

## A contrastive study of Past Tense Charts in English and Arabic in Holy Texts

**Prof. Qasim Abbas Dhayef PhD, Maryam Hashem Tahreer**  
Department of English, College of Education, University of Babylon

[qasimabbas@uobabylon.edu.iq](mailto:qasimabbas@uobabylon.edu.iq)

[maryamalmosawwa12@gmail.com](mailto:maryamalmosawwa12@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

This study presents a special kind of format which reveals the changes that occur when Arabic expresses the various English structures. As certain time/tense/mood combinations do not appear in all forms, some charts will lack one or more of the four structures. Included are: past, present, and future time; past and present tense; perfective and progressive aspect; indicative, subjunctive, and jussive mood. Most Arabic grammar texts include complete imperative mood forms, thus obviating the need to repeat them more as though this data makes an explicit application for charts through presenting it in Arabic and English texts. The charts follow a four-sentence format based on the assertive quality of the verb phrase. For example

The student studied. ( positive assertive/declarative)

The student did not study. ( negative assertive)

Did the student study? ( positive non-assertive/interrogative)

Didn't the student study? ( negative non-assertive)

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### Introduction

One of the things that makes a language hard to learn is how complex its grammar is. Now, every language's grammar is complex in its own way. For example, try to explain the rules in English of why we say "a girl" but also sometimes we can say "the girl" and also we can say "girls" but also "the girls" but not "a girls". ( Comrie, Bernard,p45 ,1985)

Arabic has a lot of grammatical features that are very different from English, as an example of this:

- In English, we say things like "I write," but "she writes."
- I write. Aktub / أَكْتُبُ

a harder language is *not* an un learnable language. First, Arabic vocabulary might not be as difficult for an English speaker as you'd think — English and Arabic actually share some vocabulary. For example, words for many delightful things (like coffee and sugar and oranges and limes) have been borrowed from Arabic.( Ibid , p 53)

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

- 1- What are the forms of past reference that expressed in English and Arabic in the selected data?
- 2- What are the various structures of past tense in English and Arabic showed in the selected data ?

The questions of the present study aims at :

- 1- Identifying the different forms of past tens that expressed in English and Arabic in the selected data.
- 2- Explicating the various structures of past tense aspects in English and Arabic showed in the selected data.

It is hypothesized that :

1. There is a difference in past tense reference that expressed in English and Arabic in the selected data.
2. There are various structures of past tense in English and Arabic showed in the selected data.

The procedures adopted in this study are the following:

- 1- Present a theoretical survey of the relevant literature on the grammar in English and Arabic respectively.
- 2- The present study adopted four Charts that explain and identify the relation ship of past tense in English and Arabic language specifically in the selected data.

This study will be confined to the investigation of a number of Biblical verses from the "Old Testament " in English and aayas taken from surat Al-Ma'da of the Glorious Qur'an in Arabic to study the different forms of past tenses in both languages in the holy texts because such texts represent the standard forms of these languages.

It is hoped that this study will be valuable both theoretically and practically since it tries to present a general framework of the grammar expressing past tense in both English and Arabic. It is also hoped to be of value to teachers, learners and translators who are interested in such aspects of linguistics.

## **Theoretical Background**

### **2.1 Past Tense**

The past tense is a grammatical tense used to describe past events. Past tense verbs include English verbs like sang, went, and washed. Most languages have a past tense, some with multiple types to indicate how long ago the action occurred. It's also possible to express continuous or repetitive events or actions in the imperfect tense. Some languages inflect the verb, changing the ending to indicate the past tense, while others use words like "yesterday" or "last week" to indicate the past. 6) Holm, John

In some languages, past tense is combined with other categories like grammatical aspect (see tense–aspect). A language's past tense forms vary depending on the aspectual or other information encoded. It uses a compound past for completed events and an imperfect past for ongoing or repetitive events. (Ibid., 2002)

Depending on the language, inflecting the verb or using auxiliary verbs (also known as "verbal operators") can be used to grammaticalise the past tense (and some do both, as in the example of French given above). It's worth noting that not all languages use verb tense markers; Mandarin Chinese, for example, uses lexical means (words like "yesterday" or "last week") to indicate past events. (Sakoda, Kent, and Siegel, Jeff, 2003: pp. 38ff.)

The "past time" to which the past tense refers generally refers to the past relative to the moment of speaking, though it may also refer to the past relative to some other time being discussed in contexts where relative tense is used (as in some instances of indirect speech). The past tense of a language can be used for more than just referring to the past; for example, in English and other languages, the past tense is sometimes used to refer to hypothetical situations, such as in condition clauses like If you loved me..., where the past tense loved is used even if there is no reference to the past. (See *ibid*) Some languages use separate tenses to distinguish the recent past from the distant past. It's possible that

there are more than two distinctions. Certain past tenses in some languages can imply that the result of the action in question is no longer valid. The use of the remote past tense *ánámwalra* "he died" in the Bantu language Chichewa, for example, would be surprising because it would imply that the person was no longer dead. Discontinuous past is the term for this type of past tense. Similarly, certain imperfective past tenses (such as the English "used to") can imply that the action in question no longer occurs. (Ibid)

### 2.1.1 Past Simple

(Quirk ,et al 1974) identifies the simple past tense is used to indicate or describe something that happened or existed in the past. The situations or conditions to use a simple past tense is to:

- describe an action, event or condition that occurred in the past or at a specified time
- refer or describe an action that has been completed and there is no time mentioned.
- describe an action or occurrence of an event that is done repeatedly and regularly.
- describe a state of mind in the past or a feeling that was felt in the past.
- refer to someone who has died
- describe events that have occurred in quick succession in the past.

### 2.1.2 Past Continuous

(Ibid : p 354) Past continuous tense is used to indicate an ongoing event in the past. Other conditions where past continuous tense is used are:

- To show that someone is in the middle of an action. *Example: I was calling him when he came home.*
- Is used to describe an action taking place when another occurred. *Example: While they were painting the door, I was painting the windows.*
- For an action that was taking place in the past when an interrupted action happened. *Example: While he was working on his laptop, he fell asleep.*

The past continuous tense is formed using the past tense of the verb to be(was/were) and the present participle verbs ending in -'ing'. These two tenses can be used together to indicate that an action happened while another was in progress. (Comrie, Bernard (1976) *Aspect*, pp. 28-29)

### 2.1.3 Past Perfect

The past perfect tense in a sentence or conversation describes an event that happened in the past before another event in the simple past tense was completed in the past. (Ibid:356)

The situations where a Past Perfect Tense is used are to: indicate an event that has occurred and been completed in the past. *Example: Meenu had borrowed money from the bank to buy her new car.*

- describe an event or action which happened before a definite time in the past. *Example: We had cleaned up the terrace before the watchman arrived.*
- describe an action that happened in the past before another action took place. *Example: We had reached their house after the dinner was over.*

Past Perfect Tense is also used to describe a state. *Example: Their wives had become good friends at the wedding.* A very important use of the Past Perfect Tense is that it is used to clarify which event happened earlier when two actions were completed in the past. *Example: I had read those books that you bought for me.* The past perfect tense is formed with the past tense of the auxiliary verb have i.e which is had and the past participle of the main verb.( Turnbull, Wally R.p13, 2000)

### 2.1.4 Past Perfect Continuous

(Ibid : p 36) This tense is used to describe actions that were going on in the past up until another action in the past happened. They are often used in the following situations:

- For an action that has occurred over a period of time having begun in the past.

- To describe an action which started and finished in the past before another past action.
- It is also regularly used in the reported speech where the present perfect continuous tense becomes past perfect continuous tense.

Unlike the past continuous and past perfect tenses, past perfect continuous tense is not used to indicate state, state of mind or feelings. Examples:

- I had *been studying*.
- It *had been raining* hard for several hours and the streets got flooded.
- If it *had not been raining*, we would have gone to the park.

#### - Past Simple

English	Arabic
The student studied . S+ V (ed)	درسَ الطالب . V + S
The student didn't study . S + Aux. + neg. + V	لم يدرسَ الطالبُ . S + v + Neg. ما درسَ الطالب .
Did the student study ? Aux. + S + V	هل درسَ الطالب ؟ S + V + Int.
Didn't the student study ? Aux. + S + V	ألم يدرس الطالبُ ؟ S+ V + Int.

#### Chart (1) Past Simple in English and Arabic .

For Example :

( لم يكن عجيبا ان يعبد المصريين فرعون , و لكن العجيب ان فرعون امن حقا بانه اله )

"It was not strange that the Egyptians worshiped pharaoh, but the strange thing is that pharaoh truly believed he was a god."

#### -Past Continuous

English	Arabic
The student <u>was studying</u> when he fell asleep . S – PRI pst – PART pre – CLS – S 2 – V pst	كان الطالب يدرس عندما غلب النوم عليه. PREP – S 2 – V pst – CLS – V pre ing – S – PRI pst * و كان الطالب ذاهبا . PART act – S – PRI pst
The student was not studying. S – PRI pst – NEG – PART pre	ما كان الطالب يدرس. V pre ind – S – PRI pst – NEG
Was the student studying? PRI pst – S – PART pre	هل كان الطالب يدرس ؟ V pre ind – S – PRI pst – INT
Wasn't the student studying ? PRI pst + NEG – S – PART pre	الم يكن الطالب يدرس ؟ V pre ind – S – PRI jus – NEG – INT

**Chart (2) Past continuous In English and Arabic**

“They were treating us like slaves”

”كانوا يعاملوننا كالعبيد“

**-Past Perfect**

English	Arabic
The Student had studied the lesson. S – MOD pst – PRI inf – PART pst	كان الطالب قد درس الدرس . V sub – PTL – PART act – PREP – S – PRI pst
The Student had not studied . S – PRI pst – NEG – PART pst	ما كان الطالب قد درس . PREP – S – V jus – NEG
Has the student Studied ? PRI pst – S – PART pst	هل كان الطالب قد درس ؟ V pst – PTL – S – PRI pst – INT
Hasn't the student studied ? PRI pst + NEG – S – PART pst	ألم يدرس الطالب من قبل ؟ PREP – S – V jus – NEG – INT

**Chart (3) Past Perfect in English and Arabic .**

**Examples :**

“For there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.” The Bible: Acts 4:12.

(( لأن ليس اسم آخر تحت السماء قد أُعطي بين الناس به ينبغي ان نخلص )) الكتاب المقدس : اعمال الرسل 4:12

**Section Three**

**Data Collection and Data Analysis**

**3.1 Data Collection**

The Selected data in this study are presented through the old Testament " Book of Genesis", and holy Qura'an Specifically surat Al-Mulk.

**3.2 Data Analysis**

**3.2.1 Past Tense in Bible**

*1- 1 In the beginning God created heaven, and earth. 2 And the earth was voiding and empty, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of God moved over the waters. 3 And God said: Be light made. And light was made.* (Bible , p1,ch.1 , V.1)

There are a variety of past tense forms to be found in the sample test provided. The beginning of the world was the primary focus of the preceding passages.

God created the heavens, the earth was a void, God moved on, and light was made. This is an example of using the past tense to speak about something that happened in the past, but it is still relevant today. Then there was light.

However, the simple and passive tense used here indicated that these lines are discussed the fundamental sources of life that reflected the new shape of life, why and how it occurs.

*2- 25 And God made the beasts of the earth was according to their kinds, and cattle, and every thing that creepeth on the earth after its kind. And God saw that it was good.* (Bible , p2,ch.1 , V.25)

This passage contains both a past continuous and a past simple, which can be found in any text on a regular basis, but the inflection of the meaning will result in a slightly different translation for the true meaning behind these lines compared to the original.

While explaining how good things were discovered on earth during the time of creation, it also explained the different kinds of things discovered on earth and how they provided a benefit to people and life on the planet.

**3-31 And God saw all the things that he had made, and they were very good. And the evening and morning were the sixth day.**

(Bible , p3, ch1 , V.31)

There is evidence here that the earth was created over a period of six days, as stated in the Bible. We have a simple past, which reflects the creation of God, and a continuous present, which also allows us to recognise that the earth was created in six days and contained all of the good things.

**4-And Adam knew Eve his wife; who conceived and brought forth Cain, saying: I have gotten a man through God.** (Bible , p4,ch.2 , V.25)

The lines above had been used to describe the early life for Adam and Eve , buy : **And Adam knew Eve his wife.**

**5- 8 And Cain said to Abel his brother: Let us go forth abroad. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and slew him.** (Bible , p6 ,ch.4, V.8)

These lines are explained the first murder was happened on earth between the sons of Adam , Cain and Abel.

**Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and slew him.**

Thus , the simple past in this verse reflects the action of killing and how far it is real that a brother faced his brother and killed him .

### 3.2.2 Past Tense In Holy Quran

1- "يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَوْفُوا بِالْعُقُودِ أُحِلَّتْ لَكُمْ بَهِيمَةُ الْأَنْعَامِ" (سورة المائدة : 1)

The Verb " Amano " Because it is a heavenly contract between believers and their creator, the verb " Amano " in this verse refers to those who make a promise on God's behalf, even though they must keep that promise and never cancel it. In contrast, we acknowledge that those who believe in God have an obligation to apply and never break this promise. In the past simple tense of "Aufo," which means that at the outset, when they promise to do something, they have to do it in accordance with their beliefs, we discovered that they had to do follow all the rules that what their believes intend on .

2- "حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةُ وَالِدَمُّ وَالْحُنْمُ الْخَنْزِيرِ وَمَا أِهْلٌ لِعَظِيمِ اللَّهِ" (سورة المائدة : 3)

" Huremat " is a passive voice . According to Quarik ,et "حُرِّمَتْ" The verb

al (1985 ) the passive voice is about results rather than progress that leads to this result. In order to arrive at its current form, the verb had to go through a number of changes. .

3- "الْيَوْمَ أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ الطَّيِّبَاتُ وَطَعَامُ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حَلْلٌ لَكُمْ وَطَعَامُكُمْ حَلْلٌ لَهُمْ وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ إِذَا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ مُحْصِنِينَ غَيْرَ مُسَافِحِينَ وَلَا مُتَّخِذِي أَخْدَانٍ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالْإِيمَانِ فَقَدْ حَبِطَ عَمَلُهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ" (سورة المائدة : 5)

Arabic is a rich language with its vocabulary and its terminologies , though you can recognize a lot of words that translated differently from one verse to another , there is a lot of passive voice in the Arabic verses .

"أُحِلَّ , أُوتُوا , حَبِطَ "

These verbs are all in passive form , since they reflect rules that wouldn't broke neither in the past life nor in the present and in the future . a good way of showing what is good and accepted and on the same time there is a punishments and rewards had been found in this verse .

4- (9) وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ (10) وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ" (سورة المائدة : 9-10)



This Sura is carrying a strong meaning of promising , rewards and punishments. This could be seen in the past verbs :

" وَعَدَ , آمَنُوا , عَمِلُوا , كَفَرُوا , كَذَبُوا "

Using the past tense in Arabic language expresses different points of view on a specific topic, in the verses above, we have a past tenses that make a big deal in translating issues the verses carry, from the promise of God for the good people who believe and work all the good things, God promise them of good things, on the other hand, other people who deny and make worse things, they will get a different ending than other people.

English		Arabic
<i>God created heaven</i>	Simple Past	الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا
<i>the earth was voiding</i>	Past Continuous	وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا
<i>light was made</i>	Past Simple	أَجَلٌ لَكُمْ الطَّيِّبَاتِ
<i>God moved</i>	Past simple	أَوْثُوا الْكِتَابِ
<i>Adam knew Eve</i>	Past Simple	حَبِطَ عَمَلُهُ
<i>morning were the sixth</i>	Passive	أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَوْفُوا
<i>and slew him</i>	Past Simple	حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ
<i>Cain rose up</i>	Past Simple	

### 3.3 Results

There is a difference in past tense reference that expressed in English and Arabic in the selected data. In English , tenses can be past or present , since our title is limited to the past tense charts then it is our main concern .

There are various structures of past tense in English they are : simple, continuous , and perfect though each reference of it related to a specific meaning , and that very clear in text (1) which contained two references of past tense , simple ,continuous , and passive form "*God created heaven, the earth was voiding the spirit of God moved over the waters. 3 And God said: Be light made. And light was made.*"

In this text the past simple refer to fact that happened in the past which is the creation , while the past continuous related to an event happened in the past for a period of time .

The Arabic texts unlike English , since past tense in Arabic didn't have simple , continuous and perfect forms , it is followed two forms of past either active or passive voice. As in : مِنْ الَّذِينَ أَوْثُوا الْكِتَابِ , in this sentence the past tense " Auto " is passive voice and the last syllable " وا " is called active deputy .

### 3.4 Discussion

Many different things can be described using the past tense, such as events that have already occurred, and the results and effects of those events can be seen.

In English, there are four different types of past tense. Actions that occurred at a specific point in time are referred to as "simple," "continuous," or "perfect," respectively, in the past. As a result of the fact that the Bible deals with events that occurred in the past while also serving as a source for so many things that have occurred since, we have found that the simple past and past continuous forms of the tense are distinct from one another.

Contexts, verses, and other daily activities in the Arabic language are heavily influenced by the past tense. unlike the English language. Unlike other languages, Arabic has only one form of past tense, which is a simple one. Verses in Holy Quran carry a lot of past forms, this one reflecting the rules and concepts that were given to people so that they could organise their lives and control its various forms

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