Futurity in English and Arabic:
A contrastive study

Walid Mohammad Amer*

ملخص البحث

يوجــد كثيـر مــن الدراسـات التقابليــة في مجـال الــتراكيب النحويــة في الإنجليزية و العربية، و لكن يبـدو أنـه لا يوجـد أي دراسـة تحليليـة تامـة خاصـة بصيغة المستقبل. لذا فإن هذا البحث يتناول هذه الصيغة و تركيبها النحوي والـدلالي في كل من العربية و الإنجليزية، و يسلط الضوء علي الصعوبات التي يواجههـا الطلبة الفلسطينيين في هذا المجال. و يقدم البحث بعد ذلك اقتراحـات و توصيـات لتدريس صيغة المستقبل يمكن معها تجنب الأخطاء الناتجة عن التداخل السلبي للغتين في هذا المجال.

Abstract

Lots of contrastive studies have been done on Arabic and English syntactic structures. However no fully analytical study has been conducted on futurity. Thus, this paper tackles futurity in English and Arabic syntactically and semantically for the purpose of highlighting areas of difficulties Palestinian learners face in learning these constructions, and then it introduces some suggestions and recommendations for avoiding errors of negative transfer committed in this field.

*(Ph.D. in theoretical linguistics) The Islamic university of Gaza.

1. Introduction

Futurity operates at the discourse rather than the syntactic level. McAllister, (2000) maintains that tense in English (present, past and the forms referring to future) is discourse-level phenomenon that although inflected in the verb phrase (VP), applies to the entire discourse or thematic unit. It is also referred to as the concrete way of linguistically marking time. However time is an abstract perceptual notion that is morphologically expressed on the VP. It is expressed out side the VP through structures such as adverbials.

Aspect is different, it establishes the relationships that exist between the various verbal notions within the discourse, and denotes the quality or type of action, whether simple, progressive, perfect, or perfect progressive.

Tense, time and aspect in English and Arabic are semantically, morphologically and syntactically asymmetrical since they are formulated differently.

This paper is only concerned with the syntax and semantics of futurity in English systematically comparing its properties with those of the corresponding constructions in Arabic within the framework of contrastive linguistics and error analysis. The discussion that follows highlights learners'

errors resulting from points of negative transfer, and suggests some pedagogical implications for avoiding them.

The study begins with describing the theoretical framework adopted (Section 1.1). Then it reviews some of the existing studies done on futurity Section 2.). (Section 3.) demonstrates an analysis of futurity constructions in English and Arabic. Section 4. Analyses errors committed in the case study. This covers the interlingual errors and errors resulting from negative transfer. Section 5. introduces suggestions and recommendations for teaching futurity. Section 6 is summary remarks.

1.1. Theoretical background

This study is theoretically based on the contrastive linguistics and error analysis theories. The former functions on two languages comparatively for the purpose of pinpointing language properties, symmetries, asymmetries, and points of transfer. (Positive and negative transfer). This type of synchronic contrastive studies differs from the diachronic comparative studies that are part of the field of historical linguistics, which is concerned with comparing languages for the purpose of reconstructing proto-languages. Charles Fries, (1945:9), states that the most efficient materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be

learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learners. Following Lado, (1980), Wardhaugh (1978), Shachter, (1974) contrastive linguistics is concerned with the functions like; prediction of errors, explaining the errors, planning textbooks, design of testing instruments. This study focuses only on the first two functions as it appears below.

Error analysis is a branch of applied linguistics, which is derived from transformational generative theory. It is concerned with the surface structure of language as is based on the notion that language is highly productive and creative. Further, it demonstrates that many learners' errors are not caused by the learner's mother tongue interference, but reflect universal learning strategies.

Following Hichards et al (1996), error analysis (EA) aims at achieving the following:

a. Identifying the causes of learners' errors.

b. Identifying strategies which learners use in language learning.

c. Obtaining information on common difficulties in language learning as an aid to teaching.

2. Previous studies:

As far as my knowledge is concerned, few studies have been done on futurity. Such studies tackled the point partially and very briefly. This section surveys such studies critically for the purpose of avoiding their demerits when describing and analyzing futurity constructions in English and SA below.

Kharma and Hajjaj (1989)

In their book *Errors in English Among Arabic Speakers: Analysis and Remedy,* the authors conduct a contrastive analysis study on Arabic and English phonetically, semantically, morphologically and syntactically. They touch futurity very briefly and predict difficulties students may face in learning future construction without siting a case study based theoretically on error analysis to land precisely on the problems Arab learners face in learning such constructions and their causes.

Al- khuli (1997)

In his book *Comparative linguistics: English and Arabic,* the writer launches a comparative study on English and Arabic sound system, morphology and syntax. Therefore, he refers syntactically very briefly to futurity comparatively and only descriptively.

Khalil (1999)

In his book *A Contrastive Grammar of English and*

Arabic, Khalil refers briefly to futurity syntactically and semantically. He tackled the subject comparatively and descriptively without referring to pedagogical implications or difficulties learners may face in learning such constructions.

Having the limitations of the above studies in mind, I touch futurity constructions in English and Arabic contrastively and analytically.

3. Futurity in English and Arabic.

There is no obvious future tense in English corresponding to time/tense parallel for present and past, since the modal pronoun *will* is not a marker for a verbal category. Quirk (1973). However, futurity is expressed by the constructions; modal auxiliary will/shall + bare infinitive, be going to + infinitive, present progressive, present simple, be to + infinitive and be about to + infinitive. Arabic does not have future tense too. Therefore, futurity is expressed by a few specific particles such as; sawfa[1] 'will', sa 'will', 9ala waδak,

'about to', youδik, 'about to' ism-u l-faa9el, 'derived subject' yakaad, 'about to'. (cf: Hassan, (1963). Al-rajhi (1981), Fassi Fehri (1993), Holes, (1995), Al-khuli (1997)) among others, The constructions of futurity in English and

---

See appendix 1 for the symbols used in transcribing Arabic

Standard Arabic (SA) can be described syntactically and semantically as follows:

3.1. Will and shall+verb stem

Will and shall are semantically used to express colorless neutral future.

1a. I shall be 47 years old by next birthday.

b. You will be pleased to see them.

Syntactically, Will is used with all persons in case of semantically expressing determination and persistence.

2a. I will be obeyed. (I am determined to be obeyed)

b. He will do as he likes (he is determined to do as he likes)

Following Quirk (1973), *shall* is used to express willingness on the part of speaker in 2nd and 3rd person. By way of illustration consider the examples in (3):

3a. He shall return the good to the store and refund his money.

b. You shall behave as you like.

An offer in the present and future can be expressed by *shall* in the first and third persons and *will* in the second.

4a. Shall I offer you another chance?

b. Will you have a rest for ten minutes?

c. Shall she make you a cup of tea?

A promise or threat in the future can be expressed in the second and third person by *shall* and in the first person by *will*.

5a. You shall be punished if you do this again.

b. I will be there to help.

This form of futurity also expresses a request in present and future. This can be expressed by will in the second person.

6a. Will you please open the door?

b. Will you kindly send me an application form?

Shifting to Arabic the construction, which is equivalent to the English *will and shall* + *bare infinitive* is *sawfa* + *imperfect indicative form of the verb*. This construction is used in SA to refer to neutral future. Consider:

7. sawfa yusafer zayd-un ?ila mesr mostaqbal-an

Will travel Zayd-nom[2] to Egypt future-acc

'Zayd will travel to Egypt in future'

3.1.1 Contrast

Syntactically, SA is divergent from English in expressing remote future. The former uses the particle *sawfa plus the imperfect indicative form of the verb,* whereas the latter uses the modal auxiliary *will* or *shall plus the infinitive.*

---

[2]'Nom' stands for the nominative case which is syntactically assigned to the subject. 'Acc' means accusative Case which is assigned to the object, and gen means genitive Case, which is assigned to the construct states, etc.

In expressing determination, willingness or offer, English uses the modals *will* or *shall* preceded by the subject whereas SA uses *sa plus the imperfect indicative form of the verb* for expressing determination, as in (8)

8. sa yafa9al ma yurid

    will do-he what want-he

    'He will do what he wants'

In expressing willingness, SA uses the imperfect indicative form of the verb followed by the complementizer *ann* or the derived nominal. Consider:

9a. yurid zayd ann yu9id al-beDaa?a

    want zayd that return the-good

    'Zayd shall return the good'

b. yurid zayd ?e9adat l-beDa9a

    Want Zayd returning the-good

    'Zayd shall return the good'

The constructions in (9a and b) are also used in expressing offer in SA along with the question particle *?a +* the imperfect indicative form of the verb followed by either the compementizer *ann* or the derived nominal. Consider:

10a. Oriid-u ann amnaHak-a forSa-tan oxra

    want-I that I-grant-you   chance another

    'I shall offer you another chance'

b. Oriid-u manH-a-ka-a forSa-tan oxra

    want-I that I-granting-you   chance another

    'I shall offer you another chance'

c. ?a toriid-u δorb-a kob-in men δ-δai ?

    Will want-you drinking-acc cup-gen of the-tea

    Will you want to drink a cup of tea?

  d. ?a toriid-u ann taδrab-a koban men δ-δai ?

    Will want-you that drink cup-acc of the-tea

    Will you want to drink a cup of tea?

3.2. Shall/will + progressive

This construction is used to express actions that will be going on at a certain time in future. It also indicates a future action that is part of a plan or an arrangement as in (11):

    11a. We shall be playing tennis at 5 p.m. next Friday.

      b. We shall be travelling all night.

Following Quirk, (1973), (1988) the *shall/will be V+ing* construction is also used to avoid the interpretation of volition, insistence, etc that future simple is characterized with. Consider example (12):

    12a. I 'll do my best.

b.   I 'll be doing my best.

The tense in (12a) involves possible volitional

interpretation. However the tense in (12b) expresses future interpretation only. (cf ibid 1973:49).

Future continuous is expressed in SA by the near future particle *sa plus imperfect indicative verb* followed by a point of time. Consider (13):

13 . Sa yal9ab fariiqu-naa l-kora-ta 9nda s-sa9a s-sabe9a

masaa?-an

Will play team-our the ball-acc at the hour the seven evening-acc

Yad-an

Tomorrow-acc

'Our   team   will   be   playing   football   at   7   o'clock tomorrow'

3.2.1. Contrast

The progressive form of futurity is expressed by *will be or shall be plus the verb+ing* followed by a point of time. However, it is expressed in SA by the near future particle *sa plus the imperfect indicative form of the verb* followed by a point of time

3.3. Future perfective

This construction refers to an action that will have happened before some other future actions happen or before some point of time arrives.

14a. They shall have played two games of tennis before we arrive there.

b. They will have graduated by the end of April.

The construction which comprises the near future particle *sa +defective verb in the imperfect indicative form (yakuun)* followed by the expletive *qad* and the past form of the verb semantically expresses future perfect in Arabic. Consider:

15. sayakuun-u qad ?anhuu l-9amal-a fi l-maδruu9-i fi mares

will be finished-they the work-acc in the project-gen in March

l-qadem.

the next.

'They will have finished the project by next March'

It is noteworthy that the future perfect form can also be semantically expressed by the future construction *sa or sawfa + the present form of the verb* followed by a derived nominal. For convenience consider the following example:

16. sa- yunhuu benaa?-a l-bayt-i fi mayou l-qadem

Will-finish-they building-acc the-home-gen in May the next

'They will have finished building the house by next

May'

3.3.1. Contrast

Future perfect is expressed in English by the modal *will* or *shall* to mark futurity and *have plus the 3rd conjugation of verb* to mark perfective aspect. SA uses the near future particle *sa* , the expletive *qad* and the past form of the verb or *sa* plus the imperfect indicative form of the verb. Consequently the two forms in both languages are syntactically not equivalent.

3.4. Future perfect continuous

Future perfect continuous expresses an action that will be in progress when some point of time arrives. Consider (17):

17. In 2002 I shall have been teaching English for twenty
    years.

Turning to the future perfect progressive form in SA, it can be expressed by the particle *sa + defective verb in the imperfect indicative form (yakuun) plus the expletive qad and the past form of the verb* followed an adverbial expressing a duration of time. Consider the example in (18):

18. Sa-ykoonuu qad naamuu sa9aty-ni 9nd-a l-xaamesa
        Will-be-they slept-they two hours by the five
        masaa?-an
        evening-acc
    'They will have been sleeping for two hours by five

o'clock in the evening'

3.4.1. Contrast

English uses the construction *will have been* or *shall have been plus the verb+ing* to express future perfect continuous, while SA uses the same construction used to express future perfect above followed by an adverbial denoting duration.

Futurity can also be expressed by the use of some other constructions as recorded along the following lines:

3.5. Simple present

The simple present replaces future in clauses of time and condition as in (19):

19a. Let's wait until he comes.

b. What will you say if I punish him?

This tense expresses a future event that is part of a settled program. Consider the examples in (20):

20a. He leaves for Egypt tomorrow.

b. She arrives by 10 o'clock train this evening.

The simple present expresses future in Arabic when it stands in adverbial clauses, and when preceded by the negative particle *lan*, 'not' which refers to strong determination.

Consider the following example:

21a. sa?usaafer 9indama ya?ty ?ahmed

Will-I-travel when come Ahmed

'I will travel when Ahmed comes'

b. Lan ta?ty hind-un Hatta tad9iina-haa

Not come Hind-nom until invite-you her

'Hind will not come until you invite her'

3.5.1. Contrast

English is semantically asymmetrical from Arabic in using simple present for denoting future. The former uses it to express an action which is a part of a settled program, whereas the latter uses it in adverbial clauses of time, and conditional clauses to express strong determination

3.6. Present progressive

The present progressive tense refers to an action that has been planned for the future.

22a. I am travelling by 7 o'clock flight to Egypt this evening.

b. I am taking the children to the seashore tomorrow evening.

In SA, *ism-u l-faa9el*, 'derived subject', which is derived from the dynamic verb is equivalent to the present progressive in English. It refers to an action that has been planned for the future, fixed arrangement, plan or program.

23. ?ana qadem-un li-zeyarat-i-kum l-yawm.

I   coming-nom to-visit-you   the-day

'I am coming to visit you today'

3.6.1. Contrast

To express an action that has been planned for the future English uses the present progressive while SA employs *ism-u l-faa9el* 'derived subject'

Future is still expressed by other constructions in English viz., *be going to + infinitive, be to + infinitive, be about to + infinitive.*

3.7. Be going to + infinitive

This construction refers to future fulfillment of the present intention and to the future of the present cause, as in (24a and b):

24a. She is going to get married.

 b. Julie is going to have a baby.

The semantic function of the construction above is expressed in SA by *sa + the imperfect indicative form of the verb* (cf. example 19 above)

3.8. Be about to +infinitive

This construction refers to an action that will be fulfilled in the near future.(imminent fulfillment).

25. The Taxi is there at the gate and we are about to leave.

To express near future, i.e. imminent future SA uses *9alla waδak,* 'about to' OR *youδik,* 'about to'

These constructions consist of the above particles directly followed by a complementizer (comp) and present tense.

26a. 9alla waδak an ya?ty ahmed

      About to   come Ahmed

      'Ahmed is about to come'

b. youδik alwaqt-u   an   yantahi

      about to the-time-nom comp. end

      'Time is about to finish'

3.9. Be to + infinitive

This construction shows command and arrangement as in (27):

27a. We are to go to Ahmed's Wedding party soon.

b. You are to be ready by 9 o'clock.

The equivalent construction that expresses arrangement in Arabic is *sa+the imperfect indicative form.*

28. sa-tatazawaj hind-un qarib-an

      will-marry Hind-nom soon-acc

      'Hind is to marry soon'

3.9.1. Contrast

As appears in (27 &28), English uses *verb to be + to be* to express future arrangement, while SA employs the near future

particle *sa* + *the imperfect indicative form of the verb*. However, it uses the compementizer ann + the imperfect indicative form of the verb to denote command. Consider

29. 9alayk-a ann takuun hona l-yawm masaa?-an

on-you that be here the-today evening

'You are to be here today evening'

Further, the examples above show clearly that SA has no equivalents to going to and be + infinitive.

3.10. Future time in the past.

Some of the future constructions in English discussed above can be used to show future time as viewed from a viewpoint in the past. Consider:

30a. He was later to regret his bad behavior.

b. I made the needed maintenance to my car so that it would

pass the safety inspection.

c. He hurried because he knew that he was going to be late.

d. I was about to miss the train.

e. I was meeting him at the Islamic university of Gaza the

next day.

To refer to future in the past, SA has a number of constructions that are syntactically and semantically different

from the English constructions above. These constructions can be summed up along the following lines

a. The past tense preceded by the bound morpheme *'?'* Hamza

expresses future in the past. For convenience consider (31) below:

31. sa-yaHDor zayd-un ?-raDiit-a ?am lam tarDaa.

    Will attend zayd   if agreed-you or not agreed-you

    'Zayd will attend if you agreed or not'

b. The past tense expresses future if preceded by *ma.*as in (32):

32. ?awSaan-ii walidii bi-fe9el l-xayr-i ma-domt-u Hay-yan

    recommended-me   father-my to doing the-good if remained

    Hay-yan

    alive

    'My father recommended me to do good all over my life'

c. If the past tense is preceded by the expletive qad, it refers to expectation.

33. qad qaamat S-Salaah

    stood the-prayer

    'The prayer is to be performed'

d. The past tense expresses future in the context of optative meaning (praying)

34. ?aTaal-a allah 9omrak

    extended God age-you

    'May God grant you long life'

e. The past tense may express future if preceded by the complementizer *?n* or *?tha*.

35. Istajiibuu li-laah wa r-rasul-i ?ða da9aak-um lima

    respond to God and the prophet if called-he-you to

    yuHyii-kum[3]

    make alive-you

    'Give your response to Allah and His Messenger, when

He calls you to that which will give you life'

Additionally, future in the past can be expressed in forms which are quite equivalent to those of English, as the particle *kada* 'was about to' which is optionally followed by the complementizer *'an'*, and *?alla-washak* preceded by the

---

[3]Sorat al-anfaal verse 24

defective verb *kana,* as clarified in (36):

36a. Kada Zayd-un   an   ya?ti

     About to Zayd-nom comp. come

     'Zayd was about to come'

b. kana zayd-un allawaδak an   ya?ty

     Was Zayd-nom about to   come

     'Zayd was about to come'

3.10.1. Contrast

It appears clearly that the structure of future in the past in English and SA is syntactically asymmetrical except for *about to* which has equivalence in Arabic.

Generally, futurity constructions in English and Arabic are almost asymmetrical. Such asymmetries are represented morphologically and syntactically in having no equivalence to the English future continuous, be + infinitive, going to, future perfect and future perfect continuous. Semantically, future simple, future continuous, future perfect and future perfect continuous forms are mostly expressed by *the sawf-a or sa + imperfect indicative form of the verb.* The English constructions be + infinitive and about + infinitive are expressed in Arabic by one construction. which cannot hold the same sense of the equivalent English constructions That is *9la waδak.*

This divergence is assumed to cause different types of grammatical errors resulting mainly from negative transfer between the two languages.

To see the effect of this difference between the two languages and its impact on learning English, I tested the performance of 150 newly admitted students to the university on using future constructions. These are aged 18 to 19 years, and are enrolled at the first level in different faculties[4]. All such subjects study English for university requirement as a non-major subject. They are all native speakers of Arabic. Their average in English is (50% : 70%) according to their scores at tawjihi certificates

The test was a combination of two parts.

Part one constitutes a translation test. Sentences in this part are required to be translated from Arabic to English. This is to test the students' competence in using structural forms denoting future. (Cf. appendix 2). Part two formulates an objective test in English. This tests students' performance in using constructions denoting future. Viz.; going to, about to, and be infinitive. After analyzing the results of the test I came

---

[4] The subjects are mainly enrolled at the faculties of Commerce, Arts, Education, and Shari`a.

out with the finding recorded in table (1) below:

Table (1) shows the percentage of students who inserted wrong tenses.

Type of futurity	Error No.	Percentage of errors	Type of error
Future simple	10	6.6%	Using present simple
Future cont.	120	80%	Using future simple
Future perfect	140	93.3%	Using future simple
Future perfect cont.	135	90%	Using future simple
Present simple	70	46.6%	Using future simple
Present cont.	80	53.3%	Using future simple
Future time in the past	231	51%	
Be + infinitive	140	93.3%	Using future Simple, going to or about to
About to	20	13.3%	Using future simple

Going to	90	60%	Using future simple

4. Interpretations of results:

The results presented in the table above show clearly that students commit serious errors in constructing futurity forms. This is due to the negative transfer and the difficulty of such constructions, as it appears from the analysis below:

4.1. Future simple:

Table 1 shows that the subjects committed less errors in using future simple than in any other futurity constructions. (6.6%). This may be due to its simplicity and the positive transfer resulting from its equivalence to *sawfa* + *the imperfect indicative form of the verb* in SA.

4.2. Future continuous

In translating sentence No. 2 in the test, students committed serious errors in using the correct futurity form. (80 %). Instead of using future continuous they maximally used future simple. This may be due to negative transfer, since this from is expressed in SA by the future simple form *sawfa* + *the imperfect indicative form of the verb along with an adverbial phrase of time* as seen earlier.

4.3. Future perfect

The subjects recorded the highest percentage of errors in

translating sentence No.3. (93.3%) They replaced the future perfect form with the future simple form. This is owing to the presence of *sawfa* + *the imperfect indicative form of the verb* in constituting the future perfect form in SA.

4.4. Future perfect continuous

The table above shows that the subjects misused this construction when they translated sentence No.4. Instead of using this form they used the simple future form. This may be due to negative transfer, since this form is represented in Arabic by the future simple form *sawfa* + *the imperfect indicative form of the verb*, or overgeneralization. Students here overgeneralize future simple in place of future perfect continuous due to its simplicity.

4.5. Present simple form denoting future

This construction is available in sentence No.5. A lot of the examinees here translated this form wrongly. 70 of them used future simple, therefore the percentage of errors was 46.6.%. This may be due to the subjects' ignorance of the correct semantic usage of this tense.

4.6. Present continuous denoting future

In translating sentence No.6, 80 subjects substituted the future simple for the present continuous form. This number of errors (53.3%) is due to the subjects' ignorance of the nature

of this form too. Subsequently, they used the nearest form denoting future, that is future simple.

4.7. Future time in the past

The sentences in the test that involve forms denoting future in the past are represented in 7, 8, and 9. In translating such sentences the subjects committed 90 errors in 7, 31 in 8, and 110 in 9. This totals 231 errors with a percentage as high as 51%. Such subjects fell in this high number of errors because of the difficulty of such constructions which do not have exact syntactic and semantic equivalence in SA.

Turning to part 2, which examines the students performance in using *going to, about to and be to,.* The subjects committed 140 errors with a percentage as high as (93.3%) in selecting the proper answer in question (1) The difficulty is because of having no equivalence to *be to* in Arabic.

In question 2 which tests the students performance in using about to 20 errors are recorded. The decrease in errors is due to positive transfer since this construction has an equivalence in SA. (*9ala waðak*).

Finally, in answering question 3 the subjects did 90 errors, with a percentage of 60%. Such students selected future simple

instead of *going to* due to overgeneralization.

To sum up, students commit more errors in using *future continuous, future perfect future perfect continuous* and *be to* than in other constructions. This is due to the negative transfer resulting from the asymmetries between Arabic and English. Another reason for such errors is the difficulty of these English forms due to the absence of their equivalence in SA. This leads to overgeneralization. Students overgeneralize future simple in the position of other future constructions owing to its simplicity. Methods **of teaching tutors adopt in teaching the English futurity** may also have a role. Tutors teach grammar deductively, and this relies totally on memorization, and lacks the observation of speech in relation to situations and events in the learners' own environment.

5 . Pedagogical implications:

1. One of the suggested ways for teaching futurity forms either in English or Arabic is to teach them contextually. Teaching in context is assumed to enhance the learning of grammar including futurity and to be more effective than presenting and explaining such structures deductively, since it helps students to get the concept of futurity and to understand its usage in different contexts. This approach also helps learners

understand the situational and cultural use of these constructions in discourse.

2. It is recommended to present futurity in a meaningful context and help Palestinian university students learn more, remember more, and use grammar more appropriately, learn how to integrate context, grammar explanations, and numerous practice and writing to increase their motivation and retention.

3. One of the contextual activities for teaching constructions denoting future is *the frame switching activity*. The teacher can introduce pairs of sentences reflecting the use of two different future constructions to let the students observe the deference between such constructions. McAllister, **(2000)**,

Another activity for teaching futurity is called *Tic-Tac- tense*. The teacher can draw a grid that contains several options of time expressions as the one appearing **below:**

Six o'clock p.m tomorrow	. next week	by next April
an action that has been planned for the future	in 2005	imminent future

The class is to be divided into two teams, regardless

students' number, (team A and B) One student from team A selects a position on the grid and uses that time expression in a sentence in the appropriate tense denoting futurity. For example:

27. I 'll travel to Egypt next week.

A correct response gives a position to the team. If an error is made nothing is given and the turn goes to the opposing team. The teams alternate turns trying to get as much positions as they can to win. (cf Steimberg, (1988).

Another activity for teaching future constructions is "*The going to game*" What am I going to draw/do?

The teacher asks a student to stand in front of the class and give him or her the chance to think of what he or she is going to draw on the board and the other students guess either by asking; are you going to draw a big house? Or by **stating you are** going to draw a big house. The student responds by saying either no I am not going to draw a big house or yes that's right, I am going to draw a big house. (cf Wrlee, (1987) for more details).

4. Focussing totally on form is generally not recommended. However, it is partially needed just for clarifying the structural form of future tenses. Dekyser (1998) maintains that the vast majority of publications

since the early 1990s support the idea **that some kinds** of focus on form is useful to some extent, for some forms, for some students, at some point in the learning process.

5. Turning to correcting errors resulting from the misuse of future constructions, the activity to recommend is *"the language log activity"* This activity is very useful for self correction. Students can follow it in correcting all types of errors including the misuse of constructions denoting future.

A sample text of language log is presented in (table 3) below:

3. Language log for <u>run for the money</u>:

P age line	original	pr oblem	rule	correcti on

Title	He will clock a different finishing time every few minutes for two hours when the last runner comes in	Mi suse Of fut ure perfect tense	The future perfect is used with the action that happens first when the other action which is introduced by when or any time word takes present tense.	He will have clocked a different finishing time every few minutes for two hours when the last runner comes in.
8-12				
15	The race will start. The drivers are waiting the signal	Mi suse of the future form 'a bout to'	Here about to is due to be used since the time	The race is about to start,

			semantically refers to imminent future	the drivers are waiting the signal

The benefits of this activity are expected to be as follows:

a.　The exercise log is considered as a record of errors.

b.　It has enough space for clarifying structural rules.

c.　It trains students to recognize their own errors by themselves.

d.　It gives the chance for self-correction of errors.

5. As it appeared in table (1) errors in the use of future constructions specially future continuous, future perfect and

future perfect continuous are much higher than errors in the other constructions. This is due to the asymmetry in the syntactic and semantic use of such constructions in Arabic and English as mentioned earlier. Therefore, it is recommended to teach futurity constructions contrastively especially for the adult students who are aware of the structure of their mother tongue. Teachers can draw the students' attention to the differences between the usage of futurity in both languages.

6. Summary remarks.

The study introduced a comparative description of futurity of both English and Arabic. It syntactically and semantically showed similarities and dissimilarities between the two constructions in both languages. The asymmetries represented a prima-facie evidence for the effect of negative transfer, simplification and overgeneralization, which appeared to be the main reasons for committing errors in learning futurity constructions in both languages. Pedagogically, such errors may be avoided if futurity constructions are taught contextually.

Appendix 1

Symbols used in transcribing Arabic

As far as the pronunciation of Arabic is concerned, this is to a large extent predictable from standard Roman

orthography. However, Arabic does have a set of consonants which are unfamiliar to the speakers of Western languages, and for the purpose of this topic these consonants along with the vowels are transliterated according to the table below:

	Arabic shape	Phonetic Transcription	description
consonants	ت	Voiceless interdental fricative	θ
	ح	Voiceless pharyngeal fricative	H
	خ	Voiceless velar fricative	x
	ذ	Voiced interdental fricative	ð
	ش	Voiceless palatal fricative	δ
	س	Voiceless alveolar emphatic fricative	s
	ض	Voiced alveolar emphatic stop	D
	ط	Voiceless alveolar emphatic stop	T
	ظ	Voiced interdental emphatic fricative	Z
	ع	Voiced pharyngeal fricative	9
	غ	Voiced velar fricative	Y
Short vowels		+front	+low
		a	
		+high +back	u
		+high +front	i
Long vowels	ا	+front	+low
		aa	
	و	+high +back	uu
		+high +front	ii
	ي		
diphthongs	و		
		aw	
	ي		ay

Appendix 2

The test

<u>Part one</u>

ترجم الجمل التالية إلى اللغة الإنجليزية آخذاً في الاعتبار الفرق بين الأزمنة

1- سوف يسافر زيد إلى مصر.

2- سنلعب كرة القدم الساعة الخامسة مساء الغد.

3- ستكمل الشركة بناء الجسر عند نهاية شهر أبريل.

4- في عام 2002 سأكون قد علمت اللغة الإنجليزية لمدة عشرون عاماً.

5- دعنا ننتظر حتى يأتي.

6- ستسافر هند في قطار الساعة السابعة إلى مصر هذا المساء.

7- كنت سأقابله في الجامعة الإسلامية عند ظهر اليوم التالي.

8- كاد أن يفقد القطار .

9- لقد أسرع لأنه كان يعلم أنه سيتأخر.

<u>Part two</u>

Underline the correct future form from the choices between brackets in the sentences below:

1. she (will have, is going to have, will have had) a baby.

2. The taxi is at the gate and we (will leave, are about to leave, are leaving).

3. We (are to go, will go, will be going) to Ahmed's wedding party soon.

REFERENCES

Alkhuli, M. (1997) *Comparative Linguistics: English and*

Arabic. Dar Alfalah, Jordan.

Alrajhi, A (1981) *Al-tatbiiq Al-nahawi.* Dar l-nahDah.

Dekeyser, R. (1998) Beyond focus on form. Cognitive perspectives on learning and practicing second language grammar. In C. doughty & J. Williams (Eds.). *Focus on form in classroom second language acquisition* (pp.197-261). Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

Fassi Fehri (1993) *Issues in the Structure of Arabic Clauses and Words,* Kluwer Academic. Publishers, Dordrecht.

Fries Charles (1945) *Teaching and Learning English as a foreign Language.* The University of Michigan Press.

Hassan, A. (1963) *Al-nahow L-wafi.* Dar l-ma?aref,.

Holes, C. (1995) *Modern Arabic Structures, Functions and varieties.* Longman.

Khalil, A. (1999) *A Contrastive Grammar of English and*

Arabic. Jordan book centre

Kharma and Hajjaj, (1989) *Errors in English Among Arabic*

Speakers*. Longman.

Lado , R. (1980) *Linguistics Across Culture*. The University of

Michigan Press.

Maclin, A. (1996) *Reference Guide to English: Handbook of*

English as a Second Language. Material Branch, English Language Program division, United States Information Agency

McAllister, L. (2000) Verb tense gets framed. Unpublished

paper presented at *the annual conference of the American association for Applied Linguistics*, Vancouver D.C. Canada.

Quirk, R. & Greenbaum, S. (1976) *A University Grammar of*

English. Longman.

Quirk, R (1988) *A grammar of Contemporary English*.

Longman.

Rinvolucri, M. (1997) *Grammar Games*. Cambridge
    University Press.

Steimberg,   (1988).*Games   Language   People   Play*.
Dominie
    Press Limited.

Swan, M. (1995) *Practical English   Usage*. Oxford
University
    Press.

Wardhaugh (1978), The contrastive analysis hypothesis. In
    Schumann's and Stenson's *New Frontiers in Second*
                            Language
Wrlee, (1987) *Language Teaching Games and Contents*.
    Oxford University Press