CHAPTER 3

CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS

In this chapter, a description of the Arabic past tenses is followed by a description of the main French past tenses, that is, the *passé composé*, *Imparfait; plus-que-parfait,* and the *passé simple*. We also discuss the use of tenses in Arabic and French.

3.1   Arabic Tenses

The Arabic verb system is different from the French or Latin systems. There are two main tenses in the Arabic language, the perfect tense or the past tense, and the imperfect tense or the present tense. The action is completed in the perfect tense which is also called the past tense. For example, one may say, "I ate". The action of eating was finished in the past. The past could be a few minutes or a few decades before the present time. Alternately, in the second tense, i.e., the imperfect, the action is still continuing. For example, you knock on the door and walk in. You see he is eating his meal. He says to you, "I am eating". The action is still continuing, he is still eating while talking to you. This is the present tense in English. It is also the "imperfect tense" in Arabic. The command tense of the verb is to order somebody to do something. The table below shows the root *akala* "he ate" conjugated in the three tenses with all of the pronouns. The pronouns in English are on the left followed by their Arabic equivalents. The third, fourth, and fifth columns show the conjugation of the past, present, and command forms of the verb "*akala*" with the corresponding pronoun.

Table 3.1: Perfect and Imperfect Tenses of the Verb "*akala*" in Arabic

English Pronouns	Arabic Pronouns	Past	Present	Command
I	*anaa*	*akaltu*	*aakulu*	-
He	*huwa*	*akala*	*ya'kulu*	-
She	*hiya*	*akalat*	*ta'kulu*	-
We	*nahnu*	*akalnaa*	*na'kulu*	-
You (SM)	*anta*	*akalta*	*ta'kulu*	*Kul*
You (SF)	*anti*	*akalti*	*ta'kuliyna*	*Kuli*
You two (M,F)	*antumaa*	*akaltumaa*	*ta'kulaani*	*Kulaa*
You (MP)	*antum*	*akaltum*	*ta'kuluuna*	*Kulu*
You (FP)	*antunna*	*akaltunna*	*ta'kulna*	*Kulna*
They two (M)	*humaa*	*akalaa*	*ya'kulaani*	-
They two (F)	*humaa*	*akalataa*	*ya'kulaani*	-
They (M)	*hum*	*akaluu*	*ya'kuluuna*	-
They (F)	*hunna*	*akalna*	*ya'kulna*	-

There is no future tense in Arabic like in French or English. To talk about the future the prefix "*sa*" is added to the imperfect form of the verb. For example, let's look at the table above to find out the imperfect form of the verb *akala*. It is *ya'kulu*. Add the prefix *sa* to the *ya'kulu* you get, *saya'kulu* which means "He will eat".

3.1.1   The Past Tense in Arabic

In Arabic grammar, the verbs are represented by the third person singular masculine form. In English, "to eat" represents the "verb form" in the infinitive. In Arabic, it is represented by the form "he ate", e.g., the third person singular masculine form.

The past tense of the verbs in Arabic is usually represented by three letters. This form is called the infinitive form of the verb or the "root". For example, the root form of the verb "

"يَأْكُلْ" is "أَكَلَ". These three letters are: "ل، ك، أ", the first letter is " أ " pronounced as "a" as in the word "above", the middle letter is " ك " pronounced as "c" as in "camera" , and the third letter is " ل " pronounced as "l" as in "light". Every other form is generated from this three-letter root form.

We add suffixes and prefixes to the root form to generate other tenses and forms. In order to produce the perfect tense forms of the verbs, we first take the three-letter root form of the verb for example " أَكَل " pronounced as *akal* without "a" at the end and add suffixes to *akal* to produce the perfect tense for different pronouns. For example, for the first person singular, i.e., "I", we add the suffix -tu e.g., it becomes *akaltu* written as أَكَلتُ which means "I ate".

3.1.2   Conjugation of the Past Tense in the Arabic Language

The structural form of the past tense is one of the easiest grammatical structures in the Arabic language. Basically, every regular verb that is conjugated in the past tense follows a very strict pattern. All regular verbs in the past tense are given with the pronoun هُوَ pronounced "*huwa*" which is the personal pronoun "he". The overwhelming majority of verbs in the *huwa*-form in the past tense have three consonants that are accompanied by the same vowel: the *fatha* (fat-hah). The *fatha* creates the "ah" sound.

For example, the verb form for "wrote" in the past tense is *kataba* (kah-tah-bah); its three consonants are "k," "t," and "b." Table 3.2 shows some common verbs in the past tense that one may use while speaking Arabic.

Table 3.2: Some Arabic Common Verbs in the Past Tense

Pronunciation	Transcription	In Arabic	Translation
akala	*ah-kah-lah*	أَكَلَ	Ate
fa'ala	*fah-ah-lah*	فعَلَ	Did
Dhahaba	*dhah-hah-bah*	ذهَبَ	Went
qara'a	*qah-rah-ah*	قَرَأ	Read
ra'a	*rah-ah*	رأى	Saw

The following table shows the verb *kataba* (kah-tah-bah) "wrote" conjugated using all the

personal pronouns. Note that the first part of the verb remains constant; only its suffix

changes depending on the personal pronoun used.

Table 3.3: *Kataba* Conjugated Using all the Personal Pronouns

Pronunciation	Transcription	In Arabic	Translation
'anaa katabtu	*ah -nah-kah-tab-too*	أنا كتبتُ	I wrote
'anta katabta	*an-tah kah-tab-tah*	أنتَ كتبتَ	You wrote (MS)
'anti katabtii	*an-tee kah-tab-tee*	أنتِ كتبتِ	You wrote (FS)
huwa kataba	*hoo-wah kah-tah-bah*	هوَ كتبَ	He wrote
hiya katabat	*hee-yah kah-tah-bat*	هيَ كتبتْ	She wrote
naHnu katabnaa	*nah-noo kah-tab-nah*	نحنُ كتبنا	We wrote
'antum katabtum	*an-toom kah-tab-toom*	أنتمْ كتبتم	You wrote (MP)
'antunna katabtunna	*an-too-nah kah-tab-too-nah*	أنتنَّ كتبتنَّ	You wrote (FP)
hum katabuu	*hoom kah-tah-boo*	هُم كتبوا	They wrote (MP)
hunna katabna	*hoo-nah kah-tab-nah*	هنَّ كتبنَ	They wrote (FP)
antumaa katabtumaa	*an-too-mah kah-tab-too-mah*	أنتما كتبتما	You wrote (dual/M/F)
humaa katabaa	*hoo-mah kah-tah-bah*	هما كتبا	They wrote (dual/M)
humaa katabataa	*hoo-mah kah-tah-bah-tah*	هما كتبتا	They wrote (dual/F)

Every personal pronoun has a corresponding suffix used to conjugate and identify the verb

form in its specific tense. Table 3.4 outlines these specific suffixes.

Not all regular verbs in the past tense have three consonants. Some regular verbs have more

than three consonants, such as:

- *tafarraja* (tah-fah-rah-jah) "watched"

- *takallama* (tah-kah-lah-mah) "spoke"

Table 3.4: Personal Pronoun Suffixes for Verbs in the Past Tense

Pronunciation	Transcription	Verb Suffix	Pronoun	Translation
'anaa	*ah-nah*	*-tu*	أَنا	I/me
'anta	*an-tah*	*-ta*	أَنتَ	you (MS)
'anti	*an-tee*	*-tii*	أَنتِ	you (FS)
huwa	*hoo-wah*	*-a*	هوَ	he/it
hiya	*hee-yah*	*-at*	هيَ	she/it
nahnu	*nah-noo*	*-naa*	نحنُ	we
'antum	*an-toom*	*-tum*	أَنتُمْ	you (MP)
'antunna	*an-too-nah*	*-tunna*	أَنتنَّ	you (FP)
hum	*hoom*	*-uu*	هُم	they (MP)
hunna	*hoo-nah*	*-na*	هنَّ	they (FP)
'antumaa	*an-too-mah*	*-tumaaa*	أَنتما	you (dual)
humaa	*hoo-mah*	*-aa*	هما	they (M/dual)
humaa	*hoo-mah*	*-ataa*	هما	they (F/dual)

Even though these verbs have more than three consonants, they are still considered regular verbs. To conjugate them, the first part of the word is kept constant and only the last consonant of the word is changed using the corresponding suffixes to match the personal pronouns. Here are some simple sentences that combine nouns, adjectives, and verbs in the past tense:

- *dhahaba 'al-walad 'ilaa al-madrasa.* (dhah-hah-bah al-wah-lad ee-lah al-mad-rah-sah) "The boy went to the school."

- *takallamat al-binto fii al-saf.* (tah-kah-lah-mat al-bee-net fee al-sa-af) "The girl spoke in the classroom."

- *'akalnaa Ta'aam ladhiidh.* (ah-kal-nah tah-am lah-dheedh) "We ate delicious food."

3.1.3   Arabic Representation of the Pluperfect (*plus-que-parfait*)

The pluperfect tense is used for a past action or situation preceding another past action. It is formed with the past tense of كانَ (*kana*) plus the past tense of the verb indicating the action. Like the continuous past, the pluperfect can be used in a simple sentence:

- *Kanu hafaru bi'rayn fi sana.* "They had drilled two wells in a year."

But it is also common in a compound sentence:

- *Kana tarak al fondoq endama wasalat al shorta* "he had left the hotel when the police arrived."

For emphasis, the practical *qad* , may be put before the second verb: *kona qad raj'ana qabl yomeen*: "We had (already) returned two days earlier."

The pluperfect "he had written", etc, can be expressed in modern Arabic by using the perfect *kan*, 'he was', with the perfect of another verb, for example *kan katab* "he had written." This tense is related to classical Arabic *kana qad* or *qad kana* followed by the perfect of another verb, e.g:

- *Qad kana ra'a minka mitla ma ra'ayna* "He had already seen through you, just as we have seen."

As a matter of fact, *kana* is a stative expressing a situation existing at the moment when 'we saw' it and it does not shift the tense of the clause automatically to the pluperfect; thus: "He was already seeing through you, just as we saw". A similar analysis explains the modern use of the perfect *kana* with the imperfect of another verb to express the European imperfect or past continuous: "He was writing" *kana yaktub*. This compound tense goes back to classical *kana yaf'alu* which denotes a stable situation consisting in doing something, e.g.:

- *kana al tabebo yazoro al marda* "The doctor used to visit the sick people".

The duration in the past (past continuous) can be expressed also by the perfect *kana* with the active practice, e.g.:

- *kana katib* "He was writing."

By using modern Arabic, the future perfect can be expressed: *kana sa yaktob* "He will have written". This construction is used in classical Arabic to signify a situation resulting from an action which will be accomplished in the future.

3.2 French Tenses

One of the functions of French verbs is to express distinctions in time. Tenses, which serve to express time i.e. to situate events as taking place in the present, past or future, also express aspect, the stage reached by the action or its duration. In French, time and aspect are fused and expressed in various tense forms that do not correspond with English tenses.

To express time, French verbs take different forms in their endings for example, for the verbs *parler* "to speak" and *être* "to be". *Je parle* ' I speak' , *Je parlerai* ' I will speak'*; Je suis* 'I am'*, Je serai* 'I will be'. We can distinguish between simple tenses such as the *présent* and the *imparfait,* and compound tenses such as the *passé composé* and the *plus-que-parfait.*

French has more than 5 tenses to talk about the past. In addition to these tenses, there are also auxiliaries of time (e.g. *venir de*) and auxiliaries of aspect (e.g. *finir de* and *cesser de*) that can be used to refer to the past.

The five main past tenses are:

- *L'imparfait* (the imperfect tense)
- *Le passé composé* (compound tense and can function as the English simple past).
- *Le passé simple* (the past historic tense)
- *Le plus-que-parfait* (the pluperfect tense)
- *Le passé antérieur* (the past anterior tense)

French verbs take many forms and are marked for person, number, gender, tense and mood.

The list of possible forms of a verb with these modalities is called conjugation.

3.2.1 Conjugation of the *Imparfait* (imperfect)

To conjugate the imparfait, the stem is formed from the first person plural of the present tense. For example: *Nous **av**ons,* "we have", *Nous **parl**ons,* "we speak", *Nous **finiss**ons,* "we finish". To this stem, the following endings are added*:-ais, -ais, -ait, -ions, -iez, -aient*. The following table shows examples of the conjugation for a few verbs in the imperfect tense.

Table 3.5: Examples of Conjugations in the Imperfect Tense

Pronouns	*Avoir*	*Parler*	*Finir*
Je/J'	avais	parlais	finissais
Tu	avais	parlais	finissais
Il/elle	avait	parlait	finissait
Nous	avions	parlions	finissions
Vous	aviez	parliez	finissiez
Ils/elles	Avaient	parlaient	finissaient

There are a few hundred irregular verbs. The verb *être* has an irregular stem but with regular endings. For reasons of pronunciation, a stem which ends in **c** becomes **ç** before an **a** (e.g. *Je commençais*) and when it ends in **g**, the **g** takes a **e** (**ge**) before an **a** (*je man**g**eais*).

3.2.2 Conjugation of the *Passé Composé* (compound/ perfect tense)

The *passé composé* is formed by using an appropriate form of the present tense of an auxiliary i.e *avoir* or *être* and the past participle of the verb in question. Most verbs take the auxiliary *avoir* to form the compound tense. There are a limited number, especially the verbs of state or motion that form their *passé composé* with the verb *être*. Some of these verbs are : *descendre, retourner, arriver, partir, entrer, rester, sortir, venir, aller, naitre, mourir, monter, tomber, passer*. Derivations of these verbs are included, such as: *rentrer, revenir, devenir, survenir,* etc.

However, some of the above *être* verbs may also form their *passé composé* with *avoir* if they are used transitively (i.e if they are used with a direct object) e.g *sortir* (to take/bring

out); *monter* (to take/bring up); *passer* (to spend the time/the holidays; to take an examination).

Example: *J'ai sorti les clés de ma poche* "I took out the keys from my pocket". The verbs *monter* "to go up" and *descendre* "to go down" when used in expressions such as *descendre / monter l'escalier (l'échelle / la rue, etc)* "to go up/ down the stairs (ladder / road, etc) also take the auxiliary *avoir*.

All reflexive verbs form their *passé composé* with *être*. The past participles of regular verbs are formed as follows:

- For *-er* verbs (e.g. *écouter*), the past participle is formed by adding *-é* to the stem (*écout-*) of the verbs: *écouter→écouté*

- For *-ir* verbs (e.g. *partir*), the past participle is formed by adding *i* to the stem (*part-*) of the verb: *partir → parti*

- For *-re* verbs (e.g. *descendre*) the past participle is formed by adding *u* to the stem (*descend-*) of the verb: *descendre→ descendu*.

These are a number of irregular past participles. They fall into six categories namely:

- *-it (e.g. dire→dit; écrire→ écrit; faire→fait)*

- *-is (e.g. asseoir→assis; mettre→mis; prendre→ pris)*

- *-i (e.g. rire→ ri; suivre→suivi; suffire→suffi)*

- *-rt (e.g. ouvrir→ouvert; offrir→offert; mourir→mort)*

- *-u (verbs ending in-voir e.g. avoir→eu; voir→vu; savoir→su; recevoir→reçu; devoir→dû; pleuvoir→plu; pouvoir→pu)*

- (verbs ending in *-loir e.g. falloir→fallu; vouloir→voulu*) (verbs ending in *-ir e.g. courir→couru; tenir→tenu; venir→venu*) (verbs ending in*-re e.g. boire→bu; plaire→plu; paraître→paru; lire→lu; connaître→connu*)

- Irregular endings (e.g. *être→été; naître→né; résoudre→résolu; vivre→vécu*)

The past participle of the *passé composé* formed with *avoir* does not agree with the subject of the verb. It agrees with any preceding direct object in gender and number. The preceding direct object may be a personal pronoun (e.g. *le, la*), a relative pronoun (e.g. *que, lequel*) the interrogative adjective (e.g. *quel, quelle*) or *combien de*:

- *Je l'ai mangée. (J'ai mangé la pomme)*

- *Les femmes que tu as vues....*

- *Quels livres as-tu achetés ?*

- *Combien de lettres as-tu écrites ?*

- The participle does not agree with the object *en: Elle en a mangé trois.*

The past participle of verbs formed with *être* agrees in number and gender with the subject:

- *Je suis allé(e)...*

- *Il est allé...*

- *Elles sont allées...*

For reflexive verbs, the agreement of the past participle depends on the category of the reflexive verbs. In reality reflexive verbs where the doer of the action is both the subject and the object of the verbs, the past participle agrees with the preceding direct object, i.e. **se**:

- *Elle s'est lavé**e***

When the reflexive pronoun is not the direct object of the verb, but the indirect object, the past participle does not agree with the preceding pronoun:

- *Il s'est lavé les mains*

- *Elle s'est lavé les mains*

In reciprocal verbs, where two or more people are doing something to each other, the past participle agrees with **se** if it is the direct object. It does not agree with **se** if it is indirect:

- *Elles se sont rencontrées*. (**Se** is the direct object). But,

- *Elles se sont parlé* (**Se** is the indirect object)

For pronominal verbs which do not have a reflexive interpretation (e.g. *se laver, se mettre*), the past participle agrees with the subject:

- *Ils se sont levés*

- *Elles se sont levées*

3.2.3   Conjugation of the *Plus-Que-Parfait*

The pluperfect "*le plus-que-parfait*" is formed with the auxiliary in the *imparfait* followed by the past participle of the verb. The choice of auxiliary, *être* or *avoir,* is the same as for the *passé composé*.

The negation is formed in the usual manner by placing *ne* and *pas* around the conjugated verb, which in this case is the auxiliary: *Je n'avais pas mangé* "I had not eaten", *Je n'étais pas allé* "I had not gone".

Table 3.6: Conjugation of Verbs in the *Plus-Que-Parfait* with *avoir*

j'avais mangé "I had eaten"	*nous avions mangé* "we had eaten"
tu avais mangé "you had eaten"	*vous aviez mangé* "you had eaten"
il, elle / on avait mangé "he, she (it) / one had eaten"	*ils / elles avaient mangé* "they had eaten"

Table 3.7: Conjugation of Verbs in the *Plus-Que-Parfait* with *être*

j'étais allé(e) "I had gone"	*nous étions allé*(e)s "we had gone"
tu étais allé(e) "you had gone"	*vous étiez allé*(e)(s) "you had gone"
il / on était allé "he, (it) / one had gone"	*ils / elles étaient allé*(e)s "they had gone"

3.3   The Use of Tenses

3.3.1   Use of the P*lus-Que-Parfait*

In narration using the past tense, the *plus-que-parfait is* used to:

a. Express an action which precedes another past action or moment. In other words, the action in the *plus-que-parfait is* prior to another past action or moment. In

48

English the *plus-que-parfait is* indicated by had + past participle. In affirmative sentences in French, it is often, but not always, accompanied by the adverb *déjà* (already). The pluperfect in Arabic is represented by using *kana* set of verbs, they are used to compare two actions in the past. These are some examples :

- *A l'âge de sept ans, Obada avait déjà écrit dix poèmes.*

- At the age of seven, Obada had already composed ten poems.

- عندما بلغ من العمر سبعة, ألَّف عباده عشرة قصائد] *endama balagha mena al omre sabaa, allafa Obada ashrata qasaqed*].

- *Quelques années plus tard, il avait abandonné tout espoir de gloire littéraire. Mais il a changé d'avis quand il a lu les poèmes à Ahmad.*

- A few years later, he had abandoned all hope of literary fame. But he changed his mind when he read the poems to Ahmad.

- بعد عدة سنين, كان قد تخلى عن أمله في الشهره الأدبيه, و لكنه غير رأيه عندما قرأ قصائد أحمد [*ba'da edata seneen, kana qad takhala 'aan amaleh fi al shohra al adabeah, walakenaho ghayara ra'yaho endama qara'a qasa'ed Ahmad].*

- *Elle a adoré les poèmes innocents qu'Obada avait écrits pendant sa jeunesse.*

- She adored the innocent poems that Obada had written during his youth.

- هي تعشق القصائد البريئة التي كان قد كتبها عباده في شبابه [*hea ta'shaqo al qasa'ed al bare'a allate kana qad katabaha Obada fi shababeh].*

b. Not all instances of had + past participle in English are translated into *plus-que-parfait in* French. For example, in French *depuis* is sometimes used with the imperfect not the pluperfect and 'had just done something' is generally translated by *venir de* in the *imparfait*. These are some examples :

- *Le public littéraire attendait depuis des années de nouveaux poèmes d'Obada quand il retrouva enfin son inspiration.*

- The literary public had been waiting for years for new poems from Obada when at last he found his inspiration again.

- *En fait, Obada venait de commencer un nouveau poème quand son éditeur a téléphoné.*

- In fact, Obada had just started a new poem when his editor called.

Contrast the *plus-que-parfait in* this sentence with the examples above:

- *Obada avait (déjà) commencé son poème quand son éditeur téléphona.*

- Obada had begun his poem when his publisher called.

The opposite of *déjà* is the negative expression *pas encore*, just as 'already' is replaced by "not yet" in English. For example:

- *Obada n'avait pas (encore) fini son poème quand son éditeur téléphona.*

- Obada had not (yet) finished his poem when his editor called.

c. The *plus-que-parfait is* also commonly used in *si* clauses followed by the past conditional. For example:

- *Obada à son éditeur: Imbécile! Si vous ne m'aviez pas interrompu, j'aurais pu finir mon nouveau poème. A cause de vous, je sens que je perds à nouveau mon inspiration.*

- Obada to his editor: Imbecile! If you had not interrupted me, I would have been able to finish my new poem. Because of you, I'm losing my inspiration again.

- *Editeur: Mon Dieu, si j'avais su combien les artistes étaient difficiles, je serais devenu comptable!*

- Editor: My God. If I had known how difficult artists were, I'd have become an accountant.

3.3.2   Use of the *Imparfait*

This tense is used to describe an event in progress in the past without reference to the beginning or the end of the action. It is the equivalent of the present in the past:

- *J'attendais ma mère*

- كنتُ أنتظرُ أمِّيَ [*konto antadhero ommy*].

- I was waiting for my mother.

In Arabic one form of *kana* which is (كنتُ) is added before the present tense of the verb (أنتظرُ) to represent this aspect.

In narratives, the French *imparfait* provides the background of continuous or prolonged events against which punctual actions are carried out. In written narratives, the punctual actions or completed events will either be in the *passé composé* or the *passé simple*. In spoken narratives, the *passé composé* is used:

- *Pendant qu'il mangeait au restaurant, il a aperçu une amie.*

- عندما كان يأكل في المطعم ، قابلَ صديقاً [*endama kana ya'kulu fil mat'am, qabala sadeeqan*].

- While he was eating in the restaurant, he saw a friend.

In Arabic, *kana* is added before the past participle form of the verb to represent this aspect. French uses the perfect (*passé composé*) which can indicate time and aspect as well while in English the simple past tense is used. English uses the past progressive (was/were Verb + ing) to indicate an event in progress in the past for which French uses the imperfect (*imparfait*). The imperfect is used to describe a state of affairs in the past:

- *La semaine dernière, comme Ali avait trois jours de congé, il est allé à la plage.*

- في الاسبوع الماضي كان لعلي ثلاثة أيام أجازه فذهب الى الشاطئ [*fi el osbo' al madi kana li ali thalathata ayyam ajazah fa thahaba ila shati'*].

- Last week, as Ali had three days of leave, he went to the beach.

In the example above, the Arabic sentence uses *kana* to represent this type of verb which is very similar to the French language. French uses the imperfect to describe the state of affairs while English uses the simple past tense.

In French if the verb refers to an ongoing action rather than to a state of affairs, the imperfect may combine with the auxiliary of aspect *être en train de* to stress the idea of progress:

- *Hier, à trois heures, il était en train de travailler.*

- البارحه في الساعه الثالثه كان مشغلولا بالعمل [*al bariha fi sa'a athaletha kana mashghoolan bel amal*].

- Yesterday, at three o'clock he was busy working.

The imperfect is also used to express a habitual action or a repetition in the past. In English, such actions are generally described through the use of the forms *used to* or *would*:

- *Ali était très ponctuel : tous les jours sauf le weekend il sortait de chez lui à 8 h 25 pour prendre le métro.*

- كان عليٌ دقيقاً في مواعيدِه، كل يوم عدى عطلة الاسبوع، يخرج من بيته الساعه 8:25 صباحاً ليركب قطار الأنفاق [*kana ali daqeeqan fi mawa'eedeh, kul yaum ada otlat al osboo', yakhrojo men baytehi asa'ah 8 :25 sabahan liyarkaba qitar al anfaq*].

- Ali was very punctual: every day except on weekends, he would come out of his house at 8.25am to take the metro.

In the above example, the first imperfect *était* describes the state of affairs while the second *sortait* describes the habitual. In English the first verb used is the simple past tense; while the second verb *would* describes the habitual. This is not the conditional *would* but one which can be replaced by "used to". The Arabic language is also similar to French in terms of using *kana* in the first part of the sentence.

The imperfect expresses the simultaneity of all the actions, processes or states of affairs that took place in the past:

- *Ali était un grand distrait et pourtant un monsieur très sérieux. Il avait trente-deux ans, il était marié, avait trois enfants et il occupait un poste de directeur du personnel.*

- كانَ عليٌّ شارد الذّهنَ دائماً ومع ذلك رجل جدّي. كانَ عمره اِثنان وثلاثون سنةً، متَزوّجٌ ولديهِ ثلاثةُ أطفالٍ و يعمل مديراً [*kana ali shared athehn daeman wa ma' thalika rajolon jaddiy. Kana omroho ithnatan wa thalathoon sanah, motazawej wa ladayhi thalathat atfal wa ya'malo modeeran*].

- Ali was very absent–minded and yet a serious man. He was thirty-two years old, married, had three children and held the post of personal manager.

The imperfect tense is also used when a continuous but completed action in the past is expressed together with the time it began or together with its duration:

- *Il pleuvait depuis deux jours.*

- ما زالت تُمطرُ منذ يومين. [*ma zalat tomter montho yawmayn*].

- It had been raining for two days.

- *Ils habitaient à Jérusalem depuis combien de temps?*

- منذ متى عاشوا في القدس؟ [*montho mata asho fil qods*?]

- How long had they been living in Jerusalem?

The Imperfect has also stylistic uses. The *imparfait dramatique or imparfait de narration* is used to give greater immediacy or impact to complete past events by replacing the speaker or writer in the middle of the action as if it were in progress e.g.

- *Albert Camus mourait accidentallement en 1960.* (Jubb & Rouxeville, 1998:14)

- Albert Camus was to die in an accident in 1960.

The imperfect can also express modalities such as a condition (e.g. *si j'étais riche*), a regret (e.g. *si j'étais belle!*), politeness (e.g. je *voulais vous dire que…*), a suggestion (e.g. *je le faisais pour vous*), a discretion (e.g. *je venais vous parler de ses enfants*), a conjecture (e.g. *un pas de plus, elle tombait*).

3.3.3   Use of the *Passé Composé* and the *Passé Simple*

Of all the past tenses, the perfect tense is the most widely used, in spoken and written formal and informal contexts.

The *passé composé* is used to express an action or an event that is completed without any implication of its duration:

- *Il a décidé d'aller au restaurant.*

- قرّرَ الذِهاب إلى المطعم. *[qarrara a thahaba ela al mat'am].*

- He decided to go to the restaurant.

Very often a precise time or day is given:

- *Il est parti à neuf heures.*

- غادَرَ في السّاعة التاسعه. *[ghadara fi a sa'aa al tase'aa].*

- He left at nine o'clock.

The *passé composé* also expresses a series of completed actions or events:

- *Comme sa voiture marchait, il est rentré chez lui, il a pris de l'argent et il est retourné au garage.*

- عندما عَملتُ سيارته ، ذَهبَ إلى البيت، أَخذَ بعض المال وعادَ إلى الورشة. *[endama amelat sayarataho, thahaba ela al bayt, akhatha bada elmal wa aada ela al warsha].*

- As his car worked, he went home, took some money and went back to the workshop.

To give a clearer picture of the sequence of the actions or events, adverbs such as *d'abord, ensuite, puis, enfin* may be used:

- *D'abord, elle a regardé rapidement autour d'elle, puis, elle s'est assise sur la marche…*

- في باديء الأمر نَظرتُ حولها بسرعة، ثَم جَلستُ في الممر... *[fi bade' el amr nadharat hawlaha besor'a, thoma jalasat fil mamar].*

- At first she looked around her quickly, then she sat on the step …

In the above example, the *passé composé* functions as a definite past in place of the *passé simple* (past historic) to describe completed events in the past whose relevance continue into the present. The *passé simple* places a completed action squarely in the past and the action does not have consequences continuing into the present from the perspective of the writer. It is not used in spoken French. It is a tense for story-telling. The *passé composé* is used both in spoken and written French. When it replaces the *passé simple*, it is translated by the simple past tense in English.

French writers use the *passé simple* less and less these days. The *passé composé* is the equivalent of the *passé simple* and is replacing it more and more in literature, although the verbs *avoir* and *être* are still quite commonly written in the *passé simple* in formal writing. In the formation of the *passé simple* for verbs ending in er, the –er is dropped and the following endings are added.

Table 3.8: Conjugation of the Verb Ending in –er in the *Passé Simple*

Pronoun	Suffix	Conjugated
je/j'	*ai*	*parlai*
Tu	*as*	*parlas*
il/elle	*a*	*parla*
nous	*âmes*	*parlâmes*
vous	*âtes*	*parlâtes*
ils/elles	*èrent*	*parlèrent*

And for the formation for all -ir and -re verbs, the ending of the infinitive is dropped and the following endings are added:

Table 3.9: Conjugation of the Verb Ending in –ir in the *Passé Simple*

Pronoun	Suffix	Conjugated
je/j'	*is*	*finis*
tu	*is*	*finis*
il/elle	*it*	*finit*
nous	*îmes*	*finîmes*
Vous	*îtes*	*finîtes*
ils/elles	*îrent*	*finirent*

The *passé composé* also functions like the English perfect tense either to describe a completed action or to describe anteriority. When it is used in a main or independent clause, it describes the events as completed in relation to the present and therefore it is relevant to the present:

- *J'ai mangé.*
- أَكلتُ. [*akaltu*].
- I have eaten.

When the *passé composé* is used in a subordinate clause, it expresses anteriority:

- *Dès qu'il a fini son travail, il se repose.*
- حالما أنهىَ عملَه، أَرتاحَ. [*halama anha amalahu, irtah*].
- As soon as he has finished his work, he rests.

When the *passé composé* functions as a perfect tense, it is aspectual and it is translated by the English perfect tense:

- *Il a lu le roman.*
- قَرأَ الروايةَ. [*qara'a ariwayeh*].
- He has read the novel.

When a length of time is used with the *passé composé*, the present progressive is used in English:

- *Il a regardé la télévision toute la journée.*
- شاهدَ التلفاز طوال اليومِ. [*shahada etilfaz tawala alyawm*].
- He watched TV

The *passé composé* is used to express actions completed in the past and were repeated several times:

- *Nous avons joué au tennis tous les matins.*
- لَعبنَا التنس كُلَّ صباح. [*laibna atinis kolla sabah*].

56

- We played tennis every morning.

3.4   Conclusion

Contrastive analysis is founded on the assumption that we tend to transfer our native language habits into the target language and that the similarities and differences of the two languages will decide whether the transfer is positive or negative. Though the predicting power of CA has been seriously questioned, as L1 interference is not the only source of error, many researchers support the view that CA and EA should complement each other. Sanders (1981) argued that a teacher wishing to prepare materials for a new language situation needs to refer to a reliable collected set of data to identify problem areas. He cannot afford to wait for his students to make repeated mistakes before a large sample of errors be collected. The immediate findings of CA are meant for the textbook writer and the teacher, not for the learner.

According to Duškovà (1969), many errors are caused by interference from L1 and also interference from other forms of the target language. Errors analysis provides information to the teacher on how much his students have learnt and also about the effectiveness of his teaching materials and procedures. It is significant to the researcher who wishes to learn about the psychological processes of second language acquisition and it is useful to textbook writers. However, error-based analysis cannot entirely replace contrastive analysis; instead its results can profitably supplement the other, particularly in the preparation of teaching materials. "A further improvement of teaching materials based on contrastive analysis might be achieved by the inclusion of the most common errors occurring outside the sphere by contrastive analysis alone". (Duškovà 1969)