**Mustansiriyah University**

**College of Arts**

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# CONTRASTIVE GRAMMAR

## Third Year/ Morning & Evening Classes

## Lecture # 7

## Verbal Categories

## Morphological Forms of the Verb

# English Verbal Categories

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Person | 1st person | I go |
| | 2nd person | You go |
| | 3rd person | She goes |
| Number | Singular | He has written |
| | Plural | They have written |
| Tense | present | I eat |
| | past | I ate |
| Aspect | perfective | I have studied for years. |
| | progressive | I am studying today. |
| Mood | indicative | I am always on time. |
| | imperative | Be there on time! |
| | subjunctive | If I were young again. |
| Voice | active | |
| | passive | |

## Arabic Verbal Categories

Arabic verbs are conjugated for three numbers: singular, dual and plural. The suffixes *-tu* and *-nā* attached to the past tense verb and the prefixes *ʔa-* and *na-* attached to the present tense verb refer to the first person and they indicate no gender distinction. Gender is manifested in verbs that refer to second or third person. The first person is gender neutral.

The Arabic verb, on the other hand, has the following categories:

l. Person: 1st, 2nd, 3rd
2. Number: singular, dual, plural
3. Gender: masculine, feminine
4. Tense: Present ("imperfect"), past ('perfect")
5. Aspect: perfective, imperfective
6. Mood: indicative, subjunctive, jussive
7. Voice: active, passive

## Morphological Forms of the Verb

Before we present a description of the various verbal categories, we will present an outline of the morphological forms of the verb in English and Arabic.

### (a) English

There are three types of verb in English: lexical (full, main) verb, primary auxiliary verb (BE, HAVE, DO) and modal auxiliary verb (WILL, MAY, CAN, etc.). Morphologically, lexical verbs are divided into two classes: regular and irregular. The former has four morphological forms, whereas the latter have five "write" or three "put" forms. The following Table shows these forms:

**Table: Morphological Forms of Regular and Irregular verbs**

| | Regular Verb | Irregular Verb |
|---|---|---|
| (l) Base form | play | write, put |
| (2) -s form | plays | writes, puts |
| (3) -ing participle | playing | writing, putting |

(4) -ed past played wrote, put

(5) -ed participle played written, put

**(b) Arabic**

Arabic has a root and pattern morphology. Each verb has a specific semantic unit (root) shared by all its derivatives. Owens (1988:101) defines Arabic inflection as "the total range of forms or morphological patterns a given root has". For example, the triconsonantal root KTB `writing' has the following forms, among others:

kataba كتبَ 'he wrote'

yaktubu يكتبُ 'he writes'

Taktubu تكتبُ 'she writes'

kattabh كتب ' make write'

maktuub مكتوب 'written, letter'

kaataba كاتب ' correspond'

maktabمكتب 'office'

maktaba(t) مكتبة 'library'

mukaytib مكيتب 'small office'

kitaab كتاب'book'

kutub كتب 'books'

kitaabatun كتابة 'writing'

kaatib كاتب'writer'

mukaataba(t) مكاتبة 'correspondence'

'istiktaab استكتاب 'dictation'

miktaab مكتاب 'typewriter'

'iktitaab اكتتاب 'registration'

Verbs are either "basic" mujarrada مجردة or "derived" maziida مزيدة The majority of Arabic basic verb roots are triconsonantal. Form I verbs are of three types, depending on the second vowel of the perfect:

- (-a): kataba كتبَ 'He wrote'
- (-i): fariḥa فرحَ 'became happy.' (signifying a temporary quality/state)
- (-u): ḥasuna حَسُنَ 'became better' (signifying a permanent quality/state)

However, some roots are quadriliteral, e.g., DḤRJ (daḥrajahu دحرجهُ 'He rolled him over.'), WSWS (waswasa lahu وسوسَ لهُ He whispered.

**Person, Number and Gender**

**(i) English**

English verbs are inflected for person. The only inflectional suffix for person is the -s 3rd person singular in the present tense, e.g., We swim. He swims. For plural number, the suffix is zero.

**(ii) Arabic**

Arabic verbs are inflected for person, number and gender. In the imperfect, person is marked by prefixes while number and gender by suffixes. The following Table presents these inflectional affixes.

## CONTRAST

First, the classification of Arabic verbs into either basic or derived is based on morphological changes, whereas the classification of English verbs into either auxiliary or main is based on syntactic principles. Second, Arabic verbs are inflected for gender, whereas English verbs are not. Third, Arabic verbs are inflected for dual number, whereas English verbs are not.