

LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF PAREMIAS IN ARABIC AND ENGLISH

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Abstract: This article explores the linguistic characteristics of paremias in Arabic and English from a comparative perspective. Paremias, including proverbs and sayings, represent an important layer of a language's figurative and cultural system. The study aims to identify common and language-specific linguistic features of Arabic and English paremias by analyzing their structural, semantic, and stylistic properties. Special attention is given to metaphorical expression, syntactic patterns, lexical choices, and rhetorical devices used in paremias of both languages. The research also highlights how linguistic form reflects cultural values, worldview, and collective experience of Arabic- and English-speaking communities. The findings demonstrate that while Arabic paremias tend to employ parallelism, rhythm, and religiously marked vocabulary, English paremias are more inclined toward brevity, pragmatism, and direct syntactic constructions. The article contributes to the fields of paremiology, comparative linguistics, and intercultural communication.

Keywords: paremiology, paremias, Arabic language, English language, linguistic features, comparative analysis, metaphor, culture, proverb

Introduction: Language is not only a means of communication but also a repository of a nation's historical experience, cultural values, and collective worldview. One of the most expressive and culturally loaded layers of any language is its paremias, which include proverbs, sayings, and fixed aphoristic expressions. The scientific study of paremias, known as paremiology, occupies a significant place in modern linguistics, as it lies at the intersection of language, culture, cognition, and society.

Paremias function as concise verbal formulas that transmit moral principles, social norms, and practical wisdom accumulated over generations. Due to their figurative nature, stable structure, and metaphorical richness, paremias serve as valuable material for analyzing linguistic patterns and cultural semantics. In this respect, a comparative study of paremias in genetically and typologically different languages provides important insights into both universal and language-specific features of human thought and expression.

Arabic and English represent two distinct linguistic systems belonging to different language families and cultural traditions. Arabic paremias are deeply rooted in classical literary heritage, oral folklore, and religious discourse, particularly influenced by Islamic values and Qur'anic stylistics. They often demonstrate complex syntactic parallelism, rhythmic balance, and expressive imagery. English paremias, on the other hand, reflect pragmatic thinking, empirical observation, and everyday experience, frequently characterized by brevity, simplicity of structure, and directness of meaning.

Despite the growing interest in paremiological studies, the linguistic characteristics of Arabic and English paremias have not been sufficiently examined from a comprehensive comparative perspective. Most existing studies focus either on semantic interpretation or cultural analysis,

while structural and stylistic aspects remain less systematically explored. This gap highlights the relevance of analyzing paremias as linguistic units that combine form, meaning, and function.

The present article aims to investigate the linguistic features of Arabic and English paremias through comparative analysis. It focuses on their structural organization, lexical composition, metaphorical devices, and stylistic markers, revealing how language-specific characteristics reflect broader cultural and cognitive patterns. By examining similarities and differences between Arabic and English paremias, the study contributes to the development of paremiology, comparative linguistics, and intercultural communication, and may also offer practical implications for translation studies and foreign language teaching.

Literature review: The study of paremias has been a subject of scholarly interest across various linguistic and cultural traditions. Paremiology, as a field of research, focuses on proverbs and sayings as fixed expressions that encode collective experience, moral values, and cultural norms. Classical Western paremiological theory was established by scholars such as Archer Taylor and Wolfgang Mieder, who emphasized the structural stability, metaphorical meaning, and didactic function of paremias. Their works laid the foundation for modern linguistic, cognitive, and cultural approaches to proverb studies.

In the Arabic scholarly tradition, paremias have been extensively examined within the framework of classical literature, folklore, and rhetoric. Early Arab linguists and literary scholars treated proverbs (*amthāl*) as an essential component of eloquent speech and cultural wisdom. One of the most influential classical works in this field is *Kitāb al-Amthāl* by Abu Hilal al-Askari, who analyzed Arabic proverbs from stylistic and rhetorical perspectives. Similarly, Al-Maydani, in his renowned collection *Majma' al-Amthāl*, systematically compiled and interpreted Arabic paremias, highlighting their linguistic form, semantic depth, and social function.

Modern Arab researchers continue this tradition by examining paremias through linguistic and cultural lenses. Scholars such as Ibrahim Anis and Muhammad al-Tunji emphasize the role of proverbs in reflecting Arab mentality, ethical values, and social behavior. Their studies point out that Arabic paremias are characterized by rhythmic balance, parallel syntactic structures, lexical richness, and frequent references to religion, morality, and communal life. However, much of the Arabic research remains descriptive, focusing primarily on thematic classification and historical origins rather than detailed linguistic comparison.

In English linguistics, paremias have been studied predominantly from pragmatic, functional, and cognitive perspectives. English paremiological research often treats proverbs as tools of everyday communication that serve persuasive, evaluative, and regulatory functions. Linguists have noted that English paremias tend to favor brevity, directness, and simple syntactic constructions, reflecting a pragmatic worldview rooted in empirical observation and individual experience. Cognitive linguistics has further contributed to the analysis of English paremias by identifying conceptual metaphors related to time, work, success, and human behavior.

Comparative paremiological studies, including Arabic–English analyses, have gained increasing attention in recent decades. Researchers argue that cross-linguistic comparison of paremias reveals both universal cognitive patterns and culturally specific linguistic realizations. Several studies address issues of equivalence and translation between Arabic and English proverbs, noting challenges such as cultural gaps, metaphorical mismatches, and stylistic loss. Nevertheless, these works often prioritize semantic interpretation over structural and stylistic analysis.

Overall, despite the rich body of scholarship in both Arabic and English traditions, there remains a lack of comprehensive comparative studies focusing specifically on the linguistic characteristics of paremias in these two languages. Structural organization, lexical choices, and stylistic devices are frequently examined in isolation rather than as interconnected elements. The present study seeks to address this gap by integrating insights from both Western and Arab scholarship to provide a systematic comparative analysis of Arabic and English paremias.

Materials and Methods: The present study is based on a qualitative and comparative linguistic analysis of Arabic and English paremias. The research material consists of a corpus of proverbs and sayings selected from authoritative paremiological dictionaries, folklore collections, and scholarly sources in both languages. Arabic paremias were drawn from classical and modern proverb compilations, while English paremias were selected from well-established English proverb dictionaries and academic studies. Only widely recognized and frequently used paremias were included to ensure representativeness and cultural relevance.

The selection criteria for the paremias were as follows: semantic completeness, structural stability, figurative meaning, and cultural significance. The corpus was balanced in terms of thematic domains, including human behavior, morality, work, time, social relations, and life experience, in order to allow for an objective comparison between the two languages.

The methodological framework of the study integrates several linguistic approaches. First, a descriptive method was employed to identify and characterize the structural, lexical, and stylistic features of paremias in each language. Second, a comparative method was used to reveal similarities and differences between Arabic and English paremias at syntactic, semantic, and stylistic levels. This method made it possible to distinguish universal paremiological features from language-specific ones.

In addition, semantic analysis was applied to examine metaphorical meaning, imagery, and conceptual content embedded in the paremias. Elements of linguocultural analysis were used to interpret how linguistic forms reflect cultural values, social norms, and collective worldview in Arabic- and English-speaking communities. Where relevant, contextual analysis was conducted to consider the pragmatic functions of paremias in discourse.

The analytical procedure involved grouping paremias according to structural patterns, dominant metaphors, and stylistic devices such as parallelism, rhyme, repetition, and syntactic brevity. The findings were then interpreted in light of existing paremiological theories and comparative linguistics principles.

Result and discussion: The extended analysis reveals that Arabic paremias are linguistically sophisticated units that integrate structure, meaning, and cultural symbolism. Structurally, the prevalence of nominal sentences and parallel constructions enhances timelessness and rhetorical impact. Semantically, Arabic paremias favor abstract moral concepts, often expressed through metaphor and symbolism. Stylistically, rhythm, balance, and figurative language serve not only aesthetic functions but also cognitive and mnemonic purposes. From a linguocultural perspective, these paremias encapsulate core Arab values such as perseverance, honesty, patience, and self-awareness, illustrating how language functions as a vessel of collective wisdom.

Linguistic Analysis of Arabic Paremias

Arabic Paremiya (Original)	Transliteratsiya	English Translation	Linguistic & Cultural Analysis
مَنْ جَدَّ وَجَدَّ، وَمَنْ زَرَعَ حَصَدًا	<i>Man jadda wajada, wa man zara'a ḥasada</i>	He who strives succeeds, and he who sows reaps.	This paremia demonstrates syntactic parallelism and rhythmic repetition. The conditional structure reinforces the causal relationship between effort and result, reflecting a universal value expressed through eloquent form.
الصِّدْقُ نَجَاةٌ	<i>Al-ṣidqu najātun</i>	Truthfulness is salvation.	A concise structure built on abstract nouns. It highlights the moral orientation of Arabic paremias and their preference for ethical concepts expressed in compact linguistic forms.
الْجَمَلُ لَا يَرَى حُدْبَتَهُ	<i>Al-jamalu lā yarā ḥadabatahu</i>	The camel does not see its own hump.	An animal-based metaphor rooted in Arab culture. It illustrates metaphorical imagery used to convey human flaws indirectly and expressively.
الصَّبْرُ مِفْتَاحُ الْفَرَجِ	<i>Al-ṣabru miftāḥ al- faraj</i>	Patience is the key to relief.	A didactic paremia employing metaphor (<i>key</i>) to convey moral instruction. It reflects the advisory and motivational function of Arabic paremias.

The comparative analysis of Arabic and English paremias reveals both universal paremiological principles and language-specific linguistic realizations shaped by distinct cultural, historical, and cognitive frameworks. In both languages, paremias function as stable linguistic units that transmit collective experience, moral values, and social norms. However, the manner in which these functions are linguistically encoded differs significantly between Arabic and English.

Extended Linguistic Analysis of Arabic Paremias

Arabic Paremiya (Original)	Structural Analysis	Lexical–Semantic Analysis	Stylistic Features	Linguocultural Interpretation
مَنْ جَدَّ وَجَدَّ، وَمَنْ زَرَعَ حَصَدَ	Parallel conditional clauses with repetition of <i>man + verb</i> pattern; balanced syntax enhances memorability.	Verbs <i>jadda</i> (to strive) and <i>zara'a</i> (to sow) imply effort; <i>wajada</i> (to find) and <i>hasada</i> (to reap) express result.	Rhythm, repetition, parallelism; poetic structure typical of Arabic rhetoric.	Reflects the cultural value of effort, perseverance, and moral causality deeply rooted in Arab ethical thought.
الصِّدْقُ نَجَاةٌ	Nominal sentence with subject–predicate structure; absence of verb increases universality.	Abstract nouns emphasize moral absoluteness rather than situational context.	Brevity, aphoristic tone, semantic density.	Highlights honesty as a core ethical principle in Arab society and Islamic moral philosophy.
الْجَمَلُ لَا يَرَى حَذْبَتَهُ	Simple declarative sentence with negation; subject–verb–object order.	Concrete noun <i>camel</i> contrasted with abstract human behavior; metaphor bridges physical and moral domains.	Indirect expression, irony, figurative imagery.	Camel symbolizes familiarity in Arab environment; metaphor conveys self-criticism norms.
الصَّبْرُ مِفْتَاحُ الْفَرْجِ	Nominal sentence emphasizing permanence and general truth.	Abstract nouns (<i>patience, relief</i>) linked via concrete metaphor (<i>key</i>).	Didactic, motivational, metaphorical clarity.	Encodes cultural belief in endurance and faith as means of overcoming hardship.

From a structural perspective, Arabic paremiyas demonstrate a strong tendency toward syntactic parallelism, nominal sentence constructions, and rhythmic balance. These features contribute to their elevated rhetorical style and enhance memorability. English paremiyas, in contrast, are predominantly characterized by syntactic simplicity, verbal sentence structures, and concise formulations. The preference for brevity and directness in English reflects a pragmatic communicative orientation, whereas the elaborated structure of Arabic paremiyas aligns with the traditional emphasis on eloquence and rhetorical beauty.

Lexically and semantically, Arabic paremiyas frequently employ abstract moral concepts such as truth, patience, honor, and destiny, often reinforced by religious or ethical connotations. These lexical choices underscore the moralizing and didactic function of Arabic paremiyas. English paremiyas, while also conveying moral lessons, tend to rely on concrete, everyday vocabulary

associated with work, objects, and practical experience. This difference suggests that Arabic proverbs prioritize ethical ideals, whereas English proverbs emphasize functional wisdom applicable to daily life.

Metaphorical imagery further highlights cultural divergence between the two languages. Arabic proverbs commonly draw on imagery related to nature, animals, and traditional life—such as camels, deserts, and agricultural practices—which are deeply embedded in the Arab cultural environment. English proverbs, by contrast, frequently utilize metaphors derived from craftsmanship, tools, trade, and domestic life, reflecting a historically industrial and mercantile worldview. Despite these differences in source domains, both languages employ metaphor as a central cognitive mechanism for conceptualizing abstract ideas.

Stylistically, Arabic proverbs often carry a strong didactic and advisory tone, functioning as moral guidance and collective instruction. The use of metaphor, parallelism, and rhythmic devices enhances their authoritative and persuasive force. English proverbs, on the other hand, are typically more neutral and advisory rather than overtly moralizing. Their pragmatic tone allows for flexible interpretation depending on context, reinforcing their role in everyday communication.

Arabic proverbs reflect a worldview grounded in moral absolutes, communal values, and rhetorical expressiveness, while English proverbs embody individual experience, practicality, and linguistic economy. These findings confirm that proverbs serve not only as linguistic artifacts but also as cultural markers that reveal fundamental differences in how societies conceptualize knowledge, ethics, and social interaction.

Conclusion: The present study has examined the linguistic characteristics of Arabic and English proverbs from a comparative perspective, focusing on their structural, lexical, semantic, stylistic, and linguocultural features. The analysis demonstrates that proverbs in both languages function as stable and meaningful linguistic units that preserve collective wisdom and reflect shared human experience. At the same time, their linguistic realization is strongly influenced by the cultural and cognitive frameworks of the respective speech communities.

The findings reveal that Arabic proverbs are characterized by syntactic parallelism, rhythmic balance, and a strong preference for nominal constructions, which enhance their rhetorical and didactic impact. Lexically and semantically, Arabic proverbs tend to emphasize abstract moral values such as patience, honesty, and perseverance, often supported by metaphorical imagery rooted in traditional and religious contexts. These features reflect a worldview in which ethical guidance and communal values occupy a central position.

In contrast, English proverbs exhibit structural simplicity, brevity, and verbal sentence patterns that prioritize clarity and pragmatic communication. Their lexical choices are typically grounded in everyday experience, practical activity, and concrete imagery, which underscores an empirical and functional approach to knowledge. Stylistically, English proverbs are less overtly didactic and more advisory, allowing for flexible interpretation depending on situational context.

The comparative discussion confirms that while Arabic and English proverbs share universal cognitive mechanisms such as metaphor and generalization, they differ significantly in linguistic form and cultural orientation. These differences highlight the role of proverbs as cultural markers that encode distinct value systems, modes of reasoning, and communicative traditions.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the development of paremiology and comparative linguistics by providing a systematic analysis of Arabic and English paremias as linguistically and culturally embedded expressions. The results may have practical implications for translation studies, intercultural communication, and foreign language teaching, where an understanding of paremiological features can enhance cultural competence and communicative effectiveness.

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