word or enter in the structure of other words as 'boy, play, an'. A bound morpheme cannot be uttered alone with meaning. It always combines with one or more morphemes to form a word as (un-, dis-, -ment, -ing, -ed, -es).

Morphemes stand in a particular relationship to each other. In any word there is a central morpheme that has the principal meaning called a root or a base; and one or more subsidiary morphemes called an affix. Thus, in spending, spend is the root or base and -ing is the affix. A root is an allomorph of a morpheme which has another allomorph that is a free form deep. It is a borrowing from another language in which it is a free form or a base as in geology, pediatrics, microfilm. A word may contain one base and several affixes. A base may be free or bound. Any base may have more than one form. An affix may be directly added to a root or to a stem. A stem consists of a morpheme or a combination of morphemes to which an affix can be added. Some stems or words contain two or more

roots. These are called compound stems. An affix is a bound morpheme that occurs before or behind a base.

Roots are longer than affixes and much more numerous in the vocabulary. For example, in 'unemployed', 'employ' is central and 'un-' and '-ed' are peripheral. If an affix precedes the root it is called a prefix, if it follows the root, it is called a suffix, and if it is placed inside the root with which it is associated, it is called an infix. A word may contain up to three or four suffixes (educat-ion-al-ly, industri-al-ization, general-iz-abl-ity), but prefixes a single prefix (en-large, ex-port, Trans-Atlantic, re-producible, deploy), except for the negative prefix un- before another prefix (un-re-turnable, un-). When suffixes multiply, there is a fixed order in which they occur. A morpheme is a group of one or more allomorphs which vary widely in shape, in accordance with their environment. Many morphemes in English have only one allomorph. Few morphemes are used throughout all forms without more than one allomorph.

### 2.4 Semantics of Tense

Things can happen now, in the future or in the past. The tenses show the time of an action. In their paper entitled Time and Tense in English Mary P. Harper and Eugene Charniak (1986, p.3) state: "Tense is used to inform the reader (listener) of when the event associated with the main verb occurs with respect [respect]to the time of utterance. That is, tense informs the reader that an event occurs before, after, or during the time of utterance." In addition, tense is a grammatical category which is marked by verb inflection and expresses when an event or action happens. Bernard Comrie (1985, p.9) asserts this point of view, "tense is grammaticalised expression of location in time." Semantics of tense is also highly important to get in focus that is because tenses do not express times of actions only or durations, but they also have many other implications. Harper and Charniak (1986, p.4) present:

five rules describe the semantics of tense both in English and in our representation...

Past rule: This rule implies that there exists some event that must end before the beginning of the utterance event. ...

2. Present rule: This rule implies that there exists some event that is either cotemporaneous with the utterance event or can begin at or after the beginning of the utterance event. Which is asserted seems to depend on the aspect of the verb associated with event. ...

3. Future rule: This rule implies that there exists some event that must begin after the end of the utterance event. ...

4. Perfect rule: This rule is triggered by the word have followed by a past participle. The event in the rule can be a progressive or a main event. ...

5. Progressive rule: This rule is triggered by the word be followed by a progressive verb form. The event in the rule can only be a main event. ...

All the above definitions and explanations of tense are related to time, and how tense describes the time of a certain action or event, but there are some other uses for tense far away from time implications. According to Comrie (1985, p.26):

tenses have meanings definable independently of particular contexts; it is possible for a given tense to have more than one meaning, in which case some of the meanings may be more basic than others; it is also possible that a tense will receive particular interpretations in particular contexts, but these are always explainable in terms of the interaction of context-independent meaning and context, and do not therefore form part of the meaning of the tense category in question.

For more explanation, English past simple tense has basic meanings that refer to definite past time. It describes what happens at a given time or during a period of time

which is temporally located prior to the present moment. As in "Ahmed ate an apple". But there are non-temporal uses of past simple tense that can be found in conditional structures and sentences expressing wishes, as in "I wish I had a car."

So, according to the previous discussion of tense relating to time and its semantic implications, we can not define tenses as a grammatical expression of action or event in time only, but we should refer to the other uses of tenses such as presenting facts or wishes.

### 2.5 Tense and Aspect:

Tense is the inflection on a verb with reference to the time of the utterance. Tense is the correspondence between the form of the verb and our concept of time. Aspect is a term used to describe the state of verb action as beginning, in progress, completed, etc. Aspect refers to how an event or action is to be viewed with respect to time, rather than to its actual location in time. According to Comrie (1976, p.3), "aspects are different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation." Since the expression of time present and past cannot be considered separately from aspect, time and aspect will be combined.

### 2.6 English Tenses and Aspect:

There are two tenses in English: past and present. There is no obvious future tense corresponding to the time relation for present and past. The future is denoted by means of modal auxiliaries as in (a), by simple present forms as in (b) or progressive forms as in (c) and (d):

- a) I will go to school. (modal auxiliary)
- b) He leaves for London tomorrow. (Simple present)
- c) It is going to rain.
- d) The train is leaving tonight.

English has the following aspects: progressive, and perfective. Aspect is shown by the use of suffixes {-ing} and {-ed} and/or auxiliary words be and have as in:

- a) They are running.
- b) He has played.

## 2.7 Arabic Tenses and Aspect:

There are two tenses in Arabic: past and present. There is no future tense corresponding to the time relation for present and past. Arabic has two aspects: the perfect and the imperfect. The perfect refers to past time (or completed action), and the imperfect refers to present or non-past time. In Arabic, aspect-tense is shown by the addition of an aspect-tense prefix to the base form of the verb. To convert a verb into the active imperfect, an imperfect tense-aspect prefix is added to the third person masculine singular base form. This imperfect tense-aspect prefix has several variants. The distribution of the tense-aspect prefix and its variants are [يـ, تـ, نـ, أ]. They shown as in: [يكتب]-[تكتب]-[نكتب]-[أكتب].

Aspects of English Present tense

English Present tense has four aspects: simple (or infinite), perfect (or complete), progressive (or continuous), and the perfect continuous. The following examples illustrate their meaning.

A. The simple (infinite) aspect does not indicate where on a time line an action begins or ends.

- Rabbits eat carrots. The verb 'eat' tells a fact that rabbits in general like to eat carrot there is no indication of time.

B. The perfect (complete) aspect indicates that the end of the action or condition is known and is used to emphasize the fact that the action is complete. The rabbits have eaten the carrots. In this sentence, the action took place in the past, but it is implied that it took place recently and is still relevant at the time of speaking.

C. The progressive (continuous) aspect indicates that the action or condition is ongoing in the present. The rabbits are eating the carrots. In this example the action of eating carrots is still in progress.

D. The Perfect Progressive (continuous) aspect indicates that an action has in progress at a particular point in time.

It is frequently used to indicate the duration of an action or event. -The rabbits have been eating carrots for six hours before I took a break. In this sentence the action is imperfect. It is still going on and might continue for sometimes in the future.

This shows us that English has deferent aspects of the tense and each aspect has its grammatical syntax. Also, each aspect has more than one semantic implication.

## 2.8 Aspects of Arabic present Tense

Arabic present tense has syntactically one aspect, the simple (infinite), but with the use of lexis can describe present events and give different semantic aspects. We can consider the following examples for more illustration:

الشمس تشرق في الصباح

This sentence state a fact that the sun raises in the morning.

أحمد يأكل سمك الآن

This sentence means that Ahmed is eating fish right now. The event is ongoing in the present.

ما زال أحمد يأكل طعامه

This sentence means that Ahmed is still eating his food and the word (mazala) gives us impression that the event takes long time. So, as we see Arabic uses words and expressions to describe the event and its duration rather than grammatical syntax.

## 3. Aspects of present Tense in English and Arabic

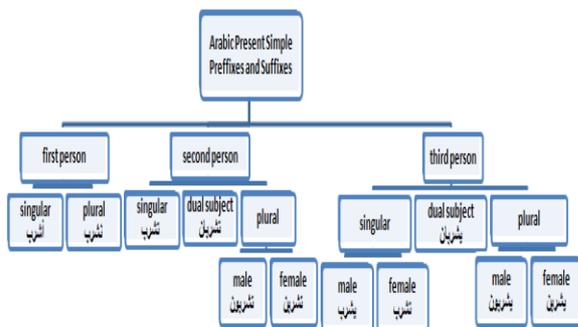
Now, I will try to make a contrastive analysis study for the present tense aspects in English and Arabic language. I will focus on how we can find an equivalent Arabic sentence for an English one. I will explain the syntax and the semantics of the tense in both of languages. This study aims to help in translating from English to Arabic. Most of the problems which face translators are that English expresses tenses syntactically, whereas Arabic uses lexicalization. So, I will try to find some basic words which could help in a good translation from English to Arabic. A translation introduces

the real intend of a sentence, not just literal translation.

**3.1 Present Simple Tense:**

Simple present tense is used to express general time. In English Present Simple tense, only the third person singular is marked for tense by the suffix -{S}, e.g.: I play, we play, you play, they play, he plays, she plays and it plays. The majority of modal auxiliaries have tense. Can, may, shall, will, must are used in the present tense. They precede the main verb and give it special shades of meaning like futurity, volition, possibility, probability, permission, and necessity. The auxiliaries can, may, shall, will, and must are not inflected for tense, e.g.: I can, we can; you can; they can, he can, she can, it can. Present form of Have and do are only inflected for third person singular nouns, and words for which the third person singular pronouns will substitute and word groups. I have, we have, you have, they have, he has, she has, it has; I do, we do, you do, they do, he does, she does, it does. Be has three forms in the present tense am, is, are as follows: I am, we are, you are, they are, he is, she is, it is.

In Arabic Present Simple tense, prefixes and suffixes are added to the third person masculine singular base form. These prefixes and suffixes have several variants according to the number and the sex. The following organization chart illustrates the variants of Arabic present simple prefixes and suffixes.



As it is shown in the figure, number is an obligatory category in the verb, when it follows the subject. A singular subject takes

a singular verb, a dual subject takes a dual verb and a plural subject takes a plural verb. However, the verb does not agree with the subject in number when it precedes it. The singular form of the verb is used when it precedes the subject. e.g.:

Subject	verb	verb	subject
الولد	يشرب	يشرب	الولد
الولدان	يشرب	يشربان	الولدان
الأولاد	يشرب	يشربون	الأولاد
البنات	يشرب	يشربن	البنات

So, we have two main syntactic differences between present simple tense in English and Arabic. Firstly, verbs follow the subject in number and sex in Arabic, but this does not exist in English. In English, only the third person singular is marked for tense by the suffix –s. Secondly, In English we have single and plural only, but in Arabic we have single, dual, and plural.

Present simple tense expresses action in the present time as a temporal use. Habitual actions, Universal meaning or Future meaning are also noun temporal use of present simple tense. Comrie (1985, p.36) defines present tense relating to the time line: "The time line diagram ... identifies the present moment as a point in time on that line, and the basic meaning of present tense is thus location of a situation at that point."

Past Future

**3.1.1 Habitual Actions**

English and Arabic are the same in this use of Simple present tense. It can describe daily routines or something done regularly or habitually.

English:

- a) Ahmed likes apples.
- b) Ahmed goes to school every day.

Arabic:

- (a) أحمد يحب التفاح.  
(b) أحمد يذهب الى المدرسة كل يوم.

In sentence a) verb 'like' gives us the meaning of habitual that, like as a verb is used mainly to talk about enjoyment, preferences and habits exactly as verb 'يحب' in the Arabic sentence. So, we can assume that the habitual use of the simple present tense here comes from the meaning of the verb. In sentence b) the time adverbial 'everyday' and 'كل يوم' in the Arabic sentence are responsible of the habitual meaning here.

### 3.1.2 Universal meaning:

We use the Present Simple to talk about universal truths (for example, laws of nature) or things we believe are, or are not, true. It's also used to generalize about something or somebody. Comrie (1985,p.40) argues, "there can be no separate habitual tense, distinct from the present... The universality can, of course, be made explicit by a time adverbial"

English:

- a) Water boils at 100 degrees Celsius.  
b) The Elephant doesn't fly.

Arabic:

- (a) الماء يغلى عند ١٠٠ درجة سيليزية.  
(b) الفيلة لا تطير.

Sentence a) in both Arabic and English use present simple to state a universal Truth as well as in sentence b) to express a fact.

### 3.1.3 Future meaning:

Present Simple can be used to talk about events that will happen in the future and we can't change (for example, an official meeting or a train departure). In this point Leech (2004, p.7) States, "it would be better to call the present tense the 'Non-past Tense', as it can be used for future as well as present time."

English:

- a) The meeting starts at 4 PM.  
b) The train leaves at the noon.

Arabic:

- (a) الميعاد يبدأ فى الرابعة مساء.  
(b) القطار يغادر فى المساء.

As we see here in the above sentences the time adverbials 'at 4 PM' and 'فى الرابعة مساء' in the Arabic sentence are responsible of the future implication.

### 3.2 Present Continuous Tense:

Present continuous tense consists of verb to be + present participle, the (-ing) form. Seven forms of verb to be (am, is, are, was, were, be, been) are used as the first member of the verb phrases. Only the first member of the verbal phrase is inflected in accordance with the subject. The second member being does not change. The present participle suffix (-ing) does not change as well. When auxiliaries are employed in groups of two or three, the following obligatory sequence is followed: be + present participle. In Arabic, there is no difference in syntax. Arabic uses lexis to express the different aspects of present tense.

Present continuous is mainly used to express the idea that something is happening at the moment of speaking. The continuous form is used for a single temporary event that has a beginning and an end. It suggests that an event began and is continuing, but it does not necessarily include the end of the action. The Present continuous also describes activities generally in progress. It can be used to express present actions, temporary actions, longer actions in progress, future arrangements and plans, tendencies & trends and irritation.

#### 3.2.1 Present Actions:

Most often, we use the Present continuous tense to talk about actions happening at the moment of speaking.

English:

- a) He is eating a dinner.  
b) Mary is talking with her friends.  
c) They are swimming in the pool.

Arabic:

- (a) هو يأكل العشاء.  
(b) ماريا تتحدث الى أصدقائها.  
(c) انهم يسبحون فى حمام السباحة.

According to the above examples, English uses special syntax form to express the meaning. In Arabic sentences we use the present simple form and there is no special form.

### 3.2.2 Temporary Actions:

Present continuous tense is also used for activities continuing only for a limited period of time.

English:

- I'm riding a bike to get to work because my car is broken. Temporary Action (His car will soon be repaired)
- They are not talking with each other after the last argument. Temporary Action (They will soon make up)
- Ahmed is working at McDonald's. Temporary Action (he is working there only during the summer holidays)

Arabic:

- انا اركب عجلة هذه الايام للذهاب للعمل لان سيارتي معطلة.
- انهم لا يتحدثون مع بعضهم البعض بعد آخر مناقشة.
- أحمد يعمل في ماكدونلز حاليا.

In the above examples, we tried to translate the English sentences. We use some lexis (حاليا, آخر مناقشة, هذه الايام) to indicate temporary meaning, because Arabic has no grammatical syntax equivalent to present continuous tense in English.

### 3.2.3 Longer Actions in Progress:

We also use present continuous when we are in the middle of doing something, time-consuming. It is used to implicate that an action takes time to be completed. Consider the following sentences.

English:

- They are working hard to earn money.
- I am training to become a professional footballer.
- Ahmed is studying hard to become a doctor.
- Mona is currently writing a children's book titled I am the World.

Arabic:

- انهم يعملون بجد ليكسبوا المال.
- انى اتدرب لاصبح لاعب كرة محترف.
- أحمد يدرس بجد حتى يصيح دكتور.
- منى تكتب حاليا كتاب أطفال بعنوان انا العالم.

Here we may have a problem in finding an equivalent for the above English sentences in Arabic. This is because English has a grammatical syntax help in introducing the sense of duration. Clever translator could mend this problem through the context of the whole text.

### 3.2.4 Future Arrangements and Plans:

Sometimes we use the present continuous to show that something is planned and will be done in the near future. This is always accompanied by a future time expression. According to Leech (2004, p.35): "the present progressive can refer to a future happening anticipated in the present... it is not a present intention or cause, but rather a present arrangement that is signaled by the progressive."

English:

- I'm meeting Mona in the evening.
- He's flying to Rome in September.
- We're not going anywhere tomorrow.

Arabic:

- سارى منى هذا المساء
- انه سيطير الى روما فى سبتمبر
- لن نذهب اي مكان غدا

Relating to the above sentences we notice that, the Arabic equivalent is adding suffix (سـ) + the imperfect of the verb. When the present progressive tense indicates that the future action is a plan made in the present the Arabic equivalent consists of (سـ) + the imperfect of the verb. Especially when verbs that show the intention on of the subject or that can indicate the result of planning by some agent. In negative sentences the suffix (سـ) is omitted.

### 3.3 Present Perfect

Present perfect consists of have + past participle. Past participle is the (-ed) form of the verb. There are two forms of have (have, has) serve as the first member of

the verb phrase. The first member has changes in accordance with the subject; the second member which consists of the past participle of the main verb does not. When auxiliaries are used in groups of two or three, the following obligatory sequence is followed: have + past participle. In case of the third person singular, the following obligatory sequence is followed: has + past participle.

The past participle form of the verb may be regular or irregular. The regular past participle ends with the suffix {-ed}, e.g.: played, passed. The pronunciation and distribution of the allomorphs of the suffix {-ed} are the same as those for the past tense suffix. The irregular past participle, like irregular past tense - has numerous forms: some verbs remain the same, some form their past participle by a special form, some replace their entire stem by a wholly different stem as in e.g. go, went, gone, run, taught, written, smelt, taken, made, said, left, sent, spoken, met, drawn, begun, set. In Arabic there is no grammatical syntax expresses the present perfect tense, but word (قد) plus the perfect or the imperfect of the verb form could be used in this sense.

Present Perfect tense denotes time completed in relation to the present. It is used to express actions that happened at an indefinite time or that began in the past and continue in the present. This tense is also used when an activity has an effect on the present moment. Comrie (1976, p.52) claims: "the perfect differs from the other aspects that we have examined is that it expresses a relation between two time points, on the one hand the time of the state resulting from a prior situation, and on the other the time of that prior situation. Thus the present perfect, for instance, such as English I have eaten, partakes of both the present and the past." So, present perfect tense could express indefinite time before now, effect on the present moment, and continuation in the present.

### 3.3.1 Indefinite Time before Now

One of the Present Perfect uses is to talk about actions that happened at some point in the past without definite time. It does not matter when exactly they happened. Notice the following examples and how we can translate these English sentences into Arabic.

English:

- He has already had a breakfast.
- He has arrive in England.

Arabic:

- لقد تناول وجبة الفطور بالفعل (a)
- لقد وصل انجلترا (b)

In sentence a) we do not know when he exactly had his breakfast. In sentence b) also the time of arriving is not defined.

### 3.3.2 Effect on the Present Moment:

We also use this tense when an activity has an effect on the present moment. So, it describes an action began in the past and has subsequences in the present. The following sentences express this use and how we can translate these sentences into Arabic.

English:

- He has finished his work. (so he can now rest)
- I have already eaten the dinner. (so I'm not hungry)
- He has had a car accident. (that's why he is in the hospital)

Arabic:

- لقد انهى عمله. (لذلك يمكنه الراحة الآن) (a)
- لقد تناولت وجبة العشاء بالفعل. (لذلك انا لست جائع) (b)
- لقد اصيب في حادث سيارة. (هذا هو سبب تواجده في المستشفى) (c)

### 3.3.3 Continuation in the Present:

We often use the Present Perfect when we want to emphasize that an event continues in the present.

English:

- Mona has worked as a teacher for over 25 years.
- Italy has produced the world's greatest artist.

Arabic:

- (a) لا تزال منى تعمل كمدرسة منذ أكثر من ٢٥ عام.  
(b) لا تزال إيطاليا تنتج اعظم فنون العالم.

In sentence a) Mona from 25 years ago and till now works as a teacher. In sentence b) Italy until now produces the world's greatest artist. In Arabic equivalent sentence we use word (لا يزال) to give the meaning of continuity.

### 3.3.4 Present Perfect Continuous:

Present perfect continuous consist of have/has + been + present participle. The Arabic equivalent is the imperfect of the verb. There is no specific form. We use the present form of the verb. The continuous form of the present perfect tense stresses the duration of a single past-to-present action that has a beginning and an end. It stresses the middle of an event rather than its beginning and end. It is more closely related to the present than non-progressive forms. So, present continuous tense could be used to express continuation in the present, past actions recently stopped, and temporary actions and situations.

### 3.3.5 Continuation in the Present:

We use the Present Perfect Continuous to show that something started in the past and stressing the fact of continuity in the present.

English:

- a) He has been painting the house for 5 hours. (He's still painting it.)  
b) I have been working as a Teacher since 1993. (I still work as a Teacher.)

Arabic:

- (a) مازال يدهن المنزل من ٥ ساعات.  
(b) مازلت اعمل كمدرس منذ ١٩٩٣.

In the above sentence we used word (مازال) in the Arabic sentences to stress the sense of continuity. This may show a problem in differentiation between present perfect and present continuous perfect tense in Arabic sentences.

### 3.3.6 Past Actions Recently Stopped:

Use this tense also to talk about actions that began in the past and have recently stopped. The following sentences

explain this use of present perfect continuous tense.

English:

- a) I have been waiting for you for half an hour! (I'm not waiting anymore because you have come.)  
b) Look at her eyes! I'm sure she has been crying. (She stopped crying when she saw them.)

Arabic:

- (a) انا انتظرتك لمدة نصف ساعة. (انا الآن لا انتظرك لانك قد اتيت)  
(b) انظر الى عينيها! انا متأكد انها كانت تبكي. (لقد توقفت عن البكاء عندما رأتهم.)

The above sentences show that Arabic sentences use perfect verb or past form of the verb in translation. There is no specific grammatical form in Arabic equivalent to English present perfect continuous tense.

### 3.3.7 Temporary Actions and Situations:

We use this tense when an action or situation is temporary as it shown in the following sentences.

English:

- a) I have been living in London for the past month.  
b) I have been working as a teacher for the past week.

Arabic:

- (a) لقد كنت أعشي الشهر السابق في لندن.  
(b) لقد كنت أعمل الاسبوع السابق كمدرسة .

According to the above sentences, present perfect continuous tens is used to express that an action has a temporary duration in the past. In equivalent Arabic sentences we use (لقد كنت) lexis plus the imperfect verb to achieve the target intend meaning.

At the end of this research, we realize that there are many similarities and dissimilarities between English and Arabic present tense aspects. These differences some of them are syntactical and other semantically. It is also clear that English grammaticalizes its description of present events, whereas, Arabic uses the lexicalization of its description of events taking place in the present.

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#### 4. Conclusion

By the end of this research, we have carried out a contrastive based syntactic semantic analysis of the present in English and Arabic showing the points of similarities and dissimilarities between both languages. The main point of these differences is that English has several grammatical forms describe the different aspects of present tense, whereas, Arabic has not this variety. Arabic uses lexis to cover the meaning. We, also, realized that the semantic relationship between form and meaning cannot be restricted. A certain form might claim a variety of implications which are derivable from the different contexts it might occur in. This shows that the literal translating will be almost wrong. We should present the real implications of a text not the literal meaning. I hope this research has participated in clarifying some of confusion which may exist between English and Arabic present tense structure and meaning.

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