

مجلة كلية التربية الأساسية للعلوم التربوية والإنسانية  
مجلة علمية محكمة تصدر عن كلية التربية الأساسية - جامعة بابل

**Argument Alternations and Event Type: Implications for English –  
Arabic Translation**

*Lec.: Qusai Basheer Ibrahim  
Dept. of Translation /College of Arts  
University of Mosul/ Mosul, Iraq.*

علاقة التغير التركيبي بنوع الفعل وأثرها في الترجمة بين الانكليزية والعربية

م. قصي بشير ابراهيم  
قسم الترجمة / كلية الآداب  
جامعة الموصل / الموصل / العراق  
[Qusai.b.i@uomosul.edu.iq](mailto:Qusai.b.i@uomosul.edu.iq)

**Abstract**

Verbs can occur in different syntactic contexts producing argument alternations. Drawing on Levin's (1993) work, this study examines argument alternations with emphasis on the correlation between the alternations and the aspectual class of verbs . The aim is to explore the extent to which the correlation can be used for showing the areas of dis/similarities between English and Arabic alternations and the consequences of such divergence in translation. The study adopts the constructional-based approach to translation , believing that the form-meaning pairing implied in the construction provides a conjunction area for formal and functional equivalence. It is hypothesized that the typological differences between English and Arabic languages impose themselves on the way the alternations are realized, resulting in significant problems that require practical solutions in translation. The study shows the importance of syntax-semantics interface in describing the relationship between the variants of the alternation. It also shows that English and Arabic languages differ with respect to the way they form the alternations and the way the restrictions are imposed on the set of verbs that enter the alternation, forcing translators to use different strategies to solve the constructional mismatch between English and Arabic languages .

**Key Words:** *Argument Alternations, Aspectual Class, Construction, Translation.*

**المستخلص**

ينشأ التغير التركيبي عندما يقع الفعل في سياقات نحوية مختلفة دون ان تؤثر في المعنى الجوهري للفعل. تلقي هذه الدراسة الضوء على التغير التركيبي بتبنيها الدراسة التي اجرتها (بث لفن ) على ظاهرة التغير التركيبي مع اعطاء الاولوية للارتباط بين هذه الظاهرة ونوع الفعل .لمعرفة مدى امكانية استخدام هذا

## مجلة كلية التربية الأساسية للعلوم التربوية والإنسانية

### مجلة علمية محكمة تصدر عن كلية التربية الأساسية - جامعة بابل

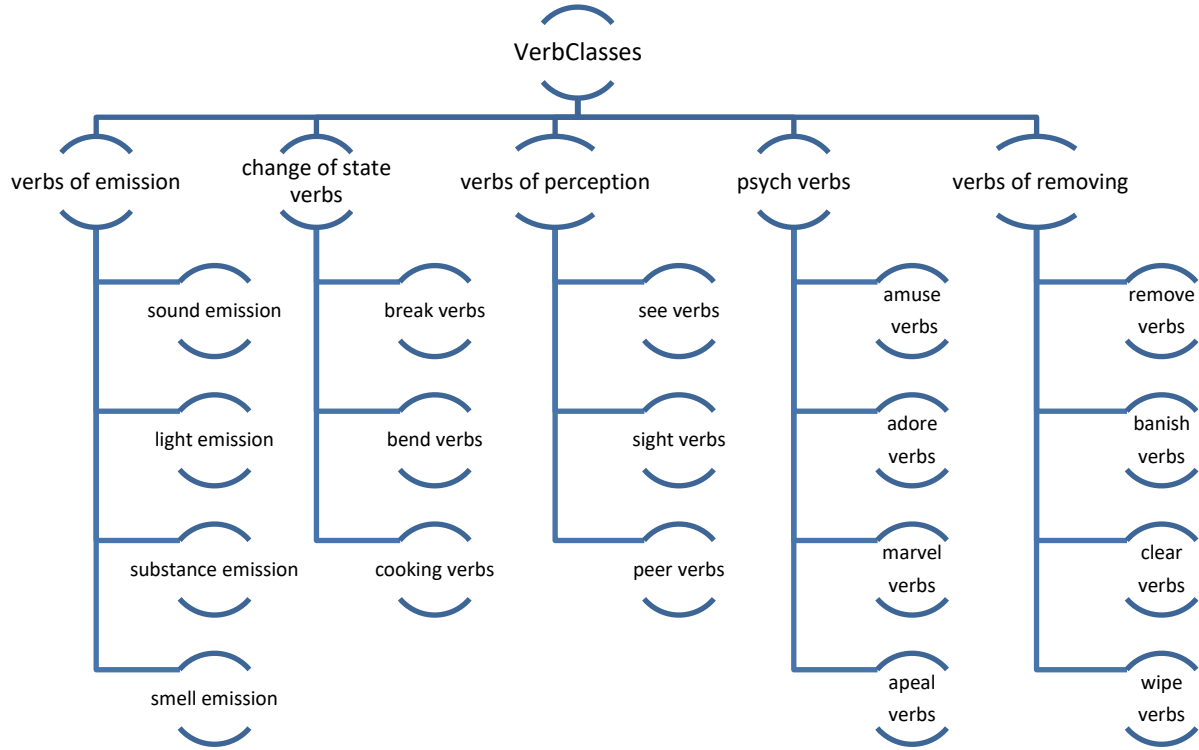
الارتباط في كشف أوجه التشابه والاختلاف بين العربية والانكليزية في مجال التغير التركيبي وانعكاس ذلك على الترجمة بين اللغتين. تتبنى الدراسة المكافئ البنوي في الترجمة إذ يمثل هذا المكافئ نقطة تلاقي المعنى والشكل وتظهر الدراسة أهمية التداخل بين النحو وعلم الدلالة في وصف العلاقة بين أوجه التغير التركيبي وكما تظهر اختلاف اللغتين في وسائل تكوين التغير التركيبي وفي القيود التي تفرضها كل لغة على نوع الفعل الذي يشكل هذا التغير ، وهذا الاختلاف يجبر المترجم على استخدام استراتيجيات مختلفة ليتعامل مع مشكلة غياب المكافئ البنوي الناتج عن تفاوت القيود المفروضة على الفعل.

الكلمات المفتاحية : تناوب الحجة ، الطبقة الجانبية، بناء، ترجمة

### 1. Introduction

Since Fillmore(1970) published his influential work “The Grammar of Breaking and Hitting”, the question of how syntax interfaces with semantics has been a central concern for linguists, and a large body of literature has been devoted to this intriguing phenomenon. Langacker (1987), for instance, observes that structural distinctions lead to semantic and even pragmatic distinctions. Despite linguists’ agreement on the importance of the interrelation between syntax and semantics, they differ with respect to the nature of this correlation. Chomsky (1981:86), among others, argues that the verb’s syntactic behavior is, to a large extent, determined by information encoded in the verb. Chomsky’s remarks are considered the birthplace of lexicalization. This lexicalist view is reversed by the constructionalist approach. Marantz (1997), for example, claims that the structure around the verb determines the verb behavior. More importantly, following Fillmore, attention has been paid to the importance of verb classes as a means of showing the correlation between syntax and semantics. According to Levin (year), verb classes are “sets of semantically related verbs showing a range of linguistic properties” (2009:1). The verbs in Levin’s(1993) work are classified with respect to their semantic shared components into super-classes. The super-classes are general and include basic concepts like change of state verbs, sound verbs, weather verbs, psychological verbs, manner verbs, result verbs, etc. The super classes are then subdivided into finer grained classes. Levin’s classification produced 48 major classes and 192 small classes. A useful way to understand some of these classes can be found in Figure (1).

مجلة كلية التربية الأساسية للعلوم التربوية والإنسانية  
مجلة علمية محكمة تصدر عن كلية التربية الأساسية - جامعة بابل



**Figure (1) Some Major and Minor Verb Classes  
(Based on Levin, 1993: X-XV)**

Fillmore's (1970) work also illustrates the importance of verb classes as a means of showing argument realization options thus inspiring Levin to classify verb classes with respect to the entering of these verbs into argument alternations. Verbs which participate in the same argument syntactic alternations are assumed to share the same semantic features and consequently belong to the same verb class. Conversely, verbs which belong to the same verb class are expected to enter the same argument alternations. Based on alternations, Levin (1993) extended Fillmore's work and classified more than 3000 English verbs into 79 alternations. Interestingly, these alternations can be observed crosslinguistically. Accordingly, a great deal of research has been done on different languages to prove the validity of Levin's classification. For Arabic, Snider and Diab (2006) classified Arabic verbs into relatively small classes. They addressed the issue by inducing verb classes automatically. More recently, Mousser (2013), motivated by Kipper-Schuler's (2005) computational work on English verb lexicon, provided a Verb Net-based work for Arabic. He adopted Levin's approach and classified Arabic verbs into 114 alternations. The following section on provides a better understanding of argument alternations, as the term "argument" is explained in relation to "argument structure".

## 2. What is Argument Structure?

## مجلة كلية التربية الأساسية للعلوم التربوية والإنسانية

مجلة علمية محكمة تصدر عن كلية التربية الأساسية - جامعة بابل

A good deal of literature has been devoted to the study of argument structure. The term was first adopted around 1980 by linguists working on government binding theory, which is mainly concerned with how noun phrases relate to verbs. Trask uses the term "argument" to refer to "a noun phrase bearing a specific grammatical or semantic relation to a verb and whose overt or implied presence is required for well-formedness in structures containing the verb" (1993: 20). The definition proposed by Trask implies that arguments are expressions or more specifically noun phrases that are essential to complete the meaning of the verb. The obligatory elements that surround the verb are arguments of the same verb. In (1-3), the underlined expressions represent arguments of the verb.

- (1) The window broke suddenly.
- (2) The man opened the door.
- (3) The journalist asked the president a question yesterday.

When considering arguments, the words "suddenly" and "yesterday" are not taken into account, they can be omitted without affecting the grammaticality of the sentence. The verb can take one, two or three arguments, as shown above. In Arabic languages, some verbs can take four arguments, as shown in (4 and 5).

- (4) نبأ علي الطلاب الحضور لازماً

Ali told the students that the attendance was obligatory.

- (5) أخبر عمر محمد زيداً مخلصاً

Omer told Mohammad that Zaid was honest.

Many linguists draw a distinction between the external argument (subject) and the internal arguments, claiming that the subject is not a true argument as the subject does not affect the interpretation of the verb. The interpretation of 'kill' in (6a-e) varies based on the internal argument but not on the external argument (subject).

- (6) a. Kill a cockroach
- b. Kill a conversation (stop an activity)
- c. Kill a bottle (empty it)
- d. Kill an enemy
- e. Kill an audience (wow them)

(Marantz,

1984)

## مجلة كلية التربية الأساسية للعلوم التربوية والإنسانية

مجلة علمية تصدر عن كلية التربية الأساسية - جامعة بابل

But how noun phrases relate to their verb represents the basis of argument structure. In this regard, Levin (2018: 1) states that an argument structure describes the number of arguments a lexical item takes, their syntactic expression, and their semantic relation to the lexical item. In order to explore the nature of the relation between the syntactic functions and their semantic roles, researchers on argument structure proposed a set of semantic roles linked or mapped onto certain syntactic positions. There is no agreement on the number of these semantic roles. Some of them are universal. based on radford( 1997: 326) , the most useful semantic roles involved in this study are:

Agent: the animate instigator of an action

(7) Ali broke the window.

Patient (Theme): a participant affected by the action

(8) The student opened the door.

Recipient: a person receiving something

(9) Ali gave his mother a gift.

Experiencer: an entity which experiences an emotion

(10) The dog frightened the boy.

Location: a place where an entity is

(11) She worked in the office .

It is assumed that there is a uniform association between the semantic roles and syntactic functions. For instance, the agent is normally associated with the subject and the patient is prototypically realized as the object. Contrary to this claim, the syntactic functions and the semantic roles sometimes do not correlate. In (12 and 13), the subject is not the doer of the action, but an entity affected by the action.

(12) The man died.

(13) The window broke.

Psychological verbs, in particular, represent a challenge to the linking hypothesis. In (14 a), the experiencer is projected onto the subject, whereas in (14 b), it is assigned as the object.

(14) a. Zeki feared the dog.

b. The dog frightened Zeki.

## مجلة كلية التربية الأساسية للعلوم التربوية والإنسانية

مجلة علمية محكمة تصدر عن كلية التربية الأساسية - جامعة بابل

In Arabic languages, semantic roles are distinguished by case markers which appear on the endings of the words. Unlike English, the linguistic function usually remains consistent even if word order is changed. The nominative case is always mapped onto the subject, the accusative is linked to the object, and the genitive is associated with the object of a preposition (Hassan, 1974). The following six sentences have the same basic meaning with minor differences. All of them have the meaning "Ali wrote the letter".

- (15) (a) كتب عليّ الرسالة  
 (b) عليّ كتب الرسالة  
 (c) كتب الرسالة عليّ  
 (d) الرسالة كتب عليّ  
 (e) الرسالة عليّ كتب  
 (f) عليّ الرسالة كتب

### 3. Argument Alternations

In this paper, verbs are described as argument-taking elements. Sometimes, the arguments of the same verb may be expressed in different ways resulting in the phenomenon of alternations. Argument alternations, according to Rappaport Hovav (2019:1), are observed when the same verb has more than one argument realization option. In (16), the verb (sell) has multiple options and different subcategorization frames. It has a doubleobject variant in (16 a) and a prepositional to-variant in (16 b).

- (16) a. The man sold a boy a car. [NP-V-NP]  
 b. The man sold a car to the boy. [ NP-V-NP-PP]

Argument alternations are typically associated with a change in the number or/and the function of the arguments. The variants in (17 and 18) differ with respect to the number of arguments that make up the alternation.

- (17) a. I floss my teeth every day.  
 b. I floss every day. . (Levin 1993:34)

- (18) a. جدع القاضي أنف السارق

The judge cut off the nose of the thief.

## مجلة كلية التربية الأساسية للعلوم التربوية والإنسانية مجلة علمية محكمة تصدر عن كلية التربية الأساسية - جامعة بابل

b. جَدَعَ القاضي السارق.

The judge cut off the nose of the thief.

In the a-variants, the object of the verb is the body part. In the b-variants, the body part is omitted without affecting the meaning of the sentence. The body part is not mentioned but can be understood. In contrast, the variants in (19 and 20) differ in the function of arguments.

(19) a. Henry cleared the dishes from the table.

b. Henry cleared the table of dishes. . (Levin 1993:52)

(20) a. فرش الجنود السجاد في القاعة.

The soldiers spread the carpet in the hall .

b. فرش الجنود القاعة بالسجاد.

The soldiers covered the hall with the carpet.

In the a-variants, the theme is linked to the object ,whereas the location is mapped onto the object of a prepositional phrase. In the b-variants, the location is associated with the object and the theme is linked to the object of a preposition.

In (21 and 22), the two options of the same verb vary in both the number and function of the arguments.

(21) a. The little boy broke the window.

b. The window broke. (Levin,1993:3)

(22) a. دحرج عليّ الكرة.

Ali rolled the ball.

b. تَدَحْرَجَتِ الكرةُ.

The ball rolled.

There is a reduction in the number of arguments, and the theme which is the object of the a- construction becomes the subject of the b- construction.

Argument alternations take other names like diathesis alternations or valency alternations. These alternations are observed within and across languages thus

## مجلة كلية التربية الأساسية للعلوم التربوية والإنسانية

مجلة علمية محكمة تصدر عن كلية التربية الأساسية - جامعة بابل

strengthening the view that the alternations are systematic in nature. However, the alternations are not examined equally. The causative alternations and dative alternations, in particular, have received particular attention. Haspelmath (2016), for instance, is noted for his typological study of the causative alternation in more than 10 languages. He formulated a number of universal generalizations for the formation of causative alternations across languages. Al-Qadi (2015) made a comparison between English and Arabic causative alternations from a cognitive-linguistic perspective. Al-Rashid (2012) investigated and used the causative alternation to answer the question of whether the lexicon or the syntax determines the argument structure. The emphasis on argument alternations began in the 1960s and was syntactically oriented; then there has been a shift towards a semantic or pragmatic account (for more information, see Levin, 2015).

#### 4. Argument Alternations as a key to Verb Meaning

The point of departure of this study is Levin's (2014:1) claim that argument alternations are meaning-preserving. The verb (dance) in (23 a-g) can appear in a variety of alternations with the same basic meaning of the verb.

- (23) a. He danced.  
 b. He danced the waltz.  
 c. She danced her baby on her knees.  
 d. She danced with Steven.  
 e. He danced to the beat of drums.  
 f. The leaves are dancing in the wind.  
 g. He danced his way into her heart. (Merriam- Webster, n.d )

It is important to note that the range of argument alternations for each verb is not an idiosyncratic feature of the verb. Rather, it is a feature of verbs that share the same semantic components and are grouped under the same verb class. The verb "radiate", for example, participates in the substance-source alternation. This alternation can appear with verbs like gush and drop which are members of the substance- emission class to which the verb "radiate" belongs.

- (24) a. Heat radiates from the sun.  
 b. The sun radiates heat.



مجلة كلية التربية الأساسية للعلوم التربوية والإنسانية  
مجلة علمية محكمة تصدر عن كلية التربية الأساسية - جامعة بابل

- (25) a. Oil gushed from the well.  
b. The well gushed oil.
- (26) a. Water dropped from the leak.  
b. The leak dropped water. (Levin 1993:32-33)
- (27) a. نَزَفَ الدَّمُ مِنَ الْجُرْحِ  
The blood dripped from the wound.  
b. نَزَفَ الْجُرْحُ دَمًا  
The wound dripped blood.
- (28) a. نَضَخَ الْمَاءُ مِنَ الْعَيْنِ  
The water gushed from the spring.  
b. نَضَخَتِ الْعَيْنُ مَاءً  
The spring gushed water. (Mousser, 2013: 87)

In the a- constructions, the substance is mapped onto the subject, and the source is realized as the object of a prepositional phrase. In the b-constructions, the source is assigned to the subject and the substance to the object.

In general, argument alternations reflect variation in information structure and focus rather than in meaning (Hanks,2013). According to Hovav and Levin (2008:161), many argument alternations are paraphrases, and the demands of information structure are behind the two different realization options of the same meaning. Consider the following examples:

- (29) a. The president faced a problem.  
b. The problem faced the president.
- (30) a. I admired his honesty.  
b. I admired the honesty in him. (Levin,1993:74)
- (31) a. مَا نَقَصَ مَالٌ مِنْ صَدَقَةٍ  
Wealth does not decrease because of charity.  
b. مَا نَقَصَتْ صَدَقَةٌ مِنْ مَالٍ

## مجلة كلية التربية الأساسية للعلوم التربوية والإنسانية

مجلة علمية محكمة تصدر عن كلية التربية الأساسية - جامعة بابل

Charity does not decrease wealth.

- (32) a. شَهِدَ الْعَالَمُ نِهَآيَةَ الْحَرْبِ فِي السِّتِينِيَّاتِ  
The world witnessed the end of the war in the 1960s.  
b. شَهِدَتِ السِّتِينِيَّاتُ نِهَآيَةَ الْحَرْبِ  
The 1960s witnessed the end of the war.

Nevertheless, many linguists believe that the syntactic contrast provides evidence for the difference in meaning. In this regard, Krifca (1999:260) stresses that each variant of the dative alternation carries a meaning distinct from the one associated with the other, as shown in (33).

- (33) a. Martha gave Myrna an apple. (double object)----- (caused possession)  
b. Martha gave an apple to Myrna. (to-variant)----- (caused motion)

The double object construction in (33a) has a caused possession interpretation. It indicates that **Martha caused Myrna to have an apple**. In (33b), the caused motion meaning implies that **Martha caused the apple to be with Myrna**.

Arabic languages has a flexible word order which can be exploited to express different meanings of the dative alternation without the need for the alternation.

- (34) a. أعطى عليُّ أحمدَ كتاباً  
Ali gave Ahmed a book.  
b. اعطى عليُّ كتاباً أحمدَ  
Ali gave a book to Ahmed.

In Arabic languages, the animate object usually precedes the inanimate. Thus, the a-variant is the usual way of expressing the double object construction in Arabic. However, the interpretation for the dative alternation remains controversial, and it has been recently challenged by some linguists (See Hovav and Levin, 2008).

In contrast, some alternations like the locative alternation are accompanied by a systematic change of meaning, and speakers of English know that the two realization options carry two distinct meanings. The locative alternation has a unified account and shows a holistic/partitive effect. The holistic effect is associated with the **with**-variant and the partitive with the **locative** variant (Levin, 1993:49-53). In (35), the **with**-variant implies the truck is completely filled with hay, whereas the **locative** variant needs not.

- (35) a. John loaded the truck **with** hay. (with variant) holistic  
b. John loaded hay on the truck. (locative variant) partitive

## مجلة كلية التربية الأساسية للعلوم التربوية والإنسانية

مجلة علمية محكمة تصدر عن كلية التربية الأساسية - جامعة بابل

This interpretation can be generalized to other locative alternations.

- (36) a. The garden is swarming **with** bees. (with variant) holistic  
 b. The bees are swarming in the garden. (locative variant) partitive
- (37) a. The man sprayed the wall **with** paint. (with variant) holistic  
 b. The man sprayed the paint on the wall. (locative variant) partitive

Arabic languages has the same alternation and shows the same holistic / partitive contrast that can be found with different constructions.

- (38) a. صَدَحَتِ الْمَدِينَةُ بِالْأَذَانِ (with variant) holistic  
 The city echoed with adhan.
- b. صَدَحَ الْأَذَانُ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ (locative variant) partitive  
 Adhan echoed in the city.
- (39) a. اِشْتَعَلَ الرَّأْسُ شَيْبًا (tanween variant) holistic  
 The head flared up with grey hair.
- b. اِشْتَعَلَ شَيْبُ الرَّأْسِ (genitive variant) partitive  
 The grey hair flared up on the head.
- (40) a. تَفَجَّرَتِ الْأَرْضُ عَيْونًا (tanween variant) holistic  
 The earth gushed forth into springs.
- b. تَفَجَّرَتْ عَيْونُ الْأَرْضِ (genitive variant) partitive  
 The springs of the earth gushed forth.

When there is a reduction in the number of arguments, it is difficult to neglect the difference in meaning between the variants of the alternation. In (41 and 42), the a-variant subsumes the b-variant and the difference in meaning determines the choice of one variant over the other.

- (41) a. His policy widened the gap.  
 b. The gap widened.

## مجلة كلية التربية الأساسية للعلوم التربوية والإنسانية

مجلة علمية محكمة تصدر عن كلية التربية الأساسية - جامعة بابل

(42) a. دَقَّ الطالبُ الجرسَ

The student rang the bell.

b. دَقَّ الجرسُ

The bell rang.

Interestingly, The syntactic distinction between the constructions of the same alternation can be accompanied by a pragmatic distinction.

(43) a. أنا مُكْرِمُ أخيكَ

I honored your brother. confirmation

b. أنا مُكْرِمٌ أخاكَ

I will honor your brother. promise

(44) a. أنا قاتِلُ أخيكَ

I killed your brother confirmation

b. أنا قاتِلٌ أخاكَ

I will kill your brother. Threat (Al-Samirra'i,2000:170)

In the a-variants, the subject is followed by a noun in the genitive case. This construction can be used to confirm something that happened in the past. In the b-variants, the subject is nunated and followed by a noun in the objective case. This construction refers to something that happens in the future. So, it can be accompanied by a promise or threat depending on context.

### 5. Event Type and Argument Alternations

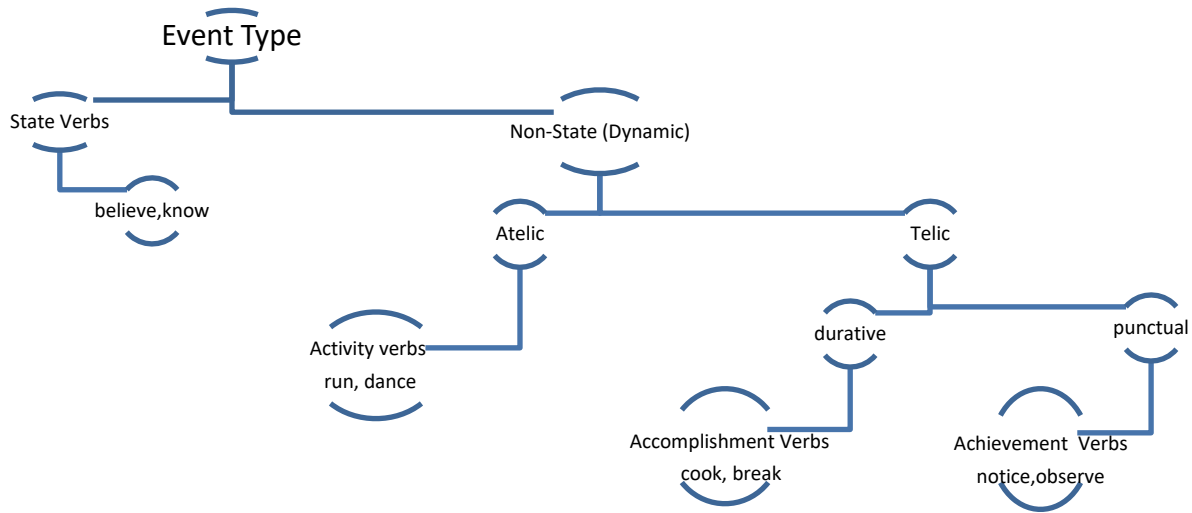
Verbs refer to actions that occur in time. So, verbs can be distinguished in terms of the time in which they occur. Accordingly, many aspectual notions have been used to classify verbs with respect to time. Importantly enough, this aspectual classification of verbs contributes much to understanding the nature of argument alternations. English imposes restrictions on which verbs can enter this kind of alternation, and for most part, these restrictions are associated with the aspectual class of verbs. The most popular classification is proposed in Vendler's seminal work (1967), which served as inspiration for many linguists to tackle many syntactic issues including argument alternations. In Vendler's classification, verbs are put under four many classes:

## مجلة كلية التربية الأساسية للعلوم التربوية والإنسانية

مجلة علمية محكمة تصدر عن كلية التربية الأساسية - جامعة بابل

- (1) State verbs
- (2) Activity verbs
- (3) Accomplishment verbs
- (4) Achievement verbs

According to Kearns (1991:116), state verbs like (know, believe) involve no change of state and they are not bounded. The remaining three classes are non-state verbs. The characteristic feature of these classes, as Comrie (1976:48) points out, is the requirement of energy input to perform the event. The feature that differentiates between activity verbs and accomplishment verbs is telicity. Activity verbs like (run, play) are atelic. They take time to perform the action and involve no temporal end point. In contrast, accomplishment verbs such as (break, open) are telic/change of state verbs. They also take time but, unlike activity verbs, have an inherent temporal end point. The temporal end point is the time at which the result of the action comes about. Achievement verbs (arrive, notice) take no time. They are punctual. Figure (2) summarizes these classes.



**Figure(2) Aspectual Classification of Verbs (Based on Vendler,1967)**

Diagnostic tests, most of which are syntactic, have been used to distinguish these classes. The classical test that is used to make a distinction between these classes is “in an

## مجلة كلية التربية الأساسية للعلوم التربوية والإنسانية

مجلة علمية محكمة تصدر عن كلية التربية الأساسية - جامعة بابل

*hour/ for an hour* "test. Atelic verbs accept "for an hour", whereas telic verbs accept "in an hour".

- (45) a. The boy danced for an hour. Activity / Atelic  
 b. The boy danced in an hour.\*
- (46) a. He broke the window in an hour. Accomplishment / Telic  
 b. He broke the window for an hour.\*
- (47) a. The ambassador arrived in an hour. Achievement / Telic  
 b. The ambassador arrived for an hour.\*

(for more tests, see Dowty,1979)

Verbs sometimes undergo an event type shift. In this regard, Van Hout (1996) points out that many argument alternations are instantiations of an atelic-telic event type-shift. For instance, the verb "surround" in (48) shows a shift between a stative and non-stative reading depending on agentivity. When the subject is non-agentive (inanimate), a stative reading arises, but a non-stative reading appears when the subject is agentive.

- (48) a. The trees surround the building. (Non-Agentive/Stative)  
 b. The police surrounded the building (Agentive/ Non-Stative)

The aspectual distinction between verbs is an important factor for the participation of some verbs in alternations. According to Levin and Hovav (1992 :249), the distinction between accomplishment (change of state) verbs and activity verbs determines the participation of verbs in the causative alternation. Only change of state verbs can participate in such alternation. In addition, Fillmore (1970) exploited argument alternations to draw a distinction between "Hitting" and "Breaking" verbs. The verbs are similar in many aspects. They are transitive verbs with the same thematic roles, agent, theme and optional instrument. Nevertheless, the verbs differ in an important feature. Breaking verbs are accomplishment/ telic verbs, whereas hitting verbs are activity/ atelic verbs. This distinctive feature of telicity explains why "breaking" verbs can participate in the causative alternation, whereas the "hitting" verbs cannot.

- (49) a. The boy broke the window.  
 b. The window broke.

- (50) a. The boy hit the window. (Fillmore,1970:126)  
 b. The window hit.\*

In contrast, only unergative/ activity verbs in the presence of a directional phrase allow the X- way construction ( Levin, 1993:99 ).

- (51) a. He pushed his way through the crowd.

## مجلة كلية التربية الأساسية للعلوم التربوية والإنسانية

مجلة علمية محكمة تصدر عن كلية التربية الأساسية - جامعة بابل

b. He pushed through the crowd.

The a-variant entails the subject crossed the path. In the b-variant, the subject did not necessarily traverse the path.

The areas of correlation between argument alternations and event type can be manifested by “there insertion”. This alternation is usually found with intransitive verbs which can be described as verbs of appearance and existence (achievement), and the post verbal noun phrase must be indefinite (Levin, 1993: 91).

- (52) a. A ship appeared on the horizon.  
b. There appeared a ship on the horizon.
- (53) a. The ship appeared on the horizon.  
b. There appeared the ship on the horizon.\*

In Arabic languages, the aspectual classification of verbs has received little attention. Rashid (2012:130) claims that there is no study that investigates the relationship between argument structure and situational/temporal aspect in Arabic languages. Arab grammarians normally classify verbs in terms of transitivity into intransitive/transitive, and verbal patterns carry information about the syntactic behavior of the verb. In general, the Arabic verbal pattern is not associated with a specific syntactic or semantic property. Yet, there are exceptions. There exist a few particular patterns with a specific syntactic behavior. For instance, verbs that have the pattern *فَعُلَ* /Faʕula/ and most of the verbs that have the pattern *فَعِلَ* /faʕila/ are intransitive. Thus, they do not participate in transitivity alternations.

(54) جَبُنَ الرَّجُلُ  
The man became a coward.

(55) سَقَمَ الْوَلَدُ  
The boy fell ill.

These patterns carry specific meanings. The former indicates a natural or permanent quality. The latter refers to an accidental or temporary quality (Wright, 1967:30).

(56) a. فَفَّهَ الرَّجُلُ  
The man became a scholar in religion.  
b. فَفَّهَ الرَّجُلُ  
The man understood.

(56a) implies or entails that the man has learned religion, whereas (56b) merely states that the man has understood the matter.

## مجلة كلية التربية الأساسية للعلوم التربوية والإنسانية

مجلة علمية محكمة تصدر عن كلية التربية الأساسية - جامعة بابل

In many cases, the verbal pattern does not determine a specific argument structure. For instance, the pattern فَعَلَ faʿʿala reflects a variety of argument structures (Tucker, 2011:197).

- (57) a. بَسَّطَ الموضوعَ He simplified the topic <Agent + Theme>  
 b. صَوَّتَ عليّ Ali voted. <Agent>  
 c. غَيَّمَتِ السماءُ It became cloudy. <Theme>  
 d. مَلَّكَ الدارَ He made him own the house <Causer, Agent, Theme>

Conversely, different verbal patterns can show the same meaning. For instance, the change of state meaning can be shown in seven patterns (Danks, 2011 : 20).

- (58) a. انكَسَرَ الزجاجُ The glass broke. infaʿʿala  
 b. نَفَرَ قَ الطلابُ The students dispersed. tafaʿʿala  
 c. انتَصَرَ الحقُّ the right triumphed. infaʿʿala  
 d. اخضرت الاوراقُ The leaves turned green. ifʿʿalla  
 e. تَدَحَّرَجَتِ الكرةُ The ball rolled. tafaʿʿlala  
 f. احلَّوكت السماءُ The sky became dark.  
 g. استضاءَ He was enlightened istafʿʿal.

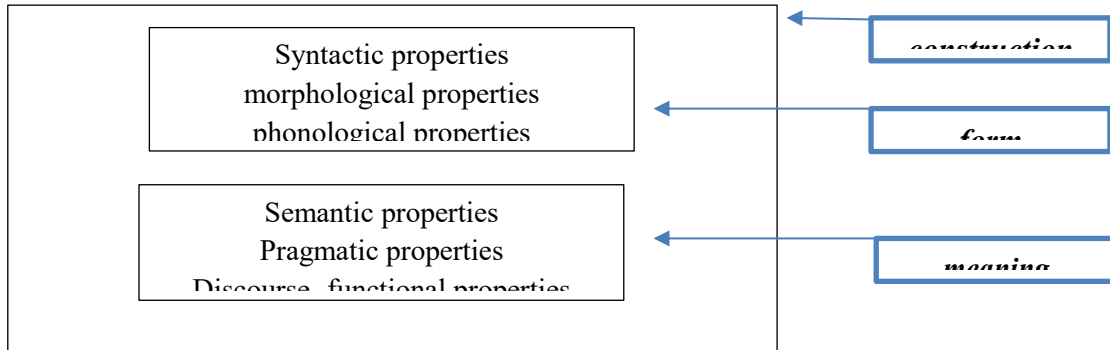
It seems that the Arabic verbal pattern has a limited role in determining the argument structure. Consequently, it imposes limited restrictions on the participation of verbs in argument alternations in Arabic. In contrast, English imposes more constraints on the verbs which are allowed to enter the alternation. The consequences of such divergence can be shown in translation between the two languages.

### 6. The Notion of “Construction” in Translation

Equivalence is one of the central issues in translation. The approaches to equivalence have been marked by a change of focus. At the beginning, translation studies focused on formal equivalence (e.g. Calford,1965). Then, there has been a shift towards functional equivalence (e.g. Nida and Taber,1982). This paper adopts **constructional equivalence** (Szmanska 2011and Rojo and Valenzuela, 2013) believing that it provides a junction area for formal and functional equivalence. More importantly, many linguists believe that the differences in meaning between the variants that form the alternation are due to the existence of distinct "constructions". Much research has been done on constructions and the role they play in language use (for a brief overview, see Barcelona and Valenzuela 2005 and Rojo and Valenzuela, 2013 ). The main assumption of constructional grammar is that the basic units of language are “constructions” which can be defined as “form – meaning pairing”. According to Goldberg (...), constructions are "form-meaning correspondences that are not strictly



مجلة كلية التربية الأساسية للعلوم التربوية والإنسانية  
 مجلة علمية محكمة تصدر عن كلية التربية الأساسية - جامعة بابل



predictable from knowledge of the rest of grammar" (1995 :3). In Constructional grammar, there is no distinction between form and meaning, as shown in Figure (3).

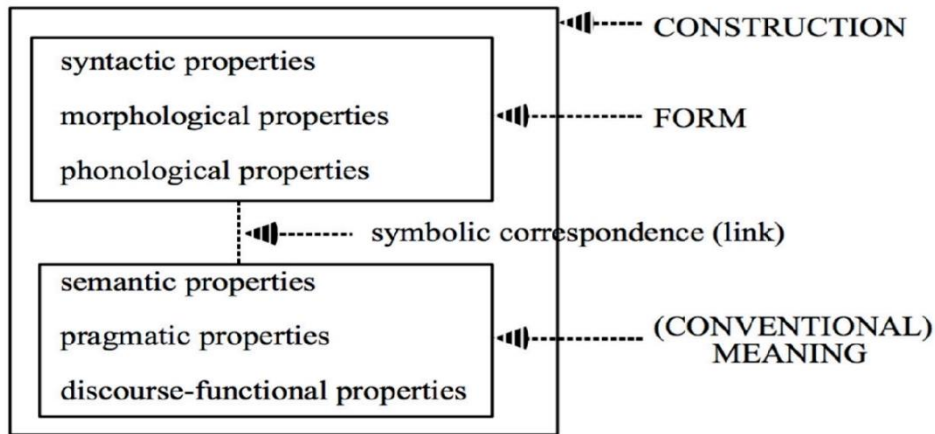


Figure (3): The Symbolic Structure of a Construction (Croft, 2001:18)

The form-meaning pairing is illustrated in the dative alternation. When the meaning "X causes Y to receive Z" is paired with the form "Subj V Obj Obj2", a caused possession construction appears, and when the meaning "X causes Y to move Z" is paired with the form "Subj V Obj Obj1", a caused motion construction appears (Goldberg, 1995:3). Constructions are treated as idioms. The meaning of the construction is obtained from the pairings of form and meaning rather than the meaning of individual words. Although the lexical words in (59 a) and (59 b) are the same, each sentence represents a different construction.

- (59) a. Ali and Ahmed met . SV —————> (Reciprocal)  
 b. Ali met Ahmed . SVO —————> (Non -Reciprocal)

## مجلة كلية التربية الأساسية للعلوم التربوية والإنسانية

مجلة علمية محكمة تصدر عن كلية التربية الأساسية - جامعة بابل

The intransitive is associated with the reciprocal meaning. The co-subjects of the reciprocal construction should have a comparable status to trigger such construction. Thus, (60 a) is acceptable, whereas (60b) is not.

(60) a. Ali met a problem.

b. Ali and a problem met.\*

The reciprocal construction is found in both English and Arabic and the two languages are similar as to the way they encode this construction. In the two languages, the reciprocal construction is triggered by the intransitive form. The translator has to be aware of such constructional differences between the variants and try to find a construction that matches the original one. Thus, (61a) and (61b) are considered constructional equivalents to (60a) and (60b) respectively.

(61) a. التقى عليّ واحمدُ VS (reciprocal)

b. لقي عليّ احمدَ VSO (Non-reciprocal)

The term “construction” overlaps with the term “structure”. But in constructional grammar, the two are distinct though related. To clarify this point, let us consider the following examples.

(62) The girl ate the meat. SVO (transitive)

(63) The girl swept the floor. SVO (transitive)

(62) and (63) share the same structure and construction, but the addition of an adjective to each can lead to a different construction.

(64) The girl ate the meat raw. SVOC (Depictive)

(65) The girl swept the floor clean. SVOC (Resultative)

The type of the adjective yields different constructions. (64) includes two events occurring at the same time. The girl ate the meat and the meat was raw at the moment of eating. (65) implies two events, but one occurs as a result of the other. The floor became clean as a result of sweeping.

In translation, the function of the construction should be considered ( Rojo and Valenzuela, 2013). For instance, in English language, the passive construction is used to highlight the object rather than the doer of the action.

(66) The window was broken by Sam. (passive)

## مجلة كلية التربية الأساسية للعلوم التربوية والإنسانية مجلة علمية محكمة تصدر عن كلية التربية الأساسية - جامعة بابل

In Arabic, the passive construction exists. But Arabic does not allow the passive when the doer of the action is known. Other means should be used by the translator to achieve the function of the English passive. Arabic has a flexible word order which can be utilized to obtain the same function without resorting to the passive.

(67) الشباك كسره سام ( lit. The window broke it Sam.)

Sam broke the window.

### 7. Alternations as a Heuristic to Construction-Based Translation

Constructions can be observed within and across languages. So, they provide a fruitful area for investigation in translation studies. In this regard, Rojo and Valenzuela (2013) argue that it is the divergence between constructions, not between single units, that makes languages differ. Translators consider these differences crucial to obtain accuracy at semantic level. Interestingly, argument alternations provide a means for showing the subtle differences between constructions. Alternatively, constructions are behind the difference in meaning between the variants of the same alternation. Some constructions are considered good candidates for translation studies. In this paper, the causative and conative constructions are chosen to show the interplay of syntax and semantics and the areas of dis/similarities between English and Arabic. The main goal is to see the consequences of this convergence or divergence in translation. In the following two sections, each construction is studied within the framework of argument alternations and in connection to translation.

#### 7.1 Causative Alternation

The causative alternation, as shown in (68), is a transitivity alternation. The intransitive (inchoative) construction describes a change of state that occurs to the theme (the window in 68b and 69b). In contrast, the causative construction describes the cause behind the change of state. The object of the causative is the subject of the inchoative (Levin, 1993: 27). The causative construction pairs the meaning {(X DO-SOMETHING )CAUSE ( Y BECOME)} with the form (Subj V Obj).

- |                                   |              |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| (68) a. The boy broke the window. | (Causative)  |
| b. The window broke.              | (Inchoative) |
| (69) a. كسَرَ الولدُ الشباكَ      | (Causative)  |
| b. انكسَرَ الشباكُ                | (Inchoative) |

This alternation exists in English and Arabic. But English, unlike Arabic, imposes more restrictions on the verbs that can participate in this alternation. In English, the causative alternation is restricted to telic/change of state verbs (Fillmore, 1970:125). State

## مجلة كلية التربية الأساسية للعلوم التربوية والإنسانية

مجلة علمية محكمة تصدر عن كلية التربية الأساسية - جامعة بابل

or activity verbs do not participate in this alternation. In addition, within the change of state verbs, there are subsets of verbs that are not allowed to enter this alternation. Many psychological verbs and verbs of appearance do not undergo the causative alternation. In this regard, Van Gelderen (2013: 89) made a list of the verbs that do not enter the alternation like appear, arrive, come and exit. Thus, there are intransitive verbs which have no causative counterparts, or causative verbs that have no intransitive counterparts, as shown in (70 and 71).

- (70) a. The crowd laughed.  
b. The comedian laughed the crowd.\*
- (71) a. The army destroyed the city.  
b. The city destroyed.\*

Arabic is a morphological language. So, many syntactic operations are carried out through morphological devices. The causative construction in Arabic is produced through affixation by the addition of (أ) /ʔ/ or germination (duplication of consonants), as shown in (72b&72c) respectively, but each device has a distinct meaning. The particle (أ) /ʔ/ is a highly productive causative affix.

- (72) a. ضَحَكَ الْجُمْهُورُ.  
b. أَضْحَكَ الْمَهْرُجُ الْجُمْهُورَ.  
c. ضَحَّكَ الْمَهْرُجُ الْإِطْفَالَ.
- (73) a. دَمَّرَ الْجَيْشُ الْمَدِينَةَ.  
b. تَدَمَّرَتِ الْمَدِينَةُ.

This divergence between English and Arabic poses a problem in translation. It is difficult to find an English constructional equivalence to many Arabic causative constructions.

- (74). اضْحَكَ الْمَهْرُجُ الْإِطْفَالَ.  
The clown laughed the children.\*
- (75). اظْهَرَ السَّاحِرُ الطُّيُورَ مِنْ قِبَعَتِهِ.  
The magician appeared the birds out of his hat.\*

## مجلة كلية التربية الأساسية للعلوم التربوية والإنسانية

مجلة علمية محكمة تصدر عن كلية التربية الأساسية - جامعة بابل

English is an analytic language. It shows the relationship between words through helping words rather than inflections. Thus, the best way to solve this problem is to resort to the analytic causative. The causative construction has the frame [ X CAUSE [ Y BECOME{STATE}. It consists of two events (cause and result). The analytical approach uses two lexical words to express the events. A periphrastic verb is used to express the cause and a non-finite verb or an adjective is used to refer to the result or the effect of the cause. English has several periphrastic verbs such as make, cause, have, let and get. The choice of the verb depends on many contextual factors. Thus, Arabic and English use two different strategies to achieve the causative construction. The choice of using this strategy rather than the other is based on the type of the language. Arabic tends to use the morphological causative, whereas English uses the periphrastic causative.

(76) اضحك المهرجُ الاطفالَ .

The clown made the children laugh.

(77) أنبخ الشرطيُّ الكلبَ على اللصِ .

The policeman made the dog bark at the thief.

(78) أعب المعلمُ الاولادَ في الحديقةِ .

The teacher let the children play in the garden.

The analytic strategy has two shortcomings. First, the analytic causative permits a wide range of interpretations. Accordingly, in translation, it is difficult to determine the appropriate periphrastic verb. (79 a,b,c,d,e) can be equivalents to (79).

(79) أنزل الشرطيُّ الرجلَ من الباصِ .

- The policeman made the man get off the bus.
- The policeman caused the man to get off the bus.
- The policeman let the man get off the bus.
- The policeman forced the man to get off the bus.
- The policeman convinced the man to get off the bus.

Second, the analytic causative is not a total equivalent to the morphological causative. They differ with respect to the degree of subject's involvement in the act and the closeness between the cause and the result, as shown in (80).

(80) اقتلعتُ الاشجارَ .

## مجلة كلية التربية الأساسية للعلوم التربوية والإنسانية

مجلة علمية محكمة تصدر عن كلية التربية الأساسية - جامعة بابل

- a. I uprooted the trees.  
b. I made the trees uproot.

The lexical causative in (80a) implies the speaker is completely involved in the act. In contrast, (80b) means the act was done perhaps by a supernatural power. Thus, only (80a) is an appropriate equivalent to the Arabic sentence.

### 7.2 Conative Alternation

This alternation is naturally exploited to talk about the conative construction. The conative alternation is a transitivity alternation. The object of the transitive variant becomes, in the intransitive variant, the object of a prepositional phrase headed by the preposition *at* (Levin, 1993:41).

- (81) a. Margaret cut the bread.  
b. Margaret cut at the bread. (conative)  
(82) a. Cynthia ate the peach.  
b. Cynthia ate at the peach. (conative)

The alternation is restricted to verbs of motion and contact (Guerssella, et.al., 1985). The transitive variant indicates that the action has been carried out. In contrast, the conative construction (the intransitive) modifies the meaning toward expressing "an attempted action without specifying whether the action was actually carried out" (Levin, 1993 : 42). The construction associates the meaning "X DIRECTS ACTION AT Y" with the form "V SUBJ OBLAT". Many verbs can occur with a prepositional phrase headed by (*at*). Yet, they do not form the conative construction for the intransitive does not have a transitive counterpart, and the verbs do not have the features of motion and contact.

- (83) a. The man looked at the girl next to him.  
b. The man looked the girl next to him.\*

The conative construction is not found in Arabic (Mousser, 2013:5). So, it is difficult for the translator to find an equivalence that matches the original in all formal and functional aspects. The reconstruction of the same meaning in Arabic languages requires the use of different strategies. The conative construction implies that the action is directed towards the intended goal, but there is no entailment whether the action is completed or not. Thus, a periphrastic verb expressing the meaning of attempt and intentionality should be added in the translation to convey indeterminacy about the completion of the act.

- (84) Ali kicked at the ball.  
جَرَّبَ عليُّ ضربَ الكرة  
(85) The boy cut at the meat.

## مجلة كلية التربية الأساسية للعلوم التربوية والإنسانية مجلة علمية محكمة تصدر عن كلية التربية الأساسية - جامعة بابل

حاول الولد ان يقطع اللحم

(86) The man pushed at the car.

أراد الرجل ان يدفع السيارة

In a few cases, the attempted action expressed by the English conative construction can be realized in Arabic by the main verb. Thus, a non-equivalent verb with the same function can be utilized by the translator. In(87a), the verb( أصاب ) implies motion and contact, whereas in (87b), the intransitive prepositional structure demonstrated by the verb (سدّد) can be regarded as a conative constructional equivalence as the verb(سدّد) conveys no entailment about the accomplishment of the act.

(87) a. He shot the target.

أصاب الهدف

b. He shot at the target.

سدّد نحو الهدف

### 8. Conclusion

The study investigates argument alternations and the extent to which the correlation between the alternations and event type may determine the participation of verbs in the alternations in order to find out the consequences of correlation divergence between English and Arabic languages in translation. The investigation reveals that language type can serve as a key for making predictions about verb's syntactic behavior. English as an analytic language favours the labile alternations; the same morphological form of the verb is used in the variants of the same alternation. In contrast, Arabic languages often tends to use morphological devices to form the alternations. Thus, the alternations in English are purely syntactic, whereas in Arabic they are morphosyntactic.

The study of argument alternations provides evidence for the importance of construction (form-meaning pairing) in accounting for the subtle differences in meaning between the variants that make up the same alternation. However, the study shows that some constructions are language-specific. The conative construction, which pairs the form "V motion and contact SUBJ OBL AT" with the meaning of "expressing the action without specifying the completion of the action", is not found in Arabic.

Despite the occurrence of certain alternations in the two languages ,the analysis of the causative alternation shows that the two languages differ with respect to the set of verbs that are allowed to enter the alternation, leading to constructional mismatch. The restrictions are correlated with telicity more than morphological constraints ,indicating that English language imposes more restrictions on the participation of verbs in the alternations .

مجلة كلية التربية الأساسية للعلوم التربوية والإنسانية  
مجلة علمية محكمة تصدر عن كلية التربية الأساسية - جامعة بابل

Translation has been investigated within the frame of constructional grammar. When the constructions exist in the two languages, literal translation seems sufficient. The constructional mismatch due to the absence of certain constructions obliges the translator to use different strategies. For instance, when English lacks an equivalent to the Arabic morphological causative, the translation resorts to the analytic periphrastic form to achieve the meaning of causation.

**References:**

- AL-Qadi, M. (2015). *Intransitivity and Causitive Alternation Phenomenon in Arabic*. Master thesis published by Arizona State University.
- Al-Rashid, M. (2012). *Argument Structure in Arabic :Syntax or Lexicon.?* Doctoral thesis published by Arizona State University.
- Al-Samirra'l, F.(2000). *Meanings of Grammar*. Jordan, Amman: Dar Al-Fikr.
- Barcelona, A , and Valenzuela ,J ( 2005). An overview of cognitive linguistics. In Brady, Imelda Katherine, Marta Navarro Coy and José Carlos Perrián Pascual (eds.) *Nuevas Tendencias en Lingüística Aplicada*, 197-230. Murcia: Quaderna Editorial.
- Catford, J. C. (1965). *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chomsky, N. (1981). *Lectures on Government and Binding: The Pisa Lectures*. Dordrecht: Foris.
- Comrie, B. (1976). *Aspect*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Croft, W. (2001). *Radical Construction Grammar: Syntactic Theory in Typological Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Danks, W. (2011). *The Arabic Verb. Form and Meaning in the Vowel Lengthening Patterns*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.
- Dowty, D. (1979). *Word Meaning and Montague Grammar*. Dordrecht: Reidel
- Fillmore, C. (1970). The Grammar of Hitting and Breaking. In R. A. Jacobs, & P. A. Rosenbaum (eds.), *Readings in English Transformational Grammar* (pp. 120-133). Waltham, MA: Ginn.
- Gelderen, E. (2013). *Clause structure*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



مجلة كلية التربية الأساسية للعلوم التربوية والإنسانية  
مجلة علمية محكمة تصدر عن كلية التربية الأساسية - جامعة بابل

- Goldberg, A. (1995). *Constructions. A Construction Grammar Approach to Argument Structure Constructions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Guerssel, M. et al (1985). Cross-Linguistic Study of Transitivity Alternations. In W.H. Elifort, P. D. Krober, and K.L. Peterson (eds.). Chicago. *Chicago Linguistic Society*.
- Hanks, P. (2013). *Lexical Analysis: Norms and Exploitations*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. (xv + 462 pp.)
- Haspelmath, M. (2016). "Universals Of Causative and Anticausative Verb Formation and the Spontaneity scale". In: *Lingua Posnaniensis* 58(2). 33-63. doi:10.1515/linpo-2016-0009.
- Hassan, A.(1974). *Adequate Grammar*. Egypt. Cairo: Dar Al-Maarif.
- Kearns, K. (1991). *The Semantics of the English Progressive*, Doctoral dissertation, MIT, Cambridge, MA.
- Kipper-Schuler, K. (2005). *VerbNet: A broad-coverage, comprehensive verb lexicon*. PhD. Thesis. Computer and Information Science Dept., University of Pennsylvania. Philadelphia.
- Krifka, M. (1999). Manner in dative alternation. Paper presented at *West Coast Conference in Formal Linguistics* 18, Tucson.
- Langacker, R. (1987). "Foundations of Cognitive Grammar". In: *Theoretical Prerequisites*, Vol. 1, Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Levin, B. (1993). *English Verb Classes and Alternations: A Preliminary Investigation*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Levin, B. (2009). *Where Do Verb Classes Come From?* Stanford University (beth.levin@stanford.edu)
- Levin, B. (2015). "Semantics and Pragmatics of Argument Alternations", *Annual Review of Linguistics*, Vol. 1, pp.: 63-83 . ([URL](#))
- Levin, B. (2018). "Argument Structure". In: M. Aronoff, ed., *Oxford Bibliographies in Linguistics*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Levin, B. and M. Rappaport Hovav. (1992). "The Lexical Semantics of Verbs of Motion: The Perspective from Unaccusativity". In: I.M. Roca, ed., *Thematic Structure: Its Role in Grammar*, Foris, Berlin, 247-269.

مجلة كلية التربية الأساسية للعلوم التربوية والإنسانية  
مجلة علمية محكمة تصدر عن كلية التربية الأساسية - جامعة بابل

- Marantz, A. (1984). *On the Nature of Grammatical Relations*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Marantz, A. (1997). "No Escape from Syntax: Don't Try Morphological Analysis in the Privacy of Your Own Lexicon." University of Pennsylvania Working Papers in Linguistics: Vol. 4 : Iss. 2 , Article 14. Available at: <https://repository.upenn.edu/pwpl/vol4/iss2/14>
- Merriam-Webster.(n.d.). Dance .In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. Retrieved January 4,2023, retrieved from: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dance>.
- Mousser, J. ( 2013). *A Large Coverage Verb Lexicon For Arabic Dissertation Submitted for the degree of Doctor of philosophy Presented by Konstanzer Online-Publikations-System* (KOPS URL: <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bsz:352-0-30000>).
- Nida, E. A. and Taber, C. (1982). *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, E.J. Brill, Leiden
- Radford, A.(1997). *Syntax: A minimalist introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rappaport Havov, M. (2019). *Morphology and Argument Alternations*. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199384655.013.607>. Published Online: 25 June 2019
- Rappaport Hovav, M. and Levin, B. (2008). The English Dative Alternation: The Case for Verb Sensitivity. In: *Journal of Linguistics* 44, 129-167.
- Rojo, A. and Valenzuela, J. (2013). "Constructing meaning in translation: The role of constructions in translation problems". In Rojo, A. and Ibarretxe-Antuñano, Iraide (eds.) *Cognitive Linguistics and Translation: Advances in Some Theoretical Models*. Berlin/ Boston. Mouton de Gruyter, 283-310.
- Snider,N. and Diab, M. (2006). Unsupervised Induction of Modern Standard Arabic Verb Classes. In: *Proceedings of the Human Language Technology Conference of the NAACL*, Companion Volume: Short Papers, pages 153-156, New York City, USA. Association for Computational Linguistics.
- Szymańska, I.. (2011). *Mosaics: A Construction-Grammar-Based Approach to Translation*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe "Semper". T
- Trask, R. L. (1993). *A Dictionary of Grammatical Terms in Linguistics*. London: Routledge

مجلة كلية التربية الأساسية للعلوم التربوية والإنسانية  
مجلة علمية محكمة تصدر عن كلية التربية الأساسية - جامعة بابل

- Tucker, M. (2011). The Morphosyntax of the Arabic Verb: Toward a Unified Syntax-Prosody. *Linguistics Research Center*.
- Van Hout, A. (1996). *Event Semantics and Verb Frame Alternations: A Case Study of Dutch and its Acquisition*. Tilburg University PhD dissertation.
- Vendler, Z. (1967). *Linguistics in Philosophy*. Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.
- Wright, W.(1967). *A Grammar of the Arabic Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University press.