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A Contrastive Analysis of Present Continuous Tense Formula Between Arabic and English at Senior High School Level

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ABSTRACT
This study analyzes the distinctions and commonalities in the utilization and structure of the Present Continuous Tense in Arabic and English among senior high school students. A multitude of pupils encounter challenges due to the frequent conflation of the English form with the Simple Present, particularly regarding auxiliary verbs, temporal indicators, and subject-verb concord. The mudhāri'form in Arabic is occasionally employed to denote past or current activities, leading to potential misunderstandings when juxtaposed with English grammatical conventions. This study used a qualitative contrastive analysis method to evaluate grammatical patterns, sentence structures, and meanings conveyed in both languages. The results indicate that structural and semantic disparities result in frequent learner mistakes. The study shows that educators ought to implement contrastive teaching tactics to enhance students' comprehension of the Present Continuous and minimize errors.
Keyword: Present Continuous Tense; Contrastive Analysis; Arabic–English Grammar; Learner Difficulties; Pedagogical Implications

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INTRODUCTION

Language serves as a crucial instrument for communication, social engagement, and the dissemination of knowledge. English and Arabic play significant roles in global communication, education, and religion among the numerous languages utilized worldwide. English serves as a global lingua franca extensively utilized in scientific, technological, commercial, and academic domains. Arabic is a prominent global language with considerable religious, cultural, and linguistic impact. Due to their global significance, comparative studies of English and Arabic have emerged as a crucial domain in linguistic research, especially via contrastive analysis.

Contrastive analysis is a methodical strategy employed to analyze two languages to discern structural similarities and differences. Lado (1957) posits that juxtaposing the linguistic characteristics of a target language with those of the learner's native language enables researchers to anticipate difficulties and potential errors. Such parallels are essential for comprehending grammatical interference, particularly in second language acquisition.

The tense system is a significant linguistic element that frequently causes learning challenges. The Present Continuous Tense in English denotes acts occurring at the time of speaking. It necessitates the auxiliary verb "to be" and the gerund form of the principal verb. Conversely, Arabic conveys continuous acts through the imperfect tense (al-fi'l al-muḍāri') without auxiliary verbs, frequently depending on temporal adverbs for clarification. These structural discrepancies may lead learners to neglect auxiliary verbs, misread temporal references, or conflate the Present Continuous with other tenses.

The significance of this research lies in the need to understand how grammatical disparities between languages create learning obstacles for senior high school students, for whom mastery of fundamental tenses is essential for academic success. Although previous contrastive studies have examined differences between English and Arabic grammatical systems, limited attention has been

given to how these differences specifically affect learners' acquisition of the Present Continuous Tense at the senior high school level. This study seeks to address this gap by providing a focused contrastive analysis of the Present Continuous Tense in English and Arabic, highlighting areas of structural divergence that commonly lead to learner difficulties. By doing so, the study contributes theoretically to a deeper understanding of cross-linguistic influence in tense acquisition and practically by offering pedagogical recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of English grammar instruction for learners with an Arabic linguistic background.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research utilizes a qualitative contrastive analysis method to investigate the Present Continuous Tense in English and Arabic. The data are sourced from grammar textbooks, real language instances, and writing samples from senior high school students. The analysis examines three aspects: (1) the grammatical structure of the Present Continuous Tense, (2) the syntactic configuration of each language, and (3) the semantic role of the tense. Descriptive comparison is utilized to discern trends and elucidate their educational ramifications.

Contrastive analysis seeks to compare the linguistic systems of Arabic and English to uncover similarities and contrasts. This study examines the formula of the present continuous tense, which conveys actions occurring at the moment of speaking.

1. Research Approach

The study utilizes a qualitative descriptive methodology through structural contrastive analysis. The primary objective is to delineate the grammatical structure constituting the present continuous tense in both languages and thereafter compare the systematic differences.

2. Source of Data

English data were taken from authoritative grammatical references, including *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (Quirk et al., 1985), as well as samples from contemporary English corpora. Arabic data were derived from both classical and modern grammatical sources, such as *Al-Nahwu Al-Wāḍiḥ*, and supported by examples from contemporary Arabic texts. Supplementary data consist of researcher-generated sample words and sentences used solely to illustrate specific grammatical patterns. No empirical learner corpus was employed in this study; therefore, references to learner forms are illustrative rather than based on analysed student writing samples.

3. Data Collection Methodology

Identify the English formula.

I am, is, are, v-ing

For example, "She is reading a book." The Arabic counterpart is identified as follows: Arabic lacks a direct progressive form; the ongoing meaning is conveyed by the present verb (fi'il mudhari), sometimes accompanied by adverbs such as "al-an" (now). For instance, "Hiya taqrau al-an" translates to "She is reading now" in English.

c. document morphological and syntactic components from both languages for comparative analysis

4. Data analysis methodology

The analysis is performed in three phases.

a. A description delineating the grammatical structure of the present continuous tense in each instance.

b. A comparison aligning equivalent grammatical elements, including auxiliary verb forms and adverbs.

c. Interpretation elucidating fundamental structural distinctions, such as the presence of the auxiliary "to be" in English compared to its absence in Arabic, and examining the implications for Arabic learners.

5. Data Validation

Data validation is accomplished through source triangulation by comparing results with several grammatical references and actual language examples from both English and Arabic.

6. Anticipated Result

This methodology is anticipated to yield

A precise comparison chart of the present continuous structure in Arabic and English.

The anticipation of prevalent learner errors among Arabic-speaking learners of English can be effectively informed by contrastive analysis between Arabic and English. Common errors occur in article usage, verb tense and aspect, subject–verb agreement, prepositions, sentence structure, lexical choice, and pronoun use. By recognizing these predictable error patterns and using authentic student writing examples, teachers can design more focused instruction, provide clearer feedback, and ultimately facilitate more accurate and fluent English language production.

Instructional guidance for grammar instruction predicated on structural disparities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The investigation demonstrates considerable disparities between English and Arabic in articulating ongoing actions. The Present Continuous Tense in English adheres to the structure: Subject + am/is/are + present participle. For instance: 'She is perusing a tome.' In Arabic, the similar idea is expressed using the imperfect tense, as in 'هي تقرأ كتابًا' (hiya taqra'u kitāban), which literally translates to 'She reads a book,' albeit the interpretation relies on contextual or temporal adverbs. Arabic does not necessitate an auxiliary verb; rather, the tense and aspect are ascertained by the verb form and the inclusion of temporal markers.

1. Structural Disparities

In English, the auxiliary verb "to be" (am/is/are) is used to produce the present continuous tense, which is then followed by the main verb's -ing form (e.g., I am reading the book). On the other hand, Arabic does not have a direct grammatical tense that is comparable to the English Present Continuous. Arabic uses the simple present tense (fi`il mudhori) to describe continuous action, which is often enhanced by context or the particle (al-an) / now to indicate continuation (I am studying now).

2. Verb Morphology

The English Continuous Tense employs inflectional morphology with the "-ing" suffix, whereas Arabic utilizes derivational morphology via verb patterns (al-azwan) to express meaning. The Arabic verb modifies its form to denote tense and subject agreement without the necessity of an auxiliary word.

3. Utilization of Auxiliary Verbs

English necessitates the auxiliary verb "be," whereas Arabic does not need an auxiliary verb in the present tense. The verb, in conjunction with subject pronouns or prefixes, expresses agreement in person and number.

4. Contextual Analysis

The English Present Continuous expressly indicates a temporary situation or an action taking place at the moment of speaking. Instead of a clear tense form, this meaning in Arabic is derived from context or temporal adverbs.

5. Origins of Learner Challenges

Learners of English who speak Arabic often omit the auxiliary verb (e.g., "He eating" instead of "He is eating") or confuse the continuous form with situations in which Arabic uses a simple present verb. This indicates a negative transfer from the Arabic language's structure.

Discussion

The structural differences between the two tense systems are the main cause of difficulties for Arabic-speaking English language learners, according to the contrastive study. Errors such as "She reading" or "He playing football now" occur when the auxiliary verb is omitted in Arabic. Another issue is that Arabic does not have the -ing participle form, which makes it difficult to differentiate between continuous traits. English teachers should provide contextualized exercises that highlight temporal differences and emphasize the use of auxiliary verbs in tense formulation. In order to clarify

meaning differences, educators can use equivalent Arabic sentences as contrastive examples in their lessons.

The auxiliary verb to be (am, is, are) and the present participle (–ing) form of the main verb are used to analytically create the present continuous tense in English. The progressive aspect is expressly represented by this construction (subject + auxiliary + V–ing), which indicates that an action is taking place at the time of speaking or in the near future. For instance, the sentence she is reading clearly indicates that the activity is continuous, setting it apart from routine or finished tasks.

According to negative transfer theory, structural differences between English and the learners' first language (L1) are frequently the cause of EFL learners' difficulties learning the present continuous tense. When L1 grammatical patterns are incorrectly applied to the target language, negative transfer takes place, leading to systemic errors. Progressive meaning is often represented lexically (e.g., through adverbs like sedang) rather than morphosyntactically through an auxiliary-plus-participle structure in many languages, including Bahasa Indonesia. As a result of direct transfer from L1 structures, learners may omit the auxiliary verb (she reading) or overgeneralize the –ing form without tense marking.

The results of contrastive analysis (CA) research, which contend that regions of structural divergence between L1 and L2 are probably the causes of learner difficulty, are in line with these data. Early contrastive analyses (e.g., Lado, 1957) predicted that learners whose L1 lacks an analogous grammaticalized form would struggle with English tense-aspect distinctions, especially the progressive aspect. This assertion has been corroborated by more recent empirical research, which shows that learners frequently have difficulty with subject-auxiliary agreement, auxiliary selection, and the functional distinction between the simple present and present continuous. These mistakes are predictable patterns formed by cross-linguistic influence rather than being random.

It is evident from combining the results of contrastive analysis with negative transfer theory that mastering the English present continuous tense involves more than just learning its formal structure. Additionally, learners need to rethink how ongoing behaviors are linguistically represented in English, which is very different from their L1 systems. In terms of pedagogy, this implies that explicit contrastive training, which emphasizes the distinctions between L1 and English tense-aspect systems, might lessen negative transfer and encourage more precise and significant usage of the present continuous tense.

On the other hand, the English present continuous tense has no clear grammatical equivalent in Arabic. Arabic uses al fiil mudhori, the simple present tense, to indicate both continuous and habitual behaviors. The progressive meaning is inferred from the context or highlighted by temporal expressions like "ana akulu al an," which means "I am eating." At the moment This suggests that Arabic relies more on semantic and situational background, whereas English uses morphology and auxiliary verbs to explicitly convey aspect. Two different linguistic systems are highlighted by the contras. Arabic is context-oriented, allowing a single verb form to carry many temporal meanings based on context, while English is aspect-oriented, making a clear grammatical distinction between simple and continuous acts.

CONCLUSION

By showing how basic structural differences between English and Arabic in expressing the Present Continuous Tense routinely affect learner errors, this study advances contrastive linguistics and pedagogical grammar. The study explains the persistence of negative transfer among Arabic-speaking English learners by showing that Arabic carries progressive meaning with a single verb form supplemented by contextual cues, whereas English relies on an auxiliary–participle construction. In addition to highlighting these distinctions, the study emphasizes the pedagogical importance of contrastive analysis as a focused teaching strategy, demonstrating how explicit comparison may turn grammatical divergence from a source of challenge into a teaching tool. These observations offer a solid foundation for creating grammar lessons that raise learner awareness and accuracy in ESL/EFL settings with Arabic-speaking students.

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