

Identifying the Degree of Action in Relation to Time: A Comparative Study between English and Arabic Languages

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ABSTRACT

This paper which entitled degree of action in relation to time targeted to identify the phasing of action in time from the view-points of the two languages in question. For the purpose of this paper, the researcher adopted descriptive-analytical method, as it is compatible with the nature of study. It is reached that the degree of action in relation to time from the perspective of English language phases four time positions, whereas action's degree in time in the view of the Arabic language phases three times. With reference to the study's results, the researcher recommends that further studies to pinpointing the short-comings in the field concerned should be carried out. It is also significant that more attention should be given to the notions of time that might specify the degree of action in relation to time in other languages.

Key words: Degree of Action - Time Reference - Concept of Time

المستخلص

جاءت هذه الدراسة بعنوان درجة الحدث بالنسبة الي الزمن، وهدفت الي معرفة تمرجل الحدث في الزمن من وجهتي اللغة الانجليزية والعربية. استخدم الباحث المنهج الوصفي التحليلي لملائمة لطبيعة هذه الدراسة. توصلت الدراسة الي ان الحدث من منظور اللغة الانجليزية يتدرج في اربعة كونات زمنية، بينما الحدث من منظور اللغة العربية يتمرجل في ثلاثة ازمنا. بالاشارة الي نتائج الدراسة، يوصي الباحث باجراء المزيد من الدراسات لتوضيح الجوانب ذات الصلة التي لم يتم البحث فيها، بالتركيز بشكل اكبر علي المفاهيم الزمنية المتعلقة بدرجة الحدث بالنسبة الي الزمن في اللغات الاخرى.

الكلمات المفتاحية: درجة الحدث - المرجعية الزمنية - مفهوم الزمن

INTRODUCTION

Action takes time and unfolds in time. Time plays a crucial role as a dimension against which action takes place. Action in time is conceived differently, since languages somehow have various views on time. Understanding degrees of action in relation to time displays the role of time in action. The role of time in action construes the concept of time upon which the degree of action can be recognized. Languages differently frame the concept of time; particularly, time with regard to languages as pointed out by Renaat (2006:94) is an extra-linguistic category, since time existed separately and independently of languages so many back ages. Thus, the concept of time might be formulated, for instance, according to linguistic representation of time, time concept culturally-stick or concept of time that derived by analogy from some notions that proposed by other sciences such as physics or philosophy.

The term notion with reference to time is progressively broad and relates in very practical sense to essence and characteristics of time, which fall within the scope of physics, philosophy, etc. On the other hand, the thought of time culturally is varied. In certain cultures, time according to Smith (1961:83) is a fundamental part of people's life whilst in the others is not. That's, everywhere throughout the world, different people do not perceive time in almost the same way. It is evident that the common sense of time in the thought of Western people is very much formed by the way they perceive time. In this concern, Ann et al., (2015:49) described that two orientations of time which stated in physics agree with the conscious knowledge of Western people about time. In other words, time relationships within the frame work of two orientations are thought of in terms of earlier-later.



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Nevertheless, it is difficult to find one concept of time which is regularly and uniformly shown in all languages, since each human society almost adopts varied time reference which means, no single concept of time can be properly used for all human beings.

Theoretical Frame Work

As deeply rooted in framing the concept of time, languages, for the most part, view time reference in terms of the conceptual frame of time. The time reference often informs people's understanding of time and conceiving of actions in time as well. In addition, it describes the dimensions that formulate the concept of time and how distinctively contribute in forming it. This is because the concept of time is mainly formulated as accordingly to the time reference. With respect to English language, it has its own concept of time which matches its interlocutor's conscious knowledge of time and perceives actions in time. Time in English, yet, is graphically represented by straight line; it expands from variable reference point, which marks it in the middle, into different directions unlimitedly and conceptualizes as containing two time divisions.

From a linguistic point of view, the use of tenses according to Renaat (2006:147) signifies a conceptual division of time into two time domains, to be specific, present time domain and past time domain. The former contains three time regions, namely present region, pre-present region and post-present region, whereas the latter is thought of as a time of boundless length. In any case, the present region, which exclusively embraced by the present time domain, includes the variable reference point from which the line extends at either side of it for an indefinite timeframe. The variable reference point is usually represented by speech time which often referred to as starting point.

Considering, the present and past time domains implicitly shapes two frames of

unlimited time regions. All time regions, each in its own, represent indefinite length as emerged within a frame of unbounded time. That is, the two frames function in the background which unlimitedly expands into opposite side, where the variable reference point refers to as a divider. Based on the foregoing, two different dimensions, namely the notion of variable reference point and time regions respectively formed the time reference. Precisely speaking, two notions that proposed by different sciences, namely philosophy and physics correspond by analogy to the dimensions which form the time reference of the language in question. In connection with the source of notions in philosophy and physics that represents the base concepts is held to be an important approach to describe the similarity between the targeted and base concepts by analogy. To this point, analogy according to Peter Aubusson et al (2009:200) is an identifying process of similarities between two concepts; the recognized one is called analog and the known science concept is called targeted.

Investigating the base concept regarding the timeless portion as similar to such a process in the based concept is considered being a philosophical question. It is worth mentioning that the purpose of studying time from the view-point of the base concept referring to analog differs from the targeted one, though the issue of time among sciences often overlaps. As referring to time from the viewpoint of the targeted concept, philosophy attempts to understand the inner workings nature of time, which is partially notion in one side and in another one is yet a concept. Be that as it may, tackling the question of time from philosophical standpoint as stated by Callahan (1948:vii) mainly based one of the four ancient scholars, namely Aristotle, Plato, Augustine and Plotinus; even if the modern philosophers' theories might not be well realized or discussed in details for they might be introduced for the first time.

Of the four previously mentioned philosophers, Aristotle (322-384 B.C.) provided a good deal of work in natural philosophy of time. He is the one who firstly created the philosophy of time and eternity, for he presented a methodological description of time in general and of its connection to the motion in particular. Aristotle systematically described that time is the number of motion. The perception of time referring to the number of motion shows a relationship of reliance of time upon motion. He pointed out that there is a correlation between perception of time and the number of motion. This relationship can be viewed as the connection between method of measurement and a thing to be measured. Yet, he clearly indicated that time is observed when there is change; “even if it is dark and we are not acted upon through the body, but there is some change in the soul, it instantly appears to us that some time has passed together with the change” (Edward Hussey 1983:43). What means, the presence of life depends on motion as a maker of change. Therefore, changes around us and in us, as he stated, are to be perceived. It is obviously time is caused by the process of change that goes hand in hand, for time goes by when change is made. As linked with motion, time is in continual succession since the motion is in ceaseless succession as well.

One crucial point in Aristotle’s philosophy is that time is absolute, since all motion in the universe as he thinks is a reflection of the continuous perfect motion in the heavens that started by the Creator (Callahan 1948:86-87). Time is simply recognized when motion is marked. Time is marked by motion in terms of before and after. To establish a cut-off point in time, Aristotle proposed the idea of the “now” to act as a center so as to show the position of “before” and “after” in the motion to measure change in time. Just change in time is measured when the “now” is

perceived in connection with the “before” and the “after” in the motion. The “now”, as a point at which time is divided, is held to be the beginning of time and the end of another. As accordingly to that the perceived time in terms of the “now” is non-identical and is always of different characteristics since the “now” is not of one kind (ibid. 1983:49).

On the plus side, the “now” is not a time at all, but it is a point of time. Though the “now” is not a fixed point, it is causally a limit between the “before” and the “after”; and, it is always in a continuous state of occurring. The “now” in so far as elaborated is so similar in some way to the point in line. That is, the point in line is not a portion of it and so does the “now”. One further fact, Aristotle combined together the eternity with time to introduce the notion of absolute time (W. Von Leyden 1964:35). That is to say, Aristotle discussed the nature of time systematically and proposed a distinct notion of time. What is more, he presented an important concept of time in terms of the “now” as a point at which time is divided into absolute past and future referring to before and after.

There again, some notions presented by physics might find their ways to the world of language and being used to describe such natural phenomenon or entity of something which has a relationship with language from the viewpoint of the language’s speakers. This assertion is in line with the statement of Jaszczolt (2009:7) who pointed out that one task to recognize the concept of time is to assess the extent to which physical notions play a role in shaping the foundations for human concepts of time that expressed in natural languages. In this context, the second dimension that constitutes time reference adopted by English language bears analogy to the targeted concept referring to physical action process from the perspective of the Theory of Relativity.

For more elaboration what concerns event from the targeted concept point of view, Stephen Hawking (1988:25) stated that event or what termed in physics “action process” from the perspective of the Relativity is instantaneous occurrence that related with a point in spacetime. Time to space is not totally isolated from it or disconnected but it is integrated with. Time combines with three dimensions of space to form a single spacetime of four dimensions. Therefore, spacetime combination is fundamental in describing the location of event and is so significant for event occurrence as well. Empirically, the light emits from an event forms a three-dimensional cone in a setting of the four-dimensional spacetime. A cone formed by this process is called future light cone of event. Similarly, past light cone by the same process comes into being. The past light cone is a cluster of events from which a pulse of light can reach the destination of the event. In other words, single short amount of light from somewhere in past light cone that called jumper area gets there to the location of a pointed event as a sign indicating that the event does not vanish or become a past knowledge. Based on the Relativity, time is inseparable component of space. What means, event does not only occur in space but also in time, which altogether formed what called spacetime combination. The event as occurring forms future and past light cones; each light cone considers being a time domination and emerges out as accordingly to event’s occurrence.

As far as the degree of action in relation to time is concerned, Arabic language, which belongs to Semitic languages family, has its own concept of time that reflects the sense of ordering events. Additionally, Arabic approaches time expression from its own perspective, since time is a significant dimension for events to take place. The

time reference which underlines the concept of time in the Arabic language is the time lapse in between the “nows” that lies in the verges of the future and past time. The time lapse referring to the base (analog) concept considers being a linguistic representation of time. According to the previously stated time construction that termed Al-Haal /alh3:l/, future and past conceptualize as separating two time units. Therefore, three time units, namely future, Al-Haal and past are conceived of respectively (Jalal El-Deen Al-Sutti 1998:23). To this point, the terms future and past are differently named in Arabic language; the former is termed as *Almust’3qbəl* while the latter is known as *Alma’di*.

The pas time which locates prior to Al-Haal, which called in other languages such as English language present time, conceives of as a neighboring time unit to Al Haal one. Its vicinity begins from the verge of the ending “nows” in the scope of Al-Haal. Similarly, the future situates in the brink of the proximity of Al-Haal. It is worth mentioning that the concept of the past and future time is understood in a particular way in the Arabic language. The past time is thought of as a time that appears in as such later and forms a time unit, while the future time as defined by Al Jarjani (2004:178) is conceptualized as a time that to be materialized, where the experiencer projects himself to perceive it subsequently to time that currently conceives by which the proximity of the future time instantly begins. What means, the experiencer is truly being faced at once by the future time after the termination of overall appointed time which accounts in terms of the current event’s lapse time that to be perceived.

The justification of the time reference of the Arabic language is not only based on the view of grammarians but also pointed out by Arabic philosophers.



Though the Greek philosophy in its classic or late version which preceded the Arabs' school of thinking, Arabic philosophers have their own contribution in the realm of philosophy after delving into Greek philosophy to formulate their own distinctive views in this respect. Additionally, Islamic religion has provided the Arab philosophers with valuable sources of religious materials (Abu Reida 1950:36). By handful of philosophers such as Al-Kindi and Abu Al-Barakat were very keen on drawing a distinction between the nature of philosophical time and linguistic one, since each discipline functions differently.

With reference to the philosophy of time, Al-Kindi (185-252 H.) as pointing to the essence of time holds that time cannot be perceived unless the "now" is conceived as a passage between the past and the future time. The "now", as forming a boundary between the past and the future time, considers an instant of time that cannot be even mediated or planned in minds. As discussing the nature of time, Al-Kindi proposed a new aspect of time that termed by grammarians a linguistic dimension of time. To this point, he stated that it is necessary to mark a pointed time in the boundary between the future and past time inasmuch as the "now" is not a time; by which he means that mediating a lapse of time in between the two "nows" in the mind, time is assumed to be existed. Thus, he introduced a new time dimension from a linguistic perspective. Furthermore, he indicated that time in the consideration of linguists branches out into two distinctive species, namely time that marked by the "now" and the other remains in continuous state of flux by the "now" (Abu Reida 1950:34). In so doing, the former is so significant for the representation of linguistic time since humans intuitively conceptualize time as having triple folds.

A crucial point in Al-Kind's philosophy is that time is not absolute since he clarified

such point by expressing that time is the length of the matter's existence. He urges that if the matter is eternal, then time is also everlasting or what means timeless. This is on the ground that the whole world is created by God (Allah) and its space of time is finite which will have to come to an end in such time as it was created accordingly (Mash'had Al-Allaf 2008:48). In this manner, neither time that set a part by the "now" nor time that remains in constant movement by the "now is infinite. This implies that the whole things are framed in time. Thus, time is just being a back mirror against which entire things account or come to happen according to their nature.

Similarly, Abu Al-Barakat, who was nearly born in 1077 in Mousal, Iraq, gave much recognition to the problematic issue of time by following different procedures in terms of reassessing the ideas of time that presented by other philosophers before introducing his own point of view. He initially rejected the linkage of time with motion as proposed by other philosophers such as Ibn Sinna. He dealt with the nature of time from new grounds by stating that there is difference between the idea of time as being in motion and the thought of motion as being in time. In this concern, the concept of the latter goes against traditional correlation between time and motion as stated by Aristotle. Considering the view of time as prior to motion in soul, he Abu Al-Barakat explains that time is a product of mental representation based on innate thought (Jamal Rajab 1996:137-138). It seems appropriate to say that the phrase "motion as being in time" implies that time exists, even if motion does not exist. Time, therefore, is independent of motion and has no relevance with motion or produces by it. So, time is held to be a backdrop for motion which can be in terms of actions as they account within the frame of time.

With respect to the idea of the “now”, Abu Al-Barakat pointed out that the “now” is in one way a potential separating point between the future and past time; in addition to that, it is a limit between any two specified or determined times. In another sense, time limit is marked between any two “nows” that indicate a predetermined time period. In essence, time is shown by the “now” and it comes into being by the sense of the “now”. Abu Al-Barakat (1215H: 79) confirmed that time moves in terms of continuity, not in succession to the “now”. Furthermore, time does not come into existence by itself, as when nothing comes into being. Accordingly, what comes into being is only the “now”. Due to that, time does not make up of the “nows” as far as the “nows” do not appear in succession.

Briefly, Abu Al Barakat referred to the “now” in three different aspects: namely, the “now” acting as a separating entity between future and past time by pointing to the concept of time; the “now” as accounting duration in terms of any two specified times referring to time characteristics; and, the “now” that makes time to come in existence by its sense. What means, the idea of the “now” can be realized and interpreted differently as has been mentioned above. So to speak, Al-Kindi and Abu Al Barakat have adapted the philosophical standpoint of the “now” to introduce a new concept that based on mental conceptualization of time. The appointed time, thus, can be perceived in terms of the “now” which refers to as beginning point that leads up to predetermined time point which to be terminated by another “now”. With reference to the reported process, a decided period whose length depends on intervals in between the two “nows” can be perceived. Such a process divides time into a preceding part and subsequent part in terms of expressible duration in between.

Methodology

The researcher adopted descriptive-analytical method because it is appropriate with the nature of the concerned study. Descriptive approach according to Aga et al, (1999:73) is used to prove specific hypotheses to facilitate answers for certain questions, concerning current phenomenon and existing events at present. Analytical approach is the use of suitable process for breaking the fundamental elements down into smaller pieces to be solved.

Questions of the study

The study will adopt the following questions for collecting the data relevant to the present study.

1-To what extent does the degree of action in relation to time differ from English and Arabic language?

2-To what extent does the concept of time play a role in specifying the degree of action in relation to time in each language?

Hypotheses of the study

1-The degree of event in relation to time differs between English and Arabic.

2- The concept of time plays a significant role in determining the degree of action in relation to time in the two languages separately.

Aim of the study

A major concern of the paper is to identify the degree of action in relation to time in terms of the concept of time.

The study is hoped to provide theoretical frame work that helps in decoding the phenomenon understudy, since little work has been done in this concern.

Discussion and Analysis

Referring to the concept and thought of time, the researcher believes that the degree of action in relation to time in English language is not specified according to the parts of time, but it is determined on the basis of the time zones. The time zones as occurring in time as background combined together in one time reference, though they differ from each other in functions.



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The two parts of time referring to future and past time in the thought of English is divided by the reference point that represented by speech time. To this point, the researcher thinks that there is similarity between the linguistic function of the speech time as representing the targeted concept and the function of the “now” as referring to the base concept. This similarity can be seen as follow: the speech time acts as while time to divide time indefinitely into future and past time. Similarly, the “now” as stated by Aristotle acts to mark time in the middle on the basis of “before” and “after” referring to future and past; both have absolute nature as time is absolute too. Therefore, the elements of time in English language is not by any means determined the degree of action in time but show how time concept conceptualizes.

On the other hand, the researcher sees that the four time zones do not correspond with the tripartite components of time but they express the phasing of the action in time. This clearly indicates that English language does not adopt the notion of the time zones according to division of time parts. It is evident that there is analogy between the linguistic time zones and time positions as established by physical action process from the view point of the Relativity. With reference to linguistics, time in English as previously mentioned is represented by time line. By curving the time line into two outwards bow shapes in both sides from the “now” which is the mid-point of the time line, the two time divisions as a background for the English absolute tenses referring to the four linguistic time occurs. Based on such idea, analogy can be drawn between the two time divisions and a formation of the two time domains formed by physical action process. As described elsewhere, the physical action process forms the future light cone and the past light cone; each can be recognized as a time domain. Within the frame of the two time domains, the physical process phases in four time positions,

namely unknown action position, timeless event position, event effect position and past event position. Moreover, analogy can be realized between the four time positions marked by physical process and the linguistic time zones, viz. present time zone, pre-present time zone, post present time zone and past time zone that linguistically represented by the absolute four tenses, specifically simple present tense, present perfect tense, simple future tense and simple past tense respectively. So to speak, the linguistic event from the stand point of the English language is analogous to the physical action process as phasing in time.

On the other hand, the linguistic role given to the speech time in the present time zone is analogous to the timeless position which is formed by instantaneous occurrence of event from physical perspective. Functionally, the present time zone and is authentic and acts as a reflection point for the coincidence of event with time since it conceptualizes as analogous activity compared with timeless event position. Additionally, there exists functional analogy between event effect position and pre-present zone. Referring to physics in terms of the event effect position as a base concept from linguistic point of view, the present time intermingles with the past time. The relationship between occurrence and event gradually ceases to exist until the occurrence thoroughly vanishes, where the event and its effect only remained there; as remaining there, the event perceives as beginning to fade but it does not fully shift to be a past knowledge for it bundles towards the present time from a time zone which is linguistically known as pre-present zone that represents present perfect tense. Since humans' minds do not use patterns of physical equations to measure time in language as physics does, the event as going up to present time according to Angela and Philip (2006:362) is viewed as psychologically relevant to present time. That is, psychology as pointed out by Eysench et al.,

(1972:327) aims to examine the codes which governs the process that has something to do with the way time is conceived. Time as a focus of attention in psychology is associated with events as they emerge to an individual in a way or another he/she perceives time. Therefore, adopting the code of event as a time frame that extends up to present time is workable from psychological perspective since not all principles are viewed similarly by different disciplines in the same way as the perspective adopted by each science is varied.

There once more, the post-present zone appears to be analogous to unknown action time position in such way. Linguistically, the post-present zone no longer exists within the frame of speech time but instantly starts after speech time as described by Renaat (2006:148). As accordingly to that it can be said that the post-present zone functionally is analogous to unknown action time position. Despite the fact that their field of application is not identical, analogy between the two time concepts with reference to the post-present zone and unknown action position is valid from the perspective that they do not come into being unless there is an occurrence of event which can be interpreted either linguistically or physically referring to the targeted or base concept respectively. What means, the post-present zone as well as unknown action time position are not constant but are coupled with the cause that brings them into existence within the background of a large time frame. In the same context, one might say that the function of the past time zone and past time position fit each other as they represent the final destination of event. All things considered, there is a cross-cutting analogy common to time zones that constitute the phasing of event from linguistic point of view and the time positions through which event occurs as a result of physical action process.

On the other hand, the researcher believes that Arabic language concerning the degree of action in relation to time is conceived according to time reference. The time reference which is derived from philosophical perspective based on the appointed time in between the two “nows” but not in the “now” itself. The ideation of framing a time concept originating from philosophy which bases on Arabic thought represents the base concept. It can be stated that the targeted concept referring to the linguistic concept results from the base concept. Therefore, correspondence between the two concepts exists in terms of conceptualization of time into two parts as being split up by expressible duration which is the time lapse in between two “nows”. With reference to the targeted concept, these time parts are linguistically conceived of as time units that termed as future, Al-Haal and past respectively. Being a time lapse, Al-Haal typically corresponds the expressible duration that divides time into folds from the point of view of the base concept. So the two concepts have the same field of application, which resulted in introducing a time reference of a linguistic dimension of time. As such, neither does the notion of space-time combination nor abstraction of physical action process have place in the concept of time of the Arabic language. That is to say, Arabic language has its own means of approaching time.

It is worth mentioning that Al-Haal from the view point of the Arabic grammarians never carries the same content of the “now” with reference to the philosophical post stand, as far as the “now” highly remains contentious as an entity that represents time. Based on their views, Al Haal appears as a pointed time in terms of the “nows” on the brinks of the future and of the past. Yet, it can be stated that the expression of Al Haal in the manner previously mentioned regards as a linguistic representation of time, which by no means is similar to the identity of

the concept of the “now” since the “now” acts as a boundary between the future and the past time which means that the “now” is not a time but it is held to be a sense of time from a philosophical point of view (Raedhi El-Deen 1998:21).

It is evident that Al-Haal is of special consideration in the concept of time in Arabic language, for it functions as a linking passage of time between the future and past and time; whenever the appointed time of event perceives as accordingly to its intervals of the time lapse that marked by Al-Haal. What importantly, the event as conceived indicates expressible duration, even when the event is of semi-zero duration that varies greatly according to the nature of the event in focus. Therefore, the concept of time in Arabic language entirely differs from the time concept that thought of based on the “now” as a time marker. That to say, Al-Haal is not only a time location for event to takes place but it is a time construction for it differentiates future from past time. Thus, the future time in Arabic language begins immediately after the termination periods of the current event that being conceptualized. Similarly, the past time is considered to be adjacent to the “nows” that point to the ending of Al-Haal and starting of the past time. An event turns to be a past knowledge as when it carries the past time marker although it varies in nearness and farness in time at which it happens. So to speak, the action according to the concept of the Arabic language is thought to be have elapsed, happened or will happen. Therefore, the degree of action recognizes through the labels of time that it carries referring to the divisions of time, namely future time, Al-Haal and past time which are thought to be a linguistic representation of time.

The Results

1-The degree of action in relation to time from the perspective of the English language phases in four time positions

2-The degree of action in time from the viewpoint of the Arabic language phases in three time divisions.

Conclusion and suggestions

This paper analyzes the degree of action in relation to time in English and Arabic language in terms of the time reference that frames the concept of time in each language. It is evident that the degree of action in time is highly varied in the two languages since each holds different notion of time according to its speakers' thought of time.

Finally this paper wishes to present a clear identification of the degree of action in relation to time in the concerned languages; also it politely suggests that other researchers who related to this field are required to place more emphasis on the study of other relevant notions of time from the perspective of other sciences such as psychology which might fully or partially have roles in framing the linguistic concept of time as far as languages are concerned.

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