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## Singularity and Plurality in Standard Arabic: A Semantic Message for Translators of *ri:h* (Wind) and *riya:h* (Winds)

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### ABSTRACT

This paper argues that the relationship between the singular and plural forms of a noun in Arabic is not merely grammatical. It specifically shows that the relationship does not only entail that a plural noun refers to more than two persons or things and that each form may hold a certain semantic significance, depending on the context. In order to prove this assumption, the paper reports the results of a study which draws on data collected from Standard Arabic: Common expressions, proverbs, poetry, prophetic traditions, and the Holy Quran (HQ), concerning the singular noun ريح *ri:h* (wind) and its plural رياح *riya:h* (winds). A mixed-method approach that relies on semantic analysis is adopted. In particular, wherever any of these two words is spotted, it is analyzed semantically, and the meaning/description of the word is traced. The analysis showed that there are two main semantic differences between the singular ‘wind’ and the plural ‘winds’ in Arabic. While the former refers to force, destruction, and pain; the latter refers to good things or tidings. In addition, the singular refers to a fixed indivisible entity that exists in one place as it is created for one purpose only. The plural, on the other hand, is distributable and may exist in different places, blow from different directions, and perform different purposes. Translators, therefore, need to take this distinction in mind when these two entries are involved in translation from Arabic to English or any other language. In particular, they need to add supporting adjectives to deliver the embedded message.

**Keywords:** Singularity; Plurality; Semantic Message; Standard Arabic; Translation

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## 1. Introduction

This study exclusively revolves around the singular noun ريح *ri:h* (wind) and its plural رياح *riya:h* (winds). Still, an overview on the singularity and plurality in Arabic may be of value for non-Arabic readers. Nouns in Arabic can be singular, dual, or plural<sup>[1]</sup> (p. 44). Other languages (e.g., English) have only singular and plural forms and in order to refer to a dual, one needs to add ‘two’ before a plural noun<sup>[2]</sup>. In all languages, however, a singular noun typically refers to one person, thing, or entity, and a plural noun refers to a minimum of three people, things, entities. Furthermore, a singular noun in Arabic, unlike English, is marked for gender; i.e., it may be only masculine or only feminine as in رفعة *raf'ah* and مكتب *maktab* (office and room, respectively). On the other hand, most singular nouns in English are neutral, i.e. ‘a teacher’ can simultaneously be a male or a female. But a few words can be distinguished by some additions; consider for example ‘actor’ and ‘actress’, ‘steward’ and ‘stewardess’, and ‘lion’ and ‘lioness’. In a few cases, a new word is used to distinguish a male from a female. Consider ‘duck’ and ‘drake’ and ‘cow’ and ‘bull’ (Ibid).

Plurals in Arabic are slightly complex as there are three types of them. First, the masculine sound plural as in معلمون *mu'alimuun* and معلمين *mu'alimiin* meaning ‘teachers’ can be created by adding ون *uun* or ين *iin* at the end of the singular noun. This type is merely meant to reflect the number, i.e. plurality. Second, the feminine sound plural can be created by adding ات *aat* at the end of the feminine singular noun. Consider for example the singular مُعلمة *mu'allimah* and its plural مُعلمات *mu'allimaat*, i.e. ‘a female teacher’ and ‘female teachers’. This, too, is used to indicate the number. Third, the broken plural type is not easy to form, particularly because the morphological structure of the plural is different from that of the singular and the semantic meaning of the plurals may have different indications. For example, أسياف *asyaaf* and سيوف *suyuuf* are two plurals of the singular noun سيف *saif* (sword). The former is created by adding the letter و *w* in the middle and changing the inflection at the beginning; the latter is formed by adding ا *a* at the beginning and ل *l* in the middle. The former is called ‘abundance plural’, as it points at a large number of swords, whereas the latter is called ‘paucity plural’, as it points at a small number. This type in particular may have a semantic significance. The corpus chosen for the present study is restricted

to the singular noun ريح *ri:h* (wind) and its exclusive broken plural رياح *riya:h* (winds). It is worth mentioning that masculine sound plural and feminine sound plural of ريح *ri:h* neither exist, nor can be formed in Arabic<sup>[1]</sup> (pp. 44–46).

Every single word in the Holy Quran, being singular or plural, has its own function. That is, we cannot take for granted that a certain plural noun like كلمات *kalimat* (words) is merely and grammatically the plural of كلمة *kalimah* (word). Some entries in the HQ in particular come only in the singular form like نور *noor* (light), and others come only in the plural form like ظلمات *zulumat* (darknesses). ‘Light’ means the straight path, and there is only one clear straight path (believing in God), whereas ‘darknesses’ points to various evil paths. Consider the verse:

1) اللهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ

Allah is the ally of those who believe. He brings them out from darknesses into the light (Q2: 257). Similarly, two or three plural nouns can be derived from the same root or singular noun are slightly different in meaning<sup>[3]</sup>.

Other entries, on the other hand, may occur in both the singular form like ريح *ri:h* (wind) and the plural رياح *riya:h* (winds). The usage of these two words looks arbitrary in Arabic. For instance, people, especially journalists, exclusively use the term التغيير *at-ta'ghyir* (the winds of change), although the singular ‘a wind of change’ is used in English alongside the plural. Arabic weather forecast also exclusively uses the plural form as in شديدة رياح *shadida riya:h* (strong winds) شمالية رياح *shamaliya riya:h* (northern winds), and خفيفة رياح *khafifa riya:h* (light winds). The singular form is commonly used in Arabic proverbs as in الباب الذي يبيحك الله من يبيحك الله (the door from which wind drifts, close it and relax) and collocations like الريح بساط *ar-rih bisat* (flying carpet), which means ‘the carpet of wind’. It is worth mentioning too that both the singular ريح *ri:h* (wind) and the plural رياح *riya:h* (winds) are feminine in the Arabic language.

In a number of cases, the two forms are used interchangeably in Arabic, and mainly in speech. Consider the frequently used Arabic proverb الرياح/الريح به تأتي ما الزوابع تأخذه (what wind/winds bring, storms take). Such a ‘random’ usage is by no means baseless, and it is what triggers this study which traces these two entries in Standard Arabic to find out the semantic difference(s) between them and to explore the basis upon which these usages rest. The study specifically seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the semantic difference between the singular noun ريح (wind) and its plural رياح (winds) in Standard Arabic?
2. What is the message for translators concerning these two terms?

## 2. Significance of the Study

The significance of the study stems from the fact that it clarifies nuanced semantic distinctions between a singular noun and its plural, namely *ri:h* (wind) and *riya:h* (winds). Words in their source language (Arabic) may appear synonyms and are usually used interchangeably, especially in spoken Arabic. However, scrutinizing similar words from a semantic perspective reveals the hidden nature of the relationship between the singular and plural. A denotation of a word refers to its explicit meaning, whereas a connotation of a word refers to the effect or emotion a word may imply, which varies from one language user to another<sup>[4]</sup> (p. 45). Consequently, the connotation of a singular word and its plural is not necessarily the same. Two or three plurals may stem from the same singular noun; these plurals may denote abundance, rarity, size, form, or time<sup>[3]</sup>.

A number of attributes, namely: Violence, harm, and negative impact should be considered in Arabic when referring to the singular noun *ri:h* (wind). On the other hand, different attributes, namely: breeze, refreshing, and useful should be considered when referring to the plural *riya:h* (winds). This study seeks to explore the factors that determine the English translation of the two Arabic terms chosen, i.e., *ri:h* (wind) *riya:h* (winds) and convey a specific message for translators to consider the context surround the usage of these terms.

## 3. Literature Review

### 3.1. Investigating the Interrelation between Grammatical Inflections and Semantics

While research on the semantic distinctions between singular and plural forms of nouns in the Holy Quran is limited, looking at similar questions in other languages or with various grammatical inflections provides useful insights into the importance of such investigations. We can explore the complex relationship between grammatical in-

flexions and semantics by building on previous research on the subject. This emphasizes the significance of additional research in this area within the context of Arabic linguistic study, particularly for standard texts.

A thorough grasp of the connection between grammar and meaning is necessary for translating Arabic texts. Chierchia examines the difference between mass and count in language<sup>[5]</sup>, presenting it as vagueness. According to his research, mass nouns have a vague quality that affects how well they work in counting contexts. Using super valuations, the study separates universal patterns from linguistic variations when encoding the mass/count difference. This suggests that vagueness is part of Universal Grammar and not just an interface phenomenon. Déprez explains the function of grammatical number in determining noun semantics by comparing bare nouns in French Lexifier Creole with languages that use plural marking<sup>[6]</sup>. In order to establish links between morpho-structure and meaning, the study presents a parameter that separates languages according to the requirement of a functional projection for number. It also provides insights into the morphological and semantic subtleties of number distinctions.

Studies on grammatical gender, like those by Cubelli and Konishi<sup>[7, 8]</sup>, highlight how gender affects meaning and cognitive processes<sup>[9]</sup>. The semantics of grammatical gender is explored in Konishi's cross-cultural study<sup>[8]</sup>, which reveals its influence on meaning, especially in the connotative associations of femininity and masculinity. Through the use of semantic differential scales, the study clarifies language-specific connotations by demonstrating how native speakers of German and Spanish evaluate grammatical gender. Konishi's later study investigates gender connotations in German and Spanish using a semantic differential approach<sup>[10]</sup>, revealing differences in speakers' perceptions according to grammatical gender. For example, speakers of German tend to identify masculine gender with greater potency, while speakers of Spanish exhibit less marked differences, which may be a reflection of language-specific gender systems<sup>[11-13]</sup>. Cubelli et al. use experiments involving monolingual speakers of English<sup>[7]</sup>, Italian, and Spanish to investigate the impact of grammatical gender on object categorization. Their results point to a lexical-level interaction between gender and meaning that affects cognitive functions.

These observations are relevant to Arabic translators because word meanings are strongly influenced by grammatical gender. The semantic implications of plural forms in languages are examined by Levy and Al-Kaabi & Muhammed<sup>[14, 15]</sup>, who show how different plural forms communicate different meanings. Levy's investigation examines gender-switching in Romance languages and the negative meanings attached to number-switching in Spanish<sup>[14]</sup>, suggesting that these linguistic variances influence expressive subtleties in speech. Al-Kaabi and Muhammed translate different Arabic plurals into English using a semantic lens, revealing subtle meanings and possible misunderstandings<sup>[15]</sup>. Through an examination of semantic and rhetorical aspects, they clarify the complexity of Arabic language and how it affects translation work. Translators need to understand the subtle meanings that various Arabic plural forms convey in order to maintain accuracy with the source language.

### 3.2. Understanding the Relationship between Inflection and Meaning in Arabic

Beyond grammatical issues, Arabic's relationship between singular and plural forms is significant, especially in religious and literary contexts. Gillon investigates the morphological and semantic characteristics of English mass and count nouns to create systematic correlations and develop empirical generalizations<sup>[16]</sup>. With regard to English common noun phrases, the study aims to bring these generalizations into line with syntactic and semantic theories. Elimam<sup>[17]</sup>, Elhindi<sup>[18]</sup>, and Elamin and Alhazmi have all discussed the importance of metaphorical language in explaining complex ideas and the necessity of maintaining the original essence of Quranic metaphors when translating them<sup>[19]</sup>.

Elimam conducted a thorough analysis of various translation strategies in relation to theoretical frameworks and authoritative interpretations of the Holy Quran<sup>[17]</sup>, with a focus on translating metaphors found in the text. The study evaluates how well English translations of Quranic metaphors capture meaning through the use of metaphor translation strategies, emphasizing the need for accurate translation to retain meaning. Usman, Ibrahim, and Ali critically examine Shihab's method of exegesis with regard to the Quran's references to the singular and plural<sup>[20]</sup>, highlighting linguistic approaches and interpretive discrepancies.

They confirm the alignment of Arabic language practices with the framework of the Quran. Comparably, a semantic investigation of ultimate plurals in the Holy Quran is conducted by Sarwar, Ahmad, and Bakhsh<sup>[21]</sup>, who look at their forms, structures, and implications for meaning and Quranic themes. By using both descriptive and analytical methods, they advance our understanding of the linguistic characteristics of the Quran. These questions highlight how crucial it is to understand the subtle application of grammatical number in order to translate Quranic passages accurately.

Al-Kaabi and Muhammad explain subtle meanings and possible misunderstandings by translating a variety of Arabic plurals into English using a semantic lens<sup>[15]</sup>. They clarify Arabic's linguistic richness and its implications for translation by closely examining its semantic and rhetorical aspects. Elamin and Alhazmi Ahmed examine the metaphor of "light" in the Holy Quran by defining source and target domains using Conceptual Metaphor Theory<sup>[19]</sup>. They demonstrate the widespread and creative use of light metaphorically to clarify important ideas in the Quran through discourse analysis.

Al-Quran investigates how grammatical categories improve the rhetorical effectiveness of the Quran's number-based deviation rhetorical device<sup>[22]</sup>. Maintaining the original text's semantic and rhetorical integrity is a problem for translators. The Quran's unique application of inflectional morphology highlights how complex Arabic linguistic structures are and how they affect translation efforts. Elhindi uses temporal, spatial, and thematic metaphors to categorize Quranic metaphors thematically<sup>[18]</sup>, highlighting their function in explaining abstract ideas and assisting believers on their spiritual path.

Scholars (like Mohammad<sup>[23]</sup>, Alsha'rawi<sup>[24]</sup>, Abdoun and Abdelaal and Rashid<sup>[25, 26]</sup>) have debated the distinction between (wind) and its plural (winds), focusing on their nuanced meanings in various Quranic contexts. Mohammad Alsha'rawi<sup>[24]</sup>, an Islamic studies scholar, explicates that *رِيحٌ* (wind) in the singular often signifies punishment, whereas *رِيحَاتٌ* (winds) in the plural denotes mercy and goodness. He posits that the directional aspect of wind contributes to this distinction, with singular winds potentially signifying destructive forces, while plural winds imply gentler, beneficial breezes. Abo Ali Shibani similarly argues that instances of *رِيحَاتٌ* (winds) in the Quran correlate with

notions of mercy, goodness, and grace, contrasting with the connotations of punishment associated with the singular رِيح (wind). The distinction between رِيح (wind) and its plural رياح (winds) holds significance in Islamic jurisprudence, reflecting upon divine phenomena. رِيح (wind) and رياح (winds) denote moving air, with رِيح (wind) often symbolizing a gentle breeze, while رياح (winds) encompasses various winds, each carrying distinct metaphorical implications. Mohammad concludes that رِيح (wind) metaphorically embodies dual functions<sup>[21]</sup>, symbolizing both welfare and punishment.

This review underscores the significance of conducting similar investigations in other languages or with different grammatical inflections, given the scarcity of studies that directly address the subtle semantic distinctions between singular and plural forms of nouns. By investigating the connection between Arabic inflection and meaning going forward, especially in light of Standard Arabic, this study seeks to add to the corpus of established knowledge.

## 4. Corpus and Methodology

The corpus utilized in this study consists of data collected from common expressions, proverbs, poetry, prophetic traditions, and verses from the HQ. The examples, except the Quranic verses, are collected through WhatsApp by third year students at the University of Jordan, majoring in English language and literature. A number of friends and relatives also participated in the data collection process. These examples are translated into English by the researchers themselves and the intended meanings made clear. The usage of رِيح (wind) and its plural رياح (winds) is explained in respect of its positivity or negativity. As for the HQ, all the verses that encompass the singular noun 'wind' along with the verses that encompass the plural noun 'winds' are carefully analyzed. The analysis shows the Surat/verse number in the HQ, its Arabic text, and its translation into English as found online in Saheeh International: Translation of the Meanings of the Noble Qura'n. A mixed-method approach is adopted in this study to combine both morphosyntactic and semantic methodologies. A semantic analysis of the data collected is provided to understand the meaning of the Quranic verses and the context surrounding each of them individually. The characteristics of رِيح (wind) and its plu-

ral رياح (winds) are highlighted. The positive and negative meanings are judged, depending on the context (the full saying/proverb/line/verse itself). A simple statistical analysis is also provided to determine the frequency of the positive and negative connotation of each word concerned.

## 5. Discussion and Analysis

The following analysis relies on examples from Standard Arabic found in common expressions, proverbs, poetry, prophetic traditions, and the HQ.

*Common sayings and expressions:* The terms 'wind energy' and 'wind power' are translated into Arabic as طاقة الريح (wind energy). This usage implies that the wind needs to be strong enough to generate electricity. الريح الصفراء (the yellow wind) is a term that was used in Arabic for the plague. It is a wind rather than winds as it rapidly spreads and is harmful and even deadly. The expression الريح الهوجاء refers to the quick, violent and destructive wind. Here, the plural 'winds' does not fit; neither can it be used interchangeably. الريح بمهب تعبي راح (My effort went with the blow of the wind) indicates that the endeavor was unsuccessful and even in vain; the singular wind is used to convey the disappointing image.

In contrast, when people are optimistic about a new event, say parliamentary election, they use the term رياح التغيير (winds of change). Consider the expression رياح الربيع والتجدد الأمل تجلب الربيع (Winds of spring brings hope and renewal), which involves optimism, too. الخريف رياح الغروب ألوان تحمل (winds of autumn carries colors of sunset) also embodies beauty and calmness. Similarly, the expression الفجر نسائم تحمل الصباح رياح (Morning winds carry the breeze of dawn) revolves around serenity and optimism. Another saying is كانوا هم بل، الرياحُ ذنبٌ يكن لم أوراقا (It was not the winds' fault; they were leaves). This means that they were weak and fragile; although winds that blew were calm and gentle, they fell like leaves.

**Table 1** below is a summary of 'wind' and 'winds' connotation as found in common expressions.

*Proverbs:* The proverb يحصد الريح يزرع من العاصفة (He who sows the wind reaps a storm) is similar to the saying "you reap what you sow". Both are used to mean 'you have to deal with the bad consequences of your work'; 'reap' seems to be used ironically. Here 'wind' is used to

**Table 1.** ‘wind’ and ‘winds’ taken together in sayings and common expressions.

Word	Frequency	Positive	Common Meanings	Negative	Common Meanings
Wind	4	0	Energy	4	Disease, violence, and loss
Winds	5	5	Energy, tiding, gentle	0	None

denote a bad action someone started. The late Palestinian President Yasser Arafat used to say *ريح يهزك ما جبل يا* (Oh mountain, a wind can't rock you), to assert his steadfast resistance against the Jews. This proverb is used by its speaker (the mountain) to show his/her solid attitude against a competitor and to emphasize that he/she will not be rocked/shocked despite the ‘strong’ wind. Similarly, *شجرة توجد لا* (there is no tree not shaken by a wind) is used to show sympathy with someone who has faced a difficulty. It means ‘Don’t worry! Every tree was one day shaken by a strong wind, and it survived’. The proverb *تعلق أن يحدث* (Even if you close the door from which the wind blows, its hand will not stop knocking) asserts that the wind remains annoying even after closing the door. The proverb means that some difficulties (represented by the wind) stand and prevent us from achieving our goals, even if we think that we have overcome them. The proverb *يحصد الريح يزرع اللي* (Who sows wind, harvest its dust) is used metaphorically to mean that ‘who does evil, reaps evil in return’. It implies that the wind is so violent and strong that it raises dust, which is a negative consequence. The proverb *من بيته يبني من* (Who builds a house on sands, expects its fall with the first wind) is common in the Arabic culture. It asserts the fact that one has to do things right to last. Two points can be concluded here. First, sands are not a solid ground; second, wind is destructive. Similarly, in *إن غرابي فإنه الريح في الغراب طار إن* (If the raven flies, it is mine) the wind is being dangerous. Bedouins boast that they keep only distinguished birds; the raven is strong and courageous enough as it can fly safely in a quick and violent wind. *سبب دون تهب لا القوية الريح* (A strong wind does not blow for no reason) represents a warning. As the wind is strong, there is a danger expected. Likewise, *تهب التي الريح* (The wind that blows in the face makes man wise) entails that difficulties (the wind) man face strengthen him).

The plural ‘winds’ is rarely used in proverbs. *تأتي* (Winds blow against ships’

will) is in fact half of a full line of poetry (see poetry section below) and is frequently used in spoken Arabic to mean things are not going as hoped. Still, it confirms the positive role of winds in moving ships. In *يخاف لا الريح يعشق من البحر* (Who loves winds, does not fear the sea), winds that blow over the seashore appear gentle and refreshing; that is why visitors do not fear hard waves, floods, or any other harm. Finally, in *لا ورق أحببك كانوا إن الريح تلم لا* (Do not blame winds if your friends are [made of] paper), it is obvious that winds are not too violent or destructive to uproot real friendship. The problem lies in the friends themselves as they are fragile and untrue (made of paper).

**Table 2** below is a summary of ‘wind’ and ‘winds’ connotation as found in proverbs.

*Poetry:* Some lines in this paragraph are taken from classic poetry, and the poets are anonymous. The line below is taken from the poem *أفاق القلب* (Horizons of the Heart) by Michael Naemy:

دموع العين قد جمدت وريح الفكر قد خمدت

(tears of eye froze and wind of thought subsided)<sup>[27]</sup> (p. 55).

The poet, after having trouble and conflicting ideas, stopped crying and his conflict (wind of thought) dropped. This wind must be strong and violent; that is why the poet stopped crying after its quietness. A well-known line about bad luck is:

إن حظي كدقيق فوق شوكٍ نثروه وقالوا لحي فاه يومٍ ريحٍ اجمعوه  
(My luck is like flour spread over thorns they asked barefoot on a windy day to collect it)

In practice, it is nearly impossible to do the job of collecting flour in the situation described above. A strong wind makes it even worse, and this agrees with the poet’s too bad luck. In

إذا هبت رياحك فاغتنمها فعقبى كل خافقةٍ سكونُ  
(If your winds blow, seize the chance following every blow is silence)

the poet wants the reader/hearer to utilize the chance and make use of blowing winds before they drop. This us-

**Table 2.** ‘wind’ and ‘winds’ taken together in proverbs.

Word	Frequency	Positive	Common Meanings	Negative	Common Meanings
Wind	9	0	None	9	Bad action, strong foe, harm, and annoyance
Winds	3	3	Gentle and moving ships	0	None

age indicates that winds can be seized for a useful purpose.

The lines in this paragraph are taken from modern poetry. In

وبرغم الرِّيحِ، وبرغم لجوِّ الماطرِ والإعصارِ الحُبُّ يبقى يا ولدي أعلى الأقدارِ

(Despite the wind, rainy weather and hurricane love remains, my son, the sweetest destiny)

by Nizar Qabbani, a Syrian poet, in the poem of *The Fortune Teller*, الرِّيحُ is apparently violent, especially because it collocates with the rainy weather and hurricane. The line

لا راية في الرِّيحِ تخفقُ لا حصان سابح في الرِّيحِ

(No banner blowing in the wind; and no horse riding the wind)

is taken from the poem of *The Legend* by Mahmoud Darwish, a Palestinian poet, and the line

ونوافذ في الرِّيحِ تكتشف المدينة في القصيدة

(Windows in the wind uncovers the city in the poem)

is taken from the poem of A Song to the Northern Wind, by Darwish, too. It seems that Darwish uses the ‘wind’ in a positive sense. In the first line, he expects a banner to blow in a calm or moderate wind; in the second, he depicts windows open in the wind. Even the title of the poem entails that the wind is nice, and the poet, consequently, attributes a song to it. In the line:

لبيت تخفقُ الأرياحُ فيه أحبُّ إليَّ من قصرٍ منيفٍ

(A tent through which winds blow is more favorite to me than an overlooking palace)

Arar, a Jordanian poet, uses الأرياحُ (winds), another plural form of رِيح. Winds in this line are gentle and calm (breeze), and so they are favorable. In the poem of Amman, Haydar Mahmoud, another Jordanian poet, says about Amman:

يا فرساً لا تننيه الرِّيحُ سلمتي لعيني خيَّ الك

(Oh stallion which a wind cannot suppress! May you remain healthy for your rider’s eyes)

He likens Amman to a stallion that can run despite strong wind; this implies that such a wind may prevent running and making a success.

The line:

ما كلُّ ما يتمنى المرء يدركه تجري الرياح بما لا تشتهي السفنُ

(Not everything a man wishes, he achieves Winds blow against ships’ will)

is composed by Almutannabbi, an Abbasside poet who was known for his wisdom. Winds may hinder the movement of ships if they blow against them. Still, this implies that it is the winds that cause the movement of ships, and here is the bright side of winds.

**Table 3** below is a summary of ‘wind’ and ‘winds’ connotation as found in poetry.

**Table 3.** ‘wind’ and ‘winds’ taken together in poetry.

Word	Frequency	Positive	Common Meanings	Negative	Common Meanings
Wind	7	3	Gentle and nice	4	storm
Winds	2	2	Useful and breeze	0	None

*Prophetic traditions:* Only one hadith (saying) is narrated by the Prophet Mohammad concerning wind and winds. When air blew, the Prophet Muhammad knelt in supplication and said: “اللهم اجعلها رياحاً ولا تجعلها ريحاً” “Oh Allah! Make it winds rather than a wind”. He meant mercy (winds) rather than punishment (wind).

**Table 4** below is a summary of ‘wind’ and ‘winds’ connotation as found in the hadith above: رباحاً ولا تجعلها ريحاً [28] (p. 10).

*Quranic verses:* The singular ri:h (wind) and plural riya:h (winds) appear 28 times in the HQ. See **Tables 5** and **6** below.

Table 4. ‘wind’ and ‘winds’ taken together in hadith.

Word	Frequency	Positive	Common Meanings	Negative	Common Meanings
Wind	1	0	None	1	storm
Winds	1	1	Useful and breeze	0	None

Table 5. ‘wind’ in the singular form as found in the HQ and its translation into English.

Surat/Verse	Text	Translation
21/81	وَلَوْلَا سُلُوسُ لَيْلِي لَمَّا نَا نَا الرِّيحُ عَصَا صِفَاةً تَجْرِي بِأَمْرِ رَبِّهِ	And to Solomon [We subjected] the wind, blowing forcefully, by his command
34/12	وَلَوْلَا سُلُوسُ لَيْلِي لَمَّا نَا نَا الرِّيحُ غَدُوًّا وَوَهَا شَهْرٌ وَرَوَّاحٌ وَهَا شَهْرٌ	And to Solomon [We subjected] the wind – its morning [journey was that of] a month – and its afternoon [journey was that of] a month
38/36	فَسَخَّرْنَا لِرَبِّهِ الرِّيحَ تَجْرِي بِأَمْرِ رَبِّهِ رُخَاءً حَيْثُ أَصَابَ	So We subjected to him the wind blowing by his command, gently, wherever he directed,
42/33	إِن يَشَاءُ يُسْكِنُ الرِّيحَ فِي ظِلِّ رُوحِهِ إِن يَشَاءُ يُدْرِكُ الْبُحْرَانَ وَالرِّيحُ تَجْرِي لَئِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَا تَمْلِكُ شَيْئًا وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَلِيمُ	If He willed, He could still the wind, and they would remain motionless on its surface. Indeed in that are signs for everyone patient and grateful.
51/41	وَفِي عَادٍ إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَا رِيحًا عَاتِلَةً عَلَيْهِمْ وَهُمْ كَانُوا فَتَارِينَ	And in ‘Aad [was a sign], when We sent against them the barren wind.
14/18	مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ ابْتغوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةَ وَالَّذِينَ يَبْتَغُونَ الْآخِرَةَ وَالَّذِينَ يَبْتَغُونَ الْآخِرَةَ وَالَّذِينَ يَبْتَغُونَ الْآخِرَةَ وَالَّذِينَ يَبْتَغُونَ الْآخِرَةَ	The example of those who disbelieve in their Lord is [that] their deeds are like ashes which the wind blows forcefully on a stormy day; they are unable [to keep] from what they earned a [single] thing. That is what is extreme error.
22/31	وَمَنْ يَتَّخِذِ لِلنَّاسِ مَثَلًا مِثْلَ خَيْلٍ فَإِنَّ رَبَّهُ يَنْزِلُ فِيهَا مِنْ حَيْثُ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ	And he who associates with Allah – it is as though he had fallen from the sky and was snatched by the birds or the wind carried him down into a remote place.
10/22	هُوَ الَّذِي يُسَخِّرُ لَكُمْ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ وَلَا حِصَابَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَلِيمُ	It is He who enables you to travel on land and sea until, when you are in ships and they sail with them by a good wind and they rejoice therein, there comes a storm wind and the waves come upon them from everywhere and they assume that they are surrounded



Table 5. Cont.

Surat/Verse	Text	Translation
46/24	فَلَمَّ رَأَوْهُمُ الرِّيحَ بِقُبُلِهِمْ أَوْ دَرَّتْ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّحَابُ فَعَرَفُوا أَنَّ السَّحَابَ الَّذِي بَدَّ لَهُمْ لَئِيمٌ لَهُمْ فَعَرَفُوا أَنَّ السَّحَابَ الَّذِي بَدَّ لَهُمْ لَئِيمٌ لَهُمْ	And when they saw it as a cloud approaching their valleys, they said, "This is a cloud bringing us rain!" Rather, it is that for which you were impatient: a wind, within it a painful punishment
17/69	أَمْ أَمِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أَن نَّخْرُقَهُمْ فِي الْبَحْرِ سُرُورًا وَأَن يُسَلِّطَ عَلَيْهِمْ عِوَجَ الْجِبَالِ فَيَكُونُوا حُجْرًا مَّوَدَّعًا لَهُمْ	Or do you feel secure that He will not send you back into the sea another time and send upon you a hurricane of wind and drown you for what you denied? Then you would not find for yourselves against Us an avenger.
3/117	مَثَلُ مَا يُنْفِقُونَ فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا نَحْوَ مَثَلِ طَيْرٍ فَتَّرَ بِأُحْمُقٍ وَجَاءَتْهُ الْوَيْلُ فَوَضَعَهَا فِي الْبَحْرِ فَتَنَزَّاهُ فِي الْبَحْرِ فَتَنَزَّاهُ فِي الْبَحْرِ	The example of what they spend in this worldly life is like that of a wind containing frost which strikes the harvest of a people who have wronged themselves and destroys it.
69/6	وَأَمَّا عَادُ فَتِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ نَسُوا آيَاتِنَا فَحَمَلْنَا الْبُرْجَانَ عَلَيْهِمْ فَجَاءَتْهُمُ الْوَيْلُ فَجَاءَتْهُمُ الْوَيْلُ فَجَاءَتْهُمُ الْوَيْلُ فَجَاءَتْهُمُ	And as for 'Aad, they were destroyed by a screaming, violent wind
30/51	وَلَوْ أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْحَقَّ لَوَدَّ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا أَنزِلَ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّمَاءَ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَرَّةً وَيَذَرُونَ	But if We should send a [bad] wind and they saw [their crops] turned yellow, they would remain thereafter disbelievers.
33/9	يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ذَكِّرُوا الْفِتْرَةَ حِينَ جَاءَتْكُمْ السَّرَّاءُ وَالْبُرْجَانَ فَعَرَفْتُمْ أَنَّ الْفِتْرَةَ الَّتِي جَاءَتْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ بِأَمْرٍ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَتَمَسَّ الْوَيْلُ الْفِتْرَةَ الْبُرْجَانَ	O you who have believed, remember the favor of Allah upon you when armies came to [attack] you and We sent upon them a wind and armies [of angels] you did not see. And ever is Allah, of what you do, Seeing.
41/16	فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ الْوَيْلَ وَالْمِصْرِينَ فَلَمَّ رَأَوْهُمُ الرِّيحَ بِقُبُلِهِمْ أَوْ دَرَّتْ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّحَابُ فَعَرَفُوا أَنَّ السَّحَابَ الَّذِي بَدَّ لَهُمْ لَئِيمٌ لَهُمْ	So We sent upon them a screaming wind during days of misfortune to make them taste the punishment of disgrace in the worldly life
54/19	إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ الْوَيْلَ وَالْمِصْرِينَ فَلَمَّ رَأَوْهُمُ الرِّيحَ بِقُبُلِهِمْ أَوْ دَرَّتْ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّحَابُ فَعَرَفُوا أَنَّ السَّحَابَ الَّذِي بَدَّ لَهُمْ لَئِيمٌ لَهُمْ	Indeed, We sent upon them a screaming wind on a day of continuous misfortune
8/46	وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَا تَنَازَعُوا فَتَفْشَلُوا وَتَذْهَبَ أَلْفُكُمْ بِأَمْرٍ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا يَكُنْ اللَّهُ مَعِ الصَّابِرِينَ	And obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute and [thus] lose courage and [then] your strength would depart; and be patient. Indeed, Allah is with the patient.





verses. In 38/36, the wind flows gently by Solomon’s command. In 10/22 ‘wind’ is mentioned twice: the first is ‘good’ and moves the ships gently. The second, however, is stormy and moves waves violently.

Depending on the data available in **Table 6** above, ‘winds’ in the plural form has the following meanings and connotations:

Winds are good tidings: People rejoice at the existence of winds, especially because they collocate with ‘before His mercy’ as shown in 7/57, 25/48, 27/63. In the first of these, winds are good tidings as they ‘carry heavy rainclouds’. As a result, rain falls and fruits grow. In the second, winds also carry and drive clouds, resulting in drinking (pure) water. Similarly, in the third, winds are good tidings before rain. 30/46 entails the same meaning of good tidings. Winds precede rain that helps in growing fruits and crops (mercy) and helps ships to sail.

Winds have benefits: as mentioned in the paragraph above, winds carry and drive rainclouds and help ships to sail. 30/48 and 35/9 affirms the same fact concerning driving clouds. In the former, winds stir the clouds and rain emerges. In the latter, winds also stir the winds which in turn drive clouds to rain and give life to a dead earth. In 15/22 winds are fertilizing. They fertilize clouds and turn them mist; they also fertilize trees and flowers and produce fruits out of them.

Winds are a sign of God: in 2/164 and 45/5, God directs the winds that carry clouds to a specific area; this is a sign of God for people. Similarly, in 18/45, the winds that scatter the dry remnants are a sign of God’s perfection in ability.

**Table 7** below represents a summary of ‘wind’ and ‘winds’ connotation as found in the HQ.

**Table 7.** ‘wind’ and ‘winds’ as found in the HQ taken together.

Word	Frequency	Positive	Common meanings	Negative	Common meanings
Wind	18	3	Gentle, moves ships, sign of God	15	Force/storm, weapon, harm, punishment
Winds	10	10	Good tidings, fertilizers, carry clouds, sign of God	0	None

The singular ‘wind’ appears 18 times in the HQ: 15 times in the negative sense and only 3 in the positive sense. The plural ‘winds’ appears 10 times; all of them are positive. These figures show that ‘wind’ has a negative sense and connotation in most verses (83.3%) and that it is used in a positive sense in only 16.6% of them. On the other hand, ‘winds’ is positive in all the verses. It never denotes a negative sense.

## 6. Conclusion

The present study has analyzed the usage of two semantically similar words in Arabic - the singular ريح *ri:h* (wind) and its plural رياح *riya:h* (winds). The study has revealed a number of differences between the two entries although they are used interchangeably in many instances, particularly in spoken Arabic. The first of these - ريح *ri:h* (wind) was found to have the connotations of force/storm, weapon, harm, and punishment in most examples. The plural رياح *riya:h* (winds), on the other hand, has the connota-

tions of Good tidings, fertilizing, carrying clouds, and a sign of God in all the examples spotted in this study.

It can also be concluded that the designation ريح *ri:h* (wind) in Standard Arabic is not simply used to refer to a singular noun; rather it is particularly used to refer to negativity. The designation رياح *riya:h* (winds), on the other hand, does not only refer to a plural noun; it is used to refer to positivity. This distinction may be necessary as the translator should find equivalent words in the target language to convey the correct meaning of the entry, i.e. ‘wind’ or ‘winds’ and reflect the connotative meaning as well. Finding precise equivalents of these entries in English may in practice be impossible. With this mind, it must be emphasized for translators to avoid literary translation of these words. The words selected for this study cannot be considered synonyms, and, therefore, should not be used interchangeably, especially in Standard Arabic. To deliver the hidden message behind the usage of the two terms chosen for this study, the translator may need to add an adjective like ‘stormy’, harmful, painful, or ‘punitive’ with the singular ‘wind’ and ‘gentle’ or ‘fertiliz-

ing’ with the plural ‘winds’. Differently put, there are slight differences in the meanings of the singular noun *ri:h* (wind) and its plural *riya:h* (winds) “that should be adequately rendered by attending to the nuances of meaning suggested by the context”<sup>[29, 30]</sup>.

## Author Contributions

Conceptualization, I.A. and M.N.A.S.; methodology, I.A.; software, M.R.; validation, M.N.A.S. and N.A.; formal analysis, I.A.; investigation, N.A.; resources, M.N.A.S.; data curation, M.R.; writing—original draft preparation, M.N.A.S.; writing—review and editing, N.A.; visualization, M.R.; supervision, N.A.; project administration, M.N.A.S.; funding acquisition, M.R. 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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