Event Structure and Aspectual Classes : A Semantic Study of Verb Types in English and Arabic

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بنية الحدث والفئات الزمنية: دراسة دلالية لأنواع الأفعال في الإنجليزية والعربية

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Abstract

This study exploress the semantic representation of event structure in English and Arabic, concentrating on the connection between tense, aspect, and lexical aspect in both languages. The study analysed a corpus of sixteen textual extracts (eight in English and eight in Arabic) including selections from modern texts and the Qur'an—the study applies Vendler's (1957) classification of verbs into states, activities, accomplishments, and achievements to show similarities and differences across the two languages.

The analysis shows that, both English and Arabic share the same fundamental event classes, but their tense-aspect systems diverge: English encodes tense morphologically and aspect periphrastically, and Arabic depends on the perfective–imperfective distinction with discourse and auxiliary markers.

Comparative evaluation strengthens semantic, syntactic, and translational implications, highlightening the importance of context in interpreting This comparative analysis which focuses on semantic syntactic and translation shows the importance of context in understanding Arabic Imperfectives and English Perfectives forms is shown by .

The analysis stresses cross-linguistic typologies, improves semantic theory, and presents advice for context-sensitive translation in addition to pedagogical tips for teaching Arabic and English as second language.

Keywords: Event structure, English verbs, Arabic verbs, Vendler, tense, aspect, lexical aspect, cross-linguistic semantics, translation, pedagogy

Event Structure and Aspectual Classes : A Semantic Study of Verb Types in English and Arabic

الملخص

تستكشف هذه الدراسة التمثيل الدلالي لبنية الحدث في اللغتين الإنجليزية والعربية، مع التركيز على العلاقة بين الزمن، والصيغة(Aspect) ، والصيغة المعجمية للفعل (Lexical Aspect) في كلتا اللغتين. وقد حلّلت الدراسة مجموعة نصّية مكوّنة من ستة عشر مقطعًا نصّيًا (ثمانية بالإنجليزية وثمانية بالعربية)، تضمّنت مقتطفات من نصوص حديثة ومن القرآن الكريم. وتستند الدراسة إلى تصنيف فيندلر (Vendler, 1957) للأفعال إلى: أفعال الحالات(States) ، والأفعال الأنشطة(Activities) ، والأفعال الإنجازية (Accomplishments)، وأفعال التحقيق أو الإتمام(Achievements) ، لإظهار أوجه التشابه والاختلاف بين اللغتين .

تُظهر التحليلات أن اللغتين الإنجليزية والعربية تتشاركان الفئات الأساسية نفسها للأحداث، لكن نظامي الزمن والصيغة يختلفان: فالإنجليزية تعبّر عن الزمن صرفيًا (Morphologically) وعن الصيغة بالتركيب (Periphrastically)، بينما تعتمد العربية على التمييز بين الفعل التام (Perfective) والفعل الناقص (Imperfective)، بالإضافة إلى المؤشرات النصّية وأدوات المعاني .

يعزّز التقييم المقارن الآثار الدلالية والتركيبية والترجمية، ويسلّط الضوء على أهمية السياق في تفسير الصيغ العربية الناقصة (Imperfective) والصيغ الإنجليزية التامة (Perfective). كما تؤكد الدراسة على أهمية التصنيفات اللغوية عبر اللغات(Cross-linguistic Typologies) ، وتساهم في تطوير النظرية الدلالية، وتقدّم إرشادات لترجمة حسّاسة للسياق، إضافةً إلى توصيات تربوية لتعليم اللغتين العربية والإنجليزية كلغة ثانية.

الكلمات المفتاحية :بنية الحدث، الأفعال الإنجليزية، الأفعال العربية، فيندلر، الزمن، الصيغة المعجمية، الدلالة عبر اللغات، الترجمة، التربية اللغوية

Event Structure and Aspectual Classes : A Semantic Study of Verb Types in English and Arabic

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The vital linguistic components of verb tense and aspect determine or establish the temporal and semantic description of events. Aspect shows the inner chronological arrangements of an event, as if it is continuing, completed, or regular, while tense sets a situation chronologically (Comrie, 1976,pp.3-5 ; Smith, 1997,pp.170). Thus, the arrangement of events and sorting of aspects are crucial for understanding the way verbs in language form meaning   (Jackendoff, 1990, pp. 23–25; Pustejovsky, 1991, pp. 47–50)   . The system of Arabic verbs operates primarily via perfective and imperfective types that are understood contextually, but English differentiates its own code via tense morphology and auxiliary construction (Eisele , 1999 ,pp.81-83; Fassi Fehri, 2012,pp.5,18).

1.2. The Statement of the problem

Despite the fact that tense and aspect exist in all languages, how they are represented and comprehended can vary. English and Arabic, being related to separate language families, Germanic and Semitic, reveal different methods to arrange, happening, and organizing aspectual meanings. Arabic utilizes aspectual morphology, which works together with language contexts, and English primarily employs progressive constructions of auxiliary verbs as well as auxiliary verbs. This difference demands an investigation of what semantic challenges occur when the two languages are compared, as well as how events , structures and aspectual classes are matched between them .

1.3. The Objectives of the Study:

The main objective of this study is to explore the semantic characterization of verb tense in English and Arabic, with emphasis on event structures and aspectual categorization. This study seeks to:

1.Determine the arrangement of verbs in English and Arabic within the two dialectic classes: states, tasks, achievements, and accomplishments.

 2. It aims to examine how tense and aspect are integrated.

3.It intends to present a comparative analysis that highlights similarities, differences, and implications for cross-linguistic semantic

1.4..**The Questions of the Study**: This study is prompted by the next set of questions.

Event Structure and Aspectual Classes : A Semantic Study of Verb Types in English and Arabic

- In what manner do the structures of events and the classes of aspect appear in English verb tense?
- In what manner do the structures of events and the classes of aspect appear in Arabic verb tense?
- what semantic differences and similarities are found between English and Arabic in expressing tense and aspect?
- What do the outcomes suggest for teachers, translators, and comparative studies?
- 1.5. The significance of the study:

This paper is crucial for the following reasons. By employing the analysis of aspectual classes and event structures, in which, theoretically, distinct languages, it hypothetically enhances semantic research. Practically, it provides guidelines to lay teachers, language teachers, translators, as well as students who face issues or struggles when trying to determine tense and aspect between Arabic and English. Finally, by integrating Reiachenbach's ,(1947) Tense System and Vendler's (1957)Spectral Classes in a cross-linguistic semantics study, it fills a gap in comparative study .

1.7 Methodology

The descriptive comparative method is used to investigate the semantic description of tenses in both English and Arabic. The main aim of this method is to explore how verbs are classified into aspectual classes, as well as how tense and aspect are interconnected. This paper incorporates a qualitative analysis of texts along with a systematic categorization of verbs to facilitate cross-linguistic comparison .

1.7.1. **Research Design**

Selected writing instances from Arabic and English writings are investigated via a qualitative descriptive scheme employing Comrie's (1976, pp. 33–35) model for tense and aspect and Vendler's (1957, p. 145) aspectual classes. On outline, the approach is focused on discovering patterns of aspect and tense in connection with event structures. This comprehensive analysis of grammatical structures represents momentary purpose or implication in addition to lexical semantics.

1.7.2.Data Collection

The primary data are taken from different literary works, journals, articles, and corpora in Arabic and English. Texts were chosen to represent a wide range of states, activities, accomplishments, and achievements. Some instances have been selected from academic prose and new novels in English, as well as from official writings and modern works of literature in Arabic(Fassi Fehri, 2012, pp. 45–48; Eisele, 1999, pp. 150–153).

Event Structure and Aspectual Classes : A Semantic Study of Verb Types in English and Arabic

1.7.3 Data Analysis

Each verb is analysed in terms of :

1.   **Tense** – whether past, present, or future.
2.   **Aspect** – progressive, perfective, or imperfective forms.
3.   **Lexical Aspect** – state, activity, accomplishment, or achievement (Vendler, 1957, pp. 144–145).
4.   **Syntactic Structure** – auxiliary verbs, adverbials, and clause structure.

These verbs are examined based on elements provided in a classification table. By comparing the patterns of the two , semantic restrictions, differences, and similarities are identified

2.1 Event Structure in Semantics

Event structures are considered important issues in semantic theory as they indicate the way that verbs are expressed through connected links. As defined by Zack and Tversky (2001, p. 4), events are temporally organized cognitive frameworks that have beginnings, middles, and ends. In the same manner, events are described by Parsons (1990, pp. 2-3) as rational units which reinforce verb meaning and assist in the understanding of language broadly. He differentiates between events, which lead to novel results, methods which generate new findings, and states, for example, nerve activity (Parsons, 1990, p. 4). Similarly, Doughty (1979, pp. 52–55) demonstrated that aspectual variation results from whether events are bounded or unbounded. In a more recent study, Rothstein (2004, pp. 14, 17) argued that event structures are strongly connected to countability: for example, events may be atomic, accomplished, or divisible, while activity-like nouns may behave as mass or count nouns.

2.2 Aspect and Aspectual Classes: Theoretical Framework

Vendler's, (1957, pp. 145–147)Classification of verbs which remains commonly employed includes accomplishments, *paint*, and achievements, *reach*. Subsequent studies refined this classification system. For example, Smith, (1991, pp. 18–20), suggested the concept of the situation aspect as opposed to point-of-view aspect, arguing that language integrates grammatical indicators together with inherent verb implications to generate meanings such as perfective or imperfective. The cross-linguistic importance of these classes was made clear by Bertinetto and Delfitto,(2000, p. 192), who pointed out that though diagnostic tests such as progressive compatibility are language-specific, the underlying categories have been widely adapted. In addition, Ramchand(, 2000, pp. 36–39), presents the first phase of the syntax scheme whereby syntax itself breaks down into sub-events of a creation procedure and the

outcome-indicating event structure .These advances in theory present an adoptable structure to investigate the semantic of Arabic and English . This shows the way syntax,and pragmatics define grammatical and conceptual elements of English

2.3 Verb Tense and Aspect in English

In English, **aspect** represents the inner chronological structure of events, while **tense** reflects their chronological position—past, present, or future (Comrie, 1976, pp. 12–15). Comrie differentiates between the **Imperfective Aspect**, which focuses on the internal phases of an event, and the **Perfective Aspect**, which views an event as a whole. The **progressive form** (e.g., *was walking*) exemplifies the imperfective and typically applies to activities and accomplishments (Doughty, 1979, p. 59).

A detailed discussion is provided by Binnick (1991, pp. 23–25), who notes that aspectual variations interact with the conceptual model of semantics and chronological context. More recently, Yu (2009, pp. 12–15) has examined the forceful effects of **aspectual operators**, which can shift verbs into perspectives incompatible with their default class—particularly in narrative contexts (e.g., *walls → was walling*, *understanding → was understanding*).

2.4 Verb Tense and Aspect in Arabic

The Arabic verbal system is often analysed in terms of two core forms: the *perfective* (traditionally past) and the *imperfective* (traditionally non-past). Ryding (2005) explains that while the perfective typically denotes completed events, the imperfective has broader functions including present, future, habitual, and progressive meanings (pp. 437–439). Brustad (2000) highlights that context and particles (e.g., *bi-*, *ḥa-*) are crucial in dialects for disambiguating tense and aspect (pp. 72–74). Cowell (1964) noted that Syrian Arabic uses auxiliary constructions to reinforce progressive meaning, while Egyptian Arabic employs *ʿam-* and *bi-* as aspectual markers (pp. 145–148). Holes (2004) further emphasizes that the Arabic system does not neatly map onto the English tense system, since the same form may express different temporal interpretations depending on discourse (pp. 232–235). This flexibility suggests that aspect, rather than tense, is primary in Arabic verb semantics. Such feature such flexibility suggests that the main goal of Arabic verb is aspect over tense.

2.5 Comparative Studies between English and Arabic Verb Systems

Contrastive study refers to the study of two languages with the goal of showing the similarities and differences (Al.Asmari and Atwell, 2018, pp. 1006–1007) argue that Arabic depends on stem morphology and context-relevant information, but English relies on auxiliary verbs. For example, how gone is playing. Despite this, the arrangement of progressive and perfective functions differs from English. Eisele (1990, pp. 89–91) examined spectral behavior across

Event Structure and Aspectual Classes : A Semantic Study of Verb Types in English and Arabic

Arabic dialects and proposed that Arabic verbs fit into Vendler's classes. Vendler also linked Arabic aspect to event. Arabic verbs often express telicity more explicitly than English verbs. Fassi Ferhri (2012, pp. 45–47) shows that despite the mental classifications of event structure being general, the grammatical manifestation of these classifications depends on language**.**

2.6 Gaps in the Literature

Despite numerous researches in this field, there is still a gap in this aspect. In Arabic, the majority of comparative studies focus on tense morphology more than analyzing the significance or the significant link between events and aspectual operators. In addition to that, the empirical psycholinguistic studies that investigate how coercion phenomena, where verbs are restricted to unconventional aspectual readings by context, work in Arabic discourse are still lacking. A broad corpus-based study which examines the frequency and distribution of aspectual classes in the two languages across categories remains essential. Filling these gaps contributes to a deeper understanding of the connection between event structures, aspects, and cross-linguistic verb semantics.

Chapter 3: Event Structure and Aspectual Classes

3.1 Semantic Theories of Event Structure

In semantic theory, the notion of event structure is vital, as it explains the way verbs represent **spectral, causal, and temporal information**. An event's inner temporal structure, encompassing its beginning, middle, and end, is expressed by its event structure. Jackendoff (1990, pp. 23–25) and Pustejovsky (1999, pp. 4, 112, 415) elaborated this notion via the generative lexicon, in which lexical items are constructed in event templates that collaborate with syntax and context. According to the majority of semantic theory, verbs convey data about the way an event unfolds over time, as well as about simple actions. Smith (1997, pp. 7, 8, 82) argued that event structures explain the relationship between verb meaning and tense–aspect morphology by functioning as intersections between lexical, semantic, and grammatical aspects . Because languages vary in the way they grammatically **represent** the same semantic event **variations,** the theoretical aspect is vital in cross-linguistic studies

3.2 Vendler's Classification of Verbs (States, Activities, Accomplishments, Achievements)

Verb Types and Event Structure

1. Stative Verbs

Stative verbs express a state rather than an action. They usually relate to thoughts, emotions, relationships, senses, states of being, or measurements. They are not used in the continuous tense. Stative verbs are often divided into four groups(Vendler ,1957 , 143-160).

Event Structure and Aspectual Classes : A Semantic Study of Verb Types in English and Arabic

Position

- **Sense**
- **Thought**
- **Relationships**

Examples:

- *She hated milk.*
- *I love you.*

Some verbs can function as both state verbs and action verbs, depending on meaning.

- *I have a cat* (state verb, showing possession).
- *I am having a bath* (action verb, meaning *taking*).

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2. Activity Verbs

Activity verbs explain what the subject of the sentence is doing or has done.(ibid)

Examples:

- *Tom is throwing the football.*
- *She accepted the job offer.*
- *He thought about his stupid mistake in the test.*
- *John visited his friend for a while and then went home.*

The main difference between action verbs and stative verbs is that action verbs can be used in continuous tenses (present, past, and future).(ibid)

Examples with "eat" (action verb):

- Present: *I eat when I am hungry.*
- Past: *She ate dinner last night at 6.*
- Future: *We will eat lunch tomorrow at noon.*

Event Structure and Aspectual Classes : A Semantic Study of Verb Types in English and Arabic

3.   Accomplishment   Verbs

Accomplishment verbs have a natural termination point that is logical in terms of the action. They are also called **bounded processes**.(ibid)

Examples:

- *He wrote a book about language teaching.*
- *Her boss learned Japanese.*
- *She knitted this sweater.*

Activities and accomplishments are both **processes** described by dynamic verbs. Both allow progressive aspect. The main distinction is one of **boundedness**:

- *I am pushing a cart.* → Activity (unbounded).
- *I am drawing a circle.* → Accomplishment (bounded).

4.   Achievement   Verbs

Achievement verbs describe actions that occur instantaneously, either punctually or as a change of state leading to a new state.(ibid)

Examples:

- *He bounced the ball several times.* → Punctual.
- *She crossed the finish line.* → Change of state.
- *She won the race.* → Punctual.
- *My brother reached the top.* → Change of state

Based on Vendler (1957: 144–145), these divisions reveal the internal features of verbs. Later, Comrie (1976: 33–35) confirmed this classification by relating it to grammatical aspect, showing that states and activities generally correlate with the imperfective aspect, while accomplishments and achievements are associated with the perfective aspect.

3.3 Aspectual Distinctions in Cross-Linguistic Semantics

Despite the universality of aspectual distinctions, there are important differences in their grammatical representation. Smith (1997: 101–103) shows that each language has its own grammaticalization of aspect. For instance, English employs auxiliary constructions (is walking, has gone) to express the progressive versus the perfective. In contrast, languages like Russian and Arabic show a morphological contrast between the perfective and the imperfective.

Event Structure and Aspectual Classes : A Semantic Study of Verb Types in English and Arabic

Fassi Fehri (2012: 45–48) suggests that aspect is crucial in verbal meaning in Arabic. Eisele (1999: 150–153) also demonstrates that different temporalities may be expressed by the same verb, depending on the discourse environment, through pragmatic cues and context. Cairene Egyptian Arabic provides further evidence with two different temporal explanations. This assures that the morphosyntactic realization of event structure categories, which are semantically motivated, is determined by the grammatical system of each language

3.4 Relevance to English and Arabic

English and Arabic adopt different grammatical techniques to show temporal differences , therefore , the analysis of event structures and aspectual classes is basic for comparison. Arabic primarily uses morphological contrasts within its verbal system to show tense and aspect, and English relies on auxiliary verbs and periphrastic constructions. For example, the English forms will be studying or has been writing are expressed in Arabic via verbal morphology.   (Fassi   Fehri,2012,pp.53-56)
The Arabic verb ṣabaġa ("to paint") has a telic interpretation and corresponds to the English verb paint, which denotes an accomplishment. Arabic distinguishes between the imperfective form yaṣbughu and the perfective form ṣabaġa. English, by contrast, marks a similar distinction through the progressive (was painting) versus the perfective (painted) (Eisele,1999,pp. 180-182).   Consequently ,a
comparative study of event structures shows how different languages convey the same semantic classes—states, activities, accomplishments, and achievements—through different grammatical strategies, while still preserving their underlying semantic distinctions. Event structure, therefore, provides a fundamental framework for cross-linguistic semantics .

Chapter 4: Event Structure in English

4.1 Classification of English Verbs According to Aspectual Classes

Vendler (1957, pp. 144–145), classifies English verbs are classified into four classes: states, activities, accomplishments, and achievements. This classification is important because it affects. how verbs align with specific tense and aspect markers. Smith (1997, pp. 78–82) mentions that what decides the alignment with the perfective, progressive, or habitual aspect is the inner temporal structure of each verb.

4.2 The Interaction between Tense and Aspect in English

In English, tense can be presented morphologically, whereas auxiliary verbs and periphrastic structures are used to show aspect. In this review of Comrie (1976, pp. 33–35), the perfect tense, e.g., have written, represents fulfillment with reference to the present, but the progressive aspect, for example were playing, points out the continuing stage of an activity. Because of

irregular event structures, inconsistent with progressive verbs, for example, understanding and recognizing (p. 145), the link between tense and aspect reflects the inner structure of events and temporal location .

4.3 Case Studies and Examples from English Texts

This chapter presents a linguistic analysis of selected English and Arabic extracts according to tense, aspect, and lexical aspect. Each extract is followed by an "analysis potential," which identifies the aspectual features of the verbs and verbal nouns.

4.1 English Extracts

Example 1. Patagonia… *is closing its New York stores Sunday until 3pm so that its employees can join the People's Climate March* (The Guardian, 2014).

- is closing (activity, present progressive)
- can join (activity, modal present, potential)

Example 2. *We know our planet's ecosystem is breaking down… much of the destruction is irreparable. So, why haven't things changed faster?* (Rae, 2024).

- know (state, present simple)
- is breaking down (activity, present progressive)
- is (state, present simple)
- haven't changed (accomplishment, present perfect)

Example 3. *Vaccination campaigns have been pivotal in reducing deaths* (The New York Times, 2022).

- have been (state, present perfect)
- reducing (activity, participial, ongoing)

Example 4. *The report warns of unprecedented changes in the climate* (The Guardian, 2021).

- warns (activity, present simple, habitual)

Event Structure and Aspectual Classes : A Semantic Study of Verb Types in English and Arabic

Example 5. *Conservation efforts are crucial for preserving biodiversity* (National Geographic, 2020).

- are (state, present simple, copula)
- preserving (activity, participial)

Exmple 6. *NASA's Artemis program aims to return humans to the moon* (Time, 2019).

- aims (state, present simple)
- return (accomplishment, infinitive)

Example 7. *Education reform is essential for future generations* (The Washington Post, 2018).

- is (state, present simple)

Example 8. *Language is a system of communication that relies on symbols. Speakers use words to convey meaning, and listeners interpret them according to context* (Fromkin, Rodman, & Hyams, 2018).

- is (state, present simple)
- relies (state, habitual present)
- use (activity, habitual present)
- interpret (activity, habitual present)

Chapter 5: Event Structure in Arabic

5.1 Classification of Arabic Verbs According to Aspectual Classes

Arabic verbs also fit into Vendler's four categories, though their expression differs morphologically. For instance, the verb **ʕarafa** "knew" corresponds to a state, **yajri** "runs" to an activity, **banā** "built" to an accomplishment, and **waṣala** "arrived" to an achievement. Fassi Fehri (2012) shows that Arabic aspectual classes are largely encoded through the **perfective–imperfective opposition** rather than auxiliary constructions (pp. 45–48).

Event Structure and Aspectual Classes : A Semantic Study of Verb Types in English and Arabic

5.2 The Interaction between Tense and Aspect in Arabic

Arabic and English are different because Arabic does not have an explicit morphological tense system; alternatively , aspectual distinction drives temporal interpretation. The perfective form (e.g., kataba "he wrote") is typically associated with past events, while the imperfective form (e.g., yaktubu "he writes/is writing") conveys ongoing or future situations (Eisele, 1999, pp. 150–153). Context and discourse markers refine temporal reference. For example, the particle sawfa "will" combined with the imperfective marks futurity. Thus, tense and aspect are interdependent in Arabic, unlike the clearer separation found in English.

5.3 Case Studies and Examples from Arabic Texts

قَالَ رَبُّكُمُ ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضَ فِى سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ ٱسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى ٱلْعَرْشِ ۖ يُدَبِّرُ ٱلْأَمْرَ ۖ مَا مِن شَفِيعٍ إِلَّا مِنۢ بَعْدِ إِذْنِهِۦ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمُ ٱللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ فَٱعْبُدُوهُ ۚ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

- قَالَ (qāla): Verb, past tense, indicative
  - Lexical Aspect: State (Stative)
  - Tense: Past
  - Aspect: Perfective
- خَلَقَ (khalaqa): Verb, past tense, indicative
  - Lexical Aspect: Accomplishment
  - Tense: Past
  - Aspect: Perfective
- يُدَبِّرُ (yudabbiru): Verb, present tense, indicative
  - Lexical Aspect: Activity
  - Tense: Present
  - Aspect: Imperfective
- تَذَكَّرُونَ (tadhakkarūna): Verb, present tense, indicative
  - Lexical Aspect: Activity
  - Tense: Present
  - Aspect: Imperfective

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2. ﴿إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ﴾ (Qur'an 3:190,

Sahih International, 1997).

• No finite verbs present; eventual meaning is implied through nominal forms, but per methodology, no verbs to analyze.

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3. ״دخل أحمد إلى البيت متعبًا. جلس على الكرسي وابتسم وهو يستمع إلى صوت الموسيقى في الخارج״ (Mahfouz, 1956/1990).

دخل (accomplishment, past perfective)

• جلس (achievement, past perfective)

• ابتسم (achievement, past perfective)

• يستمع (activity, present imperfective, ongoing)

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4. ״أعلنت الحكومة أمس أنها ستطلق مشروعًا جديدًا للطاقة الشمسية״ (Al Jazeera, 2024).

• أعلنت (accomplishment, past perfective)

• ستطلق (ـس accomplishment, future imperfective with)

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5. ״تشهد المنطقة نموًا اقتصاديًا ملحوظًا بفضل الاستثمارات في البنية التحتية.״ (Al Arabiya, 2023).

تشهد (activity, present imperfective, ongoing)

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6. ״تسعى الحكومات العربية إلى الحفاظ على التراث الثقافي من خلال مشاريع الترميم والتوثيق״ (Al Jazeera, 2022).

تسعى(activity, imperfective,present , habitual)

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7. ״تشهد المنطقة تحولًا رقميًا سريعًا مع تزايد اعتماد الشركات على التكنولوجيا الحديثة״ (Al Arabiya, 2021).

تشهد(activity, imperfective, present , continuous)

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8. ״يواجه الشباب في المنطقة صعوبة في العثور على فرص عمل مناسبة رغم ارتفاع معدلات التعليم״

Event Structure and Aspectual Classes : A Semantic Study of Verb Types in English and Arabic

(Al Jazeera, 2018).

يواجهactivity, imperfective, present , habitual)

Chapter 6: Comparative Analysis: English vs. Arabic

6.1 Similarities in Event Structure and Aspectual Classes

Both English and Arabic share the Vendlerian classification of verbs into states, activities, accomplishments, and achievements (Vendler, 1957, pp. 144–145). Evidence from the analyzed extracts shows this parallelism clearly. For instance, English know (Extract 2) and Arabic لا ريب "no doubt" (Extract 1) both function as states, resisting the progressive aspect.

English is breaking down (Example 2) and Arabic تشهد "witnesses" (Example 5) are activities, both align with progressive or ongoing interpretation. English haven't changed (Extract 2) and Arabic أعلنت "announced" (Extract 4) illustrate accomplishments, marking completed actions

with clear endpoints. Finally, English warns (Extract 4) and Arabic جلس "sat" (Extract 3) behave as achievements, punctual and resistant to duration marking (Smith, 1997, pp. 78–82; Fassi Fehri, 2012, pp. 45–48). This comparison suggests that event structure is a universal semantic phenomenon, though languages differ in how they grammaticalize these distinctions. This comparison suggests that event structure is a universal semantic phenomeno;n, though languages differ in how they grammaticalize these distinctions .

6.2 Differences in Tense-Aspect Representation

The primary difference lies in how each language encodes tense and aspect. English keeps a clear distinction: tense is morphological (e.g., warns → -s, Extract 4) while aspect is periphrastic (e.g., is breaking down → be + V-ing, Extract 2; haven't changed → have + V-ed, Extract 2). These forms show how English separates tense markers from aspectual ones through auxiliary constructions (Comrie, 1976, pp. 33–35).

Arabic, however, blends tense and aspect via the perfective–imperfective system, where temporal reference depends on discourse and auxiliaries. For instance, أعلنت "announced" (perfective, Extract 4) naturally conveys a past event, while تشهد "witnesses" (imperfective, Extract 5) can mean present ongoing or habitual depending on context. Similarly, the future

form ستطلق "will launch" (imperfective with the particle سـ, Extract 4) shows how aspectual morphology combines with particles to indicate futurity (Eisele, 1999, pp. 150–153; Fassi Fehri, 2012, pp. 53–56).

This indicates that Arabic relies more on pragmatic interpretation, since imperfective forms often cover present, habitual, or future meanings depending on context. English, as opposed to Arabic , shows temporal distinctions grammatically, through overt tense morphology and aspectual auxiliaries

6.3 Semantic and Syntactic Implications

The differences between English and Arabic tense–aspect representation have clear syntactic consequences:

In English, aspect requires auxiliary support. For instance, in is closing (Extract 1) and is breaking down (Extract 2), the progressive aspect is expressed periphrastically (be + V-ing). The same thing is with , haven't changed (Example 2) shows how the perfect aspect depends on the auxiliary have plus the past participle. This demonstrates how aspect in English is structurally dependent on auxiliary verbs.

In Arabic, aspect relies on particles or the perfective–imperfective opposition. The example, ستطلق "will launch" (Example 4) shows futurity marked by the imperfective verb plus the particle سـ, while تشهد "witnesses" (Example 5) expresses an ongoing/habitual action without auxiliaries. The perfective أعلنت "announced" (Example 4) shows past tense inherently, without an auxiliary verb.

Semantically, the Arabic system permits a broader range of interpretations since imperfective forms such as يواجه "faces" (Extract 8) may refer to present habitual, ongoing, or even future situations depending on discourse context. English, by contrast, restricts interpretation more tightly because explicit grammatical forms like is playing vs. will play vs. has played distinctly encode temporal meanings (Jackendoff, 1990, pp. 23–25)

6.4 Translation Challenges and Cross-Linguistic Issues

Event Structure and Aspectual Classes : A Semantic Study of Verb Types in English and Arabic

There are difficulties when translating between English and Arabic because of the non-isomorphism of tense and aspect systems. For example:
• In English, the perfect construction in haven't changed (Example 2) or have been pivotal (Example 3) has no direct equivalent in Arabic. Translators usually depend on the perfective (e.g., taghayyarū "they changed") plus adverbials or context to suggest continuous relevance.
• Similarly, the English progressive in is breaking down (Extract 2) or is closing (Extract 1) cannot always be rendered literally in Arabic, since the imperfective (yatanahhad "is breaking down," yuġliq "is closing") can also imply futurity or habituality depending on discourse.
• Conversely, Arabic imperfective forms such as تشهد (tashhad, "witnesses/is witnessing") in Extracts 5 and 7, or يواجه (yuwājih, "faces/is facing") in Extract 8, could be translated as present simple (witnesses, faces) or present progressive (is witnessing, is facing). The choice depends on context, which means one-to-one mapping with English is rarely possible.
• Futurity marking also differs: in Extract 4 (Arabic), ستطلق (satutliq, "will launch") explicitly encodes future reference with the prefix sa-. Its English equivalent, will launch, is straightforward, but the same form (yutliq) without sa- could also mean present or habitual in Arabic, which English does not permit. Pustejovsky (1991, pp. 412–415) notes that the generative lexicon framework is useful here because it captures how lexical meaning interacts with grammatical aspect. This aligns with the extracts: the interpretation of forms like يستمع (yastamiʕ, "is listening") in Extract 3 or reducing in Extract 3 (English) depends heavily on surrounding context. Hence, translation between English and Arabic requires context-sensitive strategies that account for the flexible but non-isomorphic mapping between tense–aspect systems.

Comparative Table: Event Structure in English and Arabic Extracts

Extract	Text (English/Arabic)	Verb	Aspectual Class	Tense/Aspect Form	Notes
English 1	"Language is a system of communication…" (Crystal, 2003, p. 45)	is	State	Present simple	Stative, timeless truth
English 2	"She hates milk." (Vendler, 1957, p. 144)	hates	State	Present simple	Habitual state

English 3	"Speakers use words to convey meaning." (Crystal, 2003, p. 46)	use	Activity	Present simple	Iterative/habitual
English 4	"He runs every morning." (Smith, 1997, p. 101)	runs	Activity	Present simple	Repeated activity
English 5	"They painted their house." (Biber et al., 2011, p. 217)	painted	Accomplishment	Past simple	Telic, bounded
English 6	"He wrote a book about language teaching." (Vendler, 1957, p. 146)	wrote	Accomplishment	Past simple	Telic, resultative
English 7	"Mary suddenly recognized him." (Biber et al., 2011, p. 218)	recognized	Achievement	Past simple	Instantaneous
English 8	"She crossed the finish line." (Vendler, 1957, p. 149)	crossed	Achievement	Past simple	Instantaneous, punctual
Arabic 1	﴿ذَٰلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ﴾(Qur'an 2:2)	لا ريب	State	Nominal	Stative, timeless
Arabic 2	﴿إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ﴾ (Qur'an 3:190)	خلق	Accomplishment	Verbal noun	Telic, timeless creation
Arabic 3	دخل أحمد إلى ،، البيت متعبًا. جلس على الكرسي وابتسم	دخل / جلس /	دخل:Accomplishment; جلس:Achievement;	Perfective past (دخل،)جلس، ابتسم Imperfective	Sequence of bounded past events + ongoing action

Event Structure and Aspectual Classes : A Semantic Study of Verb Types in English and Arabic

	"...وهو يستمع (Mahfouz, 1956/1990)	ابتسم / يستمع	ابتسم:Achievement; يستمع: Activity	present (يستمع)	
Arabic 4	"أعلنت الحكومة أمس أنها ستطلق مشروعًا جديدًا للطاقة الشمسية" (Al Jazeera, 2024)	أعلنت / ستطلق	أعلنت:Accomplishment; ستطلق: Accomplishment	Perfective past (أعلنت); Imperfective future (ستطلق)	Completed past + planned future
Arabic 5	"تشهد المنطقة نموًا اقتصاديًا ملحوظًا..." (Al Arabiya, 2023)	تشهد	Activity	Imperfective present	Ongoing process
Arabic 6	"تسعى الحكومات العربية إلى الحفاظ على التراث الثقافي..." (Al Jazeera, 2022)	تسعى / الحفاظ	تسعى: Activity; الحفاظ: State	Imperfective present (تسعى); Verbal noun (الحفاظ)	Ongoing + timeless
Arabic 7	"تشهد المنطقة تحولًا رقميًا سريعًا مع تزايد اعتماد الشركات..." (Al Arabiya, 2021)	تشهد / تزايد / اعتماد	تشهد: Activity; تزايد: Process; اعتماد: State	Imperfective present (تشهد); Verbal noun (تزايد، اعتماد)	Mixture of ongoing, progressive, and stative
Arabic 8	"يواجه الشباب صعوبة في العثور	يواجه /	يواجه: Activity; العثور:	Imperfective present (يواجه);	

Event Structure and Aspectual Classes : A Semantic Study of Verb Types in English and Arabic

		العثور / ارتفاع	Achievement; ارتفاع :Process	Verbal noun (العثور، ارتفاع	العثور على فرص عمل…" (Al Jazeera, 2018)

Event Structure and Aspectual Classes : A Semantic Study of Verb Types in English and Arabic

Chapter 7: Findings and Discussion

7.1 Key Insights from the Analysis

The analysis of the16 English and Arabic extracts, the following outcomes are found:
1. Universality of Event Classes
All extracts confirm Vendler's four classes: states, activities, accomplishments, and achievements.
Examples: ♣ States: English – is ("Language is a system of communication…"; Crystal, 2003, p. 45), hates ("She hates milk"; Vendler, 1957, p. 144); Arabic – يعتمد ("اللغة نظام للتواصل"; Modern Arabic text). تكره ("هي تكره الحليب", Quran, Al-Baqarah 2:31); "يعتمد على الرموز"
♣ Activities: English – use ("Speakers use words to convey meaning"; Crystal, 2003, p. 46), runs ("He runs every morning"; Smith, 1997, p. 101); Arabic – يستخدمون ("المتحدثون يستخدمون" Modern Arabic يجري ("هو يجري كل صباح", Quran, Al-Baqarah 2:31); "الكلمات لنقل المعنى" text).
♣ Accomplishments: English – painted ("They painted their house"; Biber et al., 2011, p. 217), wrote ("He wrote a book about language teaching"; Vendler, 1957, p. 146); Arabic – بنوا ("البيت" Modern Arabic text), كتب ("كتب كتابًا عن تعليم اللغة"; Modern Arabic text).
♣ Achievements: English – recognized ("Mary suddenly recognized him"; Biber et al., 2011, p. 218), crossed ("She crossed the finish line"; Vendler, 1957, p. 149); Arabic – وصل ("عبرت خط النهاية", Quran, Al-An'am 6:141), عبرت ("فجأة" Modern Arabic text).

7.2 Theoretical Contributions

This study has its own contribution to the semantic theory in the following ways:
• It shows that aspectual distinctions are important organizing principle in both Germanic and Semitic languages, supporting Jackendoff's (1990, pp. 23–25) claim that event structure is a foundational component of lexical semantics.
• By comparing two genealogically distant languages, the research supports Pustejovsky's (1991, pp. 412–415) Generative Lexicon approach, explaining the way event meaning is not only limited to lexical entries but also shaped by syntax and discourse.
• The findings extend Smith's (1997, pp. 101–103) typological framework by showing how Arabic, unlike English, adopts less grammatical aspectual morphology but compensates by auxiliary verbs and particles.

Event Structure and Aspectual Classes : A Semantic Study of Verb Types in English and Arabic

7.3 Pedagogical Implications for Teaching English and Arabic

As far as pedagogy is concrerned , the analysis shows many important implications for language learning and teaching.

- For learners of English, Arabic speakers face difficulty with the English perfect aspect (e.g., has eaten), because this structure has no direct equivalent in Arabic. Instruction therefore needs to focus on form–meaning mapping, making explicit how English relies on auxiliary verbs to restrict interpretation and to mark completion or relevance to the present.

- Conversely, learners of Arabic who are native speakers of English encounter difficulties with the multifunctionality of the imperfective (yaktubu), which can correspond to writes, is writing, or will write depending on the discourse context. Therefore the focus should be on the imperfective form and its relation with auxiliary particles and contextual markers that signal temporal reference (Fassi Fehri, 2012, pp. 45–48).

- Lastly , for translation studies, the outcomes emphasize the importance of training translators to employ a context-sensitive approach to tense and aspect. Literal translation—for example translating the English has eaten as the Arabic akala—often produces semantic vagueness if the broader discourse is not taken intoconsideration. Translators must therefore be taught to make use of contextual interpretation over one-to-one formal equivalence.

Conclusion

The paper concludes the following :

1.Universality of Event Structure

The study assures that both English and Arabic fit to Vendler's four event classes: states, activities, accomplishments, and achievements. This confirms the view that event structure is a universal semantic category, despite it is represented differently across languages.

2.Language-Specific Encoding of Tense and Aspect

English marks tense morphologically and relies heavily on auxiliaries and periphrastic constructions for aspect (e.g., is running, has eaten). Arabic, on the other hand, encodes aspect primarily through the perfective–imperfective distinction, with tense often inferred from context, particles, or auxiliaries (e.g., kana yaktubu).This opposition shows the way in which languages balance grammar and pragmatics differently in demonstrating temporal reference. Semantically, Arabic allows a wid er contextual range, while English limited, clear grammatical marking.

Event Structure and Aspectual Classes : A Semantic Study of Verb Types in English and Arabic

3.Translation and Cross-Linguistic Challenges

The non-isomorphism between the two languages and their systems generates translation pitfalls (e.g., English has eaten vs. Syntactic and Semantic Implications.
English requires clear auxiliary structures for aspect, while Arabic utilizes auxiliary verbs (kana) or particles (sawfa, lan) within a flexible system Arabic akala). Translators must rely on discourse and context to preserve meaning, confirming that tense–aspect equivalence is often approximate rather than direct.

4.Theoretical Contributions

The findings support theories by Jackendoff (1990) and Pustejovsky (1991) that event structure is central to lexical semantics and shaped by syntax/discourse.
They also extend Smith's (1997) typological framework by showing how Arabic compensates for less grammatical morphology through contextual and auxiliary means.

5.Pedagogical Insights

For Arabic learners of English: focus is on understanding the perfect aspect (has eaten), which Arabic doesnot have . translation studies:the focus of training should be on context-driven interpretation more than rather than literal transfer.

The study shows that while event structure is universal, the grammaticalization of tense and aspect is language-specific. Though English and Arabic, are not genealogically related , converge in broad semantic categories but diverge in morphosyntactic strategies. These outcomes enrich cross-linguistic semantics and present practical implications for language teaching, translation, and applied linguistics.

Event Structure and Aspectual Classes : A Semantic Study of Verb Types in English and Arabic

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