



Tense in English:

❖ Among the five forms of the English verb, only the contrast between base (or base+s) and base+ed1 (i.e. past) expresses time. Consider the following example:

go, goes	went
Refer to present time	Refer to past time

❖ The other two forms (i.e. base+ing and base+ed2), on the other hand, are nonfinite. They do not normally refer to time but to aspect.

❖ On this basis, we can say that there are two tenses in English: the present tense (go, goes) and the past tense (went).

The present tense:

A. The present tense has its point of reference; it is the present moment of speaking. That is, it is an absolute tense.

B. But it refers to present time in general.

C. It rarely refers to the moment of speaking (although this is included in its time).

D. This tense expresses the following:

1. **Repeated actions**, as in: I go to gym every day.
2. **Habits** (or customs), as in: I often go there to visit him.
3. **Facts**, as in: sun rises in the east / lead is a heavy metal.

4. **Ability in the present**, as in: she sings beautifully / he speaks French.

E. Occasionally, **the present tense is used to refer to the present moment** using **verbs of sensation**, in **comments and Recipes** /'resəpiz/, and in **performative acts**, as in:

- I **see** two men coming. أرى رجلين قادمين.
- Sam **knows** the answer. سام يعرف الجواب.
- Messi **passes** the ball to Dimaria. ميسي يمرر الكرة إلى ديماريا.
- I **take** a cup of flour and two spoons of sugar and **mix** them together. أضع كوباً من الدقيق وملعقتين من السكر وأمزجهما معاً.
- I **name** this ship Queen Mary. أسمى هذه السفينة الملكة ماري.
- I **declare** the session open. أعلن افتتاح الجلسة.

Practical text:

Sami lives in a dormitory. He gets up at seven o'clock in the morning. He eats breakfast at seven thirty. He goes to class at eight o'clock. He studies in the library in the afternoon. He does homework assignments and watches TV in the evening. He goes downtown on Saturday, and he goes to the movies on Saturday nights. He goes to Mosque on Friday.

Rami doesn't live in a dormitory; he has a room in a private home. He doesn't have classes in the morning on Tuesdays and Thursdays. On those days he sleeps until nine o'clock. He doesn't like movies but he likes concerts. He listens to music on the radio at night.

Sami doesn't know Rami but he sees him every day. They are in the same chemistry class. Sara is in that class too. She knows them both and they know her. They work in the same laboratory. It is a large sunny laboratory and they like it very much.

1.6 How the Elements of a sentence are Related: places and elements

A simple sentence (or rather a clause) in English has the following structure:

S V (C) (O) (A). The structure is assumed to be made up of places occupied by elements. In (21), for example, there are three places occupied by the three elements S,V,O.

21. My friend (S) has written (V) a short story (O).

The normal order of these elements is **SVO** (Note that the order is written with no commas.)

The Arabic equivalent of (21) is (22),

كتب (٧) صديقي (٠) قصة قصيرة (٢٢)

which has three places occupied by the elements, S,V,O; the order in Arabic is **VSO** Thus the English clause (21) and the Arabic clause (22) are similar to the number of places in their structures and in the elements occupying these places. They differ in the order of these elements: the English clause is SVO, the Arabic VSO.

It is to be noted that the order of the elements in the Arabic clause is relatively more **flexible** than the order of the elements in the English clause. Thus SVO **صديقي كتب قصة قصيرة** is also **possible** in Arabic, whereas VSO is not possible in English: "Has written my friend a short story.

Let us take another example.

23. The child (S) is (V) in the garden (A)

This clause has three **places** filled by the three elements, S,V,A. The order is **SVA**. The Arabic equivalent of (23) would be

(الطفل (٣) في الحديقة (٢٤)

which has **two** places, filled by the elements S,A, arranged in the order SA. Thus the difference between the two clauses is in the number of elements, and of course in the number of places. The English clause has three elements; the Arabic clause has two elements. The difference is in V.

Identifying the number of places in a structure and determining the elements filling the places will not be enough to describe the structure of a clause. The grammarian should describe how these places are related to each other.

In modern linguistics, there are **two major theories** which explain this point: constituency and dependency. Most of the grammatical methods used in English grammar belong to constituency approach, whereas the methods followed by Arab grammarians in discussing Arabic grammar are similar to dependency theory.

The **constituency theory** relates parts to a whole; a number of items are treated as part of a larger item. Within constituency, two approaches may be recognized: the phrase structure marker represented as a tree and places and elements occurring in a larger structure.

The phrase structure method mainly followed by Transformational Generative Grammar relates two items to a higher item in the tree. For example, the verb and its object in (25)

25. **The man** bought the car.

related to each other because they belong to the Verb Phrase (VP) higher in the tree. The object is represented as noun phrase (NP) and the function (object) is not stated explicitly.

(bought)

VP

(the car)

NP

The definite article 'the' is related to the noun, man' by, means of a higher structure termed the Noun Phrase (NP), as in

NP

Article (the)

Noun (man)

The higher terms, the Verb Phrase and the Noun Phrase are related to each other through a higher structure termed the Sentence (S)

The details stated so far may be represented in a tree form:

NP

Article

Noun

VP

Verb

NP

There is no direct relation between two items on the same level, e.g. between the article and the noun, or the verb and its object.

The second approach within constituency is the one followed, by most British grammarians, who follow systemic linguistics including Halliday and Quirk. Here items are related to each other because they fill certain places in a larger structure. This is the approach followed in this book. Thus, the subject, the verb and the object (S,V,O) are related to each other because they are part of a larger structure, the clause.

The Clause

S

V

O

In (25) there are three places filled by the elements S,V,O. If we go down to the next level, the phrase, we shall find the 'the' and 'man' are related to each other because they fill two places in a larger structure, the Noun Phrase (also called the Noun Group). The Noun Phrase in English has three possible places: the

head (H) preceded by a modifier (M) and followed by a quantifier (Q). M and Q are optional.

NP

M Head Q

The structure of the Noun Phrase, 'the man with the stick; is M H, that of the man in the corner is MHQ and the structure of 'he' is just H. Further details concerning this approach will be found in the following chapters.

The dependency theory, which is in many ways similar to the method followed by Arab grammarians, is not based on part-whole relation; it assumes that the relation between two items is that one of them governs the other. This relation is direct. For example, the verb governs the noun or the noun depends on the verb, $V \rightarrow N$. This relation is clear in the Arabic sentence where the verb is said to govern its subject in the subjective (nominative) case and its object in the objective (accusative) case.

26.

اشترى الرجل البيت

In the passive sentence the verb governs the object (called subject or acting subject) in the subjective.

أشترى البيت ٢٧

In these examples, الرجل and البيت depend on the verb اشترى and اشترى respectively.

Within the standard Arabic theory, the noun is governed in one of the three cases: the subjective (nominative), the objective (accusative) and the genitive, termed in Arabic النصب الرفع and الجر respectively. The Imperfect verb is also governed in one of the three cases (hence termed مضارع because it resembles the noun) the indicative the subjunctive النصب and the jussive الجزم

The relation is termed العامل government, where one term governs (the other) المعمول. The particles usually govern the imperfect verb in the subjunctive or jussive; the Indicative is the case of independence where there is no governor.

28. لم يذهب الطالب. a particle governing a verb in the Jussive(.

لن يذهب. a particle governing a verb in the subjunctive(.

يذهب. the indicative used when there is no government(.

The noun is governed either by a noun, a verb or a particle.

29. كتاب الولد. a noun governing another noun(.

جاء على. a verb governing a noun(.

في الغرفة. a particle governing a noun(.

These are the most common ways of one term governing the other, but they are not the only ways suggested by Arab grammarians. Often other more abstract factors were suggested, which we need not discuss here.

Dependency method is useful in describing Arabic. It will be referred to occasionally in the following chapters. The main analysis will however be based on constituency approach.

1.7 **Class and System**

Besides units of a language (sentence, clause, phrase, word and morpheme) and structures (places filled by elements), a grammarian studies classes and systems in a language, and contrasts these with classes and systems of other languages. We shall examine below how classes and system are defined.

Words which can fill a certain place in a sentence are said to belong to the same class. In

30. The boy went home.

There are three places filled by the Items 'the boy', 'went' and 'home', The first place may be filled by other items such as: 'the man', 'the merchant', Alf, 'he', etc. All these items and others are said to belong to the same class, the noun or the noun phrase. The second position in the sentence is filled by 'went'; It could also be filled by 'travelled', 'walked', etc. These words and others which may fill the second place belong to a class called the verb or the verb phrase. The last place in (30) is filled by 'home', Other Items which may fill this place are 'quickly' 'slowly', 'in sorrow', etc. Such Items belong to a class named adverbials.

A class may be subdivided into subclasses. The class nouns may be divided into proper nouns (e.g. Baghdad), common nouns (e.g. city), the latter may further be subclassified into: count nouns (e.g. book: books) and mass nouns (e.g. water). The various classes of English and Arabic will be discussed in the following chapters.

A system is a choice the speaker/writer of a language must make between two or more terms at the level of a clause, a phrase, etc. In English and Arabic there is a system of number. Every time the speaker uses a noun (or a pronoun) he has to choose between singular and plural in English, and between singular, dual and plural in Arabic, provided the noun can be counted. For example, the English speaker chooses between 'book' and 'books'; the Arabic speaker, on the other hand, chooses one of the three items, كتابان or كتاب or كتب. These systems are usually represented as follows.

English number system

1 Singular 2 plural

Arabic number system

1 singuter 2 dual 3 plural

The choices in a system are called 'terms': they are semantically based. Thus the number system in English has two terms, in Arabic it has three terms. In the following chapters, these terms will be referred to frequently.

A class is usually described as open because the number of nouns belonging to it are not limited: they cannot be listed. Not even the largest dictionaries in English or Arabic list all nouns in the two languages. So the class of nouns is open; so is the class of verbs, adjectives and adverbs. The terms of a system, on

the other hand, are limited in number, they can be counted and listed. This is why a system is described as closed. Number, gender and tense, for example, are closed systems.