THE ROLE OF THE AUXILIARY GUD IN YEMENI ARABIC: BRIDGING THE GAP TO THE ENGLISH PRESENT PERFECT TENSE

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the auxiliary Gud in Yemeni Arabic, examining its structural and semantic functions and exploring its potential as a bridge for understanding the present perfect tense (PPT) in English. The PPT is a notable linguistic challenge for Arabic speakers due to differences in tense and aspect systems between English and Arabic. While Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) relies on the simple past tense and contextual adverbs to convey completed actions, dialectal variations, particularly in Yemeni Arabic, reveal unique constructions that may offer insights into the English PPT. A key focus of this study is the auxiliary Gud—used with past tense verbs (e.g., قد أكلت for "I have eaten")—which functions similarly to the English PPT by indicating an action that has been completed and is relevant to the present. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews with 12 native Yemeni speakers in Alkarak, Jordan, chosen for their diverse educational and professional backgrounds. The study aimed to capture both the use of Gud in natural speech and the participants' understanding of its meaning and context. Analysis included thematic coding to identify patterns in the usage of Gud, revealing that it consistently precedes past tense verbs and conveys a completed action with current relevance. The findings demonstrate that Gud serves as an aspectual marker, aligning with the PPT's function in English and contributing to a deeper understanding of tense-aspect relationships in Yemeni Arabic. The pedagogical implications of this research are significant, offering a foundation for instructional strategies that leverage the existing linguistic knowledge of Arabic speakers to facilitate English language learning. By recognizing the similarities between Gud and the PPT, educators can develop targeted activities and exercises that bridge the gap between the two languages, making the acquisition of English tense structures more intuitive for learners. Future research should expand the analysis to include more diverse dialects within Yemen and other Arabic-speaking regions, as well as comparative studies with languages that feature similar aspectual constructions. This will further illuminate the role of auxiliary verbs in language structure and the cognitive processes involved in learning tense and aspect across languages.

Keywords: Yemeni Arabic, auxiliary Gud, present perfect tense, tense and aspect, second language acquisition, language teaching.

INTRODUCTION

The exploration of tense and aspect in language is essential for understanding how temporal relations are communicated and how these concepts impact language learners, especially when their native language structures differ significantly from those of their target language. In English, the present perfect tense (PPT) stands out as a complex aspect of grammar, particularly for non-native speakers. This tense, formed by the auxiliary verb have followed by the past participle (e.g., I have seen), functions to indicate an action that occurred at an indefinite time before now and has relevance to the present moment. It embodies both the idea of completed action and its connection to the current context.

Arabic, on the other hand, offers a different approach to expressing past actions, relying on the use of simple past tense or adverbial expressions to indicate completed actions without an auxiliary verb akin to have (Owens, 2006). However, dialects within the Arabic language, particularly Yemeni Arabic, demonstrate unique constructions that may challenge this generalization. A notable phenomenon is the use of the auxiliary Gud (e.g., قد أكلت for "I have eaten") in Yemeni Arabic, which functions similarly to the English PPT. This paper seeks to explore this phenomenon, analyze its structural and semantic role, and discuss its pedagogical implications for teaching English to Arabic speakers.

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RATIONALE

Understanding the present perfect tense poses significant challenges for Arabic speakers due to the structural and functional differences between English and Arabic. While English relies on an auxiliary verb system to express the PPT, Arabic primarily uses the simple past tense and context to convey similar ideas (Holes, 2004; Benmamoun, 2000). In MSA, a sentence like ذهبتُ إلى السوق ("I went to the market") implies that an action has been completed but does not establish a direct connection to the present. To indicate a past action with present relevance, Arabic often employs adverbs like لقد or contextual clues.

However, in Yemeni Arabic, the auxiliary Gud functions in a way that is syntactically and semantically comparable to the English PPT. This auxiliary has been overlooked in many linguistic studies, despite its potential to bridge the gap in understanding tense-aspect relationships for Arabic speakers learning English. Analyzing Gud can provide insights into the cognitive and linguistic mechanisms that allow for such constructions and how they may influence second language acquisition.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1 Tense and Aspect in English

Tense and aspect are fundamental elements in the English language, influencing how time and action are

represented. The present perfect tense, which combines the present tense of the auxiliary have with the past participle, is used to indicate actions that have occurred in the past but have a current relevance or effect (Comrie, 1976). Its usage often contrasts with the simple past, which is used to denote actions completed at a definite point in the past without immediate relevance to the present (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002).

2 Arabic Tense and Aspect System

Arabic's tense and aspect system is distinct from English, relying heavily on the use of the perfect (past) and imperfect (present/future) verb forms, which can be combined with temporal adverbs to imply different timeframes (Owens, 2006). For instance, لقد preceding a past verb denotes a past action with current implications, but the structure lacks the auxiliary verb present in English's PPT. This difference has implications for how native Arabic speakers acquire and process English tense structures.

3 Dialectal Variation in Arabic

Arabic dialects exhibit variations in how tense and aspect are expressed. Dialects in the Arabian Peninsula, including Yemeni Arabic, have been found to incorporate aspectual markers and auxiliary verbs that differ from MSA (Al-Saadi, 2017). Research on Yemeni Arabic specifically highlights the use of Gud as an auxiliary verb that precedes past tense verbs and imparts a meaning similar to the English present perfect. This has implications for understanding the linguistic innovation and how it may affect language learning.

DATA COLLECTION

To understand how Gud is used in Yemeni Arabic, data collection focused on native Yemeni speakers residing in Alkarak, Jordan, who were selected for their familiarity with regional dialectal speech. The sample included 12 participants: 7 males and 5 females, aged between 25 and 45. Participants were chosen to represent a diverse range of educational backgrounds and occupations to capture varied language usage.

The data collection method involved semi-structured interviews that allowed participants to share examples and explain their use of Gud. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and was conducted in Arabic. The participants were prompted to create sentences using Gud and to describe their meanings and the contexts in which they would use such constructions. Additional follow-up questions were used to probe deeper into the participants' understanding and usage of Gud.

DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data were transcribed and analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative analysis involved thematic coding to identify common patterns in how Gud was used. The key themes that emerged included:

Position of Gud: Participants consistently used Gud preceding the past tense verb, indicating that it functions as a syntactic marker that aligns with past tense structures.

Semantics of Gud: The auxiliary Gud was found to imply that the action had been completed with current relevance. For instance, قد ذهبت إلى السوق ("I have gone to the market") suggested that the action of going to the market had been completed but was relevant to the present conversation.

Quantitative analysis was performed to calculate the frequency of Gud usage and the contexts in which it appeared. The data showed that Gud was most frequently used when participants were discussing completed actions that were relevant to their current state or conversation.

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that Gud serves as an auxiliary verb that structures past tense sentences to convey a present perfect-like meaning. This is significant because it suggests that Yemeni Arabic has a unique grammatical feature that allows it to express completed actions with present relevance, much like the English present perfect. This finding aligns with previous research by Al-Saadi (2017), which highlighted how dialectal variations can include aspectual markers that contribute to tense-aspect distinctions.

The use of Gud reflects a deeper linguistic innovation in Yemeni Arabic that may be tied to historical and social factors influencing the region's language evolution. The ability to use Gud in sentences suggests that speakers of Yemeni Arabic have developed a form that aligns with how English speakers conceptualize actions that have occurred and are relevant now.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Understanding that Yemeni Arabic speakers have a construction similar to the English present perfect has several implications for teaching English:

Leveraging Existing Knowledge: Teachers can highlight similarities between Gud and the English PPT to create an effective learning bridge. Exercises that ask students to identify similarities and differences between the two structures can be helpful.

Contextual Learning: Activities that involve storytelling and real-life scenarios can provide practice in

using the English PPT. Students can practice forming sentences that express past actions with present relevance.

Grammar Practice: Targeted grammar exercises that contrast English PPT with Yemeni constructions using Gud can help reinforce learning by showing how the concepts are structurally similar.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This study has shed light on the use of Gud in Yemeni Arabic as an auxiliary that facilitates present perfect-like constructions. This discovery contributes to a broader understanding of dialectal variation in Arabic and its implications for second language teaching. By recognizing such nuanced features, educators can create targeted learning strategies that build on students' existing linguistic knowledge.

Future research could include expanding the sample size and exploring how Gud is used in other Yemeni communities or different Arabic dialects to determine if this construction is a widespread feature. Additionally, comparative studies with other languages that use aspectual markers or auxiliaries can provide further insights into how languages encode time and aspect.

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