

Simple Sentence Structure of Standard Arabic Language and Standard English Language: A Contrastive Study

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Received: Nov. 2, 2012 Accepted: November 20, 2012 Published: December 31, 2012

doi:10.5296/ijl.v4i1.2621 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v4i1.2621>

Abstract

Purpose: To contrast and compare the simple sentence structure in the form of statement of both Standard Arabic SA and English SE Languages on the basis of Lado's Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis CAH.

Method: 500 sentences in Standard Arabic and 500 sentences in Standard English were collected randomly from published academic sources in both languages where all of them are simple and in some cases a compound or complex sentence is broken to have simple sentences. Lado's approach and steps for contrasting two linguistic systems were identically followed: selection of source language SL (Arabic) and target language TL (English), description, comparison and prediction of potential problems classified according to the degree of importance.

Results: Results indicated that SA is a free-word-order system in the case of structuring a simple sentence in the form of statement compared to the SE which proved a fixed-word-order language. Additionally and predictively, learners of both Arabic and English as foreign language (AFL), (EFL) and as Second language (ASL), (ESL) have difficulties when attempting to write a sentence. For learners of English it is more difficult as they do not have verbal, nominal and equational sentences in their written language, so they move from one type to three or [four] types of sentences in the form of statement. For Arab learners, they have serious problems in subject-verb agreement but which was not the researcher's concern. Other problems according to this research-paper could be in translation in both cases but it is more in the case of Arab learners especially in the case of the verb (Be).

Conclusions: SA allows four types of simple sentence in the form of statement with some restrictions and rules for each case (nominal, verbal, equational, and non-verbal), whereas English allows only one type which is nominal.

Keywords: Contrastive analysis hypothesis, Standard Arabic language, Standard English language, Simple sentence, Nominal sentence, Verbal sentence, Equational sentence, Non-verbal sentence

1. Introduction

Human's language is a unique feature of humans. There are many languages but they are not alike. Standard Arabic and Standard English languages, for example, are different but alike. That is, these languages are originally different from one another (Semitic & German) but they do share at least generally some linguistic features at all levels: phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatics' level. Fields known as Contrastive Linguistics, Comparative Linguistics and Universal Grammar have a lot to do with these areas. In this research-paper, Lado's theory of Contrastive Analysis namely his hypothesis of contrastive analysis (CAH) and the steps for contrasting two languages have been all followed in this study.

Sociolinguistically, language is a means of communication between/among people, societies, communities, regions, countries, etc. Psycholinguistically, language is a human mental behaviour. In spite of this, language has many languages that is, each country or area in this world have its/their own language. Simply put, languages are many just like countries are many. Needless to say, major aims of each language whatever was is, are the same, but this or that language will be necessarily either completely or partially different from another language. Instead, one language can be partially similar to another language but not necessarily completely similar to that or this language.

Historically, linguists in nearly all over the world have made many attempts trying to name one language as the origin of all languages. Moreover, their researchers aimed at formulating or mapping the languages of the world. However, they may have achieved something, but their results and findings remain all questionable since they lack enough evidence.

Strictly speaking and universally, other linguists, lead by Chomsky, have attempted another aspect of language that is looking for universal features/aspects of all the languages of the world. Namely, this theory is known as Universal Grammar (UG).

Comparatively, other linguists would prefer to approach languages from the point of view of the similarities they share or they have in common. Mainly, what is called Comparative Linguistics (CL); researches in this area conduct their researches comparing two or more languages, dialects, etc., attempting to find out similarities between/among them.

Specifically, another approach has appeared in nearly the early 1940s and prospered in the 1960 and over, called as Contrastive Analysis (CA) or sometimes as (Contrastive Linguistics), (Lightbown, 2006). Contrastively, contrastivists (researchers working in contrastive analysis area) attempt from an educational point of view to contrast two languages, concentrating on the differences between them to be taught for second language (L2) (ESL) or foreign language (EFL) learners in order to solve their problems hindering the process of learning this or that particular foreign or second language.

In regard to (CA) and principally, Fries, Lado and James are considered as the proponents of CA theory or field study. The basic hypothesis of this theory, however is that where differences exist, difficulties of learning do exist. On the other hand, where similarities do

exist, ease of learning does exist. Put another way, the more the languages are similar the easier to be learnt and taught, and the more different they are, the more difficult they are to be learnt and taught, (Lado, 1957).

For instance, consider Arabic and English languages which are originally different from one another. More accurately, consider the simple sentence system (structure) in the two languages. Basically, they both have the same type of sentence: simple sentence, but a simple sentence structure in Arabic is entirely different from that in English. For that matter, Arab learners of English especially beginners and whether leaning it as (L2) or (FL) face difficulties in building a simple sentence. These difficulties might be due to their first language (Arabic) transfer (language interference) according to CA hypothesis.

Thus, this research-paper is a contrastive study of the simple sentence structure of both standard Arabic (SA) and Standard English (SE), where in both languages are introduced briefly, their simple sentence structures are described, and then they are compared by examples taken from the randomly collected data. More importantly and which is the core idea of this research-paper is investigating the validity of the claim that (SA) is (V+S+O) and (SE) on the other hand is (S+V+O). The researcher will declare depending on statistical results whether it is true or not, or to what extent such a claim is true. This study will also include a part where in predictions of potential problems faced by learners of English as both (EFL) and (ESL), will be mentioned and classified according to their degree of importance.

It is usually wrongly assumed that Standard Arabic language mainly its simple sentence structure, is always a type of verbal sentences (sentences which start with a (VP), that is (VP+NP+...) and English on the other hand, is not always as (NP+VP+...). However, it is important to show through this contrastive study how each system is different from another and how such a claim is not accurate. Thus, the principal aims of this study are:

- 1) Contrasting briefly the systems of the simple sentence structure in both Standard Arabic and Standard English
- 2) Declaring on the basis of the collected data whether Arabic's simple sentence is always as (VP+NP+...) and English's simple sentence is always as (NP+VP+...)

Hence, this study is delimited to both Standard Arabic and Standard English languages mainly the simple sentence structure in the form of statement in both systems. Therefore, the two systems are not syntactically contrasted in detail, that is showing only the basic differences and similarities for proving or disapproving the validity of the proposed claim that Standard Arabic's simple sentence structure is always (VP+NP+...) and Standard English's simple sentence structure is not always (NP+VP+...). Hence, the study does not include a detailed discussion of the errors and mistakes made by learners of both languages in both cases (Error Analysis) (EA).

2. Literature Survey: Description Stage

The language of a place (country/region) is an integral part of its society whether that place is a developed country, a developing country or even under-developing country. In terms of

culture, sociology, psychology and even politics, languages would appear at least apparently as enemies just like some countries are enemies of some other countries. But when it comes to linguistic matters, there is nearly no chance for just mere things, that is languages are judged by their structures and linguistic components regardless of their political, religious or social states. For instance, Standard Arabic Language and Standard English Language are two examples of what has been mentioned above. Hence, in this part of this paper, definitions of both Standard Arabic and Standard English, and basic differences and similarities between the two languages are all accounted for but very briefly.

Basically, both Arabic and English are two major languages in the world. For Arabic, this may be due to the large number of its speakers but more importantly for being the language of Islam. English, on the other hand, it is recently being the international language, language of technology and language of academic and higher education even in some Arab Countries and other foreign countries in Europe and other places in this world.

Generally, Arabic is a language spoken and used as a native language by at least one hundred million in different places distributed in the middle east and Arabian peninsula. Additionally, it is being used/learned as either a second or foreign language in places nearly all over the world. Yet, people from all over the world mostly students and tourists come to Arabian countries to learn/acquire Arabic language. Politically, Arabic language is one of the official languages admitted by the United Nations, (Chejne (1969).

As a language, Arabic is divided into three types: Classical Arabic, Standard Arabic and Spoken Arabic. Briefly, classical Arabic is usually referred to the language used before Islam, language of poetry, literature and golden ages of Islam and Arabic Sciences. Later on, after nearly, the European Renaissance, a new age has appeared along with a new version of Arabic has been called Standard Arabic or sometimes as Modern Standard Arabic. More importantly, what has been called as Classical Arabic is being only used for the Holy Quran and ancient Arabic books. Similarly, Standard Arabic language is being only used for official states, academic writings, school materials, news and broadcasting, etc, (Owens, (2006). That is, for speaking another type(s) of Arabic called or knows as dialects/varieties are used in each country. Differently put, Yemen's Arabic language is to some extent different from the Saudi's Arabia kingdom Arabic language. Yet, these two Arabic languages (dialects) are to a great extent different from the Moroccan and Algerian Arabic languages (dialects). For our purpose, Standard Arabic is being used here as the data of this contrastive study.

In effect, Standard Arabic is the language used by Arabs or any of its users for academic purposes, official purposes and more accurately the language that appears in print: newspapers, books, teaching materials, etc, (Thackston, 1994). It is different from the classical Arabic in that diacritics or case markers do not necessarily appear in all the words except in the ambiguous words and sentences whether in written or spoken cases.

On the other hand, Standard English is also one of the major languages of the world as it has been mentioned above and one of the official languages of the United Nations as well. English language is used as a native language by about three hundred million people including countries such as United Kingdom and United States of America, (Quirk, et al

1985). Regardless of the number of its speakers, English is distinguished more by its huge number of learners, those who learn/acquire it as either a foreign or second language in all over the world. For that matter, it is considered as the most widely used language in the world. Like Arabic, English has some dialects but not many as Arabic.

Thus, standard English is just like the standard Arabic language, referred to academic language, teaching materials, taught English whether as native, second or foreign, official matters, news and broadcasting, and more specifically language that appears in print and language of educated people in some cases. Ultimately, Standard English, namely academic English that appears in printed books is used as the data of this contrastive study along with Standard Arabic's language data.

3. Method

This study is qualitative and quantitative at the same time. It is qualitative in the case of contrasting both Standard Arabic's simple sentence structure in the form of statement and Standard English's simple sentence structure also in the form of statement. Conversely, it is quantitative in approaching the major aim of this study which claims that Standard Arabic simple sentence structure in the form of statement is [always] (VP+NP+...) and English is always (NP+VP+...).

However, for the former case, Lado's (1957) steps of contrasting two languages namely two grammatical systems are followed (languages selection [source and target languages]), description, comparison and finally prediction of the potential problems and their classification).

As for the latter case, the SPSS statistical programme is used to show statistically the results namely frequencies of the inserted data to declare whether the claimed hypotheses are valid, invalid or to what extent they are true/ untrue?

Generally, in the whole research-paper process, the APA style is followed. Finally, early Transformational Generative Grammar approach (TGG) introduced by Chomsky, namely (Phrase Structure Rules) (Syntactic Structures 1957) is used to indicate the syntactic analysis of both systems Standard Arabic's simple sentence and Standard English's simple sentence structure.

4. The study

4.1 Theoretical Comparison and Contrast

One obvious difference between (SA) and (SE) is that Arabic is originally Semitic (Asian language) whereas English is Germanic in its origin (European language). Again and personally, while Arabic spread is to a great extent for religious reasons, in English it is for business, academic, educational and economic reasons. Put it another way, learning Arabic language is a must for being a Muslim, for that matter and in most cases, Arabic is being learnt and acquired by those who want to join this religion. Needless to say, there exceptions, those learn it for just academic purposes but a very few number, they are. English, on the

other hand, is being learnt and taught for covering the educational, scientific, technological, etc gaps which appeared as a result for the quickly spread of English in all over the world.

Other areas of difference between (SA) and (SE) are their writing system and number of the letters they use. While Arabic is a right to left writing system language, English is left to right writing system language. Once again, Arabic has twenty eight (28) letters and English does have only twenty six (26), (Ibrahim, 2000).

More major differences between (SA) and (SE) are may be phonetic, phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic. Phonetically, (SA), unlike English has some more places and manners of articulations which are not required in (SE) like Velarized and pharyngalized sounds. Phonologically, vowels are basic and more importantly more in their number compared to Arabic vowels which are basically three. Additionally, vowels do not usually appear in written words as in the case of English, instead, they are realized by case-markers or diacritics (nominative, accusative and genitive cases). Morphologically, Arabic is a more complex inflectional language than English language is. Semantically, words which appear similar in the two languages may have in one language more than one meaning or words, each to be used in a particular situation. Consider, for example, the word (Maktabah), in Arabic it means all (bookshop, bookstore, library, and stationary). This issue and other issues are semantic differences between the two languages.

In terms of Pragmatics, a particular sentence or more accurately utterance or word said by a speaker of Arabic would mean something for speakers of Arabic but would mean something else or nothing at all for English speakers. For instance, the words (you are divorced) uttered by a man when he wants to be separated from his wife in Islamic societies, would directly result to the situation that this or that particular woman has become forbidden to that particular man who was before uttering these words her husband and allowed to stay and sleep with her. Dissimilarly, for our purpose at least, in English these words would mean nothing and are without acts. Syntactically, English and Arabic are to a great extent different from one another. Major syntactic differences are sentences' structure, word-order, subject-verb agreement and other syntactic areas. In short, whereas (SA) is a free-word-order (FWO), (SE) is a fixed-word-order (FIWO). In other words, (SA) sentence's structure can be both (S+V+O) or (V+S+O), as a statement but (SE) can be only (S+V+O). This issue which is the main one of this research-paper will be accounted for theoretically in the next part of this paper and then practically in the part next to the theoretical part, (Haywood, 1965).

In spite of these differences between (SA) and (SE) languages, they do have in common some linguistic features and issues.

Both, for example, (SA) and (SE) are inflectional languages though the former is more complex than the latter. That is, (SE) is more flexible regarding words' inflection.

Similar to (SE) is Arabic in allowing the simple sentence to start with a subject (NP), followed by a verb (VP) and an object or complement in the case of transitive verbs (Comp).

To conclude, (SA) and (SE) are different yet alike. Although the two languages differ in many areas: Phonetics, Phonology, Morphology, Semantics, Pragmatics, Syntax, and origins; they share some linguistic feature within the same areas.

4.1.1 Sentences Structure

A sentence is the largest unit in a language described by grammar (Syntax) whether that sentence is English, Arabic, French or whatever language it is, (Humboldt, 1988). Yet, it is argued sometimes and not agreed about what could be a sentence and what could not be considered as a sentence when it comes to spoken language. Once again, it is sometimes argued about issues such as sentences with semi-verbs words, to be considered as simple sentences or compound ones. But, when it comes to writing, it is easier to determine and decide what could be a sentence and what could not be a sentence regardless of the arguable issues about its type (Humboldt: 1988, pp128-139).

Additionally, a sentence in any language may have some forms at least in Arabic, French and English, and German which the researcher knows basically about, they have sentence's forms including: statements, interrogative, imperative and exclamation.

Thus, a simple sentence structure with a form of statement in (SA) may be similar to that one in (SE). In spite of this, they would be as different from one another just like the two languages are from two different origins. This issue in particular and how sentence is defined in general from the point of view of Arab linguists, English and other nationalities will be accounted for in this part of the research-paper.

In principle, a sentence is defined as “the largest unit of language that it is the business of grammar to describe”, (Leech: 2006, p. 104). Leech (ibid) continues “in writing, sentences are marked by beginning with a capital letter and ending with a full stop (.), question mark (?), or exclamation mark (!), in spoken language, the definition is problematic”.

Both Greenbaum and Nelson agree with Leech that “grammar deals with rules for combining words into larger units- and the largest unit that is described in grammar is normally the sentence”, (2002. P. 13). For Greenbaum and Nelson, a sentence in general is difficult to define and they argue with introducing a number of the definitions named as national definition “... a sentence expresses a complete thought”, or defined formally as “a string of words beginning with a capital (upper case) letter and ending with a full stop (period)”, (ibid). According to these authors, the problem in the national definition is that thought can be sometimes complete ideas by just saying words. Similarly in the other definition, some sentences such as in the case of titles are without punctuation marks yet are sentences. As a result, it can be concluded that defining a sentence in spoken language is may be to a great extent problematic but in written language it is to a great extent clear.

Moreover, (Greenbaum: 1996, pp 305-312) has discussed in details his arguments regarding what could be a sentence and what could not be a sentence. He introduced a number of the linguistic terms regarding sentence such as elliptical sentences, finished vs. unfinished sentences and complete vs. incomplete sentences. In spite of this, it seems that his conclusion is that in written language the task of defining a sentence is easier and clearer.

With reference to what has been mentioned above, only simple sentence in the form of statement would be contrasted here in both languages (SA) and (SE).

Essentially, a simple sentence is defined as “the smallest sentences-unit” which “normally has one finite verb... a subject and a predicate”, (Alexander: 1988, p. 4). Similarly, in (SA), a simple sentence is introduced by (Chejne: 1969) as a sentence which simply includes a noun phrase (NP) and a verb phrase (VP) or a predicate with a covert verb, etc.

4.1.2 Simple Sentence Structure

Though both languages (SA) and (SE) have simple sentences but the structure of each one is different in some cases, yet alike in other cases. This part of this research-paper will show in somehow details how a simple sentence is structured and viewed in each language. For that matter, the researcher will make use of transformational generative grammar (TGG), [Chomsky, 2002) to represent the elements of each given sentence in this part and the next part where in the two systems are compared according to the collected data with the help of statistical results calculated and analyzed with the use of SPSS (Version 16).

In addition to what the researcher has mentioned above is that a simple sentence in English is “a complete unit of meaning which contains a subject and a verb, followed, if necessary, by other words which make up the meaning”, (Alexander: 1990, p. 4). Like Alexander, (Elliott: 1997) presents a simple a sentence as the one which has a complete meaning and structure obligatorily starts with a subject (NP), followed by a verb (VP) and a complement if the verb is not intransitive. In effect, a sentence in (SE) appears to have a fixed-word-order system (FIWO), a system that requires a subject (NP) to come first followed necessarily and obligatorily by a verb (VP) and the other elements of the sentence depend to a great extent on the type of the used verb (VP) in the sentence.

Different from (SE) is the simple sentence in (SA). Simply put, traditional Arab grammarians and linguists view a sentence in terms of its types. That is, two types of (SA) are to be considered whenever this issue is discussed. According to (Chejne: 1969. Pp33-4), “the basic syntax of Arabic sentence is not unusually complex, there are two basic sentences types usually referred to as the nominal and the verbal sentences. Simply, he goes on, a nominal sentence is the one which starts with a noun (NP) and a verbal sentence is the one which starts with a verb (VP). It is important to note here that, some Arab linguists and grammarians and Western Arabists as well would argue about this division as sometimes it has no clear-cut semantic explanations. From another point of view, it is argued about the name itself as nominal sentences, for that matter it is suggested to use both equational sentences for sentences without verbs and nominal sentences for sentences which have verbs and nouns, but (NPs) are proceeded.

Well, before discussing these issues in details, statistical results of the collected data will be viewed contrastively and described briefly and then the issue of the structure of both systems will be discussed with illustrations taken from the collected data.

4.2 Statistical Comparison and Contrast

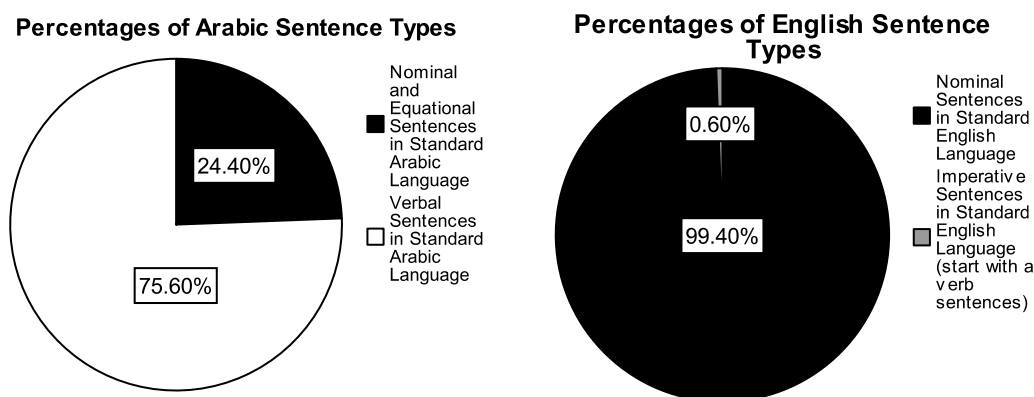
Statistically, frequency is a tool used for measuring the number or times of repeated items in each variable according to the whole inserted data. Therefore, the researcher made use of the SPSS (Version 16) to do so.

Generally, the below two figures show the percentages of the types of simple sentence in the form of statement in both Standard Arabic and English Languages.

It is indicated in the statistical analysis that there are only a hundred and twenty two (122) nominal and equational sentences out of five hundred (500) sentences, which means there are three hundred and seventy eight (378) verbal sentences out of the whole inserted date- five hundred sentences (500). In other words, there are about (24.3) percent non-verbal (nominal and equational) sentences and amazingly about (75.3) percent are verbal sentences.

On the other hand, the second figure (the pie chart in the right side) shows that all the sentences except three of them which have been chosen randomly are simple sentences but in the form of imperative which make it impossible to say that they are as verbal sentences as those in (SA), but in the form of imperative and not statements. .

In comparison, one can declare [prospectively] that (SA) is both (V+S+O) and (S+V+O) but it is more biased to the former case. (SE), on the other hand, is only a (S+V+O) language, its syntactic system does not allow sentences as (V+S+O/...) in the form of statements just as in the case of (SA).



Figures 1 & 2. Percentages of sentence structure type in SAL and SEL

5. Discussion

Contrastively and with reference to the above mentioned idea that (SA) system of the simple sentence structure is free-word-order, whereas, (SE) system is a fixed-word-order, it is worthy to discuss this point in somehow details and explain comparatively how this happens and more importantly to what extent and also why (SA) is a free-word-order and English is a fixed-word-order language. Thus, in this part these issues along with what is allowed and what is not allowed in building a simple sentence in both (SA) and (SE) languages, will be accounted for.

Strictly speaking, a basic simple sentence in English is one which contains of a subject (NP) and an intransitive verb, that is (S= NP+VP), (Ahmed, 2008) and (Patzold, 1985).

For example: (266) (The sessions ended.)

S≡ (The sessions ended.)

S≡ (NP+VP)

NP≡ (Det+ N)

Det≡ (the)

N≡ (sessions)

VP≡ (In. V)

VP≡ (ended)

Other patterns of the simple sentence in English could be as the following:

(NP+ VP+ Comp):

A comp can be (DO), (IO), (DO+IO), (DO+SA), (DO+PC);

Or it can be:

(NP+ VP+ Comp);

The (VP) here will be (a copula) and the (NP) will be (SA);

Or the (VP) is (a non-transitive verb) and the (NP) is (a PC).

On account of this, the (NP) as the first element of the simple sentence in (SE) is basic and cannot be changed unless the form of the sentences is changed to a question, imperative, etc. more importantly and again, what follows this (NP) is in most cases if not always is an obligatorily put (VP), that is, no (VP) means no sentence. Finally, what follows the (VP) is to a great extent dependent on the type of the used verb: auxiliary or lexical, and if it is lexical is it non-complement verb (intransitive) or is it a complement verb (non-transitive, transitive), etc.

In contrast, SA's simple sentence structure can be basically and [traditionally] divided into [four types]: nominal sentences vs. verbal sentences and equational or non-verbal sentences vs. verbal sentences. It is important to note that in almost all the books, mentioned in the references' list, a basic division of the sentence in (SA) is only whether nominal vs. verbal sentence or but rarely equational (non-verbal) sentences vs. verbal sentences. As far as the researcher is concerned, it is more logic to divide the simple sentences in Arabic according to the above proposed formulation (four types) from the point of view of their structure with the form of statements or in some cases declarative sentences, (Wightwick, 1998).

To begin with nominal sentences vs. verbal sentences: a nominal sentence will be viewed as the sentence which necessarily starts with a noun (NP) followed by a verb (VP) and a complement if necessary on condition this sentence can be inverted/changed into a verbal sentence without any changes or additions to its elements except in case-marking if required. A verbal sentence, on the other hand, is the one which inevitably starts with a verb (VP), followed inescapably by a subject (NP) and ended with a complement prospectively depending on the type of the verb. For instance,

(الهدف الخاص كان هدفا دينيا.)

4. (The particular aim was a religious aim.)

The syntactic Arabic system of the sentence in general and of the simple sentence in particular allows us to move the verb to be or any verb, here it is [kanaa-was], the past form of the verb be, moved to the beginning of the sentence(s). Consequently, we will have a verbal sentence instead of the nominal sentence. Syntactically, the sentences are all grammatical, well-formed and acceptable. The output of this process will be the following sentence:

(كان الهدف الخاص هدفا دينيا.)

More interestingly, however, is that in the case of (SE) or the translation here will be the same in both cases: verbal and nominal sentences.

(The particular aim was a religious aim.) (As verbal sentence in Arabic)

Or (The particular aim was religious.) (As nominal sentence in Arabic)

An example for a verbal sentence which can be changed into a nominal sentence without additions or basic changes is the following one:

(ورث سليمان داوود.)

21. Solomon inherited David.

This sentence according to the Arab grammarians is a verbal sentence which can be inverted to a nominal sentence without any changes except in case-marking and mere semantic matters as some Arab grammarians would argue. To make it clear, this sentence can be simply changed into the following sentence:

(سليمان ورث داوود.)

Solomon inherited David.

As shown above, in (SE), the sentence appears the same. Hence, one can simply infer that (SE) does not allow this kind of structure in its system. Conversely, (SA) does allow this kind of structure in its system, that is, it can be either (NP+VP+ Comp/ϕ) or (VP+NP+ Comp/ϕ).

In spite of this, it does not mean that (SA) does allow any kind of sentences to be inverted from one structure to another just like the above examples! That is to say, there are actually some restrictions and rules wherein a sentence in some cases requires subject-verb agreement in order to do the process of inversion, or in some cases basic changes (additions, deletions, insertions) will be unavoidably required to do such a process and keep the produced/made sentence grammatical, well-formed and acceptable.

Principally, an equational (non-verbal) sentence is a sentence wherein the verb to be is [deleted] or the sentence is with no verb at all according to some grammarians. Alternatively, a verbal sentence is the one which starts again with a verb (VP) but in this case it must agree in one way or another with the following subject (NP). For that matter, it is proposed here, that not all verbal sentences are equal in a sense that they can be changed into nominal

sentences. Once again, not all sentences in Arabic can be without a verb except in the present simple case. To make clear, consider the following examples:

(قام التلاميذ احتراماً للأستاذ.)

22. (Pupils stood up respectively for the teacher.)

Well, this sentence is a verbal sentence because it starts with a verb (VP) [kaamaa] [stood up], and it is followed by a subject (NP) [aatlaamith] [pupils], and ended with a complement (Comp) [ihtraman lilawstath] [respectively for the teacher]. In order to invert this sentence into a non-verbal sentence one has to make into consideration the agreement between the subject (NP) [pupils] and the verb (VP) (stood up). Has this sentence been changed on the basis of the verbal vs. nominal sentences, the result no doubt will be ungrammatical, Ill-formed and unacceptable sentences in (SA) language.

* (التلاميذ قام احتراماً للأستاذ.)

22. (Pupils stood up respectively for the teacher.)

According to the (SA) system, this sentence is not allowed, it is ungrammatical, ill-formed and unacceptable because in a such a case the verb must agrees with the subject, that is, the subject (NP) is plural and the verb too must be plural. In order to formulate a plural verb in (SA), it requires adding the mark of plural and to take into consideration whether the plural is male or female (masculine or feminine). Moreover, if it is dual and this dual again is it masculine or feminine? More considerably, in whatever case: is it genitive, accusative or nominative so that we can add the mark of what and which? Hence, the number of the allowed (produced) sentences after applying these allowed rules in the system of SA language is as it follows:

(التلاميذ قاموا احتراماً للأستاذ.)

(التلاميذ قمن احتراماً للأستاذ.)

(التلميذان قاما احتراماً للأستاذ.)

(التلميذتان قامتا احتراماً للأستاذ.)

(قام التلميذان احتراماً للأستاذ.)

(قامت التلميذتان احتراماً للأستاذ.)

(قمن التلاميذ احتراماً للأستاذ.)

(قام التلميذ احتراماً للأستاذ.)

(التلميذ قام احتراماً للأستاذ.)

(قامت التلميذة احتراماً للأستاذ.)

(التلميذة قامت احتراماً للأستاذ.)

The English translation of the sentences by order:

All pupils stood up respectively for the teacher.

All pupils stood up respectively for the teacher.

The two pupils stood up for the teacher.

The two pupils stood up for the teacher.

Both pupils stood up respectively for the teacher.

Both pupils stood up respectively for the teacher.

Pupils stood up respectively for the teacher.

The pupil stood up respectively for the teacher.

The pupil stood up respectively for the teacher.

The pupil stood up respectively for the teacher.

The pupil stood up respectively for the teacher.

Therefore, have the following sentences been produced and appeared in written language whether by an Arab person or a non-native learner would be considered as ungrammatical, ill-formed and unacceptable sentences in SA language.

*التلاميذ قاموا باحترام الاستاذ.

*التلميذات قاموا باحترام الاستاذ.

*قاموا التلاميذ باحترام الاستاذ.

*قاموا التلميذات باحترام الاستاذ.

*التلميذات قاموا باحترام الاستاذ.

*التلميذان قاموا باحترام الاستاذ.

*قاما التلميذان باحترام الاستاذ.

*قامتا التلميذتان باحترام الاستاذ.

Moving to the opposed type of the verbal sentences in this case is the non-verbal or equational sentences. Basically and as mentioned above, this type of sentences appears without a verb namely in the case of present simple tense when the sentences have only two elements (NP+ Comp) namely in SA as [mubtad'a and khabbar]. For instance,

الإنسان كائن اجتماعي.

علم النفس علم وصفي.

اللسانيات العصبية هي دراسة اللغة في المخ.

Translation of the sentences by order:

(68) Man is a social being.

(88) Psychology is a descriptive science.

(171) Neurolinguistics is the study of language in the brain.

The above given examples shows what is referred to in SA language as equational or non-verbal sentences. As a matter of fact, in this type of sentences, no verbs are there and they only appear as the verb (be) after being translated into English. Yet, these verbs can also appear when attempting to change these sentences into verbal ones. Differently put, inverting these three sentences to verbal ones appears disallowed and as there are actually not overt verbs to be moved so that sentences would be changed into verbal ones. It is important to note that some Arabs especially writers in general would sometimes use some types of words which function as verbs but when it comes to translation, one can find that such verbs does not affect the previous translation or even require any change:

يعتبر الإنسان كائن حي.

يعتبر علم النفس علم وصفي.

But this [kind] of verb would no doubt produce ill-formed sentences in some cases such as:

*يعتبر اللسانيات العصبية هي دراسة اللغة في الدماغ.

*تعتبر اللسانيات العصبية هي دراسة اللغة في الدماغ.

One more example for this case and at the same time for ambiguity of sentences in Arabic in a case they are not marked with diacritics, is:

ملك الولايات المتحدة رجل وسيم.

(467) (The king of the UK is a handsome man.)

The UK was ruled by a handsome man.

The first translation is if we read the first element of this sentence as [malika] as a verb (VP) [ruled] and the second translation if we read as [malik] as a noun (NP) [king]. Regardless of the translation which is not our concern here is that, in the first case if we consider this sentence as a verbal sentence and we want to change it into an equational one, it must be like the following one:

الولايات المتحدة ملكها رجل وسيم.

*الولايات المتحدة ملك رجل وسيم.

On the other hand, if this sentence as considered as an equational sentence, it cannot be changed into a verbal sentence unless we use the past form of the verb (be), has we used the present simple of the form of the verb (be), the sentence will be ill-formed and unacceptable thought it can be considered as grammatical. Hence, it is important to note that forming a verbal sentence with the past form of the verb (be) [kanaa] [was] would change the basic meaning of the original sentence from the notion of describing the recent king changed to the notion of a dead handsome king who was ruling UK.

كان ملك الولايات المتحدة رجل وسيم.

يكون ملك الولايات المتحدة رجل وسيم.*

~~The king of UK was a handsome man. (produced sentence)~~

The king of UK is a handsome man. (original sentence)

Have described the major restrictions for structuring a simple sentence in SA language and also changing it from a verbal one into a nominal one and vs. or from equational into verbal if possible and vice versa, it is worthy to describe what is allowed and disallowed in the SE language. It has been mentioned earlier that English allows only this order: (NP+VP+ Comp / ϕ), (Fabb, (2005).

126. Morocco is characterized by multilingualism.

139. We put down mad dogs.

143. Leila was a busy little bee.

286. The name says it all.

315. It occurs.

All the above mentioned sentences start with (NPs): (Morocco, we, Leila, the name and it). Secondly, they are also followed by (VPs): (is characterized, put down, was, says and occurs). Lastly, only four of them have (Comps): (by multilingualism, mad dogs, a busy little bee and it all. For the fifth sentence, its (VP) which is an intransitive verb does not require a complement. Traditionally, all these sentences start with capital letters to indicate their beginnings (M, W, L, T, and I), and each also ends with a full stop (.) to indicate the end of the sentence.

Well, now let's try applying some rules of the SA language and see whether the syntactic system of SE allows the application of these rules or not?

126. $S \equiv NP + VP + Comp$

139. $S \equiv NP + VP + Comp$

143. $S \equiv NP + VP + Comp$

286. $S \equiv NP + VP + Comp$

315. $S \equiv NP + VP + \phi$

According to the syntactic system of the SA language, these sentences can be changed into verbal ones and appear as it follows:

126. $S \equiv VP + NP + Comp$

139. $S \equiv VP + NP + Comp$

143. $S \equiv VP + NP + Comp$

286. S≡ VP + NP + Comp

315. S≡ VP + NP + ϕ

And the resulted sentences will be the following ones:

126. Is characterized Morocco by multilingualism.*

139. Put down we mad dogs. *

143. Was Leila a busy little bee. *

286. Says the name it all. *

315. Occurs it. *

As shown above, the produced sentences are ungrammatical, ill-formed and unacceptable in the SE language. Despite this, the above mentioned examples can be considered as sentences in non-standard English, that is spoken English and informal situations but never in formal, standard or accurate written English, (Eastwood, 1994). Or they can be considered as standard ones but in a case we insert a question mark (other elements also in some examples) at the end of each, and consider them as sentences in the form of questions but not statements which the researcher's concern here.

By the by, predictably both, learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) and as a second language (ESL), and learners of Arabic as a foreign language (AFL) and as a second language (ASL), face problems when building a simple sentence, (Broderick, 1975). With reference to the hypothesis of contrastive analysis (CAH), Arab learners of English may produce ungrammatical, ill-formed and unacceptable written sentences as a result of their native language influence (negative transfer and language interference).

Namely, these problems may be in producing sentences with no correct punctuation marks especially in the case of capitalization as SA does not have these rules, sentences without verbs particularly in sentences where the verb is (be), a case wherein SA does not have it, or in the case of translation may result to poor translation of some sentences if not wrong (word by word translation). Compared to learners of English are learners of Arabic who can also produce ungrammatical, ill-formed and unacceptable sentences in SA for the same reasons suggested by the CAH. These problems may be similar to those in the case of Arab learners, they include: producing all types of sentences with verbs (VPs) ignoring or misunderstanding that in Arabic some sentences (equational) can be without [overt] verbs, attempting wrongly to apply all punctuation's [rules] in writing an English sentence when writing an Arabic sentence, may be to some extent a rare production of nominal and equational sentences believing that SA language has always a (VP+NP+ Comp/ ϕ) system.

Occasionally, I still remember when I asked my students who were in their first year, Faculties of Dentistry, Science and Agriculture, University of Ibb, to write as much simple sentences in English as they could. Actually, each one from about five hundred students both male and females has written at least five sentences in English. The purpose was to evaluate their writing (syntactic) skill in English in particular and their level in English in general.

After I had a look at these sentences, there were about 75 percent of these sentences which are either without verbs, have no punctuation marks, have no subject-verb agreement (3rd person), misspellings (orthographically), or odd (semantically). For our concern here is the syntactic structure, the researcher believes that the main reason behind producing those types of sentences is the students' first language transference (negative transfer) in this case. Similar examples for those produced by the students are the following:

I a student*

Ali paly football*

they eat*

my teacher is handsome*

I like aples*

I studying in the University of Ibb.*

If we compare these sentences to the Arabic ones which the researcher assumes they have just tried to replace the Arabic forms stored in their brains by alternative words in English keeping in their minds that the rules of building a sentence in both languages is the same.

أنا طالب.

علي يلعب كرة قدم.

هم يأكلون.

مدرسي وسيم.

أحب التفاح.

أدرس في جامعة اب.

To a great extent, the language interference is clear here especially in the case of verb (to be) deletions and punctuation marks which are not required in the Arabic system at least in the above mentioned examples and sentences similar to them. It is important to note that Arabic always has full stops at the end of each sentence and for that matter we have seen some examples with full stops but with other errors that is capitalization which is not valid in Arabic language system.

Less serious problems which can be made by Arab learners of English due to the language interference is during the process of translation. After my students have finished writing the sentences and edited them according to their abilities, I have asked them to translate them into Arabic language to see to what extent they are good in Arabic and at the same time how do they deal with items such as verb (to be) translation. Hence, serious problems appeared in the translation of sentences consisting of the verb (be) just like the teacher has expected, otherwise, the translation, syntax were all good except in the punctuation marks, that is, no full stops at all in nearly all the translated sentences into Arabic. For instance,

I am a student. (translated as) أنا أكون طالبا

They are beautiful. (translated as) هم يكونوا جميلين

To some extent, it should be noted that this poor translation is due to the poor Arabic competence in the Arabic language itself of the students, but again it is a matter of language interference but in this case it is not the native language, it is the target language itself where in the students have tried to translate word by word.

Just like Arab learners of English, learners of Arabic language mainly here native speakers of English do also make some errors as a result of their first language negative transfer as suggested by CAH.

From among these problems is generalization wherein Arabic language learners can generalize the idea of that no sentence without a verb just English. For that matter, they might produce sentences just like the following:

أنا أكون طالبا.
هو يكون مدرس.
هي تكون أمه.

I am a student.

He is a teacher.

She is a mother.

Personally, the learners in this case have done just like the Arab learners of English have done. That is to say, they might have just tried to translate their ideas keeping in their minds the same [downloaded] [stored] system of English and the result is the above ill-formed sentences.

As far as I am concerned though I have ever met this case; native speakers of English who are learning Arabic especially beginners may attempt to apply the punctuation marks applied in their language to those in Arabic. Put another way, they may try to capitalize the first letter just like as it must be in English.

For all intents and purposes, learners in both cases can produce other types of errors due to other reasons rather than language interference but our concern here was to see to what extent the claim that SA is (VP+NP+ Comp/ ϕ) and SE is (NP+VP+ Comp/ ϕ), is true? More importantly, stating (proposing) that SA is a free-word-order language (FWO) and SE is a fixed-word-order language (FIWO) is only in this sense that Arabic allows all nominal, verbal and equational sentences whereas English allows only sentences which start with nouns/subjects (NPs). In other words, SE may appear in some cases such as and according to TGG (deletion, insertion, movement and addition) regarding the other elements of the sentence more flexible than SA, or they are may be alike, in all regards, this issue was not the researcher's goal in this research-paper.

6. Conclusion

Standard Arabic's sentence structure is a VP+NP+... and Standard English's is an NP+VP+... is A contrastive study. In one hand, it aimed at investigating the claimed hypothesis that Arabic sentences mainly simple ones in the form of statements do start always with verbs (VPs) which suggests that they are always verbal sentences. Standard English's simple sentences in the form of statements also, on the other hand, do start always with nouns (NPs). From another point view, the researcher has also presented contrastively both systems of Standard Arabic's and English's simple sentence structure (order).

The researcher has made use of Lado's steps for contrasting two languages mainly two grammatical systems for achieving the contrastive purpose. Alternatively, the researcher has also made use of the SPSS statistical programme to show the results which by he can decide whether what has been claimed is true, untrue or to what extent it is true/ untrue.

Statistically, it has been show that there are only less than quarter of the collected Arabic sentences which are nominal ones, that is (NP+VP+...), the list which are more half and more than a quarter are all verbal sentences, that is (VP+NP+...). Needless to say, it is suggested that the claim of the researcher is to somehow not true or too much exaggerated for it has been approved that Standard Arabic's simple sentence structure is not at least always (VP+NP+...) though it has conditions and restrictions in some cases to choose whether to make a sentence verbal (VP+NP+...) or nominal (NP+VP+...).

In spite of this, in the case of Standard English's simple sentence structure, the claim was not totally true for it has been approved that all the inserted sentences are nominal ones, that is (NP+VP+...) except those three or four sentences which were in the form of imperative.

It has been declared that Standard Arabic and Standard English languages are not alike. Differently put, they are different but alike: different in that English's simple sentence structure in the form of statement can never start with a verb (VP) and alike in that they both have simple sentences which have the order (NP+VP+...).

Predictably, a number of the potential problems have been mentioned as faced by learners of either Standard English as (EFL) or as (ESL), or by learners of Standard Arabic as (AFL) or as (ASL). Problems can vary starting from wrong structure to translation problems according to the level of the learners.

By all accounts, Contrastive Analysis hypothesis can be to a great extent useful for teaching, learning, translation, syllabuses' design purposes, on condition we do not take the language interference as the only reason behind any kind of mistakes/errors made by our learners.

It is recommended to conduct studies with more data and with contrasting not only simple sentences in the form of statements but the sentences in general and their forms as well.

Acknowledgement

Many thanks are due to Dr. Mahmoud Isma'il Saleh, the professor of Applied Linguistics at King Saud University, for his fruitful and valuable lectures in the field of Contrastive and Error Analyses.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Sources of the English sentences Data

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