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## Tense-aspect constructions in Jish Arabic: Morphological, syntactic, and semantic features

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### Abstract

This paper aims to examine the present and past tense-aspect constructions in Jish Arabic, an undocumented Arabic variety of Upper Galilee (Israel), and delineate their morphological, syntactic, and semantic features. Nine such constructions are identified, and the structure of each construction is discussed. In addition, using the Natural Semantic Metalanguage approach (NSM), an explication (a definition using simple words) of the meaning of each construction is presented. In discussing the Jish Arabic constructions, a comparison is made with their English counterparts, which are chosen as a familiar point of reference. The comparison with English does not make the explications prone to Anglocentrism, as the explications are built via a simple, universal language. This language ensures their translatability into Jish Arabic and their verification by native Jish Arabic speakers. In addition, it makes their meanings accessible to non-specialists, as the explications can be translated into any language. This study can be seen as a contribution to the field of theoretical linguistics, particularly descriptive linguistics, as it documents the tense-aspect constructions of an undocumented variety. In addition, it can be seen as a contribution to the field of applied linguistics, especially as it compares these constructions to their English counterparts. It is hoped that this paper will stimulate the investigation of tense-aspect constructions in other non-standard Arabic varieties, most of which are undocumented.

**Keywords:** *tense, aspect, tense-aspect constructions, Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM), Jish Arabic, English*

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## Видо-временные конструкции в арабском языке района Джиш: морфологические, синтаксические и семантические особенности

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### Аннотация

Цель статьи – рассмотреть различные видо-временные конструкции в незадокументированном арабском языке района Джиш (Верхняя Галилея, Израиль) и очертить их морфологические, синтаксические и семантические особенности. В работе обсуждается структура девяти конструкций и объясняется их значение. Дается экспликация значения каждой конструкции (определение значения простыми словами), которая формулируется с применением Естественного Семантического Метаязыка (ЕСМ). При обсуждении исследуемых арабских конструкций проводится их сравнение с английскими аналогами, которые выбраны в качестве точки отсчета. Сравнение с английским языком не делает экспликации англоцентристскими, так как ЕСМ обеспечивает их переводимость на арабский язык, используемый жителями Джиша, и их верификацию носителями этого языка. Более того, он делает их доступными неспециалистам, так как данные экспликации могут быть переведены на любой язык. Исследование вносит вклад в теоретическую лингвистику, в частности описательную, так как фиксирует видо-временные конструкции незадокументированного языка, а также в прикладную лингвистику, поскольку в нем даны результаты сопоставительного анализа конструкций исследуемого языка с английским. Данная статья может стимулировать изучение видо-временных конструкций в других нестандартных вариантах арабского языка, большинство из которых незадокументированы.

**Ключевые слова:** *время, вид, видо-временные конструкции, ЕСМ, арабский язык района Джиш, английский язык*

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### 1. Introduction

Describing the tense-aspect constructions of an undescribed language variety can have three major benefits. First, it contributes to the documentation of the variety, a process which is of great importance, especially when it comes to endangered varieties. Such a documentation can reveal the richness of, not only the target variety, but also the culture of the people speaking it. Second, it allows the linguist to conduct contrastive linguistic studies in which the tense-aspect constructions of the target variety are compared to their counterparts in other varieties and/or languages; here, the comparison can be on the morphological, syntactic, and/or semantic levels. Third, it benefits people who wish to learn the variety.

The tense-aspect constructions in Modern Standard (MS) Arabic have been extensively described throughout the history of this language (Alsaif 2017, Alasmari, Watson & Atwell 2018, Fayyad 1997, Al-Saleemi 1987, Gadallah 2017, 2006, Mohammad 1982, Bahloul 2007, Ryding 2005). They have also been described in a few non-standard Arabic varieties (Eisele 1999, Brustad 2000, Bruweleit 2015, Moshref 2012). Yet, they have not been studied in the overwhelming majority of non-standard Arabic varieties. One of these varieties is Jish Arabic, described in Section 2 below. The aim of this paper is thus to describe the different tense-aspect constructions in this variety and discuss their meanings. This being so, this study is a “micro-linguistic” level study with implications for the fields of pure linguistics (more specifically, language documentation) and applied linguistics (particularly, FL teaching), points that will be elaborated on in the discussion.

Examining the micro-, rather than the macro-, linguistic level can yield more precise results. I employ the term *micro-linguistic level* to refer to one speech form spoken by a certain community residing in one relatively small town, and I use the term *macro-linguistic level* to refer to (very) similar speech forms of communities residing in the same region (which can be part of a country, a whole country, or even a number of countries, as is the case with the Arab world). Targeting the macro-linguistic level means viewing similar speech forms of different communities as if they were one speech form. While such speech forms can be very similar to each other (especially those which are geographically adjacent to each other), they are not identical; they can differ phonologically, semantically, morphologically, and/or syntactically.

The structure of this paper is as follows. Section 2 provides a theoretical background, and it is divided into two subsections: Subsection 2.1 defines the concepts of *tense* and *aspect*, and Subsection 2.2 introduces the reader to Jish Arabic. Section 3 discusses the method of explicating<sup>1</sup> the meanings of the Jish Arabic tense-aspect constructions in a simple, universal language. Section 4 presents the different Jish Arabic tense-aspect constructions and the explications of their meanings. Section 5 is the discussion, and Section 6 is the conclusion.

## **2. Theoretical foundations**

### **2.1. Background and goals**

Before analyzing the Jish Arabic tense-aspect constructions, it is important to clarify what is meant by the terms *tense* and *aspect*. From a pedagogical perspective, the meanings of these two terms seem to be regarded as straightforward and easily explained, and one would not fail to notice this if they peruse, e.g., different English grammar textbooks (see, e.g., Dray et al. 1993, Green 1995, Murphy 2019). From a linguistic perspective, on the other hand, the meanings of

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<sup>1</sup> In the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) approach, the word *explicate* means ‘to define using semantic primes (and molecules).’ See the methodology section.

these two terms are not straightforward. Linguists can disagree on the number of tenses and aspects in, for instance, English because they do not appear to agree on what to include under these two terms (cf. Kroeger 2005: 159). Delving into a detailed treatment of this topic is outside the scope of this article, but a brief discussion of it is still necessary.

The term *tense* should not be equated with *time*. Native speakers of any language can talk about the present moment, what preceded it, and what can come after it, as all languages have exact semantic equivalents of the English words *now*, *before*, and *after* (Goddard 2008, Goddard & Wierzbicka 1994, 2002, Peeters 2006). However, not every language expresses time reference through its verbal system, to which the term *tense* is typically restricted.

*Tense* can be defined as the expression of the location of an event or state in time via the language's verbal system (Comrie 1985: 9, Dixon 2012: 5, Givón 2001: 285). While linguists agree on this definition, they do not agree on the number of tenses in a certain language, as this number depends on whether or not linguists confine their definition of *tense* to the morphology of the verb in that language.

If *tense* is defined as the time reference indicated by verb morphology, English, for example, would be said to have only two tenses, past and non-past (Crystal 1997: 196). If the verb is in its second form ( $V_2$ ), it refers to a time in the past (e.g., *I played basketball*); if it is in its first form ( $V_1$ ) and is not preceded by *to*, it can refer to the present (e.g., *I play basketball*) or future (e.g., *I will play basketball tomorrow*). If the definition of *tense* is not confined to verb morphology, English would be said to have more than two tenses.

Exactly how many tenses a language has depends on what the linguist includes under this term. Givón (2001, 286), for example, states that English has four tenses: past (e.g., *She watched the whale*), present (e.g., *She is watching the wale*), future (e.g., *She will watch the whale*), and habitual (e.g., *She always watches whales*). On the other hand, Rozakis (2003) writes that English has six tenses: present (*I live here*), past (*I lived here*), future (*I will live here*), present perfect (*I have lived here*), past perfect (*I had lived here*), future perfect (*I will have lived here*). Declerck (2015) argues that English has eight tenses; to the six tenses mentioned by Rozakis, Declerck adds the conditional (*I would live here*) and the conditional perfect (*I would have lived here*). It is worth noting that Rozakis's (2003) analysis is more pedagogical in the sense that it echoes that of EFL grammar textbooks, which present six tenses under the heading "tenses" while the conditionals under their own heading (see, e.g., Murphy 2019).

As can be seen, unlike Rozakis (2003) and Declerck (2015), Givón (2001) does not regard the perfect as a tense; this is because he regards it as an aspect. Kroeger (2005: 159) points out that linguists do not agree on whether to classify the perfect as a tense or an aspect, as it has features of both. But what is aspect?

*Aspect* can be defined as the way the predicate (roughly, the verb phrase and minimally the verb) is presented. One can speak of two main kinds of aspect, lexical and morphological. Lexically, predicates can be either events (e.g., *I ate the apple*)

or states (e.g., *I am here*). Morphologically, a predicate can have perfective aspect or imperfective aspect. The perfective aspect presents the event as a whole (e.g., *I ate the apple*) and not as a process. The imperfective aspect presents the event as a process, and it can be of different kinds, such as the progressive (e.g., *I am eating the apple*), habitual (e.g., *I used to eat apples*), and iterative (e.g., *I will keep on doing it*) (Kroeger 2005: 152–57).

When discussing the forms of the verb in Classical and MS Arabic, contemporary Arabic grammarians who write in Arabic follow the traditional grammarians in talking about three *ṣiyagh* (صيغ) ‘forms’: *al-’amr* (الأمر), *al-māḍī* (الماضي), and *al-muḍārī* (المضارع) (Alshartuni 1969, Bukhdud 1987, Malik 2007 [13<sup>th</sup> cen.]). *Al-’amr* ‘lit. the order’ is the imperative mood. *Al-māḍī* ‘lit. the past’ is the form used to talk about past states or events in declarative and interrogative statements. This form can also be used to refer to the future in some conditional and optative constructions. For example, the sentence *ghafara allāhu laka* (غَفَرَ اللهُ لَكَ) can mean either ‘God forgave you’ or ‘May God forgive you.’ *Al-muḍārī* ‘lit. the similar’ form is employed to refer to the present in declarative sentences, to the past when preceded by, e.g., the negative marker *lam* (لم), and to the future when preceded by, e.g., the negative marker *lan* (لن). Consider the following three sentences: (1) *yaktubu alwaladu jumlatan* (يَكْتُبُ الْوَلَدُ جُمْلَةً) ‘The boy writes a sentence,’ (2) *lam yaktubi<sup>2</sup> alwaladu jumlatan* (لَمْ يَكْتُبِ الْوَلَدُ جُمْلَةً) ‘The boy did not write a sentence,’ and (3) *lan yaktuba alwaladu jumlatan* (لَنْ يَكْتُبَ الْوَلَدُ جُمْلَةً) ‘The boy will not write a sentence.’

Linguists describing in English the syntax of MS Arabic or a non-standard Arabic variety use the word *perfect* or *perfective* to refer to *al-māḍī* ‘lit. the past’ form and the word *imperfect* or *imperfective* to refer to *al-muḍārī* ‘lit. the similar’ form. At the same time, they do not agree on whether the verbal system in MS Arabic or any of the non-standard varieties encodes tense and/or aspect (Fayyad 1997, Eisele 1999, Brustad 2000, Holes 2004, Ryding 2005, Aoun, Benmamoun, & Choueiri 2010, Bruweleit 2015, Gadallah 2006, 2017, Alsaif 2017 Alasmari, Watson, & Atwell 2018, Mudhsh 2021). In this paper, I use the term *perfective* to refer to *al-māḍī* ‘lit. the past’ form and the term *imperfective* to *al-muḍārī* ‘lit. the similar’ form.

It is worth noting that Arabic grammar textbooks written in Arabic focus exclusively on the description of Classical and MS Arabic and never on the non-standard varieties. Thus the grammatical terms *al-māḍī* and *al-muḍārī* are familiar to native Arabic speakers solely from Arabic grammar classes at school. While the MS Arabic word *al-māḍī* has an equivalent in the non-standard varieties, the word *al-muḍārī* does not. Therefore, whilst the literal meaning of the former term is easily understood, that of the latter is not.

<sup>2</sup> The jussive mood of the MS Arabic verb *yaktubu* (يَكْتُبُ | 3.M.IPFV-write(SG)-IND) is *yaktub* (يَكْتُبُ | 3.M.IPFV-write(SG)-JUSS). In the example, the *-i* in *yaktubi* (يَكْتُبِ) is an epenthetic vowel added because the verb is followed by a word beginning with a consonant.

Based on anecdotal evidence gathered from educated Arabic speakers in Jish and elsewhere, I have found that their understanding of *al-māḍī* and *al-muḍārī* forms is partially correct. They seem to understand *al-māḍī* form as referring exclusively to the past. Since *al-māḍī* and *al-muḍārī* forms are always contrasted in Arabic grammar classes, native Arabic speakers seem to understand *al-muḍārī* form as referring to the present. All the native speakers consulted thought that *al-muḍārī* meant *al-ḥāḍir* (الحاضر) ‘the present.’ None of them realized that it means *mushābih* (مشابه) ‘similar’ and that it is so called due to the fact that this verbal form receives the *ḍammāt* (ضمة) ‘indicative marker’ and the *fathat* (فتحة) ‘subjunctive marker,’ which look the same as the nominative and accusative markers attached to nouns (cf. Sibawayh 1988 [8<sup>th</sup> cen.]: 13).

In this paper, I will not talk about tense and aspect separately but rather about tense-aspect constructions. In Section 4, I will present the different Jish Arabic tense-aspect constructions and explicate their meanings in a simple, universal language.

Before setting out to explicate the different Jish Arabic tense-aspect constructions, it should be pointed out that verbs belong to different categories. Givón (2001: 287), for example, divides the verbs in the lexicon of all languages into “four major groups in terms of their inherent aspectuality,” that is:

(1) activity verbs, which describe an activity or a process and constitute the majority of verbs in any language, e.g. *read*, *eat*, and *dance*; semantically, they imply “doing something for some time”

(2) compact verbs, which describe events of very short duration and which can be understood as referring to “a moment,” e.g. *shoot*, *kick*, and *jump*

(3) accomplishment verbs, whose meaning involves the component “someone did something because they wanted something to happen,” e.g. *leave* and *come*

(4) stative verbs, which refer to states, e.g. *know*, *want*, and *believe*.

Owing to space constraints, in this paper, the semantic analyses and explications will be restricted to the first three categories, which refer to action verbs. As the term *compact* may sound obscure, I will employ the term *done-in-a-moment* instead. The meanings of *done-in-a-moment*, *accomplishment*, and *activity* verbs can be described via the semantic prime *do*; consequently, in what follows, I will provide a general explication of each of the three types of verbs using the Jish Arabic verb *imil* ‘do.’

In Section 4, I will present the Jish Arabic tense-aspect constructions while comparing them to the following English tense-aspect constructions. The order of the presentation is as follows. Subsection 4.1 discusses the past constructions, viz. the Jish Arabic counterparts of the following English constructions:

1. Past simple
2. Past progressive
3. Past perfect simple
4. Past perfect progressive
5. Habitual past

Subsection 4.2 discusses the present tense-aspect constructions, that is the Jish Arabic counterparts of the following English constructions:

1. Present simple
2. Present progressive
3. Present perfect simple
4. Present perfect progressive

I do not include the future for two reasons. The first is space constraints. The second is owing to a lack of consensus among linguists on whether or not the future is regarded as a tense. For example, Givón (2001: 286) treats the English future as a tense, but Dixon (2012: 8) does not; he remarks:

In a language of type II, the grammatical system of tense is confined to past and (in many instances) present time. There is no overarching grammatical term referring to ‘future’. One has instead to choose the appropriate member from a system of modalities. English is of this type. Past time is shown by past tense inflection on the verb, as in *John went out hunting yesterday*. But if one shifts from ‘yesterday’ to ‘tomorrow’ then the speaker of English must choose between stating an obligation (*John should go out hunting tomorrow*), or a necessity (*John must go out hunting tomorrow*), or a prediction (*John will go out hunting tomorrow*), or a conjecture (*John may go out hunting tomorrow*), and so on.

The same is true of Jish Arabic. Jish Arabic uses the verb *rah* ‘lit. go’ followed by the imperfective form of the verb to refer to a future event, as in *sāndī rah yākul* ‘Sandy will eat.’

If this construction, that is *rah*+imperfective, is included in this paper, the reader may justifiably wonder why other similar constructions, namely the Jish Arabic equivalents of the English modal constructions, are not included. The length required to treat so many constructions would greatly reduce the readability of this paper. This being so, I will limit the discussion to the constructions mentioned above.

It is worth noting that I discuss the Jish Arabic tense-aspect constructions in reference to (or in *partial* comparison with) English. I am not discussing them in *full* comparison with their English counterparts, as I am not discussing the English tense-aspect constructions and comparing them to their Jish Arabic counterparts. Nor am I discussing the Jish Arabic constructions through the prism of English, as the aim of the paper is to explicate the meanings of these constructions in a simple, universal language and thus avoid Anglocentrism. Reference to the English tense-aspect constructions is meant simply to facilitate comprehension of their Arabic counterparts.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> So Wittgenstein (1953: 82) remarks that the “common behaviour of mankind is the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language.”

## 2.2. Jish Arabic

Arabic is a diglossic language; that is to say, it has two forms, High and Low. The High form is the standardized register, but it is not spoken natively by anyone. About 1400 years ago, this form seems to have been the mother tongue of the people of Najd (an area in present-day Saudi Arabia), although some claim that it was merely a literary language (in Fakhouri 1986: 50, in Aoun, Benmamoun, & Choueiri 2010: 1). It was also the language of Arabic poetry; even those poets who natively spoke other forms of Arabic used this form in their poems. The advent of Islam saw the standardization of this form, particularly because it was the language of the Quran. Today, this form is known as Classical Arabic, and its modern version (which has been developed by litterateurs and the media over the years) is known as Modern Standard (MS) Arabic. MS Arabic is used in formal settings, such as courts, schools, and media (Fakhouri 1986: 49–51, Holes 2018).

The Low form consists of a myriad of varieties, and each variety is the mother tongue of a community of speakers. The mutual intelligibility between any two varieties is in inverse relation to the geographical distance between them; the closer they are, the more mutually intelligible they are (Aoun, Benmamoun, & Choueiri 2010: 2). Unlike MS Arabic, none of these varieties has been developed into a variety used in all formal settings.

Jish Arabic is one of those varieties. It is spoken natively by about 3,000 people residing in Jish. Jish itself is a small town in northern Israel, about five kilometers from the Israeli-Lebanese borders. The present author was born, grew up, and resides in Jish and speaks Jish Arabic natively. Its grammar, like the grammar of the overwhelming majority of non-standard Arabic varieties, has not been fully described. In addition, there is no corpus of Jish Arabic, and hence, I rely on my knowledge of the language as well as on consulting other native speakers.

The Jish Arabic verbal system encodes aspect. In the interlinear gloss, the perfective aspect will be indicated by <PFV> and the imperfective aspect by <IPFV>. In addition, verbs can occur in the active participle, which will be indicated by <ACTPTCL>.

## 3. Methodology

Discussing the meanings of the different tense-aspect constructions in Jish Arabic requires a method that can evade ambiguity, complexity, and Anglocentrism. Words like *tense*, *perfect*, *aspect*, *perfective*, *imperfective*, and *durative*, for example, do not have equivalents in Jish Arabic. Using them to describe the tense-aspect constructions in Jish Arabic will result in descriptions that cannot be translated into the target language, and thus, cannot be verified by native speakers of this language. Overcoming this obstacle is possible through the Natural Semantic Metalanguage.

The Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) is a theory developed by Anna Wierzbicka, Cliff Goddard, and colleagues for over 50 years (Wierzbicka 1972,



1980, 2021, Goddard & Wierzbicka 1994, 2002a, Goddard 2008a, Gladkova 2010, Gladkova & Larina 2018, Levisen 2012, Goddard & Wierzbicka 2014, Goddard 2018, Bromhead & Ye 2020, Habib 2021, Goddard, Wierzbicka & Farese 2022). It has a number of key constructs, three of which are semantic primes, universal grammar, and explications.

Semantic primes are simple, universal concepts. They are simple in the sense that they are indefinable, and they are universal in the sense that they have exact equivalents in all languages. Their simplicity is attested through trial and error, and their universality has been proven by locating their exact equivalents in genetically and geographically different languages. Their number stands at 65, as is demonstrated in the table below:

**Table 1. Semantic primes (English exponents) (Goddard & Wierzbicka 2014)**

I~ME, YOU, SOMEONE, SOMETHING~THING, PEOPLE, BODY	Substantives
KIND, PARTS	Relational substantives
THIS, THE SAME, OTHER~ELSE	Determiners
ONE, TWO, MUCH~MANY, LITTLE~FEW, SOME, ALL	Quantifiers
GOOD, BAD	Evaluators
BIG, SMALL	Descriptors
THINK, KNOW, WANT, DON'T WANT, FEEL, SEE, HEAR	Mental predicates
SAY, WORDS, TRUE	Speech
DO, HAPPEN, MOVE, TOUCH	Actions, events, movement, contact
BE (SOMEWHERE), THERE IS, BE (SOMEONE/SOMETHING), MINE	Location, existence, specification, possession
LIVE, DIE	Life and death
WHEN~TIME, NOW, BEFORE, AFTER, A LONG TIME, A SHORT TIME, FOR SOME TIME, MOMENT	Time
WHERE~PLACE, HERE, ABOVE, BELOW, FAR, NEAR, SIDE, INSIDE	Space
NOT, MAYBE, CAN, BECAUSE, IF	Logical concepts
VERY, MORE	Augmentor, intensifier
LIKE~AS~WAY	Similarity

NSM research indicates that semantic primes can be combined into simple phrases and sentences, according to patterns which are shared by all languages. These combinations are called canonical sentences or combinatorial frames. The following examples are illustrative: ‘something happened at this time,’ ‘someone was doing something for some time,’ and ‘people can know when it happened.’

NSM linguists use combinatorial frames to build larger text-like structures called *explications*. An explication is an elaborate definition of a certain concept or grammatical structure. It states the meaning of this concept or structure in a simple, universal language. In this paper, I will provide an explication of each of the different Jish Arabic tense-aspect constructions.

Different NSM researchers have demonstrated the effectiveness of NSM in uncovering the relationship between a verbal form and its linguistic behavior, especially when it comes to the category of aspect. To give but two examples,

Wierzbicka (2002) and Gladkova (2008: 36–114) have used semantic primes in the analysis of the Polish and Russian categories of aspect, respectively.

#### 4. Analysis

In this section, I present the Jish Arabic past and present tense-aspect constructions while referring to their English counterparts. As has been mentioned above, the English constructions are used as a familiar point of reference. This does not make the presentation prone to Anglocentrism, because, in the end, each Jish Arabic construction is explicated using a simple, universal language.

##### 4.1. Jish Arabic past tense-aspect constructions

###### 4.1.1. $V_{PFV}$ (عَمِلَ): Jish Arabic counterpart of English past simple

Jish Arabic uses the perfective form to talk about an action that began and ended in the past, usually at a definite time. Thus it is the equivalent of English past simple. The following example is illustrative:

- (1) ساندي أكل التفاحة مبارح  
*sāndī akal it-tuffaḥa mbēriḥ*  
 Sandy eat(3SG.M.PFV) DEF-apple yesterday  
 ‘Sandy ate the apple yesterday.’

There does not seem to be any semantic difference between the Jish Arabic tense-aspect construction and its English counterpart, and both can be explicated as follows:

- (A) Someone ‘*imil* ‘did’ something (X) [**activity verb**, e.g. ‘*ara* ‘read’ or ‘*akal* ‘eat’]
- a. Sometime before now, something happened in one place
  - b. People can know when it happened
  - c. It was like this:
    - i. Someone was doing something in that place for some time as this someone wanted
- (B) Someone ‘*imil* ‘did’ something (X) [**done-in-a-moment verb**, e.g. *takh* ‘shoot’]
- a. Sometime before now, something happened in one place
  - b. People can know when it happened
  - c. It was like this:
    - i. Someone did something in that place in one moment as this someone wanted
- (C) Someone ‘*imil* ‘did’ something (X) [**accomplishment verb**, e.g. *tarak* ‘leave’]
- a. Sometime before now, something happened in one place
  - b. People can know when it happened
  - c. It was like this:

- i. Someone did something in that place because this someone wanted something to happen
- ii. This thing happened as this someone wanted

A few comments are in order. First, component (a) of each explication has the semantic primes *before now* because some languages (like Malay) do not encode the time of action morphologically but instead semantically through a temporal expression. This component also specifies that the action happened in one place, as actions of this kind are normally spatially localized.

Second, component (b) states that people can know when the action took place. This is true of both Jish Arabic and English, both of which allow the specification of the time at which the action took place.

Third, component (c) states that the action took place as the agent wanted. This is true of so many verbs that refer to actions over which the agent has considerable control (cf. Goddard 2015: 4).

Fourth, the explications of done-in-a-moment verbs have to include the semantic primes *in one moment* because these verbs depict events of very short duration. In contrast, the meanings of activity verbs involve a process (hence the need for the subcomponent ‘someone was doing something for some time’), at the end of which there is a result that the doer wanted (hence the need for ‘as this someone wanted’). The meanings of accomplishment verbs, on the other hand, do not focus on a process but on the end result.

4.1.2. *kān* ‘am V<sub>IPFV</sub> / *kān* V<sub>ACTPTCL</sub> (كَانَ عَمَّ يَغْمِلُ):  
*Jish Arabic counterpart of English past progressive*

To talk about a continuous action in the past, Jish Arabic uses the auxiliary verb *kān* ‘be’ followed by ‘am (progressive marker) and the imperfective form of the main verb. The auxiliary verb *kān* ‘be’ and the main verb are conjugated for person, number, gender, and aspect. The continuous action was either in progress during a specific time in the past as in (2), or was interrupted by another action as in (3), or was simultaneous to another continuous action as in (4).

- (2) مباحر بمثل هذا الوقت، كنت عم باكل  
*mbēriḥ bi-mitil hādā il-wa`it kun-it ‘am bā-kul*  
 yesterday PREP-like this(SG.M) DEF-time be-1SG.PFV PROG 1SG.IPFV-eat  
 ‘I was eating at this time yesterday.’

- (3) كانت عم تاكل لما إجيت  
*kān-at ‘am tā-kul limmā ij-īt*  
 be-3SG.F.PFV PROG 2SG.IPFV-eat when come-1SG.PFV  
 ‘She was eating when I came.’

- (4) كنت عم تاكل لما كنت عم بنضف  
*kun-it ‘am tā-kul limmā kun-it ‘am ba-naddif*  
 be-2SG.PFV PROG 2SG.IPFV-eat when be-1SG.PFV PROG 1SG.IPFV-eat  
 ‘You were eating while I was cleaning.’

This tense-aspect construction is expressed in English using the past progressive; its explication is as follows:

- (D) Someone *kān* ‘am yi ‘mil ‘was doing’ something (X) [**activity verb, e.g. ‘ara ‘read’ or akal ‘eat’]**
- a. Sometime before now, something was happening in one place for some time
  - b. it was like this during that time:
    - i. Someone was doing something (X) in that place as this someone wanted
- (E) Someone *kān* ‘am yi ‘mil ‘was doing’ something (X) [**done-in-a-moment verb, e.g. *takh* ‘shoot’]**
- a. Sometime before now, something was happening in one place for some time
  - b. it was like this during that time:
    - i. Someone did something (X) in that place in one moment as this someone wanted
    - ii. This someone did the same thing (X) many times
- (F) Someone *kān* ‘am yi ‘mil ‘was doing’ something (X) [**accomplishment verb, e.g. *tarak* ‘leave’]**
- a. Sometime before now, something was happening in one place for some time
  - b. it was like this during that time:
    - i. Someone was doing something (X) in that place because this someone wanted something to happen
    - ii. This thing was happening as this someone wanted

4.1.3. *kān ṣār* V<sub>ACTPTCL</sub> (كُنْ صَارَ عَامِلٌ):

*Jish Arabic counterpart of English past perfect simple*

In Jish Arabic, to indicate that a certain action took place before another action or point in time in the past, the auxiliary verbs *kān* ‘be’ and *ṣār* ‘become’ are used followed by the active participle of the main verb. Both of the Jish Arabic auxiliary verbs are conjugated for person, number, gender, and aspect. Take the following example:

- (5) لما إجا، كنت صرت ماكل التفاحة  
*limmā ijā, kun-it ṣur-it m<ā>kel it-tuffaḥa*  
 When come(3SG.M.PFV) be-1SG.PFV become-1SG.PFV eat<ACTPTCL> DEF-apple  
 ‘When he came, I had eaten the apple.’

This tense-aspect construction seems to be semantically the same as the past perfect simple in English.

The explications of the three types of verbs when used in the grammatical construction *kān ṣār* V<sub>ACTPTCL</sub> are as follows:

- (G) Someone *kān šār ‘āmil* ‘had done’ something (X) when something (Y) happened [**activity verb, e.g. ‘ara ‘read’ or akal ‘eat’**]
- a. Sometime before now, something (Y) happened in one place
  - b. People can know when it happened
  - c. Before it happened, it was like this:
    - i. Someone was doing something (X) in that place for some time as this someone wanted
  - d. When this thing (Y) happened, people could know something
- (H) Someone *kān šār ‘āmil* ‘had done’ something (X) when something (Y) happened [**done-in-a-moment verb, e.g. takh ‘shoot’**]
- a. Sometime before now, something (Y) happened in one place
  - b. People can know when it happened
  - c. Before it happened, it was like this:
    - i. Someone did something (X) in one moment in that place as this someone wanted
  - d. When it happened, people could know something
- (I) Someone *kān šār ‘āmil* ‘had done’ something (X) when something (Y) happened [**accomplishment verb, e.g. tarak ‘leave’**]
- a. Sometime before now, something (Y) happened in one place
  - b. People can know when it happened
  - c. Before it happened, it was like this:
    - i. Someone did something (X) in that place because this someone wanted something to happen
    - ii. It happened as this someone wanted
  - d. When this thing (Y) happened, people could know something

Three comments are in order. First, of the two actions (X) and (Y), only (Y) can be described with a time expression (see component (b)). This is true of both Jish Arabic and English. Action (Y) is described using a verb in the perfective form in Jish Arabic and in the past simple in English, and both allow for the specification of time at which action (Y) took place. On the other hand, the Jish Arabic *kān šār V<sub>ACTPTCL</sub>* form and its English counterpart—past perfect simple—do not allow such a specification. In English, for instance, one can say ‘I wrote a letter yesterday’ but not ‘\*I had written a letter yesterday,’ and the same holds for Jish Arabic. One may claim that there is a contradiction. On the one hand, there is a specification of the time at which action (Y) happened; on the other, there is a restriction against adding a time adverb/expression to action (X). This apparent contradiction is resolved when we bear in mind that the perfect encodes an action that took place prior to the temporal reference point (at which action (Y) took place); when exactly action (Y) took place is either not known or is not in view.

Second, component (d) of each explication presents a shared feature of the English perfect and its Jish Arabic counterpart, which is their lingering relevance. Although action (X) happened before action (Y), it is deemed relevant not at the time when it occurred but at the time when action (Y) occurred (cf. Givón 2001: 296). This is why this component states that people in the place where action (Y)

took place could know something; the thing they can know can be about the person who did action (X), as in ‘When I arrived, Sam had already left’ (here, the speaker knows something about Sam, namely that Sam left before the speaker’s arrival) or about something or someone else, as in ‘By the time the firefighters arrived, the fire had burned the entire field’ (here, people know something about the field, i.e. that it got entirely burned before the firefighters’ arrival).

Third, the reader may wonder whether the words ‘because it (Y) happened’ should be added to the last component, so that it would read ‘when this thing (Y) happened, people could know something because it (Y) happened.’ This could be applicable to some, but certainly not all, situations. For example, if the speaker tells his friend that he was near a field that had entirely been burned when the firefighters arrived, the speaker knows about what happened to the field because he witnessed that and not because of the arrival of the firefighters. In a similar vein, the speaker’s friend knows about what happened to the field because of the speaker and not because of the arrival of the firefighters.

4.1.4. *kān šār-l-P<sub>GEN</sub> ‘am V<sub>IPFV</sub>* (كانَ صائرُهُ عَمَّ يَعمِلُ):

*Jish Arabic counterpart of English past perfect progressive*

The Jish Arabic tense-aspect construction *kān šār-l-P<sub>GEN</sub> ‘am V<sub>IPFV</sub>* is employed to talk about a continuous or repeated action that began before and continued until another action began, as is illustrated by examples (6) and (7). It is also employed to describe states that began before another action and continued until the other action began, as is seen in example (8).

- (6) لما إجا، كان صرلي نص ساعة عم باكل  
*limmā ijā, kān šār-l-ī nuṣ*  
 when come(3SG.M.PFV) be(3SG.M.PFV) become(3SG.M.PFV)-PREP-1 SG.GEN half  
*sē‘a ‘am bā-kul*  
 hour PROG 1 SG.IPFV-eat  
 ‘When he came, I had been eating for half an hour.’

- (7) لما إجا كان صرلي نص ساعة عم بجرب أعمل هذا الإشي  
*limmā ijā, kān šār-l-ī nuṣ*  
 when come(3SG.M.PFV) be(3SG.M.PFV) become(3SG.M.PFV)-PREP-1 SG.GEN half  
*sē‘a ‘am ba-jarrib a-‘mil hādā il-ishī*  
 hour PROG 1 SG.IPFV-try 1 SG-try this(SG.M) DEF-thing(SG.M)  
 ‘When he came, I had been trying to do this for half an hour.’

- (8) لما إجا، كان صرلي هون نص ساعة  
*limmā ijā, kān šār-l-ī hōn*  
 when come(3SG.M.PFV) be(3SG.M.PFV) become(3SG.M.PFV)-PREP-1 SG.GEN here  
*nuṣ sē‘a*  
 half hour  
 ‘When he came, I had been here for half an hour.’

Note that this tense-aspect construction is expressed through the third-person singular masculine perfective form of the auxiliary verbs *kān* ‘be’ (which is not conjugated) and *šār* ‘become’ (which is conjugated for person, number, gender, and aspect, and to which the preposition *-(i)l-* ‘to’ and a pronoun in the genitive form are attached) followed by *‘am* (the progressive marker) and the imperfective form of the main verb.

At first glance, the English past perfect progressive seems to have an exact equivalent in Jish Arabic. A closer look, however, reveals a difference. Unlike in Jish Arabic, in English, the past perfect progressive can be used for a continuous or repeated action that stopped a little before another action began. In example (9) below, it is clear that Sandy stopped his continuous action of swimming and got out of the pool only right before the speaker saw him.

- (9) I knew that Sandy had been swimming in the pool because his trunks were wet.

In Jish Arabic, this sentence is expressed using the auxiliary verbs *kān* ‘be’ and *‘am* (progressive marker) but not *šār* ‘become.’ I regard this as the Jish Arabic equivalent of English past progressive, explained in Subsection 4.1.2.

Another difference between this Jish Arabic tense-aspect construction and its English counterpart is that in Jish Arabic a specific duration of time has to be mentioned.

The meaning of *kān šār-lu ‘am* IPFV(3SG.M) can be couched in NSM as follows:

- (J) Someone *kān šār-l-u ‘am* *yi ‘mil* ‘had been doing’ something (X) for some time when something (Y) happened [**activity verb, e.g. ‘ara ‘read’ or akal ‘eat’**]
- a. Sometime before now, something (Y) happened in one place
  - b. People can know when it happened
  - c. Before it happened:
    - i. Someone was doing something (X) in that place for some time as this someone wanted
  - d. People in that place could know for how long

Explication (J) captures the idea that two actions/events took place, one before the other. Component (a) refers to the one that chronologically took place second, and component (b) indicates that its timing is known. Component (c) refers to the action that chronologically took place first, hence the phrase ‘Before it happened’, where *it* refers to the second action/event. The first action was continuous and was taking place as the doer wanted. Component (d) tells the reader that people can know the duration of the action (X).

Explication (K) below is identical to explication (J) above except for component (c). In explication (K), component (c) introduces a done-in-a-moment action that is repeated for some time.

- (K) Someone *kān ṣārlu ‘am yi ‘mil* ‘had been doing’ something (X) for some time when something (Y) happened [**done-in-a-moment verb, e.g. *takh* ‘shoot’**]
- a. Sometime before now, something (Y) happened in one place
  - b. People can know when it happened
  - c. Before it happened:
    - i. Someone was doing something (X) in one place for some time as this someone wanted
    - ii. It was like this:
      - i. This someone did something (X) in that place in one moment
      - ii. For some time, this someone did this thing (X) many times
  - d. People in that place could know for how long

Note that accomplishment verbs cannot be used in this tense-aspect construction either in Jish Arabic or in English.

4.1.5. *kān* V<sub>IPFV</sub> (كَانَ يَعْْمَلُ): *Jish Arabic counterpart of English habitual past*

To talk about habitual actions in the past, Jish Arabic uses the auxiliary verb *kān* ‘be’ and the imperfective form of the main verb, both of which are conjugated for person, number, gender, and aspect, as is exemplified in (10):

- (10) سَانْدِي كَان يَأْكُل تَفَاح زَمَان  
*sāndī kān y-ākul tuḥḥāḥ zamān*  
 Sandy be(3SG.M.PFV) 3SG.M.IPFV-eat apple(PL) in.the.past  
 ‘Sandy used to eat apples in the past.’

The meaning of this tense-aspect construction can be spelled out in NSM as follows:

- (L) Someone *kān yi ‘mil* ‘used to do’ something (X) [**activity verb, e.g. ‘*ara* ‘read’ or *akal* ‘eat’**]
- a. Sometime before now, it was like this for a long time:
    - i. Someone was doing something for some time as this someone wanted
    - ii. This someone often did the same thing
  - b. People can know that it is not like this anymore

Component (a) tells the reader that the action took place in the past and was repeated over a long period of time. The word *often* is a portmanteau used in NSM instead of the phrase *at many times*. Component (b) is necessary because a sentence in the habitual past implies that the action is not done in the present.

- (M) Someone *kān yi ‘mil* ‘used to do’ something (X) [**done-in-a-moment verb, e.g. *takh* ‘shoot’**]
- a. Sometime before now, it was like this for a long time:
    - i. Someone did something in one moment, as this someone wanted
    - ii. This someone often did the same thing
  - b. People can know that it is not like this anymore



One may wonder whether or not component (a.i.) should include the words *many times* and read ‘someone did something many times. When this someone did it, this someone did it in one moment.’ After all, a sentence like ‘My rabbit used to jump everywhere each time it was released from its cage’ implies that the jumping was repetitive. While this is true in this case, it is not always necessarily so. Consider the sentence ‘Sam used to slap me on the face each time he saw me.’ This sentence means that Sam used to slap the speaker once each time he saw him. The semantic difference between the two sentences stems from the verb *jump* and its combination with the word *everywhere*.

- (N) Someone *kān yi ‘mil* ‘used to do’ something (X) [**accomplishment verb, e.g. *tarak* ‘leave’**]
- a. Sometime before now, it was like this for a long time:
    - i. Someone did something because this someone wanted something to happen
    - ii. This thing happened as this someone wanted
    - iii. This someone often did the same thing
  - b. People can know that it is not like this anymore

It is noteworthy that, without context or a time expression indicating long duration, this tense-aspect construction—when used with done-in-a-moment and activity verbs—can refer to a continuous action in the past. In this case, its meaning is identical to that of *kān ‘am* V<sub>IPFV</sub> discussed in Subsection 4.1.2.

Additionally, unlike the explications in the previous subsections, the explications in this subsection do not have the semantic primes IN THIS PLACE. This is because a habitual action is not necessarily confined to one place.

## 4.2. *Jish Arabic present tense-aspect constructions*

### 4.2.1. V<sub>IPFV</sub> (بَيَعْمَلُ): *Jish Arabic counterpart of English present simple*

In Jish Arabic, if the imperfective form of the verb appears without any auxiliary verb, it can convey habitual semantics, as in example (11), a fact, as in (12), or a scheduled event, as in (13). This tense-aspect construction is the Jish Arabic equivalent of English present simple.

- (11) 5:00 ع دايمًا يسبح  
*dāyman ba-sbaḥ ‘al 5:00.*  
 always 1SG.IPFV-swim PREP 5:00  
 ‘I always swim at 5:00.’
- (12) البابا فرنسيس هو بابا روما  
*il-bābā fransīs huwwi bābā rōmā.*  
 DEF-pope Francis 3SG.M pope Roma  
 ‘Pope Francis is the Pope of Rome.’

- (13) 6:00 ع الترين بطلع  
*li-trēn bi-ṭlaʿ* 'a 6:00  
 DEF-train 3SG.M.IPFV-leave PREP 6:00  
 'The train leaves at 6:00.'

The above examples raise the following four points about habituals and facts. First, habitual actions (he eats apples) or states (he sleeps early) repeat themselves. In the absence of adverbials (e.g., *every day*, *almost never*, *sometimes* or *occasionally*), the repetition is understood to be highly regular (at many times or at all times).

Second, every habit that exists is in the end a fact; however, not every fact is a habit. Example (12) refers to a fact—something that is true—which is not a habit.

Third, a fact can refer to an action or state that people either believe to be true (like any fact pertaining to our world) or wish to temporarily assume to be true (such as any piece of information that is mentioned in a fictional novel).

Fourth, one may be tempted to claim that all that has been mentioned here applies to the English past simple and future simple, as well as to their Jish Arabic counterparts. This is partially, but not entirely, true. A sentence like 'He always ate apples and will always do the same' refers to a habit in the past and future. The meaning of the habit, I would argue, stems from the adverb of frequency *always* and not from the tense-aspect construction. In the absence of adverbials expressing frequency, such a sentence would normally be understood to refer to a particular action and not to a habit.

- (O) Someone *byi mil* 'does' something (X) [**activity verb**, e.g. 'ara 'read' or akal 'eat']  
 a. People can know that it is like this at many/all times:  
 i. Someone is doing something for some time as this someone wants
- (P) Someone *byi mil* 'does' something (X) [**done-in-a-moment verb**, e.g. *takh* 'shoot']  
 a. People can know that it is like this at many/all times:  
 i. Someone does something in one moment as this someone wants
- (Q) Someone *byi mil* 'does' something (X) [**accomplishment verb**, e.g. *tarak* 'leave']  
 a. People can know that it is like this at many/all times:  
 i. Someone does something because this someone wants something to happen  
 ii. It happens as this someone wants

Scheduled events actually refer to the future, not to the present. In addition, it carries the meaning of planning and letting other people know about the plan. The meaning of planning involves deciding to do something, the explication of which is as follows:

- (R) someone *byi* ‘*mil*’ ‘does’ something X after now  
 a. Sometime before now, someone thought like this for some time:  
     i. ‘I want to do something (X) after now  
     ii. I want other people to know this’  
 a. Because of it, people can know this:  
     i. ‘this someone will do this thing (X) after now’

4.2.2. ‘*am* V<sub>IPFV</sub> and V<sub>ACTPTCL</sub> (جاي/ عمّ يغميل):

*Jish Arabic counterpart of English present progressive*

In English, the progressive aspect of the present tense is formed by *am/is/are* with the present participle of the verb and is employed to refer to an action that is happening at the time of speaking or around the time of speaking, as in (14) and (15). It is also used to talk about planned events in the future, as in (16).

- (14) She is speaking to you now.  
 (15) I am studying English this year.  
 (16) We are coming for dinner this evening.

Examples (17)–(19) are rendered in Jish Arabic as follows:

- (17) عم تحكي معك إسا  
     ‘*am* *ti-ħki* *ma* ‘-*ak* *issā*  
 PROG 3SG.F.IPFV-speak PREP-2SG.M now  
 ‘She is speaking to you now.’
- (18) عم بتعلم إنجليزي هاي السنة  
     ‘*am* *ba-t* ‘*allam* *inglīzī* *hay* *is-sinni*  
 PROG 1SG.IPFV-study English this(SG.F) DEF-year  
 ‘I am studying English this year.’
- (19) إحنا جايين عالعشا اليوم المسا  
     *ihnā* *j* <*ā*> *yy-īn* ‘*a=l*- ‘*ashā* *il-yōm* *il-masā*  
 1PL come<ACTPTCL>-PL.M PREP=DEF-dinner DEF-day DEF-evening  
 ‘We are coming for dinner this evening.’

Examples (17) and (18) demonstrate two facts. First, the English present progressive is rendered in Jish Arabic through the progressive marker ‘*am* and the imperfective form of the main verb (which is conjugated for person, number, and gender). Second, the English present progressive and its Jish Arabic counterpart are used to talk about an action that is taking place at or around the time of speaking. However, unlike English *am/is/are* + *Ving*, the Jish Arabic progressive marker ‘*am* and the imperfective form of the main verb cannot be used to talk about planned events in the future. To express a planned event in Jish Arabic, the active participle form of the verb and a future time expression are employed, as is seen in example (19) above.

Here are the explications of the actions taking place at the time of speech:

- (S) Someone *'am yi'mil* 'is doing' something (X) now [**activity verb, e.g. 'ara 'read' or akal 'eat'**]
- a. Something is happening in one place now
  - b. It is like this:
    - i. Someone is doing something (X) in that place for some time as this someone wants
- (T) Someone *'am yi'mil* 'is doing' something (X) now [**done-in-a-moment verb, e.g. takh 'shoot'**]
- a. Something is happening in one place now
  - b. It is like this:
    - i. Someone does something (X) in that place in one moment as this someone wants
    - ii. This someone does the same thing (X) many times
- (U) Someone *'am yi'mil* 'is doing' something (X) now [**accomplishment verb, e.g. tarak 'leave'**]
- a. Something is happening in one place now
  - b. It is like this:
    - i. Someone is doing something (X) in that place because this someone wants something to happen
    - ii. It happens as this someone wants

Here are the explications of planned future actions:

- (V) Someone *'amil* 'is doing' something after now [**activity verb, e.g. 'ara 'read' or akal 'eat'**]
- a. Sometime before now, someone thought like this for some time:
    - i. 'sometime after now, I want to do something for some time'
  - b. Because of it, this someone can think like this now:
    - i. 'I know this: I will do this thing sometime after now'
- (W) Someone *'amil* 'is doing' something after now [**done-in-a-moment verb, e.g. takh 'shoot'**]
- a. Sometime before now, someone thought like this for some time:
    - i. 'I want to do something in one moment sometime after now'
  - b. Because of this, this someone can think like this now:
    - i. 'I know this: I will do this thing sometime after now'
- (X) Someone *'amil* 'is doing' something after now [**accomplishment verb, e.g. tarak 'leave'**]
- a. Sometime before now, someone thought like this for some time:
    - i. 'I want to do something sometime after now'
  - b. Because of it, this someone can think like this now:
    - i. 'I know this: I will do this thing sometime after now'

In the three explications (V)-(X), component (a) is about the past. It refers to a process of deciding and planning that took place before the time of speaking. In this process, the speaker thought about what they wanted to do and chose to do it.

Component (b) refers to the time of speaking whereby the speaker says that they will execute the scheduled event.

It is worth noting that, with some verbs, such as the Jish Arabic counterparts of English *live* and *sleep*—and in the absence of a future time expression—the active participle of these verbs refers to a state in the present, as in Example (20) and (22), and not to a future planned event. If these verbs are in the imperfective and are preceded by the progressive marker, their meanings change. It is not clear what these verbs have in common. Compare:

- (20) أنا عايش هون  
*anā* ‹*ā*›*yish* *hōn*  
 1SG.NOM live<ACTPTCL>(SG.M) here  
 ‘I live/am living here.’
- (21) أنا عم بعيش حالة صعبة  
*anā* ‹*am* *ba-ṭsh* *ḥāli* *ṣi’bi*  
 1SG.NOM PROG 1SG.IPFV-live situation difficult  
 ‘I am going through a difficult situation.’
- (22) هو نايم  
*huwwi* *n*‹*ā*›*yim*  
 3SG.M.NOM sleep<ACTPTCL>(SG.M)  
 ‘He is sleeping/asleep’
- (23) هو عم بنام  
*huwwi* ‹*am* *bi-nām*  
 3SG.M.NOM PROG IPFV-sleep  
 ‘He is falling asleep.’

In (20) and (22), the active participle of Jish Arabic *āsh* ‘live’ and *nām* ‘sleep’ refer to living and sleeping, respectively. On the other hand, in (21) and (23), the progressive marker *am* and the imperfective form of *āsh* ‘live’ and *nām* ‘sleep’ mean ‘going through’ and ‘falling asleep’ respectively.

While the reader may agree that *āyish* ‘living’ and *am ba ṭsh* ‘going through’ are semantically different, they may question the semantic difference between *nāyim* ‘sleeping’ and *am binām* ‘falling asleep.’ To clarify the matter, consider the following two sentences *huwwi am bina’ ib ilḥāmiḍ issā* ‘He is picking the lemons now’ and *huwwi mna’ ib ilḥāmiḍ bukra* ‘He is picking the lemons tomorrow.’ Both refer to the same process of picking, although this process is taking place at different times; in the first sentence, the process is taking place at the time of speaking while, in the second sentence, it will take place on the following day. The same does not go for the sentences *huwwi nāyim* ‘He is sleeping now’ and *huwwi am binām* ‘He is falling asleep,’ as the former refers to a state while the latter to a process.

4.2.3. *ṣār* V<sub>ACTPTCL</sub> (صار عامِلٌ):

*Jish Arabic counterpart of English present perfect simple*

The present perfect simple is used in English to talk about an action that happened in the past but has an effect on the present, such as in the sentence “I have eaten, and therefore, I am not hungry.” Jish Arabic does not have the equivalent of *have done X* (as it is the same as *did X*), but it does have the equivalent of *have already done X*. Put differently, the sentences ‘I ate’ and ‘I have eaten’ are rendered in Jish Arabic in exactly the same way using the perfective form of the verb. However, ‘I have already eaten’ is expressed differently. Compare:

- (24) أكلت التفاحة  
*akal-it it-tuffāḥa*  
 eat-1SG.PFV DEF-apple  
 ‘I ate/have eaten the apple.’
- (25) صرت ماكل التفاحة  
*ṣur-it m<ā>kel it-tuffāḥa*  
 become-1SG.PFV eat<ACTPTCL>(SG.M) DEF-apple  
 ‘I have already eaten the apple.’

As can be seen from example (25), Jish Arabic uses the auxiliary verb *ṣār* ‘become’ and the active participle of the main verb to convey the idea that something has already happened. The auxiliary verb *ṣār* ‘become’ is conjugated for person, number, gender, and aspect, while the main verb is conjugated for number and gender only. Like English *have done*, Jish Arabic *ṣār* ‘*āmil* ‘have done’ cannot be followed by a time expression.

The meaning of this tense-aspect construction can be spelled out as follows:

- (Y) Someone *ṣār* ‘*āmil* ‘has already done’ something (X) [**activity verb, e.g. ’ara ‘read’ or akal ‘eat’**]
- a. Sometime before now, it was like this:
    - i. Someone was doing something for some time as this someone wanted
  - b. Because of this, people can know something
- (Z) Someone *ṣār* ‘*āmil* ‘has already done’ something (X) [**done-in-a-moment verb, e.g. ṭakh ‘shoot’**]
- a. Sometime before now, it was like this:
    - i. Someone did something in one moment as this someone wanted
  - b. Because of this, people can know something
- (AA) Someone *ṣār* ‘*āmil* ‘has already done’ something (X) [**accomplishment verb, e.g. tarak ‘leave’**]
- a. Sometime before now, it was like this:
    - i. Someone did something because this someone wanted something to happen
    - ii. It happened as this someone wanted
  - b. Because of this, people can know something

Component (b) of each explication aims to convey the idea that this tense-aspect construction implies something that the addressee can know. Think of English *I have eaten* (which implies that the speaker does not want to eat anymore) or *I have watched the movie many times* (which implies that the speaker likes this movie); in both cases, the addressee understands the implied information because of the English tense-aspect construction. The same goes for the Jish Arabic form. Note that what the addressee can know can be about the speaker or about someone or something else. If, say, Elizabeth asks Sandy where her bag is, and Sandy answers ‘I have put it in the car,’ Elizabeth knows something about the bag, i.e. that it is now in the car.

4.2.4. *ṣār-l-P<sub>GEN</sub> ‘am V<sub>IPFV</sub>* (صَارَ لَهُ عَمَّ يَغْمِلُ):

*Jish Arabic counterpart of English present perfect progressive*

To talk about an action that started in the past and continues into the present, Jish Arabic employs the following components: (1) the third-person singular masculine perfective form of the auxiliary verb *ṣār* ‘become,’ (2) the preposition *-l-* ‘to’ and a pronoun in the genitive form, (3) the progressive marker ‘*am*, and (4) the imperfective aspect of the main verb (which is conjugated for person, number, gender, and aspect). This is the Jish Arabic equivalent of the English present perfect progressive. Here are three examples:

- (26) صرلكن خمس ساعات عم تحضروا الفيلم  
*ṣār-il-kun khamis si ‘-āt ‘am ti-ḥḍar-u*  
 become(3SG.M.PFV)-PREP-2PL.GEN five hour-PL.F PROG 2IPFV-watch-PL  
*il-filim*  
 DEF-film  
 ‘You have been watching the movie for five hours.’

- (27) صرلنا هون من الساعة خمسة  
*ṣār-l-ā hōn min is-sē‘a khamisi*  
 become(3SG.M.PFV)-PREP-3SG.F.GEN here PREP DEF-hour five  
 ‘She has been here since five o’clock.’

- (28) صرلنا عم نحضر الفيلم من لما وصلنا  
*ṣār-il-nā ‘am ni-ḥḍar il-filim min*  
 become(3SG.M.PFV)-PREP-1PL.GEN PROG 1PL.IPFV-watch DEF-film PREP  
*limmā wsil-it*  
 when arrive-2SG.M.PFV  
 ‘We have been watching the movie since you arrived.’

As can be seen from example (26), Jish Arabic does not use a word which is the equivalent of English *for* to indicate a period of time. Also, as is seen from examples (27) and (28), like English *since*, the Jish Arabic preposition *min* is used to indicate a point in time when the action started. When this preposition is followed by a verb, as in example (28), the verb is in the perfective aspect, akin to English, in which the verb that comes in the since-clause is in the past simple.

The meaning of this tense-aspect construction can be spelled out as follows:

- (BB) Someone *ṣārlu ‘am yi ‘mil* ‘has been doing’ something (X) for some time [**activity verb, e.g. ‘ara ‘read’ or akal ‘eat’**]
- a. Something is happening in one place now
  - b. It is like this now:
    - i. someone is doing something for some time in one place as this someone wants
  - c. before now, it was like this for some time in this place all the time
  - d. People in this place can know for how long
- (CC) Someone *ṣārlu ‘am yi ‘mil* ‘has been doing’ something (X) for some time [**done-in-a-moment verb, e.g. ṭakh ‘shoot’**]
- a. Something is happening in one place now
  - b. It is like this:
    - i. Someone does something (X) in that place in one moment as this someone wants
    - ii. This someone does the same thing (X) many times
  - c. before now, it was like this for some time in this place all the time
  - d. People in this place can know for how long

Like in English, in Jish Arabic, accomplishment verbs cannot be used in this tense-aspect construction. Note that English *die* can be used in the present perfect progressive, but its Jish Arabic equivalent *māt* cannot; instead, Jish Arabic uses the verb *nāza* ‘be dying.’

## 5. Discussion

This study has made two main contributions. First, it contributes to the field of theoretical linguistics (especially morphology, syntax, and semantics) as it uncovers the tense-aspect constructions in a language variety whose tenses and aspects have not been studied before. It also explicates the meaning of each tense-aspect construction in simple, universal terms. This makes the explications easily understood and readily translatable into any language.

Second, it contributes to the field of applied linguistics, and mainly to teaching English as a foreign language. In addition to bringing to light the Jish Arabic tense-aspect constructions, it compares them to their English counterparts. The results show that the two sets share some similarities but also some differences. On the relationship between cross-linguistic similarities and pedagogy, Ringbom and Jarvis (2009: 114) remark that:

given the important role that cross-linguistic similarities play in language learning, a natural question to follow is whether and to what extent they could be put to effective use in teaching. In general terms, a good strategy would be to make use of, and even overuse, actual similarities at early stages of learning.



If the EFL teacher in Jish is aware of these similarities and resorts to them while teaching his or her students, the latter are bound to benefit. These similarities are summarized in the following table:

Table 2. English tense-aspect constructions and their Jish Arabic counterparts

Tense-aspect construction	English	Jish Arabic
Past simple	He V <sub>2</sub>	V <sub>PFV(3SG.M)</sub> عَمِلَ
Past progressive	He was Ving	<i>kān</i> 'am V <sub>IPFV(3SG.M)</sub> كَانَ عَمَّ يَغْمِلُ
Past perfect simple	He had V <sub>3</sub>	<i>kān</i> <i>ṣār</i> V <sub>ACTPTCL(SG.M)</sub> كَانَ صَارَ عَامِلٌ
Past perfect progressive	He had been Ving	<i>kān</i> <i>ṣārlu</i> 'am V <sub>IPFV(3SG.M)</sub> كَانَ صَارَ لَهُ عَمَّ يَغْمِلُ
Habitual past	He used to V	<i>kān</i> V <sub>IPFV(3SG.M)</sub> كَانَ يَغْمِلُ
Present simple	He V <sub>1-s</sub>	V <sub>IPFV(3SG.M)</sub> يَغْمِلُ
Present progressive	He is Ving	'am V <sub>IPFV(3SG.M)</sub> عَمَّ يَغْمِلُ
Present perfect simple	He has (already) V <sub>3</sub>	<i>ṣār</i> V <sub>ACTPTCL(SG.M)</sub> صَارَ عَامِلٌ
Present perfect progressive	He has been Ving	<i>ṣārlu</i> 'am V <sub>IPFV(3SG.M)</sub> صَارَ لَهُ عَمَّ يَغْمِلُ

In addition, this study can be of interest and benefit to non-native Arabic speakers who wish to study Jish Arabic or any Arabic variety that is linguistically very close to it.

I hypothesize that what goes for Jish Arabic with regard to tenses and aspects also goes for some other Arabic dialects but not for all of them. For example, Brustad (2000: 150) points out that the use of the auxiliary verb *kān* ‘to be’ is common in Moroccan, Egyptian, Syrian, and Kuwaiti Arabic, while the progressive marker ‘*am*’ is used in Syrian and Egyptian Arabic but not in Moroccan and Kuwaiti Arabic. Alshihry (2017: 87) goes further to point out that the “semantic meanings associated with this form [i.e., ‘*am*’] are not exactly the same in every dialect. For instance, this form is attested in Egyptian Arabic as an intensifying progressive marker..., and this intensifying function is not prominent in modern Levantine dialects.” Exactly which dialects are like Jish Arabic and which are not requires further investigation.

It is worth noting that studies on Arabic varieties tend to focus on the macro-linguistic level, i.e. they target an Arabic variety that is claimed to cover a whole nation (such as Lebanese Arabic, Egyptian Arabic, and Moroccan Arabic). The present study, on the other hand, is at the micro-linguistic level. It investigates the Arabic variety of one small town that is part of the wider Arabic-speaking world. I argue that the micro-linguistic level provides more specificity and, in some cases, more accuracy.

Working at the macro-linguistic level means covering a vast geographical area with numerous people. Although these people may live in the same country (say Iraq), they belong to different communities, and each community lives in a certain area and has its own Arabic variety. There is no question that the Arabic varieties that are geographically adjacent to each other are very similar to each other. At the same time, they are not identical, neither phonologically nor semantically, morphologically or syntactically (Albirini, Benmamoun & Saadah 2011: 275). Two examples can be illustrative. Fassuta is an Arabic-speaking town that is about 20 kilometers from Jish. Despite its relative closeness to Jish and even though Fassuta Arabic and Jish Arabic are very similar to each other, one cannot fail to notice some phonological and semantic variations; for example, in final position, the close front unrounded vowel [i] in Jish Arabic is pronounced as the open-mid unrounded vowel [ɛ] in Fassuta Arabic. The word for *sheep* is *kharūf* in Jish Arabic but *‘abūr* in Fassuta Arabic. Kufir al-Labad is a small town in the West Bank, and it is about 140 kilometers from Jish. In this town the word *kā‘id* (the active participle of *ka‘ad* ‘sat’) can be used as a locative copula as in the sentence *makka kā‘idi fī al-sa‘ūdiyya* ‘Mecca is in Saudi Arabic’ (Camilleri & Sadler 2019: 18); in Jish Arabic, its equivalent, i.e. *ā‘id*, cannot be used as a copula.

This being so, it is hoped that this study will trigger other studies of the same type in which the Arabic “micro-varieties” of individual communities (especially those regarded as belonging to the same macro-variety) are investigated. This will enable microscopic comparisons of these varieties and will make the similarities and differences between them more prominent.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper has investigated the Jish Arabic tense-aspect constructions and provided an explication of each form. The explications use a simple, universal language; their simplicity makes them easily understandable, and their universality makes them readily translatable into any language. This, in turn, makes their meanings accessible to everyone. Additionally, this paper has demonstrated that these forms have equivalents in English. This matter can be of considerable importance to the area of EFL teaching and learning, especially as similarities can lead to positive transfer. Positive transfer, in turn, can facilitate the learning process. As Arabic varieties that are geographically adjacent to each other are highly mutually intelligible and are similar to each other, it can be argued that what goes for Jish Arabic goes also for the Arabic varieties that are adjacent to it. That said, further investigation needs to be carried out.

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