

## Chapter Five: Translation of Tenses (Arabic –English/ French –English)

### Tense and Aspect in Arabic- English Translation

Literature of tense in Arabic reveals two different viewpoints: traditional and contemporary. Most of the Arab grammarians follow the traditional opinion suggested by سيبويه which states that there are three tenses in Arabic: past, present, and future. The form (فعل) expresses the past. Both (يفعل) and (افعل) are capable of expressing present and future times.

Considering time, the verb in Arabic has three main tenses:

First, **the past**: the aspect of the past expresses a state or an event which happened before the moment of speaking. The past tense embraces:

- Complete: It happened and finished without having any relation with another event.
- Past (Anterior): A finished event which happened after another finished event.
- Most completed: An event which is completed in an unspecified time before another complete event.
- Incomplete (imperfect): It happened with another action. It equals ( المضارع )

Second, the verb which expresses **the present** time is of two main types:

- The past: the action has just been completed.
- The present: It expresses a state or an action in the present or the future time.

The teacher explains the lesson – إن الأستاذ يشرح الدرس

I will not be satisfied of you - لست أرضى عنك

I will not give you what you asked ما أعطيتك ما طلبت

Third, the verb can express **the future**:

- If it is preceded by ( سوف or س ) for the near and the far future such as أكتب سوف / سأكتب

- If the present is preceded by a particle which expresses expectation such as **يبرأ المريض**  
**فدا**

Following the same divisions of the English tenses (past, present, future), and using **التفصيلات** to represent the arabic tenses, a detailed analysis of the Translation of Arabic tenses into English shows the following:

## I. THE PRESENT :

- 1. The Simple Present:** It takes the form (**أفعل**), which is the 'Imperfect' (**المضارع**) form of the verb. It includes the following tenses in English:

**Present (statement/fact)**, e.g.,

'I understand you' = **أفهم ما تقول**

'I think you are telling the truth' = **أظنك صادقاً**

**General truth**, e.g.: **تدور الأرض حول الشمس**

**habits**, e.g., **ينام خالد مبكراً**

- 2. The Present Continuous:** It is constructed by **The form (أفعل الآن)**

The durative (progressive) aspect in Arabic expresses that something is taking place at the moment of speaking, e.g.,

'Ali is working in the orchard now = **يعمل علي في البستان الآن.**

- 3. The Present Perfect Simple:** It is represented by the form (**قد فعلت**).

It produces the most explicit form of the present perfect in Arabic for it includes the meaning of 'already' or 'just', e.g., **قد قامت الصلاة**, i.e., 'the time of prayer has arrived' (the near past)

'I have already explained this' = **قد شرحت هذا**

"**قد سمع الله قول التي تجادلك في زوجها** = ...-"

#### 4. The Present Perfect Continuous: The form

- ما ( زلت/انفككت/فتتت/برحت ) فاعلا

it is used to express that an act is continually happening until the moment of speaking.

#### II. THE PAST: it includes the following four tenses:

##### 1. the Simple Past: It is expressed by one of the following forms:

- **The form ( فعلت )**. The main form to express this tense is the 'Perfect' form of the Arabic verb

I saw him twice last year'

"Allah created the heavens and the earth with العنكبوت بالحق " truth  
رأيتنه مرتين في العام الماضي  
" خلق الله السماوات والأرض بالحق " truth

- **The form ( أفعل )**. it is used to narrate some events happened in the past.

##### 2. The Past Continuous: It follows one of the following two forms:

**The Form :** كنت/أمسيت/بت/أصبحت/ظللت + أفعل -

this form resembles exactly the English *past continuous* tense, as in the following Qur'anic text:

"وكان يأمر أهله بالصلاة" (مريم 55)

Similarly, the same tense occurs in the following instances:

'أمسى المطر ينهمر', 'بات الأسد يزأرا', 'أصبح الجو يندثر بالعاصفة', 'ظل القطر يسير في الصحراء.'

##### - **The Form** كنت لا أزال أفعل

It is called " الماضي المستمر المنقطع ", i.e., which was continuous for a limited period in the past, e.g.,

'كان لا يزال يكتب له.'

- ##### 3. The Past Perfect: The general rule which governs the construction of this tense is that it expresses a past in the past. When a past event is combined by a relative tense taking its reference point from the past, what happens first is the past perfect. This sequence of past events can be expressed by several means among them are the following (the past perfect structure is underlined):

##### - **The Form** فعلت + بعد أن فعلت

'He arrived after the party had started' - وصل بعد أن بدأت الحفلة

**ii. The Form** قد فعلت + فعلت

زرتة في قريته وقد اشترى سيارة جديدة

I visited him in his village; he had bought a new car =

**The Form** فعلت + كنت (قد فعل)

it involves the use of the verb كان with or without قد:

He lived in an old house which he had bought from his uncle

عاش في بيت قديم كان (قد) اشتراه من عمه

**III. THE FUTURE:** it includes the following tenses:

**1. The (Simple) Future:** There are several ways of expressing future time in Arabic, as in the following:

**The Form** سوف + أفعل

the Quranic text

but you will come to know "كلا سوف تعلمون." التكاثر 3

The form سوف أفعل is called "compound construction"; it involves adding the particle سوف and prefixing it to the Imperfect form of the verb. Unlike the form سوف أفعل, it expresses near future.

**The Form** (ما الظرفية + فعلت), as in the following Qur'anic text, it includes such structure:

.... so long as I remain alive "وأوصاني بالصلاة والزكاة ما دمت حيا." (مريم 31)

**The Form** إذا + فعلت

"إذا جاء نصر الله والفتح" (النصر 1)

**حروف النصب + أفعل**

أرغب في أن تزورني 'يسعدني ان يتماثل عمر للشفاء

**The Form** حروف الشرط + أفعل

"إن يشأ يرحمكم" (الإسراء 54)

An exception to this rule is the use of the particle 'لو', which is employed in the past only, e.g.,  
لوزارني لأكرمته

**The Form** لام الابتداء + أفعل

"وان ربك ليحكم بينهم يوم القيامة." (النحل 124).

2. **The Future Perfect:** this tense "is expressed by a perfect aspect with a relative tense taking its reference from a point in the future". So, it takes the form of

أكون قد فعلت + ظرف زمان يفيد الاستقبال

تكون الشركة قد أوفت بجميع العقود بحلول عام 1990

'The company will have fulfilled the conditions of all the contracts by the end of 1990.'

### 3. the Future Perfect Continuous

Literature of the Arabic tenses does not offer structures to express this tense. However, it is suggested that the Arabic structure ( ) سأكون فاعل is capable of expressing this tense when it is used with a suitable adverbial, e.g., (By the end of this week, I'll have been tackling this research for three months), i.e.,

بنهاية هذا الأسبوع سأكون عاملا على هذا البحث لثلاثة أشهر .

The Following Table Summarises The Equivalence Of English Tenses In Arabic

English tenses	Traditionnal viewpoint	Contemporary viewpoint
<b>Present Simple</b>	أفعل <sup>1</sup>	أفعلُ
Present Continuous		أفعل الان
Present Perfect		قد فعلت
Present Perfect Continuous		ما( زلت /انفككت /فتنتت /برحت +) فاعل/ فاعلا
<b>Past Simple</b>	فعلتُ	فعلتُ أفعلُ
<b>Past Continuous</b>		(كنت/أمسيت/بت/أصبحت/ضللت ) أفعل- كنت لا أزال أفعل-
<b>Past Perfect</b>		بعد أن فعلت فَعَلْتُ + قد فعلت كنت قد فعلت
<b>Past Perfect Continuous</b>		
<b>Future Simple</b>		أفعل + ظرف زمان يفيد الاستقبال- لام الابتداء + أفعل- ما[ الظرفية+ فعلتُ إذا+ فعلتُ حروف الشرط + أفعل-

<b>Future</b> Continuous		كلما فعلتُ
<b>Future</b> Perfect		أكون قد فعلت + ظرف زمان يفيد الاستقبال

### PRACTICE

**Question :** translate the following sentences into English

1. لقد عانيت أياما تعسة
2. ولقد نسيت أسمائهن.
3. إنك احد الأمناء الصادقين القلائل الذين عرفتهم في حياتي
4. قد كنت أحاول طيلة الظهيرة أن اذهب بك الى نيويورك.
5. منحني والدي نصحا مازلت أديره في فكري منذ ذلك الزمان.
6. لقد مضى عليهما وهما يعيشان هناك احد عشر عاما.
7. كان من عادتي تناول العشاء في نادي جامعة بيل...
8. كنا نجلس على طاولة مع رجل في سني
9. ولقد سمعت قصصا كثيرة عنها.
10. لقد رأني عدة مرات وكان في نيته أن يزورني قبل مدة طويلة
11. كنت معتادا على كتابة الرسائل مرة كل أسبوع...
12. بعد أسبوعين سنشهد أطول يوم في العام.
13. أريد أن انتظر هنا حتى تذهب ديزي الى الفراش

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