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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PAST TENSE VERB MORPHOLOGY IN 1 ARABIC AND VIETNAMESE 2 3 1. ABSTRACT 4 This study conducts a comparative analysis of past tense verb morphology between 5 Arabic (an inflectional language) and Vietnamese (an isolating language). By examining 6 twelve grammatical persons, the paper elucidates the mechanism of integrating subject 7 information into verbal suffixes in Arabic, contrasted with the analytic mechanism based 8 on function words and personal pronouns in Vietnamese. The results indicate that while 9 Arabic achieves conciseness through morphological inflection, Vietnamese prioritizes 10 socio-pragmatic flexibility. This research provides a systematic framework to assist 11 learners in effectively transitioning their cognitive approach from lexico-syntactic 12 structures to morpho-grammatical constructions. 13 Keywords: Comparative linguistics, Arabic, Vietnamese, verb morphology, past tense, 14 12 grammatical persons. 15 2. INTRODUCTION 16 The typological differences between Arabic and Vietnamese create significant barriers in 17 language acquisition. Arabic, belonging to the Semitic branch, is renowned for its root18 and-pattern system, where information regarding person, number, and gender is encoded 19 directly into the verb. Conversely, Vietnamese, an Austroasiatic language, is a 20 quintessential example of an isolating language where words do not undergo 21 morphological changes. This study focuses on the past tense (Al-Fi'l Al-Maadi) to 22 analyze how these two systems resolve the identification of the acting entity, thereby 23 offering academic insights into the equivalence between morphemes and vocabulary. 24 3. METHODS 25 The study employs a descriptive and direct comparative method. The verb "to write" (K26 T-B - كتب) is selected as a model due to its prevalence and standard trilateral structure. 27 Twelve conjugated forms of this verb in the past tense are placed alongside equivalent 28 Vietnamese structures. The analysis centers on two axes: the Morphological Axis (Arabic 29 suffixes) and the Pragmatic Axis (the Vietnamese address system). 30 4. DETAILED RESULTS AND DISCUSSION 31 The past tense verb system in Arabic is constructed based on the tight integration 32 between the verbal root and morphological suffixes, creating a unit that carries multi33

layered information. Below is a detailed survey across twelve grammatical persons. 34

4.1. First Person Singular (I) 35 As the starting point of the inflectional system, the first person singular is where the 36 subject directly asserts their individual presence in the action. 37 Language Morphological / Lexical Structure Specific Example Arabic Root + Suffix -tu Katab-tu (كَتَبْتُ) Vietnamese Pronoun + "đã" + Verb Tôi đã viết In Arabic, the suffix -tu is not merely a phonetic unit but a functional morpheme that 38 encapsulates both categories of person and number. When attached to the root, it 39 eliminates the need for independent pronouns in most communicative contexts. In 40 Vietnamese, the mechanism is entirely reversed, relying on a lexico-syntactic structure to 41 disaggregate meanings: the pronoun "tôi" identifies the subject, and the particle "đã" 42 locates the action in time. This contrast demonstrates the morphological economy of 43 Arabic against the structural transparency of Vietnamese vocabulary, illustrating the 44 transition from bound morphemes to independent lexical entities. 45

4.2. First Person Plural (We) 46 The transition from the individual "I" to a collective subject is achieved through the 47 plural morpheme of the first person. 48 Language Morphological / Lexical Structure Specific Example Arabic Root + Suffix -na Katab-na (كَتَبْنَا) Vietnamese Plural Pronoun + "đã" + Verb Chúng tôi/ta đã viết The appearance of the suffix -na in Arabic creates a morphological unity for any group of 49

subjects that includes the speaker, regardless of inclusivity or exclusivity. However, when 50 contrasted with Vietnamese, we find a deeper lexical differentiation where the speaker 51 must choose between "chúng ta" (inclusive) and "chúng tôi" (exclusive). This reflects that 52 while Arabic is more complex in verbal inflection, Vietnamese possesses a higher lexical 53 resolution in defining the boundaries of the communicative community, showing that 54 Arabic focuses on numerical morphology while Vietnamese prioritizes social interaction. 55

4.3. Second Person Singular - Masculine (You - Male) 56 The second person singular introduces the category of gender, a pivotal morphological 57 feature in

Arabic. 58 Language Morphological / Lexical Structure Specific Example Arabic Root + Suffix -ta Katab-ta (كَتَبْتُ) Vietnamese Honorific/Pronoun + "đã" + Verb Anh/Em đã viết Arabic grammaticizes masculine gender through the suffix -ta, an internal transformation 59 process that requires no external support. Meanwhile, Vietnamese embeds this 60 information into its kinship-based address system, where using "anh" or "em" identifies 61 gender while simultaneously establishing a social hierarchy. Consequently, the 62 equivalence here reflects a cognitive shift from pure gender classification to status-based 63 classification, creating a unique intersection between rigid grammatical categories and 64 flexible honorific cultures. 65 4.4. Second Person Singular - Feminine (You - Female) 66 Gender opposition is most clearly depicted when the direct interlocutor is female. 67 Language Morphological / Lexical Structure Specific Example Arabic Root + Suffix -ti Katab-ti (كَتَبْتُ)

Vietnamese Honorific/Pronoun + "đã" + Verb Chị/Em đã viết With just a change of the vowel from -ta to -ti, Arabic completely redefines the intended 68 subject of the action. In Vietnamese, the verb remains entirely invariant, and the burden 69 of identification is shifted to pronouns such as "chị" or "em." The phonetic precision of 70 the Arabic morpheme creates a tight system of opposition, forcing the learner to maintain 71 an awareness of the interlocutor's gender, which Vietnamese handles by leveraging its 72 flexible lexical system to express equivalent meanings. 73 4.5. Second Person Dual (You Two) 74 The dual number is a unique morphological feature, creating an intermediate numerical 75 category between singular and plural in Arabic. 76 Language Morphological / Lexical Structure Specific Example Arabic Root + Suffix -tuma Katab-tuma (كَتَبْتُمَا) Vietnamese Number "hai" + Pronoun + "đã" + Verb Hai bạn/anh chị đã viết The form -tuma serves as a highly grammaticized numerical specifier. Vietnamese, not 77 possessing a dual morphological form, must utilize a lexicalization method through the 78 number "hai" combined with a pronoun. This contrast shows that Arabic expresses 79 quantity through rigid morphological rules, whereas Vietnamese relies on lexical 80 assembly, making the

dual number a cognitive barrier where learners must adapt to using 81 specific suffixes instead of numerical quantifiers. 82 4.6. Second Person Plural - Masculine (You - All Male/Mixed) 83 When the scale of the subject group increases, Arabic transitions to the formal plural 84 morphology for the masculine gender. 85

Language Morphological / Lexical Structure Specific Example Arabic Root + Suffix -tum Katab-tum (كَتَبْتُمْ) Vietnamese Plural Marker + Pronoun + "đã" + Verb Các anh/bạn đã viết The suffix -tum characterizes the masculine generalization in Arabic, often applied to 86 gender-mixed groups. In Vietnamese, the lexical structure "các + pronoun" provides a 87 flexible mechanism for group designation. The morphological transition from the dual 88 tuma to the plural -tum reflects the principle of Linguistic Economy through the 89 optimization of syllabic length: the language prioritizes a shorter form that carries a 90 broader information capacity. This demonstrates the efficiency of the inflectional system 91 in Arabic compared to the transparent lexical markers used in Vietnamese to manage 92 numerical information. 93 4.7. Second Person Plural - Feminine (You - All Female) 94 Opposite the generalization of the masculine group, a group consisting entirely of female 95 subjects possesses a distinct and gender-marked form. 96 Language Morphological / Lexical Structure Specific Example Arabic Root + Suffix -tunna Katab-tunna (كَتَبْتُنَّ) Vietnamese Plural Marker + Pronoun + "đã" + Verb Các chị/em đã viết The suffix -tunna, with its geminate consonant, creates a powerful phonetic nuance, 97 asserting the absolute gender of the acting subject. Vietnamese handles this by combining 98 the plural marker with corresponding feminine pronouns. Consequently, we observe that 99 while Vietnamese maintains the neutrality of the verb, Arabic compels the speaker to 100 maintain gender awareness in every morphological change, testifying to the high degree 101 of specialization in the Semitic inflectional system. 102

4.8. Third Person Singular - Masculine (He) 103 Moving to the third person, we encounter the most basic form of the Arabic verb, which 104 serves as the starting point for all other

transformations. 105 Language Morphological / Lexical Structure Specific Example Arabic Root (Often ending in -a) Katab-a (كَتَبُ) Vietnamese 3rd Person Pronoun + "đã" + Verb Anh ấy đã viết The form Katab-a is the most minimalist unit, often considered the "zero-suffix" form in 106 the past tense system. In Vietnamese, identifying the third person depends entirely on the 107 distant pronoun system. The correlation between the "zero form" of Arabic and the 108 "detached pronoun" of Vietnamese reflects two different approaches to establishing a 109 subject absent from the conversation, while identifying the masculine singular as the 110 most crucial morphological reference point for constructing the entire Arabic verbal 111 system. 112 4.9. Third Person Singular - Feminine (She) 113 To identify a female subject being discussed, Arabic utilizes a specific feminine suffix for 114 the third person. 115 Language Morphological / Lexical Structure Specific Example Arabic Root + Suffix -at Katab-at (كَتَبَتْ) Vietnamese 3rd Person Pronoun + "đã" + Verb Cô ấy/Chị ấy đã viết The suffix -at performs the function of gender classification while altering the rhythmic 116 syllable structure of the word. Compared to Vietnamese, the change is limited to the 117 choice of the noun/pronoun (e.g., "cô", "chị") without affecting the verbal structure. This 118

equivalence once again confirms the consistency in gender classification across Arabic 119 grammatical persons, contrasted with the lexical flexibility and socio-contextual 120 sensitivity of Vietnamese. 121 4.10. Third Person Dual (Those Two) 122 The dual number in the third person continues to exhibit complexity by distinguishing 123 gender even within the verb form. 124 Language Morphological / Lexical Structure Specific Example Arabic Root + -aa / -ata Katab-aa / Katab-ata (كَتَبَا / كَتَبَتَا) Vietnamese Determiner Phrase + "đã" + Verb Hai người họ đã viết The separation between suffixes -aa and -ata requires absolute precision in identifying 125 the subject. Vietnamese demonstrates lexical richness and flexibility by using noun 126 phrases or specific quantifiers such as "hai người họ" (those two), "cả hai anh ấy" (both 127 of them), or "hai chị ấy" to express the dual concept clearly. This comparison shows that 128 while Arabic expresses sophisticated grammatical details

through morphology, 129 Vietnamese maximizes the expressive capacity of its isolating lexical system, proving the 130 parallel between morphological specialization and lexical explicitness. 131 4.11. Third Person Plural - Masculine (They - Male/Mixed) 132 When referring to a group of absent male (or mixed) subjects, Arabic applies a 133 characteristic plural masculine form. 134 Language Morphological / Lexical Structure Specific Example Arabic Root + Suffix -uu Katab-uu (كَتَبُوا)

Vietnamese Plural Pronoun + "đã" + Verb Họ đã viết The suffix -uu signifies collectivity and a phonetic open-endedness. Vietnamese uses the 135 pronoun "họ," an invariant lexical unit. This contrast highlights the multi-layered 136 information compression strategy of Arabic versus the analytical strategy of Vietnamese, 137 where the notion of "plurality" is inherent in the pronoun rather than expressed through 138 verbal change, thus establishing the third person plural masculine as the prevalent form 139 for designating external groups. 140 4.12. Third Person Plural - Feminine (They - Female) 141 The system of twelve persons concludes with the form reserved for the group of women 142 being discussed. 143 Language Morphological / Lexical Structure Specific Example Arabic Root + Suffix -na Katab-na (كَتَبْنَ) Vietnamese Plural Pronoun + "đã" + Verb Họ (nhóm nữ) đã viết The short -na suffix here must be strictly distinguished from the long -naa of the first 144 person. Vietnamese handles this through explanatory lexical methods if the gender of the 145 "they" group needs to be clarified. This morphological overlap requires learners to have 146 strong grammatical knowledge for decoding, while affirming the integrity of the Arabic 147 morphological structure against the Vietnamese flexibility based on contextual analysis. 148 5. CONCLUSION 149 The comparison of twelve grammatical persons reveals a profound opposition in 150 typological linguistic strategies. Arabic employs an integrative strategy, turning the verb 151 into a multi-layered information carrier. Vietnamese employs a disintegrative strategy, 152 keeping the verb pure and shifting the informational burden onto the pronoun system and 153 syntactic order. Mastering these comparison tables helps learners understand how the 154 worldview of each nation is

encoded: one side in morphological precision, the other in 155

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