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A comparative study of tense and aspect categories in Arabic and English

Badri Abdulhakim D. M. Mudhsh1,2*

Abstract: Based on the definition of “tense” and “aspect”, this review paper intends to compare and analyze the similarities and differences between Arabic and English tense and aspect categories in terms of their forms, functions and usage. Moreover, in the current review paper, I propose comparison and analysis that account for tense and aspect categories in Arabic and English. The comparison and analysis are based on the qualitative method which depends solely on the recent and previous research works. In addition, the comparison and analysis assume that there is a great deal of differences in tense and aspect categories in Arabic and English in terms of their forms, functions and usage. Furthermore, Arabic views temporality through aspectual distinctions of perfective category versus imperfective category. On the other hand, English expresses temporality through various verbal tense and aspect categories.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Badri Abdulhakim DM Mudhsh holds a PhD in Linguistics (Applied Linguistics) from Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), India. He has taught various courses of linguistics for undergraduate and postgraduate students at Aligarh Muslim University (AMU). Also, he has worked as an English language trainer at the Training and Placement Office (AMU). Previously, he has taught various courses of linguistics at Sana'a University and Queen Arwa University, Yemen. His research interests include Morpho-syntax and Applied Linguistics mainly on language teaching, learning and comprehension. Currently, he is interested in studying tense and aspect in Arabic and English. He has presented many papers in national and international conferences and published many research papers.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

This review article focuses on similarities and differences between Arabic and English tense and aspect categories in terms of their forms, functions and usage in order to gain a better understanding of similarities and differences between Arabic and English. Arabic and English are two different languages. Arabic belongs to the Semitic family, English belongs to the Indo-European language family. The comparison between Arabic and English in terms of verb systems has been and still of great interest of all English and Arabic grammarians. The present review article discusses in detail Arabic and English verb systems. Languages vary with regard to verb systems. What is interesting in this article is that it has gathered many of the previous and recent works in this area. Arabic views temporality through aspectual distinctions of perfective category versus imperfective category. On the other hand, English expresses temporality through various verbal tense and aspect categories.
1. Introduction
Both Arabic and English belong to different language families. Arabic belongs to the Semitic family. It is a synthetic language. English belongs to the Indo-European language family. It tends to be a synthetic language and an analytic language. These two languages (Arabic & English) differ in many levels of language. Precisely, tense and aspect of these two languages differ in many aspects. Therefore, there has been a spurt of interest to compare and analyze the verb systems used in Arabic and English.

Many studies have examined the similarities and differences in Arabic and English with regard to verb systems, and tense and Aspect categories (See, for instance, Alasmari et al., 2017; Eisele, 1990; Mudsh & Laskar, 2021; Zollmann et al., 2006). These studies are devoted to understand the similarities and differences between verb systems and the concept of time, i.e., present, past and future. In fact, verb system and concepts of time are the most essential aspects in languages. Many Arabic and English grammarians have paid much attention to understand the differences between the completeness and incompleteness of actions, the points of action, and action duration (Reishaan & Ja’far, 2008).

Many modern linguists criticize early grammarians because of their sole attention to the verb forms that indicate time in Arabic. These modern linguists further argue that defining the verb based on tense and aspect without involving contextual elements leads to many challenges when comparing Arabic and English tense and aspect (See Eisele, 1990; El-Sadek, 2014; Reishaan & Ja’far, 2008).

Carstairs-mccarthy (2002) recommends that by systematically comparing the grammatical terms of languages, there should be a place for morphology and syntax. Particularly, there should be an acknowledgment for the importance of relativity in creating lexical elements.

Despite the hard work of the previous attempts to compare and analyze Arabic and English similarities and differences with regard to tense and aspect, there is still a gap to further understand Arabic and English tense and aspect categories based on their forms, functions and usage. Therefore, this review paper tries to shed light on this gap. In order to do so, the qualitative method has been considered to analyze and compare these categories. Such comparison and analysis are solely based on the previous research works conducted in this field.

2. Contrastive Analysis (CA)
The idea of similarities and differences (Contrastive Analysis) was advocated by R. Lado (1957) when he claimed that the contrastive analysis is done by the systematic comparison between the systems of the L1 and L2. It is possible to identify and predict difficult areas that the native speakers may face in the process of learning a second or foreign language (Lado, 1957; Lennon, 2008). Lado (1957) asserts that learning difficulties depend on the similarities and differences between languages. Learning difficulties surface when the languages and cultures involved are different. The degree of difference is correlated with the degree of expected difficulty.

In contrast, if the two languages and cultures are similar, there will be no learning difficulties. In Lado’s analysis, the problems in learning a second or foreign language can be predicted prior and hence measures can be taken to eliminate such problems or difficulties. Such analysis enables one to prepare and customize the teaching materials according to the need of learners (Lado, 1957). Lado (1957, p. 7) states that “The plan of the book rests on the assumption that we can predict and describe the patterns that will cause difficulty by comparing systematically the language and culture to be learned with the native language and culture of the student”.

However, the contrastive analysis emphasized on the comparison of the surface structures of languages beginning with sound, then the grammar and ending with lexicon. In fact, lexicon received very little attention. These principles of contrastive analysis of Lado were very much in consonance with structural linguists who perceived language as a rule-governed system that could
be arranged hierarchically with phonology at the lowest level, followed by morphology at intermediate level and then syntax at the last level.

After World War II, there was a surge of interest in language learning and language teaching in the United States. The University of Michigan became a hub of language learning and language teaching. Fries and Lado applied structuralist approach to language teaching. This approach advocated by Fries and Lado popularly at Michigan led to a great emphasis “on the principled selection and grading of linguistic items for instruction” (Lennon, 2008). Thus, the “contrastive analysis” became the basis of language comparison and language teaching. Fries (1945, p. 9) states that “The most effective materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner”.

Moreover, contrastive analysis became associated with the behaviorist theory of language learning propounded by Watson and later supported by Skinner, Pavlov, Thorndike and others. The behaviorism school perceives language learning as habit formation characterized by stimulus, response and reinforcement.

Finally, contrastive analysis (CA) was not without problems. From the 1960s onwards, the application of CA approach declined. Rensburg (1983) cites the following reasons for the decline of contrastive analysis in the 1960s:

(i) The association that CA had with structural linguistics was replaced by the Transformational Generative Theory of Chomsky.
(ii) Close affinity of CA with the behaviouristic theory was discarded by psychologists and linguists.
(iii) Scholars of Applied Linguistics criticized CA approach saying that it had a very little practical application in the classroom situation (Nemser, 1971). CA was also rejected on the ground that all errors could be not traced to interference from the source language (Dušková, 1969). Many of the difficulties that CA predicted did not always turn out to be so (Nickel, 1971).

3. Tense and aspect
Tenses and Aspects are the grammatical categories of verb. Tense and aspectual distinctions in most languages are expressed through verbal morphology. Languages vary in the specifications of tense and aspect. Tense expresses the location of time in language. Comrie (1976, p. 2) defines tense as “the grammaticalized expression of location in time ‘locating’ the time of a situation related to the situation of the utterance”. Tense captures time in a linear sequence. Situation that corresponds with the moment of speech is considered as present, situation placed before the moment of speech is past and situation located after the moment of speech is future. Present is used as the reference point to situate past as distinct from future. Temporal system that relates an event or action to reference point is considered as deictic system. Tense is considered as a deictic system (Comrie, 1985). Tense is categorized into two types: absolute tense and relative tense. Tense which considers the “present moment” as the reference point for the location of situation in time is called absolute tense. Tense where the reference point of location of event or situation is point in time provided by the context. Also, the present moment that is the relative tense. In relative tense, the present moment is not considered as the deictic center or reference point.

Klein (2009) discusses tense by analyzing three time spans: time of utterance (TU), time of situation (TS) and topic time (TT). The tense captures the relation between TT and TU. According to Klein (2009) topic time refers to “the time span to which the speaker’s claim on this occasion is confined”. In Klein’s definition, the situation before TU is the past, present is the situation at TU and future is after TU. However, there is a problem with the classical notion of tense as simple past,
present and future as there are many non-canonical uses of tense (See Bybee et al., 1994; Comrie, 1976, 1985; Klein, 2009). Nevertheless, tense generally refers to the time at which an event, an action or a process or states hold. Tense locates situation in time, whereas aspect is concerned with “the internal temporal constituency of the situation” (Comrie, 1976, p. 3).

Comrie (1976, p. 3) defines aspect as “different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation”. Aspect expresses whether the situation is complete, ongoing, durative, iterative and habitual. Aspect characterizes perfective/imperfective oppositions. Comrie (1976, p. 16) defines the perfective/imperfective oppositions as “perfectivity indicates the view of a situation as a single whole, without distinction of the various separate phases that make up that situation; while the imperfective pays essential attention to the internal structure of the situation”.

On the other hand, perfective aspect views the situation as a whole, single unanalyzable unit with beginning and end, but imperfective aspect does not make any reference to its beginning or end. It is stated that perfective views situation from outside, but imperfective aspect does it from inside (Comrie, 1976). Generally, it is stated that perfective form suggests complete situation, possessing beginning, middle and end. Imperfective form may be characterized as making reference to the internal temporal structure of situation, thereby perceiving it from within. Languages may reflect both perfective and imperfective aspectual oppositions. The imperfective aspect is further categorized into habitual and continuous. Continuous aspect is classified as non-progressive and progressive. These tense and aspect categories of Arabic and English will be discussed in the following sections.

4. Comparative analysis of tense and aspect categories in Arabic and English
In this section, I present the comparison and analysis of Arabic and English tense and aspect categories in terms of their forms, functions and usage based on the qualitative method which solely depends on collecting previous literature on tense and aspect categories in Arabic and English. Moreover, I utilize the seven tense and aspect categories in the present study for the understanding of researchers and learners. The seven categories considered are as follows:

(i) Simple Present Tense  
(ii) Simple Past Tense  
(iii) Simple Future Tense  
(iv) Present Progressive (Continuous) Tense  
(v) Past Progressive (Continuous) Tense  
(vi) Present Perfect Tense  
(vii) Past Perfect Tense

4.1. Simple present tense
Simple present tense identifies situation that coincides with present moment (Comrie, 1985). The essence of present moment is considered in other studies as in Leech (2004) and Quirk et al. (1974). Present tense captures situation that is regarded as “instantaneous present” (Leech, 2004; Quirk et al., 1974). However, the idea of any situation simply coinciding with “present moment” is rather problematic. It is rarely possible to restrict situation that is strictly commensurate with the present moment (Comrie, 1985). In English, present tense is used to locate variety of situations temporally. Present tense is used in performative sentences, where the act described by the sentence is actually performed by uttering “the sentence in question” (Comrie, 1985). For example, the sentence “I name this ship the Titanic” constitutes an act of naming the ship that may be perceived as momentous (Comrie, 1985). Leech (2004) includes these types of sentences in present tense. He uses the term “ceremonial statements” to refer to these types of sentences. In English, present tense is also used to report ongoing series of events like sports commentaries, and so on. Comrie (1985) further refines the earlier definition of present tense and states that
present tense may be used to refer to situation which involves much longer period of time than present moment. Nevertheless, present moment lies within longer period of time (Comrie, 1985). In English, present tense is also used with habitual aspectual meaning as in “Mary goes to school at seven o’clock every day”. Present tense is also used to refer to past situation as in “narrative present”.

On the other side, Arabic has two simple verb forms “al-maadīlī” (perfect/past) and “al-muDaari” (imperfect/present). These two verb forms “al-maadīlī” and “al-muDaari” were referred to as perfect and imperfect by the grammarians (Wright, 1967; Beeston, 2016). The perfect “al-maadīlī” expresses completed actions and the imperfect “al-muDaari” denotes incomplete actions (Ryding, 2005). In Arabic, aspectual distinctions seem to be more prominent than tense distinctions (Ryding, 2005). Arabic seems to be deficient in expressing tense distinctions. Comrie (1976, p. 78) also mentions “two sets of Arabic verb forms to refer to perfective and imperfective”. However, Comrie (1976, p. 80) states that “perfective indicates both perfective meaning and relative past time reference, while the imperfective indicates everything else that is either imperfective meaning or relative non-past tense”. He further suggests that in Arabic the opposition between imperfective/perfective partakes both aspect and “relative” tense. Arabic verb expresses the degree of realization of process of event. It is concerned with the completion or incompleteness of action and this gives us the perfect/imperfect opposition.

However, many modern Arabic grammarians tend to use the notion of tense to denote temporal notions especially in language teaching (Ryding, 2005). Ryding (2005, p. 442) states that “present tense in Arabic corresponds to imperfect”. The use of present tense in Arabic is general and may refer to incomplete, ongoing actions or ongoing states (Ryding, 2005). The Arabic imperfect corresponds with English perfect and present continuous tenses (Moaibdin, 1988; Ryding, 2005). Arabic does not distinguish between present tense and present continuous tense. Moreover, in Arabic, present tense may be used to indicate habitual aspect as shown in this example “jastāqi’dū fi: 7atxa:misati kulli jawm”, “He gets up at five every day”.

4.2. Simple past tense
Past tense locates situation before the present. Any event or situation that is placed prior to the present moment is considered as past tense. Comrie (1985, p. 41) claims that “past tense only locates the situation in the past without saying anything about whether the situation continues to present or into future, although there is often a conversational implicature that it does not continue to or beyond the present”. Leech (1974) also complies with Comrie’s generalization of past tense.

Past tense in general includes all situations that preceded present (moment of speech). Many studies referred to the strong resemblance between past tense and perfective aspect (See Bybee et al., 1994; Dahl, 1985; Laskar, 2008, 2012; Mudsh, 2018). These studies assert that perfective also views situation restricted in the past. However, perfective does not designate temporal notion deictically. In English, past tense is used to locate any situation prior to present. English does not show degree of remoteness.

In Arabic, perfective is used to indicate perfective as well as past time reference (Comrie, 1976). Comrie (1976, p. 80) states that “perfective indicates both perfective meaning and relative past time reference”. Recent studies on Arabic, such study by Ryding (2005) assert that Arabic past tense refers to completed action or action in the past. Therefore, in many respects, it equates the English past tense and past perfect.

4.3. Simple future tense
Future tense may be used to refer to event that takes place after the moment of speech (Bybee et al., 1994; Comrie, 1985). Future includes desire, intention, willingness, intention and prediction (Bybee et al., 1994). There is a debate about whether future should be treated as tense or mood
category (See Comrie, 1985; Laskar, 2012; Mudhsh, 2018). Future involves simply a prediction about future events which may or may not occur. Hence, treating future as tense category is problematic. Comrie (1985, p. 44) states that “the so-called future tense in English makes a clear prediction about some future state of affairs, and it is in this way clearly distinct from modal constructions that make reference to alternative worlds”. The traditional grammar shows English as having future tense (Comrie, 1985). Traditional grammar presents the auxiliary “will” as the form used for denoting future tense. The auxiliary “will” may have other usages in English other than future tense reference.

Future reference in English can be expressed using different tenses as shown in the following discussions:

(i) Simple prediction: There will be thunderstorm in Florida tomorrow.
(ii) Arrangements: We are meeting the principal in the evening.
(iii) Intentions: I am going to spend the winter in Maryland.
(iv) Time-tabled events: The train leaves at 4 am in the morning.
(v) Prediction based on present evidence: It’s going to snow.
(vi) Willingness: I will give you a lift to the office.
(vii) An action in progress in the future: This time next month I shall be travelling across Europe.
(viii) Situation that is a matter of routine: You’ll be seeing Mary in school tomorrow. Won’t you?
(ix) Obligation: You are to report to the principal.
(x) Immediate future events: The plane is about to take-off.
(xi) Projecting into the future and looking back at a completed action: By next month, I will have gone back home.

Studies such as Quirk et al. (1974) and Leech (2004) also discussed various ways of how future is expressed in English. These studies show how future reference in English can be idealized in many other tenses.

Future time reference in Arabic is expressed by adding “sa/sawfa” to the imperfective form of verb. The addition of particle “sa/sawfa” renders a sense of prediction as in the following examples.

(1) fi: xillal ʔiːjʔiːna sanah sa-jaːnːʃa ʔilaʃaːr ʔala alqamar
“In time twenty years sa-live-present-3ps man on the moon”.
“In twenty years” time man will live in moon.

(2) sa-tumṭir
“It is going to rain”. (Al-Saleemi, 1987, p. 65)

In Arabic, we also find the use of “sa/sawfa” with the perfect form of the main verb in order to indicate future as in example (3).

(3) sawfa jatazawadʕ fi: jahr June ʔalmuqbil
“He is going to get married next June”. (Al-Saleemi, 1987, p. 65)

4.4. Present progressive (Continuous) tense
Progressive belongs to the aspectual category of imperfective. It is assumed that progressive aspect “views an action as ongoing at reference time” (Bybee et al., 1994). The progressive aspect
is used to describe situation in progress or ongoing. Progressiveness is akin to continuousness and
distinct from habitual (Comrie, 1976). The essential function of progressive is to refer to temporary
or ongoing situations (Leech, 1974). English makes a distinction between progressive and non-
progressive situations. There are some restrictions in English with regard to the use of progressive
aspect with stative verbs. Leech (1974) suggests that progressive is used to refer to present
temporariness as shown in examples (4)—(7).

(4) Where is Sara? She is cooking dinner.
(5) What on earth are you doing?
(6) I am trying to play violin.
(7) What is happening? The river’s overflowing its bank.

In examples (4) and (5) cited above, situations represented are temporary and cover present
moment. These also extend to past and future.

Arabic uses imperfective to capture both simple present and progressive situations. Arabic does
not distinguish between habitual and progressive (Mobaidin, 1988; Ryding, 2005). Example (8) will
illustrate how Arabic employs the imperfective form of verb to include both simple present and
progressive situations.

(8) Salma tutbuxu ?at-ʔaʔa:m
Salma cook the- food
“Salma is cooking the food./Salma cooks the food”. (Mobaidin, 1988, p. 75)

In the absence of any temporal adverbial, it is very difficult to distinguish progressive from
simple present tense in Arabic.

4.5. Past progressive (Continuous) tense
The “progressive situations” having past temporal reference are considered under past progres-
sive. English past progressive is indicated by an auxiliary and verb marked with “-ing”. Leech
(2004) states that present progressive corresponds with “now” that is the present moment of
actual time but the idea of location of past progressive has to be “some other certain idea of
reference”. Leech further suggests that time reference is often indicated by adverbial clause or
phrase. Leech clarifies the essence of past temporariness of past progressive in the following
examples.

(9) This time last year, I was travelling around the world.
(10) He was looking very ill when I last saw him.
(11) Five minutes later, the rescue party was leaving.

Mobaidin (1988) claims that equivalents of English past progressive can be stated by the perfective
of the verb “kān” followed by imperfective of the main verb as shown in the following example.

(12) fi: miθl hdaʔ alwaqt mina ʔassanti ʔalma:dijha kuntu ʔadrusu fi: london
in like this the-time of the-year the-last (I) was study in London
“This time last year, I was studying in London”. (Mobaidin, 1988, p. 91)

Comrie (1976) maintains that in Arabic, imperative past is expressed by combining perfective
of the verb “to be” (auxiliary) and imperfective of the main verb as in “kān yaktubu” “he was
writing/used to write”. In Arabic, “perfective and imperfective are combined to indicate action
which is completed in itself and it has internal structure” (Comrie, 1976, p. 81). The past inter-
pretation of imperfective is that it is derived from “kāna”.


Mobaidin (1988) while discussing present progressive in Arabic mentioned that some verb clauses are made in the participial form to refer to present temporariness. These forms of participial occurring with the perfective of “کن” do not convey “past temporariness”, but it simply locates a situation in the past. It does not indicate whether the situation lasted for an indefinite period of time or was temporary as in example (13).

(13) ٰکنا ٰصادیقی ٰسکیناٰ حنا
(he) was friend-my living here
“My friend lived/used to live here”
(He was a resident of this place)

In Arabic, adverbial phrases are necessary for conveying the meaning of “past temporariness”. Without adverbial phrases, perfective of the verb “کن” and the structure of imperfective do not convey the meaning of the temporariness.

Adverbials must be able to convey “a definite point in time”, otherwise the past temporariness meaning gets eliminated as in example (14).

(14) ٰقبل ٰسناتاٰن ٰکنْتِعاٰن ٰکَادْرِسٰعِی ٰفِی ٰعَمارِیکاٰ
before two years (I) was (I) studying in America.
“Two years ago, I used to study in the U.S.A”. (Mobaidin, 1988, p. 93)

Past progressive can refer to “habitual situations that hold for a limited period of time as illustrated in ‘at that time, I was working the night shift’” (Comrie, 1976, p. 37). Leech (1974, p. 26) also maintains that “past progressive can be used to indicate iteration or habitual actions in past as in ‘by sunrise, the laborers were normally making their way to work’”. The emphasis on restricted duration is emphasized by Leech as well. Hence, adverbials are essential in these sentences to obviate any vagueness. However, unlike English, in Arabic, elements of pastness, habituality and temporariness cannot be combined.

English past progressive meaning that indicates “habituality” as discussed above cannot be expressed in Arabic, because of the three elements which are “pastness, habituality, temporariness”. These elements cannot be combined in Arabic. Mobaidin (1988) states that if we try to translate the English sentence “by sunrise, the laborers were normally making their way to work” by using imperfective with perfective “کن”, we will get a sentence like (15) that conveys the meaning of habituality and pastness, but in temporariness.

(15) ٰماٰیا ٰجوٰرِعٰ ٰیافِمشی ٰکاٰنا ٰیالُعَمَمَالاٰعِل ٰیامَعْنِاٰ ٰییِاٰلَا ٰیالُعَمَاٰل
“by rise the-sun (were) the-workers walk to the-work”. (Mobaidin, 1988, p. 93)

4.6. Present perfect tense

Perfect category differs from other aspectual categories in the sense that it does not convey anything about the internal temporal structure of situation, rather it connects a situation with its preceding situation (Comrie, 1976). Comrie (1976, p. 52) states that “perfect expresses the ‘continuing present relevance of a past situation’”. To illustrate “perfect”, Comrie contrasts the two sentences, “I have lost (perfect) my penknife” and “I lost (non-perfect) my penknife”. In the first (perfect) sentence, there is an implication that the “penknife” is still lost, but it is not so in the second (non-perfect) sentence. Leech (1974) also states that present perfect indicates “past with present relevance” or “past which involves the present”. Perfect draws a relation between two time-points: (i) time of situation ensuing from preceding situation and (ii) time of preceding situation. Perfect draws a relation between “present state” and “past situation”. One of the features of English perfect is that it may be incompatible with the specification of the time of
the past situation as in the sentence “I have got up at five o'clock this morning” which is not acceptable in English (Comrie, 1976). This is due to the specific reference to the point of time “at five o'clock this morning”. However, Comrie (1976, p. 54) argues that “specification of time is not categorically excluded in perfect in English as sentence like ‘I have seen Fred today’ can occur”. Perfect can be used if the specifications of the time of the past situation include the present time.

So far in the above analysis, I treated perfect as having continuing relevance of an earlier situation. The following are the various types of perfect which are used in English based on Comrie’s analysis (Comrie, 1976).

(i) Perfect of result: perfect of result deals with present state that is referred to as the consequences or result of some past situation. Comrie draws differences between the two sentences “John has arrived” and “John arrived” to illustrate the perfect of result. In the first sentence, the persistence of the result of the subject John’s arrival is there, which is not so in the second sentence “John arrived”.

(ii) Experiential perfect: This type of perfect includes situation that has “held at least once during some time in the past leading up to the present” (Comrie, 1976, p. 58). English makes a clear distinction between experiential perfect and perfect of result with the help of these two sentences, “Bill has been to America” and “Bill has gone to America”. The sentence “Bill has been to America” is an instance of “experiential perfect”, which implies that Bill did go to America at least once and there is no suggestion that he is still there. The other sentence a “perfect of result” suggests that “Bill is now in America that is the present result of the past action of ‘going to America’” (Comrie, 1976, p. 59).

(iii) Perfect of persistent situation: English uses this type of perfect to describe situation that begun in the past but continues to the present as in “we've lived here for ten years”.

(iv) Perfect of recent past: This type of perfect is used where the present relevance of past situation referred to is one of temporal immediacy. Generally, the past situation referred to is immediate past. I mentioned above that in English there is a restriction of the use of perfect with time specification. But this constraint does not hold if the time specification is adverb “recently” or one of its synonym as in “I have recently learned that the match is to postponed” (Comrie, 1976, p. 60). In English, however, the past situation is necessary to be recent.

The (present) perfect in Arabic is formed with the particle “qad” preceding perfective as shown in examples (16) and (17) (Al-Saleemi, 1987; Comrie, 1976). Al-Saleemi (1987) states that the perfective when preceded by the particle “qad” conveys an action as in example (16) or to refer to an action that just finished at the moment of speaking as in (18).

(16) qad kataba
qad write-past-he
“He has written”. (Chomsky, 1976, p. 81)

(17) qad katabt
qad write-past-I
“I have written”. (Al-Saleemi, 1987, p. 42)

(18) qad bi9tuka haðah.
qad sell-past-I you this.
“I have sold you this”. (Al-Saleemi, 1987, p. 42)

On the other hand, there are few Arabic scholars who believe that Arabic does use perfect in the sense of English (Al-Muttalibi, 1986; Mobaidin, 1988). Al-Muttalibi (1986) rejects rendering any
temporal meaning to particle “qad”. He does not find any difference between the perfective preceded by either “qad” or “laqad” and perfective occurring alone as far as the reference of the temporal is concerned. The form “qad” adds more emphasis to the event so it shows it really happened in the past (Al-Muttalibi, 1986).

In spite of the debate over the use of “perfect” in Arabic, it is observed that in the recent years English teachers in Arab world present the sequence of “qad” plus perfective sentence in Arabic as an equivalent of English present perfect.

4.7. Past perfect tense
Past perfect (or plu-perfect) states “a relation between a past state and an event earlier situation as in ‘John had eaten the fish’” (Comrie, 1976, p. 53). This tense refers to “past of the past” that refers to a time in the past seen from the perspective of time already in the past (Leech, 2004).

In Arabic, past perfect is rendered by the use of perfective of “to be” “ka:na” and the perfective of the main verb with or without the particle “qad” as in “ka:na qad kataba” “he had written” (See Alsaif, 2017; Al-Saleemi, 1987; Cantarino, 1974; Comrie, 1976).

5. Conclusion
In this review paper, I have made an attempt to compare and analyze Arabic and English tense and aspect categories in terms of their forms, functions and usage based on the previously existed literature. From the comparison and analysis, it is clear that both systems of Arabic and English are different as far as tense and aspect systems are concerned. Further, English makes a fine stratification of time through the use of various tenses. In contrast, in Arabic, temporality is captured mostly by aspectual distinction of perfective versus imperfective. English employs various verbal forms to express the various tenses and aspect categories. Arabic differs a lot from English with respect to expression of tense and aspect system. For instance, the progressive (continuous) tense is marked by adding “-ing” to the verb. In English, there is a separation of simple present tense from present progressive contexts. Arabic does not distinguish between present tense and progressive aspect. In Arabic, both of these categories are considered under imperfective category. In the same way, English makes an overt distinction between past tense and past progressive tense, whereas in Arabic perfective is used for both past and past progressive contexts. Though, it can be concluded that both Arabic and English have a great deal of differences with regard to tense and aspect categories when it comes to their forms, functions and usage. The similarities and differences between Arabic and English in terms of the tense and aspect categories are concluded in the following Table.

| Arabic | English |
|--------|---------|
| **Similarities** | |
| The use of present tense may refer to incomplete, ongoing actions or ongoing states (Ryding, 2005). | Simple present tense is used to report ongoing series of events like sports commentaries (Leech, 2004). |
| Arabic past tense refers to completed action or action in the past (Ryding, 2005). | English past tense refers to completed action or action in the past (Ryding, 2005). |
| Future time reference in Arabic is expressed by adding “sa/sawfa” to the imperfective form of verb. | Traditional grammar presents the auxiliary “will” as the form used for denoting future tense. |
| Past progressive tense can be indicated by the perfective of the verb ‘kar’ followed by imperfective of the main verb (See Cantarino, 1974; Comrie, 1976; Al-Saleemi, 1987; Alsaif, 2017). | Past progressive tense is indicated by “was/were” and the verb marked with ‘-ing’. |

(Continued)
| Differences | Arabic | English |
|-------------|--------|---------|
| Temporality in Arabic is mostly viewed by aspectual distinctions of perfective category versus imperfective category (Ryding, 2005). | Temporality in English is viewed by various verbal forms to express the various tense and aspect categories (Ryding, 2005). |
| Arabic does not make distinction between present tense and progressive aspects. | English makes a separation between simple present from present progressive tenses. |
| Arabic perfective is used for both past and past progressive tenses. |
| In Arabic, aspectual distinctions seem to be more prominent than tense distinctions (Ryding, 2005). | English tends to be a tense language and can express through various verb forms (Ryding, 2005). |
| The use of present tense is general and may refer to incomplete, ongoing actions or ongoing states (Ryding, 2005). | Present tense is used to refer to situation which involves much longer period of time, habitual aspect and may refer to past situation as in ‘narrative present’ (Comrie, 1985). |
| Present perfect tense is formed with the particle ‘qad’ preceding perfective. It refers to refer to an action that just finished at the moment of speaking Al-Saleemi (1987). | Present perfect tense can be used in various types of perfect such (perfect of result, experiential perfect, perfect of persistent situation and perfect of recent past Comrie (1976). |
| Past perfect tense is rendered by the use of perfective of ‘to be’ ‘ka-nu’ and the perfective of the main verb with or without the particle ‘qad’ (See Comrie, 1976; Al-Saleemi, 1987; Alsafi, 2017). | Past perfect tense refers to “past of the past” that refers to a time in the past seen from the perspective of time already in the past (Leech, 2004). |

Author details
Badri Abdulhakim D. M. Mudsh12 E-mail: badrimudsh@gmail.com
ORCID ID: http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4945-8621
1 Department of Linguistics, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India.
2 Department of English, Sana’a University, Sana’a, Yemen.

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