A Contrastive Analysis of Inflectional Affixes in English and Arabic

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to contribute to the field of Arabic-English comparative studies. It compares the two languages, English and Arabic, at the morphological level. The scope of the paper has been restricted to the comparison of the two systems of the inflectional affixes in English and Arabic.

A Brief Review of Contrastive Linguistics and Contrastive Analysis

Comparative Linguistics is one of the broad subdivisions of General Linguistics the second and third of which are Descriptive Linguistics and Historical Linguistics. In Comparative Linguistics, one may compare various stages in the development of a language or compare the history of two or more languages in order to find out a proto-language.

Contrastive Linguistics or Contrastive Analysis is a practice-oriented approach that is concerned with comparing two or more languages to explore the similarities and dissimilarities between them. Both Comparative Typological Linguistics and Contrastive Linguistics compare languages synchronically. So, Contrastive Linguistics is the synchronic comparison of two or more languages, but the diachronic comparison of two or more languages to find out a proto-language is Comparative or Historical Linguistics. Contrastive Linguistics is "only a predictive technique" (Verma and Krishnaswamy, 1989) by which we compare the structures of two or more languages to explore the similarities and dissimilarities

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between them and thus we can "predict the difficulties the learner is likely to encounter" (Verma and Krishnaswamy, 1989).

Fisiak (1981) distinguishes two main types of contrastive linguistics:

- Theoretical contrastive linguistics which contributes in establishing linguistic universals and increasing detailed knowledge of particular languages. It seeks to systematically compare two or more languages with the aim of offering an exhaustive account of the differences and similarities between them, providing an adequate model for their comparison, and defining how and which elements are comparable.

- Applied contrastive linguistics which has aims related to language teaching and the development of teaching materials. Drawing on the findings of theoretical contrastive analysis and providing a framework for the comparisons, applied contrastive linguistics selects information pertinent to the purpose and presents it adequately.

Language comparison is of great interest in theoretical as well as applied perspectives. It reveals what is general and what is language specific.

James (1980) lists the following properties of contrastive linguistics:

- it is synchronic rather than diachronic;
- it is interlingual or cross-linguistic rather than intralingual;
- it involves two different languages rather than varieties of one language;
- it is unidirectional, taking one of the two languages as frame of reference; and
- it focuses on the differences rather than the similarities between languages.

Contrastive linguistics is not recent; its roots go back at least to last decade of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century but it has received its present name after 1941. Contrastive analysis was originally developed by Charles Fries (1945), expanded and clarified by Robert Lado (1957), and demonstrated by innumerable dissertations and, at its best, in a still widely used series of studies under the editorship of Charles Ferguson. Then, it was used extensively in the field of Second Language Acquisition in the 1960s and early 1970s as a method of explaining why some features of a Target Language were more difficult to acquire than others.

Contrastive linguistics' and 'contrastive analysis' are often used indiscriminately, but the former is the more general term and may be used to include developments from applied contrastive analysis. Contrastive Analysis has some pedagogical roles in prediction and diagnosis of errors made by the learners in the process of learning a second or foreign language. Contrastive analysis helps the teachers to know what to test and to what degree to test different items of the second language. It helps the course designers in selecting and grading the teaching materials.

In his book *Discovering Interlanguage*, L. Selinker (1992) identifies some models of contrastive analysis. He mentions 'a structural model' which concentrates on "the syntactic structures as the basis of the comparison between the languages compared" (Selinker, 1992), 'a functional model' which gives a great consideration to the comparison of the semantic and functional elements of linguistic systems after comparing forms of the languages being

compared, 'a pragmatic model' which deals with utterances and 'Semanto-grammatical model' which describes specific grammatical systems semantically, comparing them accordingly. He also mentions 'a transformational model', 'a diglossic model', 'an electic generative model', 'a cognate syntactic model', and 'an intonational model'.

There are two types of contrastive analysis. (i) Microlinguistic contrastive analysis is code-oriented in practice. It is concerned with three levels of language, namely, phonology, lexis and grammar. (ii) Macrolinguistic contrastive analysis tries to achieve a scientific understanding of how a group of people communicate. It describes linguistic events within their extralinguistic settings.

Contrastive analysis has relationships with other fields of applied linguistics. As Fisiak (1981) puts it; "drawing on the findings of theoretical contrastive studies [applied contrastive studies] provide a framework for the comparison of languages, selecting whatever information is necessary for a specific purpose, e.g. teaching, bilingual analysis, translation, etc" (Fisiak, 1981).

Contrastive analysis and error analysis deal with the errors of the L2 learner. Contrastive analysis tries to predict the areas of errors the L2 learner may commit and the areas of difficulties that the L2 learner may encounter in the process of learning L2. Error analysis is concerned with the description and analysis of errors made by second language learners. Each has a different emphasis: contrastive analysis is most concerned with language description (general or autonomous linguistics), and error analysis with language acquisition and learning (psycholinguistics).

Contrastive analysis also provides the research of bilingualism with certain views, assumptions, explanations of some phenomena, like creolisation and pidginisation of languages which may lead to better understanding of bilingualism. Contrastive analysis helps the translator and the L2 learner in avoiding errors and passing the difficulties and minimizing interference. By virtue of their object of study, the fields of contrastive analysis and translation studies share a great deal of common ground: they are interested in seeing how 'the same thing' can be said in other ways.

What is an affix?

Affix is an element (morpheme) added to a word, base or root to produce an inflected or derived form, such as '-s' added to *cat* to form *cats* and 're-' added to *read* to form *reread*. Affixes are traditionally divided into prefixes, which come before the form to which they are joined; suffixes, which come after it; and infixes, which are inserted within it.

Inflectional affixes Vs. Derivational affixes

The suffix '-s/-es' in the words *dogs*, *buses*, *stories* and *potatoes* is an inflectional morpheme. So, the inflectional morphemes like '-s/-es' are "productive across an element entire category … not all inflectional morphemes are productive across an entire category," (Napoli, 1996) because the plural morpheme '-s/-es' cannot be attached to some nouns like *deer*, *man*, *child* and *sheep*.

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"Derivational morphemes can range from adding very little meaning to quite a bit of meaning, and the meaning they contribute is at least somewhat unstable …Quite often inflectional morphemes add either a minimal or delicate sense distinction or a very specific sense that is invariable" (Napoli, 1996). The inflectional morpheme '-s' in *dogs*, for example, adds plurality. So the specific sense that this inflectional morpheme can add is plurality.

Inflectional Affixes in English and Arabic

An inflection means a change in the form of a word according to the job it is doing. English is not highly inflected, especially compared to several European languages and Semitic like Arabic, but there are still many times when inflection is required.

1.   Inflectional affixes in English

In English, inflectional affixes are only suffixes.

1.1. Inflectional suffixes in verbs

In English, there are regular verbs and irregular verbs. A regular verb is one whose forms are determined by rules and is thus predictable. If we take the three verbs *play*, *listen* and *open*, we find they behave alike when changes are required:

1. The suffix '-s' is added to form the third person present singular, as in the sentences: "*He plays football*", "*She listens to Arabic music*" and "*John opens the door*".
2. The past participle and simple past tense are formed by adding '-ed', as in the sentences: "*He played football*", "*She listened to Arabic music*" and "*John opened the door*".
3. The present participle is formed by adding '-ing', as in the sentences: "*He is playing football*", "*She is listening to Arabic music*" and "*John is opening the door*".

1.2.   Inflectional suffixes in the plural nouns

Most English nouns have a singular and a plural form. The '-s/-es' in the nouns *books* and *boxes*, for example, is the inflectional suffix of the plural form.
There are many nouns that take zero suffixes in the plural form. In the sentences *"there is a fish in the water"* and *"there are fish in the water"*, the word *fish* in the first sentence is singular and it is plural in the second sentence.

There are some English nouns, like *John*, *London*, *music*, and *honesty*, that do not take a plural suffix, i.e. they are always singular.

1.3.   Inflectional suffixes in the genitive of nouns

The inflectional suffix '-s' can be added to nouns to form the genitive form as in the phrases *the man's car, the children's toys, and Jack's book.*

1.4.   Inflectional suffixes in the adjectives

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In English, there are also inflectional suffixes that attach to adjectives. These inflectional suffixes are the comparative '-er' and the superlative '-est' as in the sentences "*He is shorter than his father*", and "*He is the shortest one in the family*".

2. Inflectional affixes in Arabic

In Arabic inflectional affixes can be suffixes, prefixes or infixes. The type of account of Arabic morphology that is generally accepted by (computational) linguists is that proposed by McCarthy (1979, 1981). In his proposal, stems are formed by a derivational combination of a root morpheme and a vowel melody. McCarthy's analysis differs from Harris' (1941) in abstracting out or autosegmentalizing the vowels from the pattern and placing them on a separate tier of the analysis. Rules of association then match consonants and vowels to form the abstract stem.

Harris' segmental analysis is shown below:

Root:	k t b	"notion of writing"
Pattern	_a_a_	
Stem	katab	"wrote"

McCarthy autosegmentalizes the vowels from the pattern, as it is shown below:

Root Tier	k t b
Pattern Tier	CVCVC
	\/
Vocalization Tier	a

2.1. Inflectional affixes in verbs

A fully inflected form of an Arabic verb may consist of prefixes, a stem and suffixes. Verbs in Arabic are formed from roots consisting of three or four letters (known as radical letters). From these roots, verbal stems are constructed using a number of canonical forms known as measures. Measures are sequences of consonants and vowels that represent word structure. "Verbs in Arabic are either triliteral (having three radical letters) or quadrilateral (having four letters)" (Soudi, A. et al, 2007).

Table (1) shows the inflectional affixes that can attach to the verbs in the past tense. The verb 'كتب' /katab/ (to write) that consists of three radical letters is taken as an example:

Table (1) Arabic inflectional suffixes in the past verbs

Person	Number	Masculine	Suffix	Feminine	Suffix
1st	Singular	Katabtu	-tu	katabat	-at
	Dual	katabna:	-na:	katabna:	-na:
	Plural				

2nd	Singular	Katabta	-ta	katabti	-ti
	Dual	katabuma:	-tuma:	katabtuma:	-tuma:
	Plural	Katabtum	-tum	katabuna	-tuna
3rd	Singular	Kataba	-a	katabat	-(a)t
	Dual	kataba:	-a:	katabata:	-ata:
	Plural	Katabu	-u	katabna	-na

Table (2) shows the inflectional affixes that can attach to the verbs in the present form and the exceptions are not shown in the table because they are rare in Arabic language. Notice that the stem of the Arabic verb is changed in pronunciation or transliteration when it is affixed with affixes of present and imperative forms, as shown in Tables (2) and (3).

Table (2) Arabic inflectional affixes in the present verb

Person	Number	Masculine	Prefix	Suffix	Feminine	Prefix	Suffix
1st	Singular	aktub	a-	-	aktub	a-	-
	Dual						
	Plural	naktub	na-	-	naktub	na-	-
2nd	Singular	taktub	ta-	-	taktubi(:n)	ta-	-i(:n)
	Dual	taktuba:n	ta-	-a:n	taktuba:n	ta-	-a:n
	Plural	taktubu:n	ta-	-u:n	taktubna	ta-	-na
3rd	Singular	yaktub	ya-	-	taktub	ta-	-
	Dual	yaktuba:n	ya-	-a:n	yaktuba:n	ya-	-a:n
	Plural	yaktubu:n	ya-	-u:n	yaktubna	ya-	-na

Table (3) shows the inflectional affixes that can attach to the verbs in the imperative form and the exceptions are not shown in the table because they are rare in Arabic language.

Table (3) Arabic inflectional affixes in the imperative form

Person	Number	Masculine	Prefix	Suffix	Feminine	Prefix	Suffix
2nd	Singular	iktub	i-	-	iktubi	i-	-i
	Dual	iktuba:	i-	-a:	iktuba:	i-	-a:
	Plural	iktubu	i-	-u	iktubna	i-	-na

From the above tables we can notice the following:

- the prefixes determine the tense in the present and imperative forms
- there is no prefix in the past form of the verb
- the suffixes determine the number and the gender
- all present forms have prefixes.

Exceptional cases:

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- some past verbs can be prefixed but they are rare in Arabic;
- the imperative forms of some verbs cannot be prefixed but they are rare in Arabic
- when the verb comes before a noun subject, the suffixes '-a:', '-u', '-ata:' and '-na' that are attached to the past form in the case of the third person masculine dual, third person masculine plural, third person feminine dual and third person feminine plural, respectively, are changed into '-a' for the third person masculine dual and plural and '(a)t' for the third person feminine dual and plural; and
- when the verb comes before a noun subject, the suffixes '-a:n', '-u:n', '-a:n' and '-na' that are attached to the present form in the case of the third person masculine dual, third person masculine plural, third person feminine dual and third person feminine plural, respectively, are deleted.

The inflectional affixes in Arabic can be suffixes, prefixes or infixes. In Arabic the inflectional affixes of the verb determine the person, number, tense and gender. Arabic has three persons and three numbers (singular, dual and plural). Arabic makes a morphological distinction among singular, dual and plural on nouns, verbs, and adjectives, i.e. it has the singular, dual and plural distinction in the nouns, verbs and adjectives agreement. In Arabic there is the prefix 'ا' /i/ that determines the imperative form. In Arabic, there is no progressive tense; there is only simple tense, so that there is no affix that determines the progressive tense. In Arabic there are infixes; there is the infix 'ﺗ' /t/ that can be inserted in some verbs as shown in the table (4). The verb 'حفل'/ ħafal/ (to celebrate) in the past tense will be taken as an example. The third person pronouns will be used as an example:

Table (4) Inflectional infix in Arabic

Person	Number	Masculine	Prefix	Infix	Suffix	Feminine	Prefix	Infix	Suffix
3rd	Singular	aħtafala	a-	-t-	-a	aħtafalat	a-	-t-	-at
	Dual	aħtafala:	a-	-t-	-a:	aħtafalata:	a-	-t-	-ata:
	Plural	aħtafalu	a-	-t-	-u	aħtafalna	a-	-t-	na-

2.2. Inflectional affixes in nouns

In Arabic language, every noun has a gender (masculine or feminine) and the adjectives that modify the noun(s) will agree for gender as well as number and there is one exception. Arabic makes use much of gender than some European languages like English. There are three number categories for Arabic nouns (including adjectives); singular, dual, and plural. The plural is further divided into three subcategories: the regular masculine plural, the regular feminine plural, and the broken plural.

2.2.1. Inflectional affixes of gender

Some nouns can be changed from masculine into feminine nouns by adding the suffix 'ﺔ'/ah/ (this suffix is pronounced /ah/ if the reader or speaker wants to stop/pause reading or speaking after the word that is attached with that suffix and it is pronounced /at/ if the reader or speaker continues reading or speaking). Here we will deal with this suffix as it is attached

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to a separate word, i.e. to a word that is pronounced or read alone not in a combination of words. The following are some examples:

Table (5) Inflectional suffix of gender in singular nouns

Masculine	Feminine	Suffix	Gloss
talib	talibah	-ah	Student
modi:r	modi:rah	-ah	Manager

The suffix '-ah' is the suffix of the feminine noun. Most feminine nouns in Arabic end in '-ah', but this '-ah' is not always a suffix; it can be a part of the basic feminine form. The noun *daʒaʒah* (hen), for example, is feminine and the '-ah' is not a suffix and the masculine noun is *di:k* (cock).

So, it is not a rule that every masculine noun can be changed into feminine by adding the suffix '-ah' and not every feminine noun can be changed into masculine noun by deleting the '-ah'. There are also some feminine nouns that do not end in '-ah'. The noun *bent* (a girl) is a feminine noun and it does not end in '-ah'.

Most of the nouns are either masculine or feminine in their nature (forms) not by their suffix, i.e. the gender in Arabic is arbitrary in most cases. In Arabic, there are also some nouns that are only masculine and refer to the jobs of men and cannot be changed into feminine. But in modern Arabic, those masculine nouns are used as masculine and feminine as they can refer to the jobs of men and women. And if we add the feminine suffix '-ah' to the masculine form, we will create another word.

For example, the noun *taja:r* (pilot) is a masculine noun but it refers to someone (a man or a woman) whose job is flying an aircraft and if we add the suffix '-ah' to it, we will create the new word *taja:rah* that means 'an aircraft'.

There are also some nouns that are only feminine and cannot be changed into masculine. For, example, the noun *samakah* (a fish) is only feminine and it cannot be changed into masculine. If we delete the '-ah', it will become plural. So, we can say "*akalat al-samakah al- tça:m'* (the fish ate the food).

Also there are some nouns that are only masculine and refer to a man and cannot be changed to feminine or used to refer to a woman even in the modern Arabic. For example, the noun 'insa:n' (a human-being) is masculine and refers to a man and not to a woman. We can say; "*qa:baltu insa:n tawi:l*" (I met a tall human-being) and we cannot say; "*qa:baltu insa:n tawi:lah*" or "*qa:baltu insa:nah tawi:lah*".

The adjectives that modify the nouns should agree with the gender. We say "*qaru:rah kabi:rah*" (a big bottle) and we cannot say; "*qaru:rah kabi:r*" because the noun *qaru:rah* is feminine, so the adjective *kabi:r* that modifies the noun should agree with the noun gender and should be feminine. Arabic has a suffix that determines the gender, but English does not have this characteristic. Even if there are some nouns that can be either masculine or feminine, they are still rare in English.

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2.2.2. Inflectional affixes of dual and plural nouns

In Arabic, the dual can be formed by adding the suffix 'ان/ـان'/a:n/ to the masculine singular noun and by adding '-a:n' to the feminine noun after changing the '-ah' into '-at' if the '-ah' is in the singular form of the feminine noun. But there is a difference between the suffix of the dual form when it is a subject and the suffix of the dual form when it is an object or after a preposition.

The plural in Arabic is further divided into three subcategories: the regular masculine plural, the regular feminine plural, and the broken plural. The regular masculine plural is formed by adding the suffix 'ون/ـون' /u:n/ to the singular form when it is a subject and by adding the suffix '/ين/ـين' /i:n/ to the singular if it is an object or after a preposition. In Arabic, the dual and plural noun, when it is a subject, has a different suffix from that of the dual and plural noun, when it is an object or after a preposition. But in English, the form of the plural noun is the same in both cases (subject and object).

In Arabic, the regular feminine plural is formed by adding the suffix 'ات/ـات ' /a:t/ to the singular form after deleting the feminine suffix '-ah' if it is in the singular form or if it is a part of the feminine singular noun. Unlike the suffix of the regular masculine plural, the suffix of the regular feminine plural is the same whether it is a subject or an object or after a preposition. Table (6) shows the suffix of the dual and plural forms. The nouns *mudaris* and *mudarisah* (teacher), masculine and feminine respectively, will be taken as an example.

Table (5) Inflectional suffixes of dual and plural nouns

Noun	Gender	Number	Suffixed noun	Suffix
Subject	Masculine	Dual	mudarisa:n	-a:n
		Plural	mudarisu:n	-u:n
	Feminine	Dual	Mudarisata:n	-a:n
		Plural	Mudarisa:t	-a:t
Object/after a preposition	Masculine	Dual	Mudarisein	-ein
		Plural	Mudarisi:n	-i:n
	Feminine	Dual	mudarisatein	-ein
		Plural	Mudarisa:t	-a:t

2.2.3. The broken plural

In Arabic there are a large number of broken plurals. Broken plural is formed by changing some letters in the spelling and pronunciation of the singular form. There is no specific rule for adding a particular affix(es) to form the broken plural. The broken plurals in Arabic are semi-arbitrary; they are not absolutely arbitrary because some of them have one of the patterns 'aCCa:C' or 'CaCa:CiC' (C stands for consonant) and some of them do not have any particular pattern. The following are examples of the broken plurals that have such patterns.

Singular	Plural	Gloss
- qalam	aqla:m (aCCa:C)	pen

-	wazn	awza:n (aCCa:C)	measure
-	na:fiðah	nawa:fið (CaCa:CiC)	window
-	marwaħah	mara:wiħ (CaCa:CiC)	fan

The following are examples of the broken plurals that do not have any particular pattern.

	Singular	Plural	Gloss
-	kalb	kila:b	dog
-	ħima:r	ħami:r	donkey
-	Šahn	Šohu:n	plate
-	qaru:rah	qawa:ri:r	bottle
-	reʒl	arʒul	leg

"The Arabic broken plural system is highly allomorphic" (Soudi, A. et al, 2007). Notice that the broken plurals are different from the irregular plurals because the spelling of the irregular plural is absolutely different from the spelling of its singular form. The noun 'imraʔah' (woman) is singular and 'nisa:' (women) is plural. The irregular plurals are very rare in Arabic.

2.4. Inflectional affixes of adjectives

(a) Affixes of Adjectives that modify nouns

In Arabic, adjectives that modify nouns will agree for gender as well as number of the nouns they modify.

In the sentence "qa:baltu Šaħafi ṭawi:l" (I met a tall (male) journalist), the noun 'Šaħafi' (journalist) is masculine and the adjective 'ṭawi:l' (tall) is masculine. But in the sentence "qa:baltu Šaħafiah ṭawi:lah" (I met a tall (female) journalist), the noun 'Šaħafiah' (a female journalist) is feminine and the adjective 'ṭawi:lah' (tall) is feminine.

So, the feminine suffix '-ah' is attached to the noun 'Šaħafiah' and to the adjective 'ṭawi:lah'. Also if the noun the adjective modifies is singular, the adjective must be singular and if the noun is dual, the adjective must have dual affix(es) and if the noun is plural, the adjective must have plural affix(es). But there is one exception. If the noun is a feminine broken plural, the adjective that modifies must be feminine singular.

(b) Affixes of Comparative and Superlative adjectives

In Arabic, the prefix 'ا' /a-/ is used as an affix of the comparative and superlative forms of the adjectives that are bi-syllabic. The comparative and superlative forms of the bi-syllabic adjectives are formed by adding the prefix 'ا' /a-/ with some changes in the spelling and pronunciation of the adjectives. The following are some examples.

	Adjective	Comparative	Superlative	Gloss
-	kabi:r	akbar	al-akbar	big/large
-	ðaki	aðka	al-aðka	clever

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The comparative form and the superlative form of the adjective affixed with the prefix 'ا' /a-/ can be used to refer to both masculine and feminine.

The comparative and superlative forms of the adjectives that consist of more than two syllables are not affixed. Such adjectives can be changed into comparative forms and superlative forms by changing them into nouns and adding the words 'akθar' (more) and 'al-akθar' (the most) before them respectively.

Conclusion and Findings

In this paper, a brief review of contrastive linguistics and contrastive analysis has been presented. The relationship between contrastive analysis and other fields of theoretical and applied linguistics – error analysis, translation, and bilingualism – was also presented. Inflectional affixes and derivational affixes were briefly discussed.

The inflectional affixes in English were discussed and it was found that there are many inflectional affixes in English; verbal inflectional suffixes, plural inflectional suffixes, the genitive suffixes and adjectival inflectional suffixes. Then, the inflectional affixes in Arabic were discussed. Inflectional affixes in Arabic are verbal affixes, nouns suffixes, and adjectival affixes. Table (6) shows the verbal affixes of both English and Arabic and table (7) shows the noun affixes of both English and Arabic.

Table (6) Verbal affixes in English and Arabic

Person	Number	Gender	Present Simple			Past and past participle		Present participle		Imperative		
			English Suffix	Arabic		English suffix	Arabic suffix	English Suffix	Arabic Affix	English Affix	Arabic	
				Prefix	Suffix						Prefix	Suffix
1st	S	M	-	a-	-	-ed	-tu	-ing	-	-	-	-
		F										
	D	M	-	na-	-	-ed	-na	-	-	-	-	-
		F										
	P	M	-					-ing				
		F										
2nd	S	M	-	ta-	-	-ed	-ta	-ing	-	-	i-	-
		F		ta-	-i(:n)		-ti		-	-	i-	-i
	D	M		ta-	-a:n		-tuma:		-	-	i-	-a:
		F		ta-	-a:n		-tuma:		-	-	i-	-a:
	P	M		ta-	-u:n		-tum		-	-	i-	-u
		F		ta-	-na		-tuna		-	-	i-	-ein
3rd	S	M	-s	ya-	-	-ed	-a	-ing	-	-	-	-
		F	-s	ta-	-	-ed	-at	-ing	-	-	-	-
		M		ya-	-a:n		-a:		-	-	-	-

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D	F		ya-	-a:n		-ata:		-	-	-	-
P	M	-	ya-	-u:n	-ed	-u	-ing	-	-	-	-
	F		ya-	-na		-na		-	-	-	-

Abbreviations used in the table:
S: Singular   D: Dual   P: Plural   M: Masculine   F: Feminine

(Notice that the English inflectional suffix '-s' of the third person singular of the present simple is also used for the non-personal 'it'.)

Table (7); noun affixes in English and Arabic

Number	Gender	Subjective case		Objective case	
		English	Arabic	English	Arabic
Singular	Masculine	-	-	-	-
	Feminine		-		-
Dual	Masculine	-	-a:n	-	-ein
	Feminine		-a:n		-ein
Plural	Masculine	-s	-u:n	-s	-i:n
	Feminine		-a:t		-a:t

(Note: the noun affixes in English and Arabic are only suffixes)

(Notice that in the above table the plurals in Arabic are only the regular masculine and the regular feminine.)

In Arabic, the adjectives that modify the nouns behave as the nouns they modify. But in English, there is no affix attached to the adjectives that modify nouns. In Arabic, the suffix of the feminine noun is '-ah' but there is no gender distinction in English.

The findings of the study and comparison of inflectional affixes in English and Arabic can be summarized as follows:

- In English the inflectional affixes can be suffixes only, whereas the inflectional affixes in Arabic can be suffixes, prefixes or infixes.
- In English the inflectional suffixes of the verb determine the person and tense and there are suffixes that determine the number in the case of the present simple tense and there are no suffixes that determine the gender, whereas in Arabic the inflectional affixes of the verb determine the person, number, tense and gender.
- In English there is no dual suffix, whereas in Arabic there are dual affixes.
- In English there is no gender suffix, whereas in Arabic there is.
- In English, there is no affix that determines the imperative form of the verb but in Arabic there is the prefix 'ا' 'i' that determines the imperative form.
- In English, the suffix '-ing' determines the progressive tense (form) but in Arabic there is no suffix that determines the progressive tense (form).
- In English there is a genitive suffix, whereas in Arabic there is no genitive suffix.

- There is a zero inflectional plural suffix in English but in Arabic there is no zero inflectional plural affix.
- In English the suffix of the subject plural form is the same of the suffix of the object plural form but in Arabic the subject plural/dual form is different from the object plural/dual form.
- It was found that the inflectional system of nouns of Arabic is more complex than that of English.
- In Arabic, the adjectival affixes agree for the gender and number of the nouns the adjectives modify, but in English there is no noun-adjective agreement.
- The inflectional affixes of the comparative and superlative forms of adjectives in English are suffixes and these suffixes do not make any essential change in the spelling of the adjectives, but in Arabic the only inflectional affix of the comparative and superlative forms is a prefix.
- The proper names, abstract names and some collective nouns cannot be changed into plural in both languages (English and Arabic). So, there are no inflectional affixes for such kind of nouns.
- In English and Arabic, the affixes of the nouns are always suffixes.

Depending on the findings of the comparison stated above, it can be concluded that the two systems of inflection in English and Arabic are different rather than similar and the system of inflection of English is structurally simpler than that of Arabic. And finally, pedagogically speaking, the Arabic learners will find it easy to learn the system of inflectional affixes of English. Moreover, no difficulties can be faced during learning English inflectional affixes.

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Appendix

A list of phonetic symbols of the Arabic consonants

S. no.	Phonetic symbol	Arabic letter	Three-term label	Example
1	b	بـ/ب	Voiced bilabial plosive	ba:b (door)
2	t	تـ/ت	Voiceless denti-alveolar plosive	ti:n (fags)
3	d	دـ/د	Voiced denti-alveolar plosive	di:n (religion)
4	k	كـ/ك	Voiceless velar plosive	kita:b (book)
5	ʒ	جـ/ج	Voiced palate-alveolar affricate	daʒaʒah (hen)
6	q	قـ/ق	Voiceless uvular plosive	qamar (moon)
7	l	لـ/ل	Voiced alveolar lateral	la: (no)
8	m	مـ/م	Voiced bilabial nasal	maʈar (rain)
9	n	نـ/ن	Voiced alveolar nasal	nu:r (light)
10	f	فـ/ف	Voiceless labio-dental	fan (art)
11	θ	ثـ/ث	Voiceless inter-dental fricative	θalaθah (three)
12	ð	ذـ/ذ	Voiced inter-dental fricative	ðamb (sin)
13	s	سـ/س	Voiceless alveolar fricative	su:q (market)
14	Š	صـ/ص	Voiceless velarised alveolar fricative	Šabaħ (morning)
15	z	زـ/ز	Voiced alveolar fricative	ruz (rice)
16	ʃ	شـ/ش	Voiceless palate-alveolar fricative	ʃams (sun)

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17	x	خ/خـ	Semi-Voiced uvular fricative	xubz (bread)
18	ɣ	غ/غـ	Voiced uvular fricative	ɣuba:r (dust)
19	ħ	ح/حـ	Voiceless pharyngeal fricative	ħima:r (donkey)
20	h	ه/هـ/ـهـ/ـه	Voiceless glottal fricative	hawa:& (air)
21	r	ر/ـر	Voiced alveolar trill	rab (lord)
22	ʕ	ع/عـ	Voiced pharyngeal frictionless continuant	ʕaql (mind)
23	j	ي/يـ	Voiced palatal semi-vowel	jawu:m (day)
24	w	و/ـو	Voiced labio-velar semi-vowel	wa:hid (one)
25	ŧ	ط	Voiceless velarised denti-alveolar plosive	ŧi:n (soil)
26	đ	ض/ضـ	Voiced velarised denti-alveolar plosive	đaʕi:f (weak)
27	∂	ظ	Voiced velarised alveolar fricative	∂arf (envelope)
28	ʔ	أ	Voiceless epiglottal plosive	faʔr (rat)

A list of phonetic symbols of the Arabic vowels

s. no.	Phonetic symbol	Label	Example
1	i	Front unrounded vowel between close and half-close (short)	kita:b (book)
2	i:	Front close unrounded vowel (long)	di:n (religion)
3	a	Front open unrounded vowel (short)	qalam(pen)
4	a:	Front open unrounded vowel (long)	ba:b (door)
5	u	Back rounded vowel between close and half close (short)	ruz (rice)
6	u:	Back close rounded vowel (long)	su:q (market)

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