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Linguistic Analyses of Rhymed Proverbs, Idioms and Fixed Expressions in Jordanian Arabic

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the syntactic and prosodic structures of rhymed proverbs, idioms, and fixed expressions in Jordanian Arabic (JA). The study highlights how these expressions give precedence to phonological considerations over strict syntactic or semantic norms. While traditional and previous research has often focused on meaning or cultural context, this work shifts attention to form, as it examines how Arabic idioms and proverbs value rhyme, parallelism, and style. Data were collected from classical sources like *madʒmaʕ al-ʔamθaːl* and contemporary social media, with a focus on rhymed expressions still used in JA. The analysis is based on both classical Arabic grammar and modern linguistic frameworks. The results of the study show that these expressions not only carry rich semantic and cultural dimension, but they also exemplify a blend of syntax, sound, and morphology. A lot of Jordanian proverbs, idioms and fixed expressions give priority to prosody rather than to meaning or syntactic structure as many of these expressions have parallel bi-clausal structures with matching rhythm. In some cases, suffixes, ellipsis, topicalization, inversion and exaggeration are skillfully used for prosodic purposes. Conditional structures and headless relative clauses are manipulated to maintain phonological symmetry at semantic and syntactic cost. In conclusion, phonological harmony frequently shapes or overrides conventional grammatical structures.

Highlights:

- The paper presents a linguistic analysis of rhymed proverbs, idioms and fixed expressions in Jordanian Arabic.
- This study shows how prosodic, semantic, and pragmatic aspects interact in the creation of rhymed proverbs, idioms and fixed expressions
- The paper indicates that in many Jordanian proverbs, idioms and fixed expressions, rhyme is the driving force rather than the meaning or syntactic structure.

1. Introduction

Idioms, fixed phrases, and proverbs are essential elements of language and cultural communication. These forms have more purpose in languages than merely decorating speech; they reflect shared experiences, convey values, and communicate accumulated social wisdom. Their oral beauty, rhythm, metaphorical depth, and conciseness all contribute to their argumentative impact. Even when they deviate from traditional semantic or grammatical logic, proverbs in Arabic, including Jordanian Arabic (JA), frequently use rhyme and prosodic symmetry to create memorable and widely accepted statements[1,2].

Proverbs are unique in their brevity and accuracy. They are characterized by brief expression, clear meaning, and profound implication. Often, they are neatly built by stylistic elements particular to the Arabic language, like rhythmic flow, phonetic harmony, and rhetorical additions like rhyme and alliteration. These qualities let Arabic proverbs survive through time since they provide them unique appeal and memory. Proverbs and idioms have historically been employed as grammatical exemplars by classical grammarians to establish syntactic and morphological norms.

Texts such as *madʒmaʕ al-ʔamθaːl* 'Collection of Proverbs'[3] and *al-ʔiːḍaːħ fiː ʕuluːm al-balaːɣa* 'Explanation of Rhetoric Sciences'[4] highlight the importance of melody, parallelism, and balanced phrase structure in the Arabic rhetorical tradition.

This study mainly investigates syntactic and prosodic characteristics of rhymed proverbs, idioms, and fixed expressions in JA. It also reviews some of the cultural and pragmatic aspects of these expressions. Whereas the majority of linguistic analyses have concentrated on idiomatic meaning or cultural context, of these expressions, our study sheds light on their syntactic and prosodic architecture. In particular, it examines how prosodic demands like rhyme and rhythm frequently impact, modify, or supersede conventional syntactic patterns, resulting in statements that prioritize phonological harmony ahead of syntactic accuracy or semantic clarity. Moreover, by providing a thorough linguistic analysis of rhymed, syntactically stylized proverbs in Jordanian Arabic, this work fills a gap in the literature.

2. Literature Review

In *Al-amθal al-ʕarabijja: Dirasa tarxijja taħlilijja* 'Arabic proverbs: a historic and analytical study', Qatamesh[5] discussed the meanings of *maθal* (proverb) and *ħikma* (wisdom), investigating the difference between the two as well as types of well-known sayings and classifications of Arabic proverbs. Then, examining Arabic proverbs historically, the researcher discussed the significant works produced in this tradition. He, further, concentrated on how proverbs often stray from conventional grammatical rules and are passed down in many variants. Qatamesh [5] also looked at the literary characteristics of proverbs, including their rhetorical force, use of figurative language, and stylistic elements like sound patterns and visual imagery.

Al-Amad[6] underlined the need of dialogic proverbs as a natural component of everyday life among individuals from all social origins and orientations. The study concentrated on the themes hidden inside these proverbs. Al-Amad[7] presented a compilation of works devoted to Jordanian folk culture. This in-depth study of Jordanian proverbs emphasized their interpretive flexibility and complex meanings. It investigated the textual and oral aspects of these proverbs. The study also investigated the speech patterns and underlying stylistic cues that influenced how these proverbs work in communication. The findings of the study included the interpretive depth of proverbial speech, the strength of lexical

choice, and the way proverbs generate meaning by means of a unique semantic and stylistic framework. It also showed how culturally accepted rhetorical systems shape expression by use of proverbs.

Al-Fuqaha'[8] investigated the phenomena of assimilation, substitution, and root-based symmetry in proverbs as phonological processes showing dialectal diversity among Arabic-speaking communities. The study also looked at metathesis, glottalization, and the common occurrence of superlative forms in Arabic proverbs. These qualities were examined as stylistic tools with both semantic and rhythmic functions. The study found that Arabic proverbs often improve both memorability and rhythmic flow through the use of common stylistic elements such as word doubling, replacement, and metathesis. Finally, the study found that many proverbs violate normative morphology.

Amayra, and Nazzal[9] highlighted the linguistic traits particular to Arabic proverbs, which include stylistic elements that have shaped their unique form and broad use. Aiming to track linguistic changes and stylistic evolution across time, the researchers contrasted a sample of classical proverbs with modern ones. Their results indicate that modern Arabic proverbs-especially those stated in Standard Arabic- are a natural extension of classical proverbial forms. Though stylistic variations are clear, both have certain structural and rhetorical characteristics. The paper also found that classical proverbs highlighted rhetorical form as a goal in itself, sometimes highlighting complex figurative tools and verbal exaggeration. By comparison, modern proverbs with less dependence on conventional rhetoric tend to prefer simpler structures and more direct exposition. The research also noted that certain contemporary proverbs show influence from colloquial dialects and may be somewhat linguistically clumsy or loose, thereby resembling spoken vernacular more than Classical Arabic. This change shows the dynamic tension in modern proverbs between eloquence and accessibility.

Hammad[10] looked at how classical Arabic proverbs shape grammatical and morphological interpretation. The research found that Arabic proverbs are excellent resources for syntactic and morphological study. Grammarians often utilized them as instruments to promote and defend grammatical guidelines. Thus, proverbs are not just cultural expressions but also legitimate and authoritative linguistic evidence in the creation of grammatical and morphological rules.

Rajah[11] distinguished the proverb (*maθal*) from ḥikma (*wisdom*), and emphasized the artistic and rhetorical qualities present in Arabic sayings and proverbs. The paper looked at several rhetorical ornaments, narrative, anecdote, analogy, and symbolism. The study highlighted the key stylistic features and aesthetic design of traditional Arabic proverbs.

3. Methodology

3.1. Data Collection

In order to understand how form, sound, and cultural intent merge in proverbs, idioms and fixed expressions, the research makes use of both contemporary linguistic frameworks and ancient Arabic grammar. Most proverbs were collected from two sources: a book '*madʒmaʕ al-ʔamθaːl*' (The collection of Proverbs) by Al-Maydani[3]. However, since these proverbs are written in Standard Arabic, we selected only the ones that are rhymed and used in Jordanian Arabic. The second source is a facebook page[12].

As for the idioms and fixed expressions, there are no books or sources for these. Therefore, the researchers collected them individually from what they read and heard from people around them.

3.2. Selection Criteria

To understand how form, sound, and cultural intent merge in proverbs, idioms, and fixed expressions in Jordanian Arabic, this study combines contemporary linguistic theory with insights from Classical Arabic grammar. The selection criteria of these expressions are as follows:

○ The proverb must be in Jordanian Arabic, regardless of whether its origin is Classical.

○ It must exhibit clear rhyming patterns (end rhyme, internal rhyme, or rhythmic symmetry).

○ It must have an identifiable structure (e.g., parallelism, repetition, ellipsis).

○ It must carry a culturally embedded meaning relevant to Jordanian or broader Levantine society.

In the same vein, the criteria for idioms and fixed expressions are as follows:

○ The expression must be fixed (non-compositional or partially compositional).
○ It must be commonly used in spoken Jordanian Arabic.
○ It must be heard in natural, real-life discourse or informal digital contexts (e.g., social media).
○ Preference is given to expressions that display phonological parallelism or rhythmical closure.

3.3. Sources and Sampling:

Table 1 shows the sources and sampling of the proverbs, idioms and fixed expressions selected.

The total sample size comprised 120 proverbs and 60 idioms and fixed expressions. Thus, the distribution of these expressions by source and type is shown in **Table 2**.

Table 1. Sources and sampling of the proverbs, idioms and fixed expressions selected.

Source	Type	Total Collected	Selected for Analysis	Criteria Used
Madʒmaʕ al-ʔamθāl (Book)	Proverbs	250	80	Must be used in Jordanian Arabic + rhymed
Facebook Page (Local Proverbs)	Proverbs	120	40	Rhymed, culturally relevant
Field Collection (Informal)	Idioms/Fixed Expr.	150	60	Fixed, rhythmic or stylistically marked

Table 2. Distribution of proverbs, idioms and fixed expressions by source and type.

Type	Book	Facebook	Field Collection	Total
Rhymed Proverbs	80	40	0	120
Idioms/Fixed Expr.	0	0	60	60

3.4. Data Analysis

This study is concerned mainly with the syntactic and prosodic analyses of rhymed proverbs. However, to draw a complete picture, the cultural, semantic and pragmatic aspects of these proverbs were visited as well. Some phonological analysis was embedded under prosody. The semantic/pragmatic analysis here entails the analysis of the words that complete the rhythmical pattern in these proverbs and idioms.

The data were analyzed both qualitative and quantitative, based on a mixed-method linguistic framework. The primary focus is on prosody and syntax, with attention to semantic, pragmatic, and phonological patterns.

Prosodic and Phonological Analysis:

Each proverb/expression was analyzed for:

○ Rhyme scheme (e.g., perfect rhyme, assonance, consonance)
○ Syllable count and rhythmic balance

4. Results

Proverbs, idioms and fixed expressions, especially in spoken dialects, represent a model in which phonology, syntax, and semantics are intricately linked. They emphasize the need of including aesthetics into linguistic study. In this section, we present the results of our analyses of these expressions. We start first with a brief quantitative analysis:

1. **Quantification:**
   - Frequency of rhyme types:
     ▪ End rhyme: 82%
     ▪ Internal rhyme: 10%
     ▪ Assonance/consonance only: 8%
   - Rhythmic balance (based on syllable count symmetry):
     ▪ Balanced (e.g., 5-5): 65%
     ▪ Unbalanced but rhythmic (e.g., 4-6): 25%
     ▪ Irregular: 10%

2. **Syntactic Structure:**
   - Categorized into:
     ▪ Nominal phrases (NP): 35%
     ▪ Verbal sentences (VS): 40%
     ▪ Elliptical/fragment structures: 25%
   - Common patterns:
     ▪ Parallelism (e.g., ***X-phrase, Y-phrase***): frequent in 52%
     ▪ Coordinated clauses (***and-structure***): 30%
     ▪ Imperative-based: 18%

3. Semantic and Pragmatic Analysis:

- Literal vs. metaphorical meaning:
  - Metaphorical: 85%
  - Literal: 15%
- Cultural references (e.g., animals, local places, traditional values): Identified in 60% of proverbs
- Pragmatic intent:

- Warning: 28%
- Criticism/mockery: 22%
- Advice/wisdom: 40%
- Irony/humor: 10%

4. Structural Coding Example

As an example, a structural coding example is shown in **Table 3**.

Table 3. A Structural Coding Example.

Expression	Type	Rhyme	Rhythm	Structure	Semantic Intent
ma: bilbag ʕala umm ʃduːg ʔilla beiḍ masluːg 'A big-ugly-cheeked girl does not deserve except boiled eggs'	Proverb	End	4-4	VS	Irony
ʔitmaskan ḥaṭṭa: tatamakkan 'Stoop to conquer/Act humble until you gain control'	Proverb	End	6-6	Parallel	Advice
ʔiða: dʒann rubʕak, ʕaqlak ma: yinfaʕak 'If your people went crazy, your discretion wouldn't help you'	Fixed Expr.	End	4-4	Imperative	Wisdom

4.1. A Cultural and Pragmatic Analysis

Apart from structural issues, Arabic proverbs, idioms and fixed expressions are inextricably linked with cultural values and social performance. According to Suleiman[13], proverbs in Arab society frequently serve as rhetorical devices meant to control behavior, provide veiled criticism, or support group standards. Their application is not only about delivering meaning but also about performing identity and social competency.

This cultural reasoning is particularly clear in Jordanian Arabic. Often, rhymed phrases are employed to convey sarcasm, criticism, or comedy. Their acceptability and effect rely not just on the circumstances but also on the shape of their delivery. Well-known proverbs usually have a great impact on the life of an average person. For many, their common use has raised them to the level of behavioral recommendations. Rarely does one hear a discussion or debate unsupported by a well-known proverb, which offers a clear and quick expression of viewpoint. These sayings cover a broad spectrum of beliefs and points of view, including contradictions. While some proverbs reflect *pessimism*, others advocate *hope*. While some advocate virtues like *honesty* and *kindness*, others promote *flattery*, *deception*, or *mistrust*.

In everyday life, proverbs, idioms and fixed expressions are used to give guidance, caution against certain ac-

tions, inspire tenacity, or imitate social values. These expressions have both linguistic and social purposes, which explains why they endure throughout time and why, in spite of grammatical inconsistencies, their structure is frequently maintained. Arabic academics like Al-Sharafat[1] and Al-Mawsuʕa Al-Ghanijja[2] highlighted how these expressions act as cultural mirrors, reflecting the complexity of societal views as well as traditional values.

Popular proverbs and often fixed phrases in Jordanian Arabic show the variety of cultural values, intellectual legacies, and social conventions inside the society. They represent a complicated cultural perspective in which they simultaneously support societal values and warn against moral collapse. The way proverbs express both positive values and support desirable social ideals including good character, compassion, respect for elders, contentment, faith in God, hard labor, and a dedication to moral conduct e.g., *ʔal-ḥaraka baraka* 'Movement is a blessing', and *ʔal-dʒaːr qabl ʔaddaːr* 'Look for a (good) neighbor before you look for a (good) house', *ħaːfiẓ ʕala ʔaṣ-ṣadiːq walaw fiː ʔal-ħariːq* 'Keep your friend even in the fire'.

Conversely, some proverbs promote negative societal ideals and advocate behaviors including cunning, manipulation, cowardice, and suspicion of others. Often, these sayings encourage values at odds with concepts of human dignity and ethical behavior. Among the phrases are: *biʕt*

dʒaːri wa-lam ʔabʕ daːri 'I sold my neighbor, but I did not sell my house', *ʔal-ħiːla ʔanfaʕ min ʔal-wasiːla* 'The trick is better the means', *ʔitmaskan ħaṭṭaː tatamakkan* 'Stoop to conquer', *yalli yitzawwaj ʔummiː ʔaʔulluh ʕammiː* 'The person who gets married to my mom will become my uncle', and *ʔiða: dʒann rubʕak, ʕaqlak maː yinfaʕak* 'If your people went crazy, your discretion wouldn't help you'.

Proverbs and idioms are, thus, seen as reflective mirrors of the intellectual, cultural, and social identities of peoples and cultures. Offering a key to comprehending human culture and evaluating societal realities, they reflect distilled experiences the human mind has thought of into short and emotive sentences. These expressions have been shaped by generations of observation, knowledge, and innovation, and they have greatly influenced social behavior and group views[14]. Depending on context and goal, their communicative power lies in their capacity to convince, inspire, or warn others. These phrases function as cultural utterances, understandable only through shared knowledge[15].

In Jordanian Arabic, such phrases are often employed to convey criticism, advice, or irony in culturally relevant and socially strategic ways. Often using metaphor, exaggeration, or analogy, proverbs and idioms serve moral or practical teachings[16].

Examples of command-based proverbs include: *ruq ħatta: tastaħiq* 'Be gentle until you deserve', *ʔimʃiː il-ħiːṭ li-ta.ṣil ʕala ʔal-bayt* 'Walk by the wall to reach your house', *ʔitmaskan ħaṭṭaː tatamakkan* 'Stoop to conquer/ Act humble until you gain control', *ʔiʃki li-rabbak wa-naːm, wa-laː taʃki li-baniː ʔaːdam fa-tunħaːn* 'Complain only to God and sleep, not to people, or you will be humiliated'. As they often reflect practical or moral counsel, these commands are meant to direct conduct.

Abu-Lughod[17] links eloquence with power and legitimacy. He argues that rhyme idioms have a certain rhetorical force in discussion via their rhythmic and memorable shape. A well-delivered proverb in storytelling, political debate, or daily dispute can be a convincing action; its sound is as strong as its meaning.

4.2. A Syntactic Analysis

Analyzing the syntactic structure of well-known proverbs, scholars have identified syntactic condensation, ellipsis, inversion, and fronting as phenomena that are used for prosodic and rhetorical purposes of Arabic proverbs rather than just stylistic additions[4,18]. These syntactic structures are not arbitrary; rather, they reflect a language and cultural economy in which form, tone, and meaning are closely related. Classical works such as *kitaːb ʔat-taʕriːfaːt* 'Book of definitions' support the idea that Arabic syntax is dynamic and responsive to context and aesthetics[19].

Often, proverbs in Arabic fit the usual phrase pattern outlined in classical Arabic grammar as "a compound of two elements, one of which is predicated of the other"[19]. Within this framework, Arabic sentences are usually made up of two fundamental parts: 'the subject' *ʔal-musnad ʔilaih* and 'the predicate' *ʔal-musnad*, which together provide the basis of syntactic building. Whether a sentence starts with a noun or a verb determines its classification as either nominal or verbal. Nominal sentences start with a noun and they usually convey permanence, stability, and ageless truths. By contrast, verbal phrases start with a verb and usually express action, change, and temporal occurrences. This distinction is reflected in the distribution of proverbs: while *ʔakaltum tamriː wa ʕaṣaytum ʔamriː* 'You ate my dates and disobeyed my command' captures past actions and moral critique, phrases like *"ʔal-ħaraka baraka"* ('Movement is blessing') represent static truths[20,21].

The frequency of set grammatical patterns that have become formulaic due to repetitive use is a noteworthy characteristic of Jordanian proverbs. Despite frequently breaking grammar norms, these patterns are tolerated because of their rhythmic harmony. Jordanian Arabic proverbs exhibit several grammatical characteristics that merit examination from a linguistic perspective:

— Using pronouns to emphasize a point *ʔanta ṭiq waː ʔanaː miq, fa-mataː nattafiq?* 'You're stubborn and I'm stubborn, so when will we agree?'

— Rhythmic negation *ʔal-ħasuːd laː yasuːd* 'The envious person cannot succeed'

— Relative clauses *ʔal-dʒaːr ʔal-laðiː ʔin qaːwamtahu baħatak* 'The neighbor who, if you speak to him, exposes you'

— Parallelism and Juxtapositions *ħilwa fiː ṭ-ṭabx, ʕajjaːna ʕind ʔal-ʔakl* 'Diligent during cooking, sick when it's time to eat'

— Conditionals and correlative structures *ʔiðaː dʒaːʔa ʔal-ħiːn, ħaːrat ʔal-ʕayn* 'When the time comes, the

eye is confused'.

In Arabic, both nominal and verbal sentences fit under the category of declarative structures, which are used to express statements that may be evaluated as either true or false. The proverb *ʔal-ħaqq ʔabladʒ wal-ba:ṭil ladʒladʒ* 'Truth is bright, and falsehood is shaky', for instance, is a nominal statement starting with a word that expresses steadfastness and stability in meaning affirming the clarity of truth and the vagueness of untruth. By contrast, verbal statements like *ʔakaltum tamri: wa ʕaṣaytum ʔamri:* 'You ate my dates and disobeyed my command' and *ʔiχṭalaṭa ʔal-ħa:bil bi-n-na:bil* 'Things became utterly confused' describe particular past events or acts. As long as these nominal and verbal proverbs are declarative, they can be evaluated as true or false.

Examining such phrases more closely shows the common use of nominal structures in Arabic proverbs. Often, these forms highlight stability and certainty in line with the general communicative goal of proverbs to support a main message or moral judgement in a memorable way. They are often employed to convey universal facts or culturally accepted norms.

Nominal proverbs come in many shapes. One frequent pattern is a definite subject and an indefinite predicate, as in *ʔal-ħaraka baraka* 'Movement is a blessing'. Another variation is having a verbal clause predicate as in *ʔal-ħa:dʒa taχtaq ʔal-ħi:la* 'Necessity creates creativity'. Other proverbs show the predicate as a prepositional phrase: *dawa:m ʔal-ħa:l min ʔal-muħa:l* 'Stability is impossible'. If the subject is indefinite, then the predicate must precede as in *taħt ha:ða: ʔal.kabʃ nabʃ* 'Beneath this ram lies a hidden matter'. From another angle, some nominal proverbs are affirmative while others are negative, such *ʔal-ħasu:d* **la: yasu:d** 'The envious does not succeed'.

Syntactic pairing, which emphasizes the idea of co-occurrence between different grammatical components, is another common structural characteristic in Arabic proverbs. This covers the interaction between adjective and noun, stress and emphasized word, conjunction and conjunct, preposition and object of the preposition, and construct noun and genitive complement. For instance, in *rajaʕat ri:ma: li-ʕa:daṯiha: ʔal-qadi:ma* 'Rima returned to her old habit', *ʔal-qadi:ma* works as an adjective modifying *ʕa:daṯiha:*. In *ʔal-luqma ʔal-hanijja*, too, *ʔal-hanijja* is an adjective characterizing *ʔal-luqma*. In *ʔad-di:k ʔal-faṣi:ħ min ʔal-bayḍa biṣi:ħ*, *ʔal-*

faṣi:ħ 'A melodious rooster starts singing as soon as it gets cracks the egg', *ʔal-faṣi:ħ* qualifies *ʔad-di:k*.

From a prosodic point of view, these phrases are considered small phrases[22]. Some of the most common syntactic structures will also be addressed in the next section to show how prosody overrides syntax.

4.3. A Prosodic and Semantic Analysis

Studies on formulaic language have underlined the need of prosody, especially rhyme and rhythm, in the formation and processing of idiomatic phrases. Wray[23] considers formulaic sequences as pre-made language pieces usually kept in memory as unexamined phrases. From this perspective, prosodic coherence enhances their cognitive efficiency and conversational flow. Kuiper[24] pointed out that the consistency of idiomatic phrases across speech communities typically results from prosodic regularity, including rhyme.

The use of rhyme is deeply embedded in Arabic linguistic tradition. From pre-Islamic poetry to Qur'anic recitation, rhyme has served both aesthetic and functional purposes[25]. These literary and religious texts often employ prosodic symmetry to create emphasis, rhythm, and sonic cohesion. Versteegh[26] traces this tradition through the history of the Arabic language, noting that such features have not only persisted but have also influenced vernacular usage.

However, while rhyme in literary Arabic has received ample scholarly attention, its role in dialectal forms especially in colloquial proverbs and idioms has been largely neglected. Jordanian Arabic, with its phonetic variability and syntactic flexibility, provides a fertile ground for examining how rhyme functions outside formal registers. In many expressions, rhyming patterns seem to dictate lexical choices or syntactic configurations, often at the expense of semantic clarity or grammatical alignment. As the present study shows, prosodic elements especially rhyme often shape their structure over strict semantic alignment.

4.3.1. Rhymed Proverbs and Lexical Selection

In Jordanian Arabic, rhymed proverbs frequently feature lexical items that appear semantically or syntactically incongruent but are preserved due to their prosodic fit. This phenomenon is not unique to Arabic. Fernando[27] observes that in many languages, proverbs and fixed expressions are

shaped and preserved as much by rhythm and rhyme as by their propositional content. Mieder[14] similarly argues that rhyme contributes to a proverb's durability and transmission

across generations.

An illustrative example from the Jordanian dialect involves the proverb:

1. | *ʔilli* | *biddo* | *minna-k* | **_maṣlaḥa_** | *bi-ʕmall-ak* | | *min* |
   |---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
   | Whoever | wants | from-you | something | will turn-to-you | from | *ʃ-ʃams* |
   | **_marwaḥa_** | | | | | | |
   | the-sun a fan | | | | | | |

Here, the rhyme between *maṣlaḥa* 'interest' and *marwaḥa* 'fan' drives the structure of the expression, even though the imagery is far-fetched. The rhymed words have the same syllabic structure (CVC.CV.CV) and that makes the proverb more prosodically appealing. The proverb also benefits from the semantic relation of antonymy. It shows that people can do the impossible to get what they want from you. As many proverbs, this also consists of two clauses which have almost the same length in terms of word and syllable numbers. The proverb finds an antonym pair: the sun, the source of heat, and the fan, a source of cooling down, and uses the pair to indicate that people may turn something in the opposite in order to convince you to do some interest for them. This example highlights how rhyme operates not as a superficial tool but as a central organizing principle, often determining the final lexical form of the expression. Here is another example of a relatively newly-coined *idiom*.

2. | ðra:ṭ | ʕa-l | bala:ṭ |
   |---|---|---|
   | fart | on-the | tiles |
   | 'nonsense/ has no effect/ barking dogs seldom bite' | | |

Here, the choice of *'bala:ṭ'* (tiles) to complete the rhythmical pattern is semantically anomalous as *fart* and *tiles* are rarely combined in the real world. Nonetheless, the idiom is used and understood without much effort.

3. | ma: | bilbag | ʕala | umm | ʃdu:g | ʔilla | beiḍ | maslu:g |
   |---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
   | NEG | suit | on | mother | big ugly cheeks | except | eggs | boiled |
   | 'A big-ugly-cheeked girl does not deserve except boiled eggs/ poor ugly people are worth nothing' | | | | | | | |

This rhymed proverb is a simile for any poor person who dreams to get more than what they afford. So, the proverb tells that those poor people, represented here by a girl with big ugly cheeks, are not worth more than boiled eggs. The proverb should be 'A big-ugly-cheeked girl does

4.3.2. Syntactic Restructuring for Rhymed Flow

Rhyme in Jordanian Arabic does not only influence lexical selection; it also affects syntactic structure. Tayyara[16] documents how idiomatic expressions in Levantine Arabic often exhibit *altered word order, non-standard agreement, or elliptical* constructions- all introduced to maintain rhyming patterns. This kind of restructuring aligns with broader observations in formulaic language studies, where fixed expressions are not always governed by grammatical rules but by their idiomatic and phonological coherence[23].

Many Jordanian proverbs change the phrase structure to fit a certain syllabic rhythm or rhyme pattern. Verbs, for example, can be *fronted or delayed, articles lost, or uncommon inflections* utilized to guarantee prosodic alignment. Although this can lead to grammatically unacceptable statements, such forms are well known and culturally accepted- implying that speakers naturally give musical balance priority over syntactic rules.

Recall that in this paper we argue that prosody overrides semantics and syntax in rhymed proverbs, idioms and fixed expressions. Here, we combine semantic and syntactic analyses with the prosodic one as the choice of a word that completes the rhythmical pattern often has some bearings on the semantic meaning and syntactic structure of the whole expressions. We start with the following example:

not deserve anything', but it chooses a trivial thing that could be worth the poor herself and of course rhymes with the last word of the first part of the proverb *ʃdu:g*, hence *beiḍ maslu:g* was chosen.

Syntactically, the proverb involves *ellipsis* as a verb

like *ta:xuð* 'take/ deserve' right before the object of the second clause *beiḍ maslu:g.* The proverb is also a good example of *alternation*. The verb *bilbag* 'suit', which is transitive in English, takes a prepositional complement introduced with the preposition *la* 'to' not *ʕala* 'on'.

4. gaʕad-na   wi   l-qaʕdeh   ṭa:la-t,
    sat-we   and   the-sitting   stayed long-F,
    la: ʃa:j   insˌʌbb   wa-la   qahwe(h)   fa:rat
    NEG   tea   poured   neither   coffee-F   boiled
    'We stayed long (at one's place), neither tea was poured not coffee was boiled, i.e., the host is stingy'

The proverb describes stingy people who never serve tea or coffee regardless of how long the visitor stays at their place. The second clause had a *topic* structure where the clause started with the *fronted* topic '*ʃa:j*' (tea) conjoined with another *fronted* topic '*gahwe*' (coffee) and the verbs followed. This is because '*ṭa:lat*' (stayed long) in the first clause ends with a feminine suffix, and '*gahwe*' (coffee) in the second clause is also feminine. So, it enforces a feminine agreement ending on the verb *fa:ra-t*. The main point here is that prosody came before syntax in this proverb as the syntactic structure of the second clause was altered to meet a rhythmical pattern.

Prosodically, '*ṭa:lat*' and '*fa:rat*' both have the same syllabic pattern (CV:.CVC). Moreover, the first sounds of the second syllable (CVC) in each have the same place of articulation, i.e., /l/ and /r/ are both alveolar.

4.3.3. Prosodic Drive

It is also common to have a rhymed proverb where a prosodic word rhymes with another that is totally part of the latter, i.e., one word is one syllable more or less than the other:

5. Lisa:na-k   ħiṣa:na-k,   ʔin   ṣuntu-h   ṣa:na-k
    Tongue-your   horse-your   if   preserved-it   preserved-you
    'Your tongue is your horse, if you take care of it, it'' take care of you'

6. Dawa:m   l-ħa:l   mina   l-muħa:l
    Permanence   the-state   from   the-impossible
    'It is impossible to stay the same all the time'

In (5), the second rhyming word '*ṣa:na-k*' is completely part of the first rhyming word '*ħiṣa:na-k*'. The same applies to example (6) where the first rhyming '*ħa:l*' word is part of the second '*muħa:l*'. Note that in example (5) the verb '*ṣa:na-k*' (preserved) is not semantically compatible with the subject '*ħiṣa:na-k*' (your horse) since a horse cannot preserve a man. However, the verb was chosen to rhyme with the subject. In example (6), a less frequent or stylistically marked word is chosen over a more common synonym to preserve rhyme: The word *muḥal* ('impossible') is favored for its rhyming quality with *ḥal*, even though *mustaḥil* is more commonly used in contemporary speech. These two examples support our argument that prosody flouts semantics in rhyming proverbs.

Parallel Structures

Many JA proverbs are bi-clausal which often have same or close number of syllables and/or words. It is very common for these proverbs and idioms to have a parallel structure, i.e., both clauses/phrases have the same syntactic structure. We present a few examples here and analyze them prosodically with reference to their semantic and syntactic structure. In these examples, prosodic symmetry creates emphasis, rhythm, and sound cohesion. We start with example (7).

7.	Min	barra	rχa:m,	w	min	dʒuwwa	sχa:m
	From	outside	marble	and	from	inside	coal dust

'A fair face may hide a foul heart'

This proverb consists of parallel prepositional phrases. Both start with the same preposition *min* 'from', followed by opposing adverbs: *barra* 'outside' in the first phrase, and *dʒuwwa* 'inside' in the second. Both words consist of two similar syllables (CVC.CV). The two phrases end with the rhyming words that have the same syllabic structure (CCV:C) *rχa:m* and *sχa:m*, and even the same sounds except for the first. Semantically speaking, the last rhyming words in the two phrases should have an opposing meaning. So, we ex-

pect the second phrase to end with something like *bala:ṭ* 'tiles', *ṭu:b* 'blocks', or *ṭi:n* 'clay' to have an opposite meaning to *rχa:m* 'marble'. However, since none of the three words has a similar rhythmical pattern, the proverb ended with a very good rhyming candidate *sχa:m* 'coal dust' which has somehow opposing meaning in that the look of it is not at all as appealing as marble. In fact, the same idea and almost the same structure appear in example (8).

8.	a.	Min	barra	halla	halla,	w	min	dʒuwwa	jiʕlam Allah
		From	outside	wow	wow	and	from	inside	knows Allah

'It looks wow from outside, but only God knows what is inside, i.e., appearances deceive'.

Again, the proverb has two similar prosodic structures. Perhaps, the word *halla* 'wow' is repeated in the first phrase

in order to have similar number of syllables as the phrase *jiʕlam Allah* 'Allah knows'.

	b.	Min	bar.ra	hal.la	hal.la,	w	min	dʒuw.wa	jiʕ.la	mAl.lah
		CVC	CVC.CV	CVC.CV	CVC.CV	C	CVC	CVC.CV	CVC.CV	CVC.CV

Another example that has a parallel structure is:

9.	La:	fi-l-ʕi:r	w	la:	fi-n-nafi:r
	Not	in-the-caravan	and	not	in-the-army

'You are useless in trade and war'

The proverb, which translate literally as "Neither in the caravan nor in the army", is one of the most common Arabic proverbs. It was first used during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) by Quraysh tribe to refer to Banu Zuhrah 'Zahra's tribe' when they refused to participate in the war against the Prophet, as they could not bring themselves to fight him since he was the son of their relative, Amina bint Wahab (the prophet's mother). Abu Sufyan ibn Harb used the proverb to belittle Banu Zuhrah for not being of any use in trade or war. The proverb is used to describe a person who is of little use, having no role in significant events. It is a phrase that diminishes the person's reputation and makes their status seem insignificant among others.

The proverb has two parallel structures that start with the negative particle '*la:*'. Both phrases have the preposition

fi 'in' followed by the definite article and ending with the rhyming word: *ʕi:r* 'caravan' in the first, and *nafi:r* 'army' in the second. The only difference here is that the first rhyming word has one super long syllable (i.e. CV:C) *ʕi:r* while the second has two (CV. CV:C) *na.fi:r*. The two words were used here since Arabs' life at that time (almost 1450 years ago) revolved around trade and war. As in (7) and (8), example (9) has the conjoining connector *w* 'and'. Finally, the proverb also involes ellipsis as the verb *janfaʕ* 'be of good use', which should appear after the negative particle, is deleted.

Some of the parallel structures depend on repeating the first word (or one of its derivatives) in each clause as that would make it easier to remember and use. Examples (10–11) illustrate.

10. *ʔimʃi*   **b-dʒna:zeh**   w   la: *t-imʃi*   **b-dʒwa:zeh**
    walk   in-funeral   and   don't   2s-walk   in-marriage
    'Participate in a funeral, but don't get involved in arranging marriages'

11. *ʕa:ʃir*   l-ʁani   **b-jiʁni:k**   w
    live with   the-rich   will-make you rich   and
    la: *t-ʕa:ʃir*   l-dʒarban   **b-jiʕdi:k**
    don't   2s-live with   the-mangy   will-transmit it to you
    'Live with the rich and s/he will make you rich, but if you live with the mangy, s/he will make you mangy as him/her'.

In (10), the two clauses have a verb in common *mʃj* 'walk' with two different conjugations: *ʔimʃi* 'walk' as an imperative verb in the first, and second person singular present *timʃi* 'you walk' in the second. While the first can be interpreted literally or metaphorically, i.e., 'to walk in a funeral to the cemetery or to make arrangements for the deceased to be buried', the second occurrence is more likely to be metaphorical, i.e., 'to arrange marriages'. Example (11) is the same: an imperative verb in the first clause, and second person singular present in the second. The repetition of a word in the two clauses makes it prosodically easier to remember and use.

As mentioned earlier, many proverbs have a nominal-sentence structure, i.e., verbless clause. This is because verbless clauses indicate permanence that clauses with verbs, especially action, achievement and accomplishment verbs, do not indicate. Some of these verbless clauses/ sentences show parallel structure as they are composed of two minor prosodic phrases:

12. [Lisa:n   milis]$_{MP}$ w   [galb   nidʒis]$_{MP}$
    Tongue soft   and   heart   cunning
    'S/he is cunning despite his/ her nice words'

13. [L-ʕein   basˁi:ra]$_{MP}$ wi-   [l-i:d   gasˁi:ra]$_{MP}$
    the eye   can see   and/but the hand short
    'Man proposes but God disposes'

14. [sabiʕ   sˁana:jiʕ]$_{MP}$ wi-   [l-baxt   dˁa:jiʕ]$_{MP}$
    seven   crafts   and   the-luck lost
    'S/he can do multiple words, but s/she does not have good luck'

15. [Bi-l-ma:l]$_{MP}$ wala   [bi-l-iʕja:l]$_{MP}$
    In-the-money   but not   in-the-children
    'May it damage physical things, but not hurt your children'

The parallel structure in these proverbs, with the binomial small clauses, makes it very easy for people to memorize. They are kept in memory as unexamined phrases. In addition to the syntactic parallelism, there is also a semantic parallelism. In (12–13), each proverb has two body parts that are predicated by an adjective. Note that (12) incorporates ellipsis as the subject and verb as elided since the nouns *lisa:n* and *galb* are indefinite and so the following words are adjectives, i.e., each of the two prosodic minor phrases equates to NPs in syntax. Alternatively, we can also say that the definite article was dropped from each noun. In other words, the syntactic structure of the proverb should have been *l-lisa:n milis w l-galb nidʒis* '**The** tongue is soft, but **the** heart is ʕunning'. By contrast, in (13), the noun in each minor phrase is definite and thus it qualifies as a subject, and the following adjectives are therefore predicates. Finally, (15) also shows a semantic and prosodic parallelism that makes the proverb appealing to say. This proverb is usually said when someone gets in an accident and his/ her cars gets partially or completely damaged. So, people try to alleviate it by indicating that it is much better that the car was damaged, but you and your family were safe.

Parallel structure can sometimes involve the repetition of some syntactic or semantic elements:

16. | <u>ṣa:ḥib</u> | l-ʔasad | <u>wa</u> | <u>ləw</u> | ʔakala-<u>k</u> | w | la |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| befriend | the-lion | even | though | ate-you | but | don't |
| t-<u>ṣa:ḥib</u> | n-naðil | <u>wa</u> | <u>ləw</u> | ḥamala-<u>k</u> | | |
| be-frind | the villain | even | though | carried-you | | |

'Befriend the strong even if he hurt you, but don't befriend the villain even they do you a favor'.

17. | xa:f | min | ʕaduwwa-k | marra | w-min | ṣadi:qa-k | ʔalf | marra |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| fear | from | enemy-your | once | and-from | friend-your | thousand | times |

'Beware your friend a thousand times as much as you beware your enemy'

18. | ḍarab-<u>ni</u> w | baka | sabag-<u>ni</u> w | ʃtaka |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| hit-me | and cried | preceded-me | and complained/accused |

'He hit me and cried, and he got to the judge faster me and accused me (of hitting him)'

The proverb in (16) consists of two clauses that have the exact syntactic structure. Semantically, it has three words and a second person suffix in common (underlined). Example (17) involves an ellipsis as the verb *xa:f* 'fear/beware' in the second clause has been deleted due to having one more word *ʔalf* 'a thousand'. So, deleting the verb results in having the same number of words, hence sounding more rhythmic. Finally, example (18) has the exact syntactic struc- ture (V conj V) and the same number of syllables in each with having the first person singular object suffix (underlined) cliticized to the first verb in each clause.

Exaggeration

To find a good rhyme or rhythmical clause, some proverbs resort to exaggeration. Notably, exaggeration in such proverbs and idioms is used in all cases to create a rhythmical pattern:

19. | Lugmeh | hanijjeh | bitkaffi | mijjeh |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| A mouthful | with love | suffices | a hundred |

'Little food served with love can feed a hundred people'

20. | Hamm | l-bana:t | la-l-mama:t |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Worry | the-girls/daughters | to-the-death |

'Parents keep thinking about their daughters (future) until their death'

21. | L-ʔaqarib | ʕaqa:rib |
| --- | --- |
| The-relatives | scorpions |

'Relatives may harm you as much as scorpions may'

The proverb in (19) tells us that little food served with love can feed a hundred people. The word *mijjeh* 'a hundred' fits well since it rhymes with *hanijjeh* 'with love' and both words have the same geminate. Additionally, both clauses prosodically equate to small clauses which usually consist of two words. Example (20) exaggerates about parents' con- cern about their daughters, hence the use of the word *mama:t* 'death'. The two rhyming words *ban:t* and *mama:t* have simi- lar syllabic structures (CV. CVVC). Example (21) exaggerates about the harm that one may get from their relatives, thus the use of the rhyming word *ʕaqa:rib* 'scorpions'. The rhyming words *ʔaqarib* and *ʕaqa:rib* have similar syllabic structure (CV. CV:CVC) with the last two syllables having the same sounds as well. The simile particle *zaj* 'as' is also deleted.

The three examples (19–21) show that Arabic proverbs resort to exaggeration in order to find a second rhyming word. This supports our argument that prosody determines semantics as completing the proverb with a rhythmical pat- tern/word won over finding a suitable, non-rhyming, word in each.

Conditional Structure

Many proverbs use conditional constructions based on a pairing between a conditional sentence and a result clause.

Described in classical grammar by Ibn Hisham al-Anṣari [20] and in modern study by Al-Makhzumi [28] and Hayat and Hayat [29], this syntactic structure creates a cause-effect link whereby the second component logically and structurally depends on the first. Examples of this pattern include: *ʔiðaː dʒaːʔa ʔal-ḥiːn, ḥaːrat ʔal-ʕayn* 'When the time comes, the eye is confused', and *law ʔaʃ-ʃuːr ʃuːri: ma: baʕatht θawri:* 'If the choice were mine, I wouldn't have sold my bull'.

English has three main conditionals that can be differ-entiated grammatically according to the tense in each clause. Standard Arabic, by contrast, loosely differentiates conditionals based on the conditional particle. For example, *ʔin* 'if' is used when the conditional expresses an action that may take place, i.e., type 1. The use of *ləw* aligns with type 3, i.e., past actions that are impossible to change. In Jordanian Arabic, most proverbs have the conditional and time adverbial particle *ʔiðə*, which mostly equates to the second conditional, as proverbs describe hypothetical states.

22. ʔiðə   ʕurifa   s-sabab,   baṭala   l-ʕadʒab
    If/ when   known   the-reason,   annul   the wonder
    'When we know the reason (behind it), we won't wonder (why it happened)'

23. ʔiðə   dʒann   rabʕa-k,   ʕagla-k   ma: jinfaʕa-k
    If/ when   go crazy   people-your,   head-your   NEG   benefit-you
    'If your people went crazy, your discretion wouldn't help you'

24. ʔiðə   ka:n   bi-d-dain,   xuð-l-ak   ki:lt-ain
    If   were   by-the-debt   take-for-you   kilo-DUAL
    'If it is allowed to take it and pay later (as a debt), take two kilos, i.e. take advantage of it'

25. Inn   ra:ħ   ði:b   l-mar:ħ,   ʔidʒə   l-ħusaini   yilʕab   w   jirta:ħ
    If   went   wolf   the-field   come   the-jackal   play   and   rest
    'When the wolf leaves the fields, the jackal can do whatever it wants in them'

26. Ləw   ʃ-ʃour   ʃour-i,   ma   biʕ-t   θour-i
    If   the-decision   decision-my   NEG   sold-I   ox-my
    'If it had been my call, I would not have sold my ox, i.e., I can do whatever I want if I have the option'

As long as these are conditional, they are bi-clausal. This gives them a prosodic pattern that is very appealing to the ear especially with the pause between the two clauses and the re-set of the frequency pattern of the second clause. The examples above use the three conditional particles. It is sometimes hard to decide which conditional type the proverb indicates. We will not discuss this here as we are concerned with the prosodic structure in the first place.

It is noticed that many proverbs utilize suffixes to support the prosodic structure. For instance, in example (23), the addition of the possessive pronoun suffix turned the open syllable *ʕa* at the end of each clause, into a closed one. More importantly, if that suffix had not been added, the rhythmical pattern would have been broken:

27. ʔiðə   dʒann   r-rabʕ   il-ʕagel   ma: jinfaʕ
    If/ when   go crazy   the-people,   the-head   NEG   benefit
    'If the people went crazy, the head/mind wouldn't help'

Semantically, the proverb in (27) does not make much sense. Prosodically, though the last word in each clause ends with the same sound, the two words do not rhyme: *rabʕ* is (CVCC), while *jinfaʕ* is (CVC.CVC). Finally, the prosodic urge also enticed word order inversion. The first clause follows an Arabic canonical word order, while the second clause has a topicalized word order:

28.

ʔiðə	dʒann	rabʕa-k,	ʕagla-k	ma:	jinfaʕa-k	~~ʕagla-k~~
If/when	go crazy	people-your,	head-your	NEG	benefit-you	~~head-your~~
Comp	V	Suj，	Top	neg	V-Obj	~~Sub~~

As mentioned earlier, the inversion (topicalization in this case) is driven by the need to have a rhythmical pattern as *jin.fa.ʕak* 'benefits you' has the exact same last syllable as the last word of the first clause, i.e., *rab.ʕak* 'your people'.

In (24), a dual suffix (-ain) has been added to the last word in the proverb in order to rhyme with the last word of the first clause *dain* 'debt'. The intended meaning is *xuð gad ma bitgdar* 'take as much you can', but that would not rhyme with *dain*. So, prosody has precedence over semantics.

Example (25) shows that in order to have a rhyme with the first clause, a verb phrase has been added at the end of the second clause. In other words, the second clause should

mean something like 'the jackal wanders in the fields'. However, the verb phrase *w jirta:ħ* 'and have some rest' have been added to complete the rhythmical pattern. Finally, example (26) also benefits from possessive suffixes (i.e., 1st person possessive pronoun 'i') in order to have an open syllable which sounds more salient.

Headless Relative Clauses

Often, the grammatical structure of Arabic proverbs features relative clauses. Such clauses also have to have a resumptive pronoun that is linguistically linked to an antecedent, hence guaranteeing structural agreement.

29.

l-ʕiʃr0a	illi	ha:na-t,	ja reitaha	ma:	ka:na-t
The living together-F	that	became cheap-F, I wish it		NEG	be:pst-3SF

'I wish the bond (between us) that was sacrificed had never existed, i.e., I wish I had not known you ever'

In this instance, the feminine pronoun *'-t'* (*ha:nat* and *ka:nat*) functions as a resumptive pronoun that would render the sentence grammatical.

Headless relative clauses (HRC) proverbs are very com-

mon in JA as they usually describe a person. They always appear with the first singular masculine/feminine relative pronoun *'ʔilli'*. It can be used for non-animate subjects as well. Here are some examples:

30.

ʔilli	bitna:m	la-l-ʕaṣir,		ma:	bista:hal	l-mahir
Who	sleep-f	to-the-late afternoon		NEG	deserve-f	the dowry

'The girl who sleeps until late afternoon does not deserve to be married, i.e., Get married to an active energetic girl, not a lazy one'

31.

ʔilli	bimʕi	ʕala	ridʒlei-h,	la:	tiħlif	ʕalei-h
Who	walk	on	feet-his	NEG	swear	on-him

'Any human, who walks on two feet, cannot be guaranteed, i.e., no-one can be trusted'

32.

ʔilli	ʕaglu-h	b-ra:su-h,	biʕrif	xala:ṣ-h
Who	brain-his	in-head-his	knows	end/savior-his

'Anyone who has a brain in his head should know what saves him, i.e., everyone knows what is good and what is bad for them'

33.

ʔilli	bokil	ʕala	dirsu-h,	binfaʕ	nafsu-h
Who	eats	on	molar-his	benefit	self-his

'What you eat benefits you only, i.e., whatever you do will benefit or harm you only'

34.

ʔilli	min-hum,	aħsan	min-hum
That	from-them	better	than-them

'What you get from them is better than them'

35.

ʔilli	fa:t,	ma:t

That   passed   died

'let bygones be bygones'

All these examples are bi-clausal which makes them prosodically more appealing. The head of RC is missing in all: *el-binit* 'the girl in (30), *eʃ-ʃaxṣ* 'the person' in (31–33) and *el-iʃi* 'the thing' in (34–35). Since the relative clause modifies a noun, it is usually descriptive and that makes it somehow longer than the second clause. Deleting the head of RC makes it relatively shorter and this, in turn, makes the number of syllables of the HRC closer to the number of the second (predicative) clause, hence sounding more rhythmical.

No, let's see how prosody controls the rhyming word in each, i.e., how prosody determines semantics. In (30), the word *l-ʕaṣir* 'the late afternoon' was chosen in order to thyme with *mahir* 'dowry' though, when tired, most people wake up in the afternoon, but not in the late afternoon. The word for afternoon is *ðu.hur*, but that word does not rhyme with *ma.hir* despite having two similar syllables and the same last consonant. In (31), the whole RC *bimʃi ʕala ridʒlei-h* 'walks on his feet' is a redundant description to 'man'. It was chosen to make a good rhythmical pattern with the second clause. Note that the third person singular ACC/ GEN case suffix (-h) helped to have rhyming words since without it, the prosodic phrases would be ill-formed, i.e., *ridʒlei-h* 'his feet' would become *ridʒlein* 'two feet', and *ʕalei-h* 'on him' would become *ʕala,* which, of course, does not rhyme with *ridʒlein*.

The same suffix *-h* is used in (33). However, here the third person singular suffix (-h) is used to ease the consonant cluster at the end of the rhyming words *ḍ-ḍirs* 'the molar' and *n-naʃs* 'the-self'. Recall that Arabic only allows consonant clusters in a coda position, which implies that consonant clusters are not preferable in the language. Thus, adding the suffix *–h* resyllabifies the two words into (CVC.CV) instead of (CVCC) and that resyllabification makes the rhyming

words and syllables more audible.

The example is (34) has two equal number of syllables in each phrase. Though the rhyming word is the same in both clauses, it has different meanings as shown in the translation. Finally, (35) sounds poetic as it consists of the relative pronoun and two adjacent rhyming words. Instead of choosing a word like *ra:ħ* 'gone', the word *ma:t* 'died' was chosen to rhyme with *fa:t* 'passed'.

To sum up, HRC resorted to four tactics to preserve a prosodic pattern: consisting of two clauses; adding suffixes; deleting the head of the RC in order to reduce the number of syllables in the first clause; and manipulating semantics in favor of prosody.

4.4. Idiomatic and Fixed Expressions

Perhaps the idiomatic and fixed expressions in JA has barely received attention if any. This is because Arab linguists and researchers have focused either on idiomatic expressions in Standard Arabic or on proverbs in Arabic dialects. In fact, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, idiomatic and fixed expressions in JA have not been collected by any researcher. In this section, we will show how most of these idiomatic and fixed expressions are prosodically governed at the expense of semantics.

First, a quick look at some of the fixed expressions in English shows that many of them sound rhythmic: e.g., *easy peasy, hanky panky, hocus pocus, willy nilly, dilly dally, tittle tattle*, and many others. However, it seems that a good number of these expressions have nonsensical word, e.g., *peasy, pocus* and many others. In contrast, all words in idiomatic and fixed expressions in SA and many Arabic vernaculars have meanings:

36. a. **hajṣ**   **bajṣ**
       hardship   confusion   'total confusion'
    b. **ʁajḍ**   min   **fajḍ**
       little   from   much   'just a small portion (the tip of an iceberg)'
    c. ʔixtalaṭ   l-**ħa:bil**   bi-n-**na:bil**
       mixed the rope holder   with-the-arrow shooter
       'Things got mixed up/ It became a complete mess'
    d. bila: **kalal**   wala   **malal**

without tirednessnor boredom
'working hard without complaining'

e. **musa:ʕid** **ga:ʕid**
helper sitting 'unemployed/useless person'

f. **ħilis** **milis**
sweet tongue soft
'a person who can deceive people easily with his/her nice talk'

g. **sa:lim** **ʁa:nim**
safe/unharmed victorious
'safe and sound'

h. **fa:riʕ** **da:riʕ**
tall/towering imposing/robust
'someone with a striking appearance or commanding presence'

While some of idioms and fixed expressions are rhymed, others are morphologically driven as the following binomials show:

37. a. di:n wa dunja
religion and earthly life 'both earthly and spiritual lives'

b. nu:r wa na:r
light and fire 'The good and the bad'

c. qalb wa qa:lib
heart/inner and mould/outer 'He is the same from inside and outside'

d. qi:l wa qa:l
said and say 'gossip/ tittle tattle'

e. ru:ħ wa rajħa:n
comfort/content and providing 'total bliss'

f. ṭa:x ṭi:x
shooting (nonsense word)
'shooting randomly/ doing things without planning'

These fixed expressions are mostly morphologically driven. Put differently, the binomials in each expression have the same morphological base. In most cases, the two words have opposing but complementary relationship. In three of these examples (b,d,e), the change took place at the vowel level while the consonants remained intact. In (c) the consonants remained the same but the vowel pattern changed. In (a, e) some other consonants have been added and incurred a semantic change. In all examples, the morphological derivation takes precedence over the semantic meaning. However, having some consonants in common creates a prosodic pattern.

5. Conclusion

This study clarified how prosodic, semantic, and pragmatic aspects interact in the creation of rhymed proverbs, idioms and fixed expressions. The data indicates that in many Jordanian phrases, rhyme is the driving force rather than the meaning or syntactic structure. One rhyme may completely encompass another (e.g., ḥiṣa:nak / ṣa:nak), prioritizing sound over logical meaning. A lot of these expressions have parallel bi-clausal structures where matching rhythm and rhyme take precedence over syntax and semantics. Suffixes, ellipsis, topicalization are manipulated purely

for prosodic purposes. Exaggeration is also used to select rhyming units. Conditional structures are rhythmically ordered, with suffixes and word-order inversions are manipulated to maintain phonological symmetry at semantic cost. Headless relative clauses use techniques like head deletion, pronoun suffix addition, and clause compression to balance lengths and rhyme. Thus, prosody often dictates the linguistic form of these expressions as sound and rhyme are prioritized over meaning, syntax, or clarity. In conclusion, linguistic aesthetics become a driving force in JA oral tradition.

The findings of the study may be applicable to other Arabic dialects or even other languages that have rich traditions of oral expression. For example, the interaction between prosody, syntax, and semantics in fixed expressions could offer a comparative framework for analyzing similar phenomena in Egyptian Arabic, Moroccan Arabic, or even in non-Arabic languages like Turkish or Persian, where idiomatic and formulaic expressions play significant cultural and communicative roles. Thus, putting our results in a broader typological perspective could give more generalizable conclusions about the role of phonological aesthetics in shaping meaning and structure across languages.

Author Contributions

Introduction, W.A. (Wafa AlQtaishat) and A.Y.; Literature Review: W.A. (Wafa AlQtaishat) and W.A. (Wafa' Aladwan); Methodology: I.H. and A.Y.; Results (quantitative analysis): A.Y.; Results (Cultural and pragmatic analysis): W.A. (Wafa' Aladwan) and I.H.; Results (Syntactic Analysis): A.Y. and W.A. (Wafa AlQtaishat); Results (Prosodic and semantic Analysis): A.Y. and I.H.; Results (Idiomatic and fixed expression): A.Y. and W.A. (Wafa' Aladwan); Conclusion: W.A. (Wafa' Aladwan); Initial referencing: W.A. (Wafa AlQtaishat) and W.A. (Wafa' Aladwan); Checking references: A.Y. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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