

Conditional constructions in English and Arabic in Terms of Construction Grammar

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المستخلص

تعد نظرية القواعد التركيبية من أكثر النظريات اللغوية دقة لتفسير الكثير من الظواهر اللغوية وتحديد النحوية منها. تضم هذه النظرية تحت مضلتها توجيهين رئيسيين أحدهما يتبنى فرضية عالمية التراكيب اللغوية والآخر يختصر العالمية على الملكات العقلية والادراكية التي تعتمدها اللغة. التراكيب الشرطية في اللغتين الانجليزية والعربية يمكن دراستهما للإسهام في هذا النقاش النظري الدائر بين الفريقين. تقوم هذه التراكيب النحوية بترميز أو تمثيل السبب والنتيجة في حدثين مترابطين. إن الهدف الرئيسي من عمل هذه الورقة البحثية هو للإجابة على السؤالين الآتيين: أولاً، ما هي أوجه التشابهات والاختلافات بين التراكيب الشرطية في اللغتين العربية والانجليزية. ثانياً، كيف تسهم هذه التشابهات والاختلافات المفترضة في النقاش الدائر حول فرضية عالمية التراكيب النحوية. تتلخص قيمة هذه البحث بما يمكن تقديمه على الصعيدين النظري والتطبيقي. عملياً، يمكن الاستفادة من الفروقات والتشابهات بين التراكيب النحوية في اللغتين العربية والانجليزية في تدريس اللغتين العربية والانجليزية للمتعلمين. أما نظرياً فقد أشرنا إلى فائدة هذه الورقة البحثية في النقاش الدائر حول عالمية التراكيب النحوية. الكلمات المفتاحية: التراكيب النحوية، التراكيب الشرطية، فرضية عالمية التراكيب النحوية، اللغة العربية، اللغة الانجليزية

Abstract

Construction grammar is one the most sophisticated theories of language system., There is a debate between two orientations, within the framework of construction grammar, over universality of some aspects of language system. Conditional constructions in English and Arabic can be studied in order to contribute to this debate. They are used to encode the cause and effect of two events. The current paper is based on the following two questions: what are the main differences and similarities between Arabic and English conditional constructions? How do these similarities and differences contribute to the debate over universality of constructions? This contrastive study has theoretical and applied values. Theoretically it contributes to the debate of universality and practically it can benefit the fields of language teaching and translation.

1. Introduction

Construction grammar is a name used to designate a group of grammars based on the assumption of 'construction'. These grammars are pioneered by Fillmore and Kay (1995), Goldberg (1995) and Langacker (1987) and Croft (2001). They represent a reaction to the main stream, the componential grammar. The main guiding assumptions of construction

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grammar are as follow: (1) the central construct and language unit is the symbolic unit or construction. A construction is a conventional unit pairing meaning and form. All the language components are compressed in this construction. (2) Unlike the componential grammar which viewed as a system of rules, grammar is an inventory of constructions. This inventory is arranged by some mechanisms of storing rather than rules of building structures (Fried & Östman, 2004: 12). Among the construction grammars there is a debate over the universality of such grammar. Unlike Fillmore and Kay (1995), Langacker (1987) and Croft (2001) disagree on the assumption of universality and adopt usage-based assumption in which constructions are language specific. Most of the past studies primarily focus on investigating constructions within a single language. Recently, some studies have employed cross-linguistic analysis in order to test the two assumptions (Boas, 2010). The current paper comes in the same context by investigating conditional constructions in English and Arabic. **Conditional constructions have received a great attention within the framework of cognitive linguistics and construction grammar (Fillmore 1986, 1990; Sanders and Redeker 1996; Dancygier 1998; Dancygier and Sweetser 2005). Conditional constructions are used to encode the cause and effect of two events. The current paper is based on the following two questions: what are the main differences and similarities between Arabic and English conditional constructions? How do these differences contribute to the debate over universality of constructions? Therefore the study aims to show the similarities and differences between conditional constructions in English and Arabic and to support the dissection about universality by some evidences. This contrastive study has theoretical and applied values. Theoretically it contributes to the debate of universality and practically it can benefit the fields of language teaching and translation.**

2. Conditional Construction in English

The conditional sentence of English consists of two clauses, protasis and apodosis. The former sets up the condition and the latter shows the condition consequences. These two conditional clauses are connected by the conditional particle *if* that is located at the beginning of the protasis. The protasis may precede or follow the apodosis. The (Gurevich, 2010: 88), as in the conjunction *then* may optionally precede the apodosis following example:

(1) If the weather is stormy, (then) the trip will be canceled.

There are four types or groups of constructions in English, they are:

A. Real Conditional

present tense or If + past tense, past tense] [If + present tense,

This construction is used scientific facts, habitual and automatic results (Cowan, 2008). For example:

(2) I stay in home if it rains.

(3) Water turns to ice if you heat

B. Potential Conditional

[if + present simple, will + base form]

This construction expresses a highly real possibility of an action occurrence in the future (2001). or present (Declerck and Reed

(4) If he drives fast he'll arrive in time.

(5) If you do not study harder you will not get full mark.

C. Hypothetical Conditionals

1. [If + past tense (V-ed/were/was), would (or might/could) +base form]

(6) If I were rich, I would pay you a car.

(7) If I was rich, I would pay you a car.

(8) If I invited him to the dinner, he would come.

[If + past simple (V-ed/were/was) + would be + present participle]

(9) If I were in France I would be visiting Louvre Museum.

[If + past continuous or past perfect + would + verb]

(10) If I were traveling by train, I would feel much better.

(11) If you had worked harder, you would be the best.

These three constructions are used with the unreal actions which represent wishes or desires. Past tense is used here to indicate present or future actions.

2. [If + past perfect, would (might/could) have + past participle]

(12) If I had met John I would have invited him to the party. (I did not meet him)

This construction express impossibility, the action happened in the past and impossible to be changed. Dancygier & Sweetser (2005: 61) indicate that the speaker can express different degrees of epistemic distancing by using different forms of past tense. The first construction above is lesser distanced by using *was* than it is with *were* which is in turn lesser distanced than the construction (13). Therefore, (15) reflects more distanced than

(14) which is in turn more distanced than (13).

(13) If he was President, he wouldn't know how to deal with economic globalization.

(14) If he were President, he wouldn't know how to deal with economic globalization.

(15) If he had been President, he would not have known how to deal with economic globalization.

3. Conditional Construction in Arabic

Conditional system of Arabic is complex and detailed one. It consists of a general abstract construction or skeleton which contains three elements: conditional particle, protasis and apodosis. The protasis commonly precedes the apodosis, [conditional particle + protasis, apodosis] (Wickens, 1980: 76). Arabic has a large number of conditional particles by which different conditional situations are manifested. Sometimes these particles overlap therefore it is difficult to classify them sharply. However, they can be divided into three types depending on their general properties.

A. Real Situations

1. [إذا (idā) + Protasis, apodosis]

The general uses of this particle are with the expected and repeated actions, and with the actions are: إذا that undoubtedly occur. According to Abu-Chacra (2007), the three general uses of

- a. It is used when the speaker is talking about a highly expected action, as in the next examples:

(16) إذا بدأت بتعلم اللغة استطعت التواصل مع الآخرين خلال وقت قصير

If you start learning the language you will be able to communicate with others in a short time.

(17) إذا حصلنا على المستندات الكافية كسبنا القضية

If we get enough documents, we will win the case

- b. This particle is used with the repeated actions, as follow:

(18) إذا عاد من عمله أخبرته بما جرى

I will tell him what happened if he comes back from work

(19) إذا سمعت صوت المؤذن سارعت الى الصلاة

If I hear the voice of the muezzin, I go quickly to pray

- c. It is commonly used with the actions that doubtlessly happen or represent facts, as in the following examples:

(20) إذا بلغ الشخص كان زواجه اصلح

It is preferable for a person to marry when at his early adulthood.

(21) إذا اكتمل القمر اضاءت السماء

If the moon is completed, the sky is lit up.

a. [(matā) + Protasis, apodosis] متى 2.

b. [(ayan) + Protasis, apodosis] أيان

(000, 73-4) mentions, these two conditional constructions are used with time ٢As Alsāmarāçy (with some differences between them as follow:

a. متى: (matā) is used with the undetermined time, as in the following examples:

(22) متى تذهب الى السوق اذهب معك

When you go to the market I will go with you.

(23) متى ساعدتني ساعدتك

When you help me I do so with you.

(idā) can also be used with time but when the time is determined اذا The previous particle as in the next examples:

(24) سوف اذهب معك الى السوق اذا طلعت الشمس

I will go with you to the market when the sun goes up

(25) سوف اساعدك في عملك فور عودتي من المدرسة

I will assist you in your work once I return from school.

b. أيان: (ayan) is used with time when the speaker wants to magnify an action, as follow:

(26) ايان يأتي يوم القيامة

When does Judgment Day come.

(27) أيان تقرأ القرآن تشعر براحة كبيرة

When you read Quran you feel comfortable.

a. [(ayn) + Protasis, apodosis] اين 3.

b. [(haythumā) + Protasis , apodosis] حيثما

(000, 71-2) They ٢These two conditional particles are used with space. According to Alsāmarāçy (حيثما (ayn) is more general than اين can be used interchangeably with little difference in which (ayn). The sentence (29) reflects اين (mā) is added to ما (haythumā), especially when the particle more generality and emphasis than the sentence (28).

(28) حيثما تجلس اجلس

I will sit wherever you sit

(29) اينما تكونوا يدرككم الموت

Wherever you will be, death will find its way to you.

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4. [(anā) + Protasis, apodosis] أنى

This conditional particle can be used interchangeably with the conditional particles of space (haythumā). However, there are some differences between them. Unlike the other (ayn) and (anā) has an additional sense of time. It is used with endless options of places and particles, time. The speaker reflects through its use great emphasis on the action he is engaged with. In the next examples, the speaker puts great emphasis on the situation in which he will be and go with

hearer regardless of place and time:

(30) أنى تذهب اذهب معك

Wherever you go I am with you

(31) أنى تكن اكن

I will be wherever you are.

5. [(kayfama) + Protasis, apodosis] كيفما

It is used state description, as follow:

(32) كيفما تكونوا يولى عليكم

However you are the ruler will be

(33) كيفما تصنع معي اصنع معك

Whatever you do with me, I do you

6. a. [/men/ + Protasis, apodosis] من

b. [/mā/mahmā/ + Protasis, apodosis] مهما

a. /man/ is a conditional particle comes with human, as in the next examples:

(34) من اراد الخير سعى اليه

The person who wants goodness, he has to work for.

(35) من احبني احبته

Who loved me I loved him.

b. /mā/mahmā/ is used with nonhuman, as follow:

(36) مهما تطلب مني افعل دون تردد

I will do whatever you ask without hesitation

(37) مهما تعطيني اقبل

Whatever you give me I will accept.

7. [/ai/ + Protasis, apodosis] أي

This particle has not fixed meaning or use, its use is determined by what it is added to. It is generally used when there is a set of actions or entities need to be determined as follow:

(38) أي الفريقين تشجع اشجع

of the two teams you like, I will encourage.

Which

(39) اي وقت تغادر اغادر

I will leave at the time you leave

B. Possible Situation

[إن/ + Protasis, apodosis]

This conditional particle is generally used when there is a doubt about the occurrence of actions.

, as follow: (000, 59-60) indicates different contexts of Alsāmarāçy (

- a. It is used with the actions that probably happen and their occurrence depends on other actions occurrence, as in the next examples:

(40) إن قاتلوك قاتلهم

Fight them if they fight you.

(41) إن طلقها فلن تعود له مرة اخرى

If he divorce her, she will not return to him again.

- b. It can be used when the speaker is doubtful about taking place an action, as follow:

(42) إن هوجمت المدينة بقتيلة نووية فلن يبقى احد على قيد الحياة

If the city is attacked with a nuclear bomb, no one will survive.

(43) إن جفت جميع الانهار سيعيش الناس على الابرار

If all rivers are dried, people will depend on wells

- d. It is used with the impossible actions like (44) and (45). This sense or use overlaps with the next construction uses.

(44) حلق كالطيور إن استطعت

Fly like birds if you can.

(45) سير على سطح البحر بقدميك إن كنت قادر

Walk on the sea with your feet if you can.

- e. Sometimes it followed by an imperative or rebuke, as follow:

(46) إن غادر الجميع فغادر

If everyone leaves, then you should leave.

(47) إن كنت غير قادر على المجيء فلم وعدتني

If you had known that you will not come, why did you promise me?

C. Hypothetical Situation

[لو/ + Protasis, apodosis]

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/law/ is one of the most important conditional particles. It According to Wright (1996: 345) has different situations and is used in various contexts, as follow:

- a. It comes with the hypothetical clauses in the past tense. It indicates that the supposed action either does not occur or is not likely to occur, as in the following examples:

(48) لو اتحد العرب لكان النصر حليفهم

If the Arabs were united, they would get their victory.

(49) لو اغلقت المصانع الملوثة للبيئة لما تأثرت طبقة الاوزون

If the polluting factories were closed the ozone layer would not be affected.

- b. It comes with wishes, as in the next instances:

(50) لو أني املك مليون دولار لساشرت الى جميع انحاء العالم

If I had a million dollars I would travel all over the world

4. Contrast

A. Similarities

1. The general construction of the two languages consists of the same elements: the conditional particle, protasis and apodosis.
2. The conditional particle is always connected with the protasis.
3. The two languages can be classified into three types according to the classification of the different situation they encode.

B. Differences

1. English is more flexible than Arabic in the arrangement of the conditional construction components.
2. Arabic conditional construction is mainly based on the conditional particles to express different situations, while English depends on the verb form or tense of the protasis and apodosis.
3. English has only three constructions which have distinct functions that correlate with the three general types of conditional constructions. Arabic has 12 distinct constructions. Every construction encodes or express a specific situation within the three suggested types of conditional constructions.

4. In addition to the constructions of situations like [(idā) + Protasis, apodosis], Arabic employs specific /in/ + [(idā) + Protasis, apodosis], Arabic employs specific /law/ + Protasis, (لو Protasis, apodosis] and [constructions with different particles for time, space, state, human and nonhuman, while has no such detailed constructions and only one particle is used, if.

5. Some Arabic conditional constructions reflect the viewpoint of the speakers in many (matā) in order to emphasize the importance متى (ayan) rather than أيان situations, as in using (ayn). English encodes أين (anā) expresses more emphasis than أنى of an action. In the same way three degrees of epistemic distance of hypothetical situations by using different forms of past tense.

5. Conclusions

- 1. It seems that there is a highly abstract shared construction includes three components arranged in two ways: [conditional particle + protasis, apodosis] and [apodosis, conditional particle + protasis]. This construction advocates the hypothesis of universality.**
- 2. In a related context, the sameness of classification into real, potential and hypothetical reflects the universality of the situation that the constructions encode rather than the universality of the constructions themselves.**
- 3. The suggested universal abstract construction is manifested differently in the two languages. The two languages use different morpho-syntactic tools in order to express conditional situations.**
- 4. Arabic is more explicit and accurate than English in encoding conditional situations. It use many linguistic tools to express different situations.**

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