

Oppositions in Arabic Proverbs: A Lexicosyntactic Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Human beings are claimed to have a strong tendency for structuring their thoughts in terms of binary oppositions (Lyons, 1977). Binary oppositions, both canonical and non-canonical, have cross-linguistically been shown to perform textual functions in language and discourse (Jones, 2002; Davies, 2012; Hsu, 2015; Akşehirli, 2018, among many others). This study examines the discourse functions of oppositions in a dataset of oppositional pairs extracted from a collection of Arabic proverbs. Drawing on a synergy of Jones's (2002), Davies's (2012), and Hassanein's (2018) syntagmatic typologies of antonymy and opposition, it tests the synergised typology on the dataset to quantify and exemplify the discourse functions of opposition therein and prove the interactivity of the syntactic environments. The study has shown ancillary opposition to be the preponderant function with far higher frequency distributions than the remaining ones. Two functions logged in Classical Arabic discourse (Hassanein, 2018) have also been logged in proverbial discourse. One function is subordination (one opposite is hypotactically appended to another) and the other is case-marking (both lexemes play oppositional case roles at syntactic and semantic levels). The analysis has also shown that the syntagmatic classification replicated in this study validates former classifications across languages, most notably English, Swedish, Japanese, Chinese, Serbian, Romanian, Turkish, and Persian. It has also been revealed that the syntactic frames of co-occurring oppositions play significant roles in proverbial categorisation and conceptualisation and support the argument that proverbs tend to pattern cultural units and schemas into parallel structural frames.

Keywords: Oppositions; Arabic; Proverbs; Syntagms; Frames; Functions

INTRODUCTION

The last twenty years have witnessed an increasingly riveting interest in proverbs across many languages and cultures from various perspectives, including descriptions, comprehensions, and comparisons of L1-L2 proverbs (cf. Dabbagh, 2016). Mieder (2004) draws a distinction between the study of proverbs (paremiology) and the collection of proverbs (paremiography). Paremiographers make collections of proverbs for paremiologists to examine them from a more inclusive perspective drawing upon fields, such as anthropology, art, communication, culture, folklore, history, literature, philology, psychology, religion, sociology, and also linguistics. The criticism often levied against paremiographers is that they collect and list proverbs usually out of context. The specific context reveals what the proverb in fact tends to say and the meanings of proverbs are dependent upon the contexts in which they are used and must, therefore, be analysed in their unique contexts, be they social, literary, rhetorical, or journalistic (Mieder, 2004). In this regard, the paremiologist Arvo Krikmann has been cited by Mieder (2004) as speaking of the 'semantic indefiniteness' of proverbs because of their heterosituativity, polyfunctionality, and polysemanticity.

Proverbs are used with great effect in Levantine Arabic (Arabic spoken in the Levant region of the Middle East, including Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Jordan)—as well as in all Arabic dialects—and are highly prized as the distillation of collective wisdom and experience (McLoughlin, 1982). Arab paremiographers, such as Al-Ġuhaymān (1982) and Taymūr (2014), pattern their collections of Arabic proverbs on a thematic as well as structural basis according to Mieder’s (2004) differentiation between proverbial expressions (e.g., ‘to bite the dust’), proverbial comparisons (e.g., ‘as busy as a bee’), proverbial interrogatives (e.g., ‘Does a chicken have lips?’), twin formulas (e.g., ‘give and take’), and wellerisms (e.g., ‘Each to his own, as the farmer said when he kissed his cow’). Their most effective and creative mechanism of doing so is ‘opposition’ whose commonest pattern grammars are ‘Better X than Y’, ‘Like X, like Y’, ‘No X without Y’, ‘One X doesn’t make a Y’, and ‘If X, then Y’, as in such well-known proverbs as ‘Better poor with honor than rich with shame’, ‘Like father, like son’, ‘No work, no pay’, ‘One robin doesn’t make a spring’, and ‘If at first you don’t succeed, then try, try again’ (cf. Mieder, 2004). Opposition is employed here as an embracing term for opposite and non-opposite pairs of words, the opposition of which is triggered by the syntactic environments within which they linearly co-occur. The present study seeks to champion the pattern grammar approach to pan-Arabic proverbial opposites referred to in lexical-semantic literature as ‘canonical antonym pairs’ (Murphy, 2003). By ‘canonical’ Murphy (2003) means that a pair of opposites are considered by the intuition of native speakers of a particular language, the ‘clang phenomenon’ (Muehleisen, 1997), to be conventional antonyms in a neutral context and out of context, as in ‘warm/cool’. The ‘semi-canonical’ opposites are less conventional ones, such as ‘cool/hot’. The ‘non-canonical’ opposites are contextually bound, non-conventional ones in natural language use, as in ‘cold/cool’.

The objective of this study is to quantify and exemplify the discourse functions and syntactic frames of Arabic proverbial pairs of opposites as toolkits for paremiographers. In the light of this specific objective, the present study raises the following questions:

1. How many textual functions do canonical oppositional pairs perform within pan-Arabic paremiographical discourse?
2. How often do canonical oppositional pairs tend to co-occur within grammatical patterns in pan-Arabic paremiographical discourse?
3. To what extent are the functions and patterns of oppositional pairs useful for structuring information in Arabic paremiographical discourse?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Proverbs have been studied from a variety of (non)linguistic perspectives across languages and cultures (e.g., Ho-Abdullah, 2011). Few previous endeavours have been made to identify the syntactic formulae of cross-cultural proverbs (Mieder, 2004; Coinnigh, 2014), such as ‘X is Y’, ‘No X, no Y’, and the like. Past research on the frame grammar of pan-Arabic proverbs is “extremely sparse, if not scant” (cf. Hassanein & Mahzari, 2021, p. 203). Previous studies on Arabic dialects have adopted different linguistic approaches than the one pursued here. For example, adopting Lakoff and Turner’s cognitive theory of metaphor, Tohamy (n.d.) showed that animals are proverbially used to represent humans metaphorically. Bahameed (2007) studied the linguistic and cultural translatability of Hadhrami proverbial expressions from Arabic into English and found that these proverbs are translatable with three equivalence theories (functional, ideational, and formal) and also two idiographic approaches (subjective and objective).

Naoum (2007), for instance, examined the semantic associations of English proverbs and their equivalents in Arabic and concluded that the pragmatic aspects of the language and

context of situation result in different associative meanings of the proverbs. Shehab & Daragmeh (2014) approached Arabic proverbs from a context-based perspective and stressed the importance of context of use and situation for their translation into English. Farghal & Al-Hamly (2015) examined the semiopragmatic value of translating Arabic fiction proverbs into English and presented a typology of procedures used by the translator, notably omission, literal translation, and functional translation. Thalji (2015) followed a pedagogical problem-solving approach to the rendering of English-Arabic-English proverbs and revealed some challenges thereto, including mistranslations of culture-specific proverbs, wrong TL equivalents, and irrespective meanings, as well as misparaphrases and multifaceted errors. Fahmi (2016) undertook a cross-cultural study of selected Arabic proverbs in contrast with their English equivalents and argued that proverbs negotiate pragmatic signification at several linguistic levels and reflect the cultural identity of a specific society and some universalities common among societies. Alghamdi (2018) approached 13 religious proverbs through a sociopragmatic lens and showed that these proverbs serve different speech acts respective to different speech situations and to the Qur'an and Hadith. Assaqaf (2019) approached proverbs from a translational viewpoint, addressing some challenges in interpreting English proverbs into Arabic or vice versa due to the cultural distinctions between Arabic and English and non-equivalence of culture-specific proverbs. Further studies scrutinised Arabic proverbs from different translational stances.

From the preceding review of literature, it is evident that there is a resurgence of translational interest but a dearth of lexico-syntactic interest in Arabic paremiographical and paremiological studies. Canonical opposition and antonymy in Arabic have been proverbially prevalent since time immemorial and are culturally known for their ubiquity and persuasiveness. Despite their prevalence, they have not been duly and adequately approached from a frame grammar perspective, which forms the rationale and basis for conducting this study.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Aspects of lexical-semantic opposition (contraries, opposites, and antonyms) have been tackled by scholars through the lens of two related linguistic approaches: paradigmatic and syntagmatic approaches. Paradigmatic relations are said to be widely used in knowledge organisation systems whereas syntagmatic relations are claimed to be generally related to co-occurrences in some contexts (Chiu & Lu, 2015). Murphy (2006) argues that antonymy, and in turn opposition, is syntagmatic (i.e., co-occurring in contrastive constructions on the axis of combination) and paradigmatic (i.e., co-occurring interchangeably with a seed word on the axis of selection) as well as lexical (i.e., between words) and semantic (i.e., between senses). Traditional studies of opposites, technically antonyms, are based on context- and syntax-free classifications (cf. Davies, 2012). Jones (2002) argues that the classifications are notorious for confusable terminologies regarding the categories described. Contrarily, the most recent classifications draw on context- and syntax-dependent approaches that categorise oppositions according to their co-occurrence in syntactic frames in stretches of real discourse (cf. Davies, 2012). Davies (2012) contends that although the syntactic frames are mentioned in passing in Fellbaum (1995), the most pioneering work has been conducted by Mettinger (1994), but the most extensive and comprehensive one has been undertaken by Jones (2002). Using 3000 database sentences from a newspaper corpus of 280 million words, Jones's (2002) pioneering study has preselected 56 canonically antonymous pairs (X/Y, e.g., 'success/failure') and classified them into eight categories based upon the syntactic frames in which these pairs co-occur ('X and Y', e.g., 'success and failure'). Jones's (2002) categorisation has served as an inspiring analytical toolkit for a dozen of subsequent studies within and across languages,

including English (Murphy & Jones, 2008), Japanese (Muehleisen & Isono, 2009), Swedish (Murphy et al., 2009), Arabic (Hassanein, 2013; 2018), Chinese (Hsu, 2015), Turkish (Akşehirli, 2018), and Persian (Mohammadi et al., 2019). Table 1 sums up the typology of antonym discourse functions with definitions and examples from Jones's (2002) quantitative data analysis.

TABLE 1. Jones's (2002) model of the discourse functions of canonical antonyms

Category	Frame	Example	N	%
Ancillary	Cross-categorical	<i>Form</i> is temporary , <i>class</i> is permanent	1,162	38.7
Comparative	X more than Y	Reward is more effective than punishment	205	6.8
Co-ordinated	X and Y	Implicitly and explicitly	1151	38.4
Distinguished	between X and Y	The difference between right and wrong	161	5.4
Extreme	Cross-categorical	Either too dry or too wet	40	1.3
Idiomatic	Cross-categorical	The long and the short of it is that height counts	23	0.8
Negated	X not Y	Government must play an active , not passive , role	62	2.1
Transitional	from X to Y	The mood in both camps swung from optimism to pessimism	90	3.0
Residual			106	3.5
Total			3,000	100

Using a corpus of 62,088 words retrieved from reports on the two biggest protest marches in London, Countryside Alliance, and War Coalition, Davies (2012) retrieved Jones's (2002) model and refined it from a qualitative perspective to categorise the discourse functions of non-canonical oppositions based on the syntactic frames in which they co-occur, mostly with implications. Table 2 outlines such functions with examples from Davies's (2012) dataset.

TABLE 2. Davies's (2012) model of the discourse functions of non-canonical oppositions

Category	Frame	Example
Negated	X not Y	Clotted cream <i>not</i> ruptured spleen
Transitional	X turns into Y	Villages are <i>turning into</i> weekend rest centres or dormitories
Comparative	more X than Y	The marchers seemed <i>more</i> bemused <i>than</i> offended
Replacive	X rather than Y	Mr Michael may propose introducing a licensing system <i>rather than</i> an outright ban
Concessive	X but Y	There was plenty of passion <i>but</i> the marchers remained good-natured
Explicit	X against Y	House music <i>against</i> war
Parallelism	No specific frame	<i>They can walk over our</i> lands <i>but they can't walk over</i> us
Binarised option	whether X or Y	<i>whether</i> Mr Blair still treats those hundreds of thousands of people as an irrelevant minority , <i>or</i> accepts that this time, the countryside really has spoken

Using a dataset of 1,179 canonical oppositions gathered from the two major collections of Hadith, 640 pairs from Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī and 539 pairs from Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Hassanein (2018) developed a synergic model of Jones's (2002), Davies's (2012), and Hassanein's (2013) typologies of antonymy and opposition in discourse. Table 3 summarises the developed model with examples.

TABLE 3. Hassanein's (2018) synergy of Jones's (2002), Davies's (2012), and Hassanein's (2013) classifications

Category	Frame	Example	N	%
Ancillary	Trans-categorical	<i>If</i> a weal happens to him, he is grateful <i>and if</i> a woe happens to him, he is patient	513	43.50
Co-ordinated	X and Y	None of you will be a (true) believer until I become dearer to him than his parent <i>and</i> his child	511	43.40

Sub-ordinated	if X then Y	When it is a hot day, cool yourself down with prayer(s), because extreme heat comes from the flame of hellfire	46	3.90
Negated	not X but Y	Facilitate , <i>not</i> complicate and incline , <i>not</i> disincline	37	3.15
Comparative	X [adj-]er than Y	The upper hand is <i>better than</i> the lower hand , for the upper hand is spending and the lower is begging	33	2.80
Case-marked	Trans-categorical	The interrogee is not more knowledgeable than the interrogator	18	1.55
Transitional	from X to Y	As for the first sign of the (Last) Hour, it is a fire that gathers people from the east to the west	12	1.00
Interrogative	X or Y?	People will live through a time in which one will not care about the source of his gain: Is it licit or illicit ?	5	0.40
Idiomatic	Trans-categorical	Each of you must spit neither between his hands nor on his right but on his left or under his leg	3	0.25
Replacive	X in return for Y	Look at your seat in fire : God has <i>replaced</i> it <i>with</i> a seat in paradise for you	1	0.05
Total			1,179	100

The (non-)canonical approaches prove that such typologies are genre-sensitive and data-based, since all or some of these categories have been retrieved and replicated with other genres and datasets across languages.

METHODOLOGY

Using a pan-Arabic dataset, the researcher draws on a retrievable and replicable synergy of Jones's (2002) and Hassanein's (2018) provisional classifications of the discourse functions of canonical oppositions and/or antonyms based on their syntagmatic co-occurrences within grammatical patterns or syntactic frames serving as structural triggers for their oppositions. Nevertheless, genre-specific and data-driven differences between languages necessitate the revisions and refinements of the methodological approach, as discussed in the subsections below.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The design of the current research study consists of a combination of the intersecting modes of investigation, quantitative and qualitative, into the so-called mixed method in order to provide a useful dataset and undertake a rigorous data analysis to find answers to the research questions. The quantitative analysis will provide statistics necessary for objective generalisations while the qualitative one will provide verbal representations of the numerical data. "To give a full account of textual opposition, both quantitative and qualitative approaches are valuable" (Davies 2012, p. 69).

DATASET

The data for this study have manually been collected from a pan-Arabic paremiographical compilation entitled *Waḥdat al-Amṭāl Al-ʿAmmiyya fī-l-Bilād Al-ʿArabiyya* ('A Collection of Vernacular Proverbs in the Arab Countries') and edited by Al-Baqlī (1968). The compilation is thematised and thus arranged into eight volumes, each of which represents a special topic or theme. These themes are morality, ethics, sociology, economics, law, politics, carrot-and-stick, and education. This book in particular has been chosen for a number of reasons. First, it is the only bulky, antiquarian book that deals with vernacular and popular proverbs across the entire Arab world as evidenced by the lexical signals of 'collection' and 'Arab countries'. Second, it is a large-scale, ten-volume book considered to be the most comprehensive work on pan-Arabic paremiography. A dataset of 181 canonically opposite pairs has manually been extracted from

that book and inserted into a database, using spreadsheet as a toolkit for the quantification and exemplification of the co-occurrences of canonical antonyms. Such antonyms are conventional opposites sorted by native speakers of Arabic as ‘prototypical’ (i.e., good) opposites in contrast with not-good and bad opposites based upon the native speakers’ intuitions and metalinguistic knowledge. During the stage of data extraction, the researcher has used his intuition as a native speaker of Arabic to make a distinction between canonical (conventional), semi-canonical (less conventional), and non-canonical (unconventional) oppositions and sample only the canonical ones as the database for analysis. One criterion for drawing the distinction between canonical, semi-canonical and non-canonical oppositions in discourse is Muehleisen’s (1997) “clang phenomenon”, i.e., native speakers’ intuition about words considered to be conventional, less conventional, and non-conventional opposites in language. The other is Davies’s (2012) cline of canonicity whereon oppositions range on a gradable scale from a canonical to non-canonical status. The clang phenomenon is the reason why the researcher has chosen manual extraction and analysis of data over the automatic one, besides other strong considerations given by Hsu (2015): first, the inability of the automatic method to determine contextually bound and/or ambiguous opposites; second, its non-viability for identifying frameless but formally featured antonym functions, such as the ancillary and case-marked functions. This study focuses solely on canonical opposition, as it has been rigorously modelled in English and cross-linguistically retrieved, validated, and replicated with different datasets in many discourses.

METHOD OF ANALYSIS

The present study seeks to reevaluate and test Hassanein’s (2018) synergic model of antonym categories (Table 3) against the collected dataset, by probing their rigorous retrievability and replicability with the paremiography of the Arab countries and providing a conflated approach with implications for text and discourse analysis as subfields of applied linguistics in its broad sense. Hassanein’s model in particular has been chosen as the analytical toolkit for the dataset of the present study for a number of reasons. First, the model is a rigorous combination of three interdependent dynamic typologies developed by Jones (2002), Davies (2012), and Hassanein (2013). Second, the combinatory model draws its categorisation mainly from Jones’s (2002) most comprehensive model in English and Hassanein’s (2013) seminal model in Arabic. Third, the model broadens the scope and range of antonymy from oppositeness to opposition, drawing on Davies’s (2012) terminology. The model also conforms to the three R’s principles which Simpson (2004) considers to be characteristic of any analytical (stylistic) method: **Rigor** (based on explicit analytical framework), **Retrievable** (based on explicit criteria and terms), and **Replicable** (verifiable by testability against the same text or applicability to another).

DISCUSSION

This section presents two analyses of the dataset that quantify and qualify the textual functions of opposites in Arabic paremiographical discourse. The quantitative analysis with its statistics is exhaustive, whereas the qualitative one is representative for reasons of space and word limit.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

This subsection undertakes a statistical reading of the frequency distributions of the discourse functions of canonical opposites in the sampled dataset according to the grammatical patterns and syntactic frames in which they co-occur. Figure 1 diagrams the frequency of each category across the eight-volume dataset, both in number (N) and percentage (%).

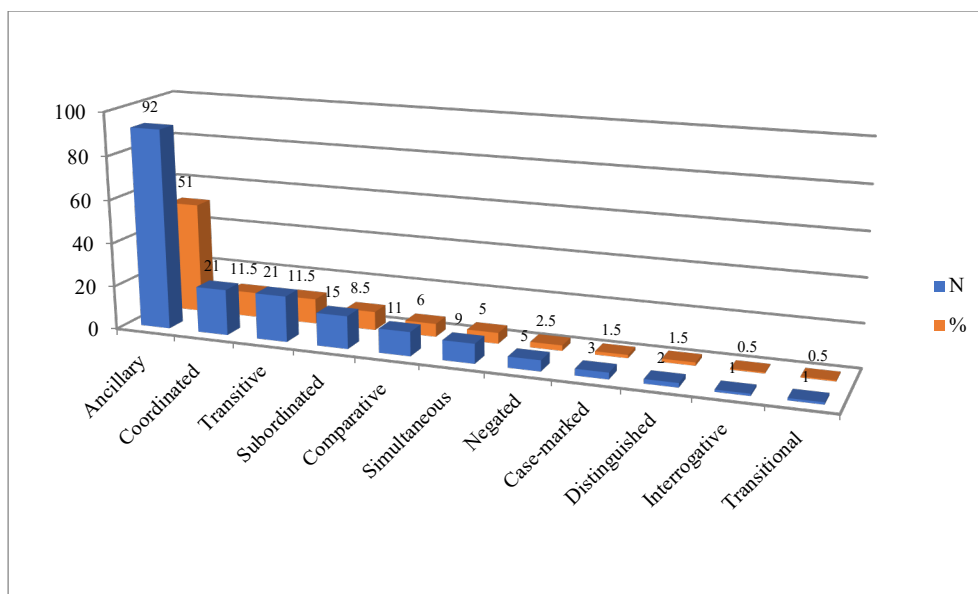


FIGURE 1. Frequency distributions of eleven categories identified and quantified in the dataset

As Figure 1 shows, ancillary opposition is the most pervasive discourse function in the dataset and is ranked first, occupying more than half of the frequency distributions, 92 (51%). No syntactic framework is specific to ancillary antonymy, which borrows its frames from other categories, as in ‘X and Y’ from coordinated opposition. The pervasiveness and framelessness of ancillary opposition have been proved in former studies on English (e.g., Jones, 2002; Jones & Murphy, 2005; Murphy & Jones, 2008), Japanese (Muehleisen & Isono, 2009), Swedish (Murphy et al., 2009), Dutch (Lobanova et al., 2010), and Arabic (Hassanein, 2018). A second category competing against ancillary opposition and next in order to it is coordinated opposition which occupies 21 (11.5%) of the dataset—a quantification coincidentally shared by transitive opposition (21, 11.5%) in which opposites hold grammatical relations and which resides in a residual category (cf. Jones, 2002; Murphy et al., 2009; AlHedayani, 2016). The favourite frames of these two categories are respectively ‘X and Y’ and ‘to X (v) Y (n)’ (verb-object constructions), among minor frames. Ranked fourth in order is subordinated opposition, which is foreign to Jones’s (2002) and Davies’s (2012) typologies but has first been developed in Hassanein (2013) and then validated in AlHedayani (2016) and Hassanein (2018)—a finding revealing some particularity and specificity in language use. Such a category favours protasis-apodosis (‘if X then Y’) and subordinate-superordinate (‘who(ever) X, Y’) clause structure. Comparative and simultaneous oppositions come fifth and sixth in order with no significant difference in number and percentage, 11 (6%) and 9 (5%), respectively. The five remaining categories of negated, case-marked, distinguished, interrogative, and transitional oppositions are minor classes with low frequencies, and their typical frames are ‘X and not Y’, ‘X, Y’, ‘X among Y’, ‘X or Y?’, and ‘X out of Y’, respectively.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

This subsection representatively exemplifies the identified and quantified discourse functions of canonical opposites in qualitative terms to illustrate how opposition functions in proverbial Arabic discourse, how it figures lexico-semantically, and how it is governed by cultural and contextual restraints. Arabic opposite pairs and their English counterparts appear in bold and in underline. The square bracketed ‘P’ stands for ‘part’.

ANCILLARY OPPOSITION

Ancillary opposition, a polyonym of Jones's (2002) 'ancillary antonymy', is said to be a relatively widespread phenomenon across language in general (cf. Jones, 2002), featuring two pairs of contrast: an A-pair signaling, strengthening, or triggering a contrast between a B-pair of items. In this study, ancillary opposition is statistically preponderant and is ranked first with 92 (51%) pairs of the entire dataset, hence supporting Fellbaum's (1995) argument that the ancillary category comes first when pairs from different word classes are also calculated. The ancillary effect is so strong that the B-pair is sometimes alternately interwoven with or sequentially detached from the A-pair but takes place elsewhere in the clause (cf. Jones, 2002). Some A-pairs are more ancillary than others, depending on the level of opposition inherent in the B-pairs. Likewise, some B-pairs are more contrastive than others, depending on the level of ancillarity borne by the A-pairs: "if the B-pair has no innate element of opposition, the A-pair generates an instantial contrast; if the B-pair already has a low level of innate opposition, the A-pair activates this latent contrastive potential; and if the B-pair already has a high level of innate opposition, the A-pair affirms this great contrast to the point of assigning antonymy" (cf. Jones, 2002, pp. 47-55). No specific frame is distinctly assigned to ancillary opposition but its most favoured and frequent one, among others, is 'X and Y', which is the favourite frame of coordinated opposition. In ancillary opposition, the A-pairs and parallelism serve as key contrast-generating mechanisms, even with parataxis, i.e., lack of conjunctions (cf. Jones, 2002). Let us take these two illustrative examples:

- (1) a. العبد في تفكير والرب في تدبير (Al-Baqlī, 1968 [P1], p. 32)
b. "The **servant thinks**, the **Lord does**."
- (2) a. هم يضحك وهم يبكي (Al-Baqlī, 1968 [P3], p. 193)
b. "A **care** causes to **laugh** and a **care** causes to **cry**."

Proverb (1a) hosts an A-pair, *al-'abd/al-rabb* ('servant/Lord'), in an X-and-Y frame to affirm innate contrast between another B-pair, *tafkīr/tadbīr* ('thinking/doing'), whereby the topos of the proverb is that 'Man proposes, God disposes'. In other words, one has a limited free will to propose and set the path, but God disposes otherwise and directs the steps to success or failure, as wisely put in *Hamlet* by Hamlet, "There is a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will" (Waters, 1994, p. 240) and by God in the Qur'an, "But you will only wish to do so if God wills" (Qur'an 76:30, Abdel Haleem, 2004, p. 402). One's plans and plots are ordained by divine providence to be a success or failure. Proverb (2a) duplicates the lexeme *hamm* ('care') in a non-canonically opposed pair, *hamm/hamm* ('care/care'), hosted in an X-and-Y frame to confirm antonymity between a canonical opposite pair, *yidāḥḥak/yibakkī* ('cause to laugh/cause to cry'). The A-pair, whose members are not opposed in neutral contexts, is less ancillary than the A-pair in proverb 1a but is brought into non-canonical opposition by the canonical opposition inherent in the B-pair. The point of the adage is so ironical that in distress one might 'not know whether to laugh or cry' or how to react in a particular situation. The syntactic framework of the Arabic pairs *hamm/hamm* and *yidāḥḥak/yibakkī* triggers an ancillary opposition ('XX and YY') between the two pairs with a more contrastive focus on the latter pair, while the syntactic frame of the English proverbial equivalent "whether to laugh or cry" ('X or Y') triggers a coordinated opposition lacking the ancillary effect. Both proverbs are semantically equivalent but grammatically variant.

COORDINATED OPPOSITION

Coordinated opposition, Jones's (2002) 'coordinated antonymy', contains opposite pairs that signal either inclusiveness or exhaustiveness of a particular scale. Coordinated opposition is mainly conjoined by *and/or* and is ranked second with a frequency distribution of 21 (11.5%) of the whole dataset that places it as a major category as it is in other languages (e.g., Murphy et al., 2009; Muehleisen & Isono, 2009; Kostić, 2011; Hsu, 2015). Building on grammar books, the researcher is prone to utilise the mnemonic acronym 'FANBOYS' (For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So) for coordinating conjunctions (single coordinators), as well as correlative conjunctions (double correlators), to link equal ideas (words, phrases, and clauses). Generally, those opposites joined by connectors with *and* (e.g., 'both...and') are inclusive; those linked by connectors with *or* (e.g., 'either...or') are exhaustive. Coordinating and correlative conjunctions express distinct syntactic relationships: causative, junctive, negative, contrastive, disjunctive, concessive, and resultative, respectively. Like ancillary opposition, coordinated opposition is also a relatively prevalent phenomenon in Arabic. Its most favourite framework is incontestably 'X and Y'.

- (3) a. المال يجي ويروح (Al-Baqlī, 1968 [P4], p. 250)
b. "Money comes and goes."
(4) a. لا في العير ولا في النفير (Al-Baqlī, 1968 [P2], p. 77)
b. "neither in the caravan nor in the troop."

Proverb (3a) features a reversive pair of opposites, *yigī/yirūh* ('come/go'), in an X-and-Y frame to inclusively express the transience of money and how it can swiftly come into and out of existence from time to time. The adage is always cited as a show of sympathy to solace and soothe someone who went from wealth to poverty or who fell in misfortune and fell short of fund. Money is likened to a camel's fur that falls out but then grows back or to a leafless bough which leafs out again (cf. Al-Baqlī, 1968, pp. 250-251). Money may be lost and regained at a moment's notice, just like birds flying back and forth. Proverb (4a) exemplifies a correlatively negated pair of opposition, *al-īr/al-nafir* ('caravan/troop'), in the frame 'neither X nor Y' to describe the referent (the person spoken of) as being simple-minded, unimportant, and useless (cf. Al-Baqlī, 1968 [P2]). The correlative conjunction 'neither-nor' remains the standard frame for all the pan-Arabic proverbs which share the same propositional meaning in the same syntactic pattern, such as 'neither to these nor to those' and 'neither in my mind nor in my land' (Al-Baqlī, 1968 [P2]), whose propositional and syntactic equivalent in English should be 'neither here nor there'.

TRANSITIVE OPPOSITION

The transitive function of antonymy has first appeared in Jones (2002) and then reappeared in Murphy et al. (2009) and AlHedayani (2016) as holding a grammatical rather than semantic relation. This function that is classified as a minor one in Jones (2002) is classed by this study as a major one ranked third next to coordinated opposition just for reasons of alphabetical order and occupying the same frequency: 21 (11.5%). Transitive opposites, according to AlHedayani (2016), occur in a subject-object grammatical structure, wherein one nominal opposite acts as a subject and the other as an object or one serves as a modifier of the subject and the other as a modifier of the object. The transitive function of antonyms includes some sentences, in which an ancillary contrast transpires between another pair of phrases (cf. AlHedayani, 2016). A typical grammatical pattern of transitive opposition is 'X does something to or is done something by Y'.

- (5) a. الطبع يغلب التطبع (Al-Baqlī, 1968 [P2], p. 63)
 b. “Nature prevails over nurture.”
- (6) a. الشرا يعلم البيع (Al-Baqlī, 1968 [P4], p. 226)
 b. “Buying teaches selling.”

Proverb (5a) hosts a pair of opposites, *al-ṭab* /*al-taṭabbu* (‘nature/nurture’), within the transitive frame ‘X does something to Y’, in which the X-opposite ‘nature’ is a noun (phrase) by form and a subject by function whereas the Y-opposite ‘nurture’ has the same nominal form but functions as an object. The transitive frame used here is SVO (Subject/Verb/Object), the simplest form of a clause or a sentence. The motif of the adage is that ‘habit ever remains’, ‘old habits die hard’, ‘whoever grows up with a habit, grows old with it’ (*mann šabb ‘alā šay’ šāb ‘alayh* (Al-Ġuhaymān, 1982 [P8], p. 183), and ‘child is father of the man’ (cf. Wordsworth’s *My Heart Leaps Up*). It is further poeticised: “I have been vainly trying to teach you, but your nature prevails; the dog’s tail would never straighten out even if a brick were hung to it” (cf. Al-Baqlī, 1986 [P2], p. 64), the meaning of which is ‘the leopard cannot change its spots’. All such propositionally similar proverbs mean that whichever traits one displays in adulthood originate from and date back to childhood, so what has always been will always be. Proverb (6a) employs the syntactic frame ‘X does Y’ to host the oppositional pair *al-širā/al-bay* (‘buying/selling’) in a transitive SVO structure whereby the X-opposite brings about the Y-opposite. The propositional content of the Arabic proverb is that one can learn the art of sale by more experience of the transaction of purchase—a content that can be packed in “learn how to sell the way you buy” and “the more you tell the more sell”. The aphorism “practice makes perfect” is quite applicable here in that the more one gets involved into transactions of buying and selling, the more one learns the techniques of sale by mingling with a variety of sellers and by learning from mistakes.

SUBORDINATED OPPOSITION

Subordinated opposition has originated as ‘subordinated antonymy’ in Hassanein (2013) but has then been retrieved and validated in MSA (AlHedayani, 2016) and CA (Hassanein, 2018). Ranked fourth in order with a 15 (8.5%) frequency distribution and proving data specificity or sensitivity, subordinated opposition signals the co-occurrence of opposite pairs in a hypotactic context, be it conditional, concessive, circumstantial (Hassanein, 2018), or consequential (AlHedayani, 2016). In this category, the X- and Y-opposites co-occur in complex clause structures. The X-opposite occurs in a protatic or subordinate clause; the Y-one in an apodotic or main clause. Favourite frames of the subordinated function are ‘if X then Y’ and ‘who(ever) X, Y’.

- (7) a. إلی یاکل الحلو یصبر ع المر (Al-Baqlī, 1968 [P4], p. 204)
 b. “Who(ever) eats the **sweet** has to bear the **bitter**.”
- (8) a. إن زاد الشيء عن حده إنقلب لئده (Al-Baqlī, 1968 [P5], p. 260)
 b. “If something exceeds its **limit**, it turns into its **opposite**.”

Proverb (7a) builds the subordinate frame ‘who(ever) X, Y’ in order to host a canonical pair of nominal opposites, *al-ḥilw/al-murr* (‘sweet/bitter’), whereby the X-opposite occurs in a hypotactic (subordinate, dependent) clause whereas the Y-one occurs within a hyperotactic (superordinate, independent) clause. Both opposites hold a consequential subordinated relation, the subject matter of which is ‘no rose without a thorn and no gains without pains’ (“*al-ḡunm bi-l-ḡurm wa-l-ḡurm bi-l-ḡunm*” (cf. Al-Baqlī, 1968 [P4], p. 204). ‘He who has tasted the world’s honey has to stand the bees’ stings’ is indeed a solacing aphorism for whoever suffers

loss after gain, poverty after wealth, demotion after promotion, and degradation after elevation. Proverb (8a) establishes a contrast between two poles of the same thing on a continuum, *ḥadd/didd* ('limit/opposite'), in a protatic-apodotic ('if X then Y') structure. The protasis is typified by a subordinate clause whereas the apodosis is represented by a main, superordinate clause in a conditional proverbial saying. The locus of the proverb is to maintain moderation in all things because abundance, like want, ruins many, and every extremity is a fault.

COMPARATIVE OPPOSITION

Comparative opposition has its debut in Davies's (2012) non-canonical opposition inspired by Jones's (2002) comparative antonymy in which one opposite is measured against another in a comparative context, directly by straightforwardly balancing an X-opposite against a Y-opposite (more X than Y), indirectly by weighing X against Y on a specified scale (X more adj. than Y), preferentially by choosing X over Y (X rather than Y), and equally by comparing X to Y (X as/like Y). In Arabic, all such cases, rather more (all degrees of comparison), have been recorded in positive and elative contexts (cf. Hassanein, 2013; AlHedayani, 2016). In this study, comparative opposition is ranked fifth with an 11 (6%) frequency distribution and is shown to be a self-evident category across a different genre, i.e., Arabic proverbs. This proverbial canon prefers direct comparisons between pairs of opposites by weighing one against the other.

- (9) a. *إللي تعرفه أحسن من الللي ما تعرفوش* (Al-Baqlī, 1968 [P8], p. 334)
b. "What you **know** is better than what you do **not know**."
- (10) a. *الصلاة خير من النوم* (Al-Baqlī, 1968 [P1], p. 31)
b. "**Prayer** is better than **sleep**."

Proverb (9a) draws an indirect comparison between a morphologically related pair of opposites, *ti'rafuh/ma: ti'rafūš* ('know/not know'), on a scale of value within the framework 'X adj.-er than Y', wherein the X-slot opposite 'know' is said to be better than the Y-slot counterpart 'not know'. The complementary binaries 'know/not know' are compared together against the specified scale of value (strictly goodness) to advise that 'better the devil you know than the devil you do not know', i.e., it is wiser and safer to deal with a disagreeable but familiar person or thing than with an unfamiliar one that could or might be worse. Proverb (10a) is explicit about the litany of *al-taṭwīb* which has been a common refrain in the call to *al-faḡr* ('dawn') prayers since the prophet Muhammad's lifetime and which is to repeat twice the formulaic comparative expression "Prayer is better than sleep". The historical anecdote of this comparative refrain dates back to Bilāl ibn Rabāḥ who went to the prophet Muhammad to get a permission from him for raising the call to the dawn prayers but he was told the prophet was sleeping. Bilāl commented that prayer is better than sleep and since then it has been being repeated twice in the call to dawn prayers in a practice known as *al-taṭwīb* until today (cf. Melchert, 2004, p. 279). Since then this litany has been proverbialised on occasions on which something is taken for granted to be better than something else (X is better than Y) without a need for a representative speech act.

SIMULTANEOUS OPPOSITION

Simultaneous opposition, Jones's (2002) simultaneity, is a discourse function in which two opposites are directly equated with each other in describing the same object or situation to create an unlikely or ironical parallel and, therefore, their dual properties may be applicable to the same referent (cf. Jones, 2002). This function occurs through three nominally, adjectivally, or both nominally and adjectivally opposite structures: equation, annexation, and asyndeton

(cf. AlHedayani, 2016). Equation involves the hosting of two opposites in equative sentences (cf. Hurford et al., 2007) whose structure is equivalent to the frame ‘X is Y’. Annexation is a genitive structure in which two opposite nouns are compounded as one unit. Asyndeton occurs when two opposite adjectives are paratactically and inseparably conjoined to describe a noun. In this proverbial study, simultaneous opposition, which is logged by Jones (2002) in a residual section as a marginal, not even minor, category and which is not quantified or typified in Hassanein (2013, 2018), is classed here as a minor category with a low frequency distribution of 9 occurrences (5%).

- (11) a. داخل بيت عدوك ليه؟ قال: حبيبي فيه. (Al-Baqlī, 1968 [P3], p. 151)
b. “Why are you entering the house of your **enemy**? He said: ‘My **love** lives therein’.”
- (12) a. حاميها حراميها (Al-Baqlī, 1968 [P3], p. 145)
b. “Its **protectors** are its **looters**.”

Proverb (11a) is a question-answer adjacency pair in which the questioner-addresser wonders why the questionee-addressee is entering the house of the latter’s enemy, a question to which the addressee ironically and contradictorily replies that because it is also the house of his loved one. The opposite pair members, *‘aduww/ḥabīb* (‘enemy/love’), work simultaneously together to describe exactly the same referent as being the residence of the addressee’s enemy and love at the same time. Based on Jones (2002) and AlHedayani (2016), the researcher finds this proverb in its surface and deep structures a typical case of equational sentence, a relational structure in which X (the house of enmity) is Y (the house of love) and Y (the house of love) is X (the house of enmity). By the irony and freak of fate the addressee was predestined to have fallen in love or stricken up a close friendship with a member of an enemy’s household, an inevitable and inescapable destiny because of which the addressee puts his or her life at risk for the one he or she cherishes. Proverb (12a) uses the syntactic frame ‘X is Y’ in order to host the opposite pair of *ḥāmīhā/harāmīhā* (‘protectors/looters’) whose referring expressions are co-referential in that both of them designate the same referent. Co-reference is the propositional gist of the declarative statement of the proverb which asserts the proposition that those who have been entrusted or charged to guard and protect some resources are indeed the ones who leverage them to their advantage, aphoristically a fox guarding a henhouse. The syntactic structure, SVSC (subject+verb+subject complement), of the proverb typifies simultaneous opposition in which the X- and Y-opposites are mutually inclusive and interchangeable in that its protectors are its looters (X is Y) and its looters are its protectors (Y is X).

NEGATED OPPOSITION

Jones (2002, p. 88) defines the function of ‘negated antonymy’ as “the co-occurrence of an antonymous pair within a framework that negates one antonym as a device to augment the other” (X not Y). Davies (2012) renames it ‘negated opposition’ which confirms inherent mutual exclusivity in canonical examples and constructs mutual exclusivity in non-canonical ones. In the current study, negated opposition cancels one opposite in favour of the other at surface structure but expresses preference for one opposite over another at deep structure when combined with the contrastive ‘but’ (not X but Y). AlHedayani (2016) assigns three functions to negated opposition. One is negation for emphasis using the framework ‘X not Y’. The second is negation for correction utilising the framework ‘not X but Y’. The third is negation for cancellation which is a controversial function because it uses a coordinative framework marked by a correlative conjunction ‘neither X nor Y’ and is included under the coordinated function (cf. Jones, 2002; Murphy & Jones, 2008; Muehleisen & Isono, 2009; Kostić, 2011; Hassanein, 2013, 2018; Hsu, 2015).

- (13) a. العزوبية ولا الجوازه العار (Al-Baqlī, 1968 [P7], p. 323)
b. **Singlehood**, (and) not shameful **marriage**.
- (14) a. شاب ولا تاب (Al-Baqlī, 1968 [P2], p. 58)
b. **Grew grey**, (and did) not repent.

Proverb (13a) establishes opposition between canonical opposites, *al-‘uzūbiyya/al-ḡawāza* (‘singlehood/marriage’), within the frame ‘X (and) not Y’ (relatively equivalent to ‘X but not Y’ in English), which formally negates Y to affirm X but functionally prefers X to Y. The motif of the proverb is that it is better for one to stay single than be so unhappily married that one would be forced to divorce. It signifies a warning against rushing oneself into matrimony and a counsel to wait for Mr. or Mrs. Right. At its deep structure, such a proverb is subsumable under preferentially comparative opposition (singlehood is better than shameful marriage; ‘better single than sorry’; ‘better cut the shoe than pinch the foot’) and under replacive opposition (singlehood rather than shameful marriage). However, the researcher prefers to subsume it under negated opposition because of the formal features of the syntactic frame and the overriding negation with the negative particle *lā* (‘not’). Proverb (14a) replicates the same syntactic framework ‘X and not Y’ to enclose the non-canonical pair of opposition, *šāb/iāb* (‘grew grey/repent’), to assert that old habits die hard and habit ever remains. The syntactic frame in use affirms the X-opposite but negates the Y-one in such a manner that the latter opposite member is negated in favour of the former. The subject matter of the proverb is to focus on a habitual and persistent committal of sins no matter how much old and grey one has turned. Old age and gray hair have not dissuaded the errant from sinning.

CASE-MARKED OPPOSITION

The case-marked textual function has made its debut in Hassanein (2013) as ‘case antonymy’ and reappeared in Hassanein (2018) as ‘case-marked opposition’. It signals the co-occurrence of two opposites in cross-categorical frames that host case-marking roles played by either opposite or both. As Hassanein (2013, 2018) puts it, case is used here both syntactically and semantically to represent ways in which nouns related to a verb (for instance, its subject, object(s), and complement) are semantically related to the meaning of the verb. Cases include syntactic roles as subject/object, present participle/past participle, and active/passive or semantic roles as agent/patient, experiencer/theme, and benefactor/beneficiary. In comparison to the statistical frequency distributions of Hassanein’s (2013) case antonym (1%) and Hassanein’s (2018) case-marked opposition (3%), this study also logs a rather marginal frequency of case-marked opposition (3 cases, 1.5%), that is statistically not so significant but is still part and parcel of the proverbial typology.

- (15) a. الشريك المخالف اخسر وخسره (Al-Baqlī, 1968 [P4], p. 227)
b. (If you have) a contentious partner, **lose** and **cause** him to **lose**.

Proverb (15a) builds the opposition of transitivity in both syntactic and semantic senses, a grammatical facility used for representing experience in language by identifying verbs which take direct objects (SVO) and the way meanings are encoded in the clause (Simpson, 2004). Case-marked opposition figures between grammatically opposed verbs, *ihsar/hassar* (‘lose/cause to lose’), the former of which is intransitive and the latter transitive. This grammatically opposite (in)transitivity in turn enshrines an opposition between the three participants of semantic transitivity around the verbs ‘lose/cause to lose’, i.e., experiencer/actor/experiencer, respectively. The argument of the proverb is to accelerate the dissolution of a contentious partnership even with losses on both sides. Incompatible partners

are advised to better lose once together than suffer forever and to lose the battle but win the war. Partnership must be based on mutual consent and intelligibility between both parties.

DISTINGUISHED OPPOSITION

Distinguished opposition, a polyonym of Jones's (2002) 'distinguished antonymy' and AlHedayani's (2016) 'distinction', records the co-occurrence of a pair of opposites in a frame that alludes to an inherent semantic disparity, a metalinguistic or metaphorical distinction, between both opposites. The typical frames are 'n between X and Y' or 'v X from Y' where n is a noun ('distinction' or a synonym thereof) and v is a verb ('distinguish' or a synonym thereof). Unlike the framework 'n between X and Y' which is regarded by Jones (2002) as a potentially and obviously productive one common to almost all his database sentences in English, the framework 'v X from Y' is the most productive one in Arabic paremiography. AlHedayani (2016) argues that in MSA there are some database sentences under distinction in which two opposites serve as two ends of a certain pole and the point in between is referred to. Compared to the high frequency of Jones's (2002) distinguished antonymy (100 cases, 5.4%) and AlHedayani's (2016) distinction (51 cases, 1.7%), distinguished opposition is logged by this study as a marginal category, taking up a rather marginal frequency (a couple of cases; 1.5%).

- (16) a. عند الشدة والضيق بيان العدو من الصديق (Al-Baqlī, 1968 [P3], p. 174)
b. In difficulty and in need, the **enemy** becomes distinct from the **friend**.

Proverb (16a) preaches to people in distress about the metalinguistic distinction between true friendship and true enmity, especially in hard times and dire straits because 'a friend in need is a friend indeed'. The adage does so by using a canonical pair of opposites, *al-ʿaduww/al-ṣadīq* ('enemy/friend'), in a distinction-making framework 'X becomes (v) distinct (adj.) from Y'. The axiomatic meaning is that trials and tribulations do separate 'the sheep from the goats', 'the wheat from the chaff', and 'the men from the boys'. A true friend is the one who helps when help is really needed and the one who can indeed be counted on in difficulty. Al-Baqlī (1968, p. 174) cites a poet, presumably Al-Šāfi'ī, as versifying that exact sense: "May God reward tribulations with all godsendings | with them I knew enemies from friends (The researcher's own translation).

INTERROGATIVE OPPOSITION

Interrogative opposition, 'interrogative antonymy' in Jones & Murphy (2005), 'disjunctive antonymy' in Muehleisen & Isono (2009), and 'binarised option' in Davies (2012), forces a single choice between two mutually exclusive opposites in an X-or-Y frame that often takes the form of a question. By 'mutually exclusive', one means that the occurrence of one opposite excludes the occurrence of the other owing to the disjunctive coordinator 'or', the function of which is to indicate exclusiveness rather than inclusiveness. Interrogation, disjunction, and binary option have been proposed to refer to the same syntactic frame hosting a pair of oppositions. This study favours 'interrogative opposition' because it is a superordinate under which the disjunctive coordinator 'or', the question mark '?', and binary choice are all subsumable. Interrogation shuns confusability between disjunctive coordination and disjunctive interrogation and makes a choice from two options or more. In this study, only one case of interrogative opposition is recorded, occupying a very marginal, almost statistically insignificant, percentage (0.5%), although it has higher percentage (17.7%) in Jones & Murphy (2005). The typical frame logged in this study is 'X or Y?'.

- (17) a. الكذب ع الحى واللا ع الميت (Al-Baqlī, 1968 [P3], p. 182)
b. Lying to the **living** or to the **dead**?

Proverb (17a) features interrogative opposition in its original form by employing an interrogatively disjunctive framework ‘X or Y?’ in order to host two mutually exclusive binary and complementary opposites, *al-ḥayy/al-mayyit* (‘living/dead’). The Arabic saying does not orthographically end in a question mark, but its interrogativity figures intonationally, which may explain why the researcher ends the English counterpart with the interrogation mark. The interrogation is ironically rhetorical in that it is raised not to seek an answer but to lay emphasis on the point that liars can lie about someone dead but not about someone alive, because truth about the latter will sooner or later come out.

TRANSITIONAL OPPOSITION

Like Jones’s (2002) ‘transitional antonymy’, transitional opposition, as Davies (2012) defines it, signals a transformation from one state to another. Seminally in Jones (2002), transitional antonymy takes up 90 (3.0%) of his database and signals the co-occurrences of antonymous pairs in frames that express a shift from one location or state to another. Besides, Hassanein (2013) has added a temporal change from one period of time to another to the category that he (2013, p. 169) defines as “the co-occurrence of an antonymous pair within a framework that expresses a change in place, in time and in state.” This study has recorded just one case in which there is a change or shift in state represented by the syntactic Arabic framework ‘make X from/out of Y’, which is equivalent to the English frame ‘turn X into Y’.

- (18) a. يعمل من الحبة قبة (Al-Baqlī, 1968 [P2], p. 90)
b. Make out of a **seed** a **dome**.

Proverb (18a) is a typical case of situational transition in which there is a shift from one state to another, as exemplified in the paired opposites, *al-ḥabba/ubba* (loosely, ‘seed/dome’; freely, ‘molehill/mountain’), which describe a person as being overactive and histrionic in making ‘a mountain out of a molehill’, turning a slight problem into a serious one, a minor issue into a major one, and in exaggerating the importance of trifles in his/her behalf. Pragmatically, the illocutionary force of the proverb is to implicitly inform the interlocutor about the spoken-of person’s habit of making something out of nothing, blowing things out of proportion, going overboard, and overacting.

CONCLUSION

This study has sought to revisit Arabic paremiology from a lexico-syntactic perspective by investigating the discourse functions of oppositions in Arabic paremiographical discourse. Therein oppositions are shown to perform eleven functions—namely, ancillarity, coordination, transitivity, subordination, comparison, simultaneity, negation, case-marking, distinction, interrogation, and transition, based on their co-occurrences in syntactic frames. The syntactic frames act as triggers of canonical, semi-canonical, and non-canonical oppositions in discourse whose classification has been induced and instigated by the ancillary function of opposition (ir)respective of the hosting environments. This is the reason why ancillary opposition is the most frequent function in the dataset.

The quantified and qualified functions in Arabic proverbial discourse are also shown to be typologically similar but not identical to their counterparts in other languages. Some functions are shared between Arabic and other languages, such as the ancillary function (a

contrastive pair projects its contrastiveness on another pair), the coordinated function (an opposite is inclusively conjoined with or exclusively disjoined from another), the transitive function (an opposite relates syntagmatically to another in an SVO structure), the comparative function (an opposite is gauged against another on a lexical-semantic scale), the simultaneous function (an opposite synchronises with another to describe one referent), the negative function (an opposite is denied in favour of the other), the distinguished function (an opposite is made distinct from another), interrogation (an opposite is chosen over the other, often in the form of a question), and transition (a shift in state from one opposite to another). Two functions have been added to the classifications developed in other languages. One is the subordinated function (one opposite is hypotactically appended to another) and the other is the case-marked function (where both lexemes play opposite case roles at syntactic and semantic levels). The syntagmatic analysis of Arabic proverbs conducted herein synergically retrieved and replicated the classifications undertaken recently across other languages (e.g., Mettinger, 1994; Jones, 2002; Davies, 2012, among others), contrary to the paradigmatic analyses that are based upon inherent semantic properties as markedness and gradation (e.g., Lyons, 1977; Cruse, 1986).

This paremiological study proves that opposition is prevalent in everyday language and is an integral part of the paremiographical tradition. Opposition pervades Arabic proverbs lexically, semantically, conceptually, contextually, canonically, and non-canonically. This is because it reverberates to all word classes, including nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions, as well as to all categories, such as gradables, complementaries, converses, reverses, and incompatibles. “Antonyms are antonyms, regardless of word class, regardless of gradability” (Jones, 2002, p. 155). The syntagmatic study of opposites undertaken in this article provides cross-linguistic evidence for both Mieder’s (2004) and Coinnigh’s (2014) arguments that proverbs in general pattern their information structure in syntactic patterns or formulae, as in ‘Better X than Y’, ‘Like X, like Y’, ‘If X, then Y’, ‘No X, no Y’, and ‘X is Y’. Proverbs employ such structural patterns to host oppositions as sense-making mechanisms and phraseological units therein. These patterns may pose a real challenge to the translation of Arabic proverbs into other languages as the discourse functions they perform within proverbial discourse are compulsorily mutated in the process of finding a cultural equivalent.

To conclude, the syntagmatic study of opposite pairs according to their co-occurrences in syntactic frameworks in Arabic paremiographical discourse shows a human propensity for patterning proverbial thoughts in binary oppositions—a “general human tendency to categorize experience in terms of dichotomous contrast” (Lyons, 1977, p. 277). Opposition is proved to have both canonical (Jones, 2002) and non-canonical (Davies, 2012) configurations. This study focused on the lexico-syntactic analysis of the canonical guises whereas the non-canonical ones deserve future research to test the hypothesis that the syntactic frames also serve as triggers not only for canonical antonyms but also for non-canonical oppositions in text. Recommended for further research is also the sequential order in which members of the opposite pairs appear. ‘Which opposite item, X or Y, comes first and why?’ remains an unexplored enquiry in Arabic and merits extensive research.

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APPENDIX

Arabic Transliteration System

Arabic	sAts	Unicode	Arabic	sAts	Unicode	Arabic	sAts	Unicode
ا	a, ā	0101	ط	ṭ	1E6D	ى	ā	0101
ب	b		ظ	ẓ	1E93	ي	ī	012B
ت	t		ع	‘	02BF	و	ū	016B
ث	ṭ	1E6F	غ	ġ	0121	َ	a	
ج	ġ	01E7	ف	f		ِ	i	
ح	ḥ	1E25	ق	q		ُ	u	
خ	ḥ	1E2B	ك	k		يَا	ai	
د	d		ل	l		وَا	au	
ذ	ḏ	1E0F	م	m		يَا	īy	012B
ر	r		ن	n		وَا	ūw	016B
ز	z		ه	h		ة	a, ah, āh, at, āt	0101
س	s		و	w, ū	016B			
ش	š	0161	ي	y, ī	012B			
ص	ṣ	1E63	ء	’	02BE			
ض	ḏ	1E0D						

Unicode hexadecimal values of uppercase transliteration characters

Ā	Ḑ	Ḑ	Ĝ	Ĝ	Ḥ	Ḥ	Ī	Š	Ş	Ṭ	Ṭ	Ū	Ẓ
0100	1E0E	1E0C	01E6	0120	1E24	1E2A	012A	0160	1E62	1E6E	1E6C	016A	1E92

SOURCE. https://brill.com/fileasset/downloads_static/static_fonts_simple_arabic_transliteration.pdf

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