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Editor-in-chief

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Some Syntactic Variations in Modern Standard Arabic Proverbs

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Abstract

Languages are often regarded as a state of constant flux due to their nature as contact languages. Therefore, variation occurs in all languages since they are alive as their speakers. The present study is concerned with the peculiar type of proverbs; notably, it is about proverbs in Modern Standard Arabic. Consequently, the present research is primarily concerned with exposing some syntactic variations in modern standard Arabic proverbs. It has been assumed that proverbs are frozen forms; however, some scholars have stated that proverbs may undergo some changes and developments across the passage of time. Accordingly, the present research is entirely concerned with investigating the syntactic variations of some Modern Standard Arabic proverbs with any syntactic processes underlying such variations. It is intended to examine any syntactic variation of the same proverbs that may exist in Modern Standard Arabic proverbs and the extent to which they are relatively fixed or totally frozen. The current study investigates the syntactic variations with reference to a universal fixedness approach which is ascribed to the different variations including syntactic ones and relative fixedness of expressions including proverbs.

Keywords: Definition of Proverbs, Frozenness, Relative Fixity.

1. Introduction

Generally speaking, the concept of a proverb per se does not differ from one language to another because of its universality (Al-Dhabi,2011: 7; Taher,2018: 82). Yaqub (1995:21) has defined the Arabic proverb as a concise and inherited expression created by people that moves across generations with no changes, it is applied to occasions that are alike even if the origin of that proverb is

unknown. Ghazala (2008: 138) explains that " proverbs are special, fixed, unchanged phrases which have special, fixed, unchanged meanings" .

However, proverbs could appear once and then vanish. Many antiquated proverbs are no longer used in the present time; they are dropped from the repertory of proverbs. But instead, new and modern proverbs are innovated to depict more social matters attributed to the dynamic needs of people in modern time (Xiangyang,2016: 289). Ademowo and Balogun (2014: 151-2) provide that people are able to create new proverbs and hackneyed the old ones. This implies an important piece of evidence that goes with what Chomskyan view has tackled about the capacity of normal native speakers to innovate novel sentences that have not been generated before (Ibid.).

Among Arab scholars, Al-Ashir (2014: 50) states that Arabic language renews and evolves due to human needs to fulfill gaps in communication and to control civilized situations. He also says that ancient Arabic proverbs have passed away because they do not suit modern situations as a result of the development of human civilization (Ibid: 11). Al-Sulaiman (2004: 1) underscores that people are capable of simplifying the forms of popular proverbs to be more memorable and widespread. He elaborates that Arabs have invented a number of Modern Standard Arabic Proverbs (henceforth, MSAPs) to substitute the old ones. For instance, the MSAP ⏎ القِرْد في عَيْن أُمّهِ ⏎ ⏎ غَزَال ⏎ ⏎The crow thinks her own birds fairest⏎ replaces its antique counterpart ⏎ ⏎وَعْدُ الحُرِّ دَيْنَ ⏎ and ⏎زُيِّنَ في عَيْنِ وَالِدٍ وَلَدٌ⏎ ⏎He who promises runs in debt⏎ is used instead of ⏎وَعْدُ الكَرِيمِ أَلْزَمُ مِنْ دَيْنِ الغَرِيمِ⏎. MSAPs are considered one of the varieties of Arabic that can be highly used nowadays by many Arabic speakers. Such proverbs are widely found in newspapers, magazines, articles, press and literary writings (Amayreh and Nazzal,2014: 65).

Stylistic hallmarks of proverbs, called " proverbiality" by Shirley Arora (1984-cited in Mac Coinnigh, 2015: 112), are an esteemed part in maintaining and promoting the proverb standing as much possible. They veritably help distinguishing whether an

expression is a proverb or not. The whole proverbial features are rarely found in a single proverb. Thus, the more proverbial characteristics a proverb has, the higher proverbial value. More clearly, proverbs have many essential features which are integrated within various linguistic levels such as phonological, semantic and syntactic levels. The most important ones are rhyme, alliteration, metaphor, hyperbole, personification, paradox, ellipsis, parallelism and fixity. However, the main concern of this study is only restricted to fixity feature.

2. Fixity

Fixity is a structural-semantic property of proverbs. Ababneh and Al-Ajlouny (2017: 712) observe that fixity is a problematic and challenging feature of proverbs. According to them, proverbs are high or low fixed forms. However, for other Arab scholars, the concept of fixity in Arabic proverbs means the frozenness in their structures and meaning (Al-Dhabi, 2011: 12-3). Fixity has been proved to be found in English too. Norrick (1985: 43) has stressed the word fixity as a defining proverbial marker. According to him, proverbs have fixed structures that should be primarily recognized among people. Fixity is relative and allows flexibility, even if there are optional variations in the grammatical structures of a proverb, people have to recognize it as a proverb, particularly when being more familiar in that community. For example, in the English proverbs ⏹All is not gold that glitters (glisters)⏹ and ⏹All that glitters is not gold⏹, it appears that there are simultaneous lexical as well as grammatical variations and alterations for a single proverb. Having investigated various collections of English proverbs, Norrick (Ibid: 44-6) concludes that it is impossible to have a proverb being totally frozen yet being fixed. Such fixity should be somewhat limited and without lacking or disfiguring the crucial proverbial status or their " recognizability" .

A proverb retains its meaning even though it has been reconstructed by means of passive voice, clefts and / or the use of modals. By the way, a proverb is really a proverb if substituting, rearranging, adding, or changing either part of it or mixing between

two proverbs does not result in changing the meaning of the original proverb, or-else it is an anti-proverb[1].

3. Variations in the Syntactic Structures of MSAPs

Proverbs are everyday expressions that are intrinsic to culture. They are the most popular expressions whether in spoken or written texts. As stated previously, fixity is one of the controversial debates in proverbial properties. Some scholars claim that proverbs in general are frozen; others argue that they are relatively fixed.

What is meant by relatively fixed expressions, including proverbs, is that they are not totally frozen. Amayreh and Nazzal (2014: 60) and Khalaf (2016: 24) have argued that proverbs perhaps syntactically develop and change alongside the passage of time. Humaidah (1997: 162) has mentioned that Arabic language allows its speakers to produce sentences having various syntactic relations and forms but expressing the same meaning. The purpose of this section is to investigate some syntactic variations in MSAPs mainly with the limits on the clause or sentence level. The flexibility in the syntactic forms of MSAPs, if found, indicates human creativity regarding such variations.

It is worth quoting and mentioning a relevant study in this regard, i.e. that of Moon (1998) who has classified her survey of fixed expressions in English, including idiomatic expressions and proverbs with reference to predicates, nominal, adverbial, exclamatory and subordinate clauses and other lexico-grammatical, syntactic or systematic variations, concluding that substitution and transformation variations are

[1]   " Anti-proverbs are brief statements modeled after existing proverbs through one of a number of processes which are word placement, sound change, combining, word play, stunting and negation" (Ababneh and Al-Ajlouny, 2017: 712-6).

registered in her data. She has also mentioned that such variations can be found in the fixed expressions of other different languages. In other words, there is a clear assumption that the syntactic variations in the fixed expressions especially proverbs may not be exclusive to

English only but can be present in other various languages. This section aims at filling this gap in literature. Some syntactic variations in MSAPs are going to be discussed right now with reference the syntactic processes in Arabic sentences. Based on two different sources containing MSAPs, some observable variations in the syntactic forms and structures of MSAPs with regard to the clause or sentence level can be displayed and discussed. Such variations play no role in changing the meaning of the proverbial utterances. Moon' s (1998) framework, which has been applied to the fixed expressions in English, will be taken into consideration when investigating such variations in the data collected.

4. Problem of the Study

It has been believed that proverbs are characterized by frozenness, to say more, there is no change in the structures of the same proverbs. Hence, it is necessary to investigate whether there are syntactic variations in the data under study or not and what types of change occur.

5. Hypothesis

It is fundamentally assumed that MSAPs can undergo some recognizable syntactic variations which lead to say that they are not completely fixed or to be more specific, they are relatively fixed.

6. Significance of the Study

The present study is useful to analyse MSAPs syntactically in relation to Arabic rules. Syntactic analysis of proverbs plays an important role in facilitating and understanding their meanings. The study sheds some sufficient light on MSAPs which are important since non-native speakers of Standard Arabic can investigate the culture and attitudes of Arabs throughout studying Standard Arabic proverbs in general and MSAPs in particular. Another point is that many MSAPs are semantically shared by other languages, that is to say, they are universal. It also can contribute to achieve a better understanding of MSAPs on the part of non-native speakers of Arabic.

7. Limitation of the Study

The present study is limited to the description of the syntactic structures of proverbs, focusing exclusively on MSAPs. Most of these proverbs are widely used. The corpus is restricted to some selected MSAPs which have been collected from two authentic sources on MSAPs containing numerous instances, namely Muʿjam Rawaʾiʿ Al-Hikma wa Al-Aqwal Al-Khalida "The Dictionary of Wonderful Wisdom and Immortal Sayings" by Al-Baʿalbaki (2001), 3rd edition, and Dictionary of Common English Proverbs by Attia (2004). The reason behind this is to vary the data and to confirm the previous hypothesis.

8. Data Analysis and Discussion of Syntactic Variations in MSAPs

Within the corpus, it has been shown that eighteen of MSAPs with their alternatives exhibit more than one syntactic variation. The following pages are devoted to tackling and highlighting these variations.

٨.1 Sentence Pattern Variation

Some MSAPs exhibit variation in their syntactic pattern, i.e. some patterns can be used interchangeably as in the following instances:

Proverb 1: ⬚ ⬚ ⬚He who promises runs in debt⬚ وَعْدُ الحُرِّ دَيْنٌ عَلَيْهِ

The sentence pattern of this proverb is SC [A]. The prepositional phrase عَلَيْهِ serves as an optional adverb in the pattern and omitting it does not affect its propositional meaning.

Proverb 2: ⬚ ⬚ ⬚He who promises runs in debt⬚ وَعْدُ الحُرِّ دَيْنٌ

The syntactic structure of the current MSAP is SC, which is semantically analogous to proverb ١. The optional adverb here has been totally deleted.

1- **S C [A] :** وَعْدُ الحُرِّ دَيْنٌ عَلَيْه
2- **S C :** وَعْدُ الحُرِّ دَيْن

8.2 Nominal ↔ Verbal Sentence Variation

Some MSAPs vary their syntactic types when verbal structures tend to change into nominal ones or other structures. In this case, MSAPs still retain their basic meaning as in the examples below:

Proverb 3: ⟨أَكْبَرُ مِنْكَ بِيَوْمٍ أَعْلَمُ مِنْكَ بِسَنَةٍ⟩ ⟨If you wish good advice, consult an old man⟩

This proverb is formally nominal and the predicate begins with the comparative adjective أَعْلَم which is followed by the prepositional phrase مِنْكَ .

Proverb 4: ⟨أَكْبَرُ مِنْكَ بِيَوْمٍ يَعْرِفُ عَنْكَ بِسَنَةٍ⟩ ⟨If you wish good advice, consult an old man⟩

Compared to proverb ٣ which bears similarity to this proverb, the syntactic variation occurs in the predicate. This comparative adjective in proverb ٣ has been transformed to another related similar constituent, but syntactically different, i.e. an imperfect verb form, it is يَعْرِف . This syntactic change requires an appropriate prepositional phrase عَنْكَ to replace the early one.

8.3 Syndetic ↔ Asyndetic Coordination Variation

Variation in the types of coordinated sentence seems to be displayed in the corpus of MSAPs.

Proverb 5: ⟨إِضْحَكْ يَضْحَكِ العَالَمُ مَعَكَ وَ آبْكِ تَبْكِ وَحْدَكَ⟩ ⟨Laugh and the word laughs with you, weep and you weep alone⟩

Syndetic coordination is expressed in this proverb, where the coordinating particle وَ "and" is used to join two conditional complex sentences.

Proverb 6: ⟨إِضْحَكْ تَضْحَكْ لَكَ الدُّنْيَا ، إبْكِ تَبْكِ وَحْدَكَ⟩ ⟨Laugh and the word laughs with you, weep and you weep alone⟩

Asyndetic coordination is found in this variant MSAP, where the particle وَ "and" between the two conditional sentences is elipted. Variation of coordination does exist in these two various proverbs in spite of the fact that they do express other variations in the gender assigned to the verb forms يَضْحَكِ "He laughs" ↔ تَضْحَكْ "She laughs", in the definite nouns that are semantically equivalent العَالَم "the

world" ↔ الدُّنْيَا "the present life", in prepositional phrases مَعَكَ "with you" ↔ لَكَ "for you" and finally in word order of the elements of only the first main clauses while the second ones remain unchanged. The syntactic structure of the main clauses are illustrated as below:

1. The first main clause of proverb 5:

a- [V + S + A] : يَضْحَكْ العَالَمُ مَعَك

2. The first main clause of proverb 6:

b- [V + A + S] : تَضْحَكْ لَكَ الدُّنْيَا

8.4 Compound ↔ Complex Sentence Variation

In the corpus of the study, it is noticeable that some compound sentence proverbs transform into complex sentence types, and the opposite is true. There are some quoted instances:

Proverb 7: ⟨عُصْفُورٌ فِي اليَدِّ وَ لاعَشَرَةَ عَلَى الشَّجَرَةِ⟩ A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush⟩

In this MSAP, the first main clause is affirmative which is عُصْفُورٌ فِي اليَدِّ. It is connected with the second main clause by the particle وَ "and" which is in the negative form. The coordinating process seems to be between the affirmative and negative clauses.

Proverb 8: ⟨عُصْفُورٌ فِي اليَدِّ **خَيْرٌ** مِنْ عَشَرَةٍ عَلَى الشَّجَرَةِ⟩ A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush⟩

Proverb 8 clearly displays another syntactic varied structure here, which is of the complex sentence type, since the comparative subordinate clause, beginning with comparative adjective خَيْر, is introduced.

8.5 Relative ↔ Conditional Subordinate Clause Variation

Variation does occur within some types of subordinate clauses as elaborated in
the two following MSAPs below:

Proverb 9: 🞂الّذي يَزْرَعُ الشّوْكَ لا **يُحْصِدُ** العِنَبَ🞀 Sow the wind and reap the whirlwind🞀

  Structurally, the relative pronoun الّذي "who" introduces the nominal relative subordinate clause which is placed at the beginning of the proverb and it is followed by imperfect verb in the indicative mood.

Proverb 10: 🞂**مَنْ يَزْرَعْ** الشّوْكَ لا **يَجْنِي بِهِ** العِنَبَ🞀 Sow the wind and reap the whirlwind🞀

  Although there is variation in the verb form of the main clauses between يَحْصِدُ and يَجْنِي meaning "reaps" in proverbs ٩ and 10, respectively, the first proverb and its alternative show no difference in meaning even if the prepositional phrase بِهِ is inserted after the main verb in proverb 10. The relative pronoun in proverb 9 is turned into indefinite conditional pronoun مَنْ "if" in proverb 10 where the latter is also followed by imperfect verb but in the jussive mood. In other words, the subordinate clause type is shifted from nominal relative to conditional. In this example, multiple variations are so evident.

8.6 Masculine ↔ Feminine Gender Variation

 Variation in masculine and feminine gender is interchangeably used with regard to concord between the subject being broken plural noun and the verb. This is quite apparent in the following MSAPs that are structurally, lexically and semantically alike.

Proverb 11: 🞂 عِنْدَ الشَّدَائِدِ يُعْرَفُ الإخْوَانُ🞀 A friend is never known till needed🞀

  The passive verb يُعْرَفُ agrees with its following acting subject الإخْوَانُ in gender but not in number. Both of them express masculine form, yet, the former indicates singular number and the latter refers to plural since the acting subject comes immediately after the passive verb form.

Proverb 12: 🞂 عِنْدَ الشَّدَائِدِ تُعْرَفُ الإخْوَانُ🞀 A friend is never known till needed🞀

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There is no concord in gender and number between the passive verb form تُعْرَفُ and its acting subject الإخْوَانُ. The former expresses singular number and feminine gender whereby the same acting subject has plural and masculine form.

Syntactic variation seems to be in the passive verb only which denotes masculine gender in one occurrence and feminine gender in another. These two MSAPs are syntactically appropriate because they are in full accordance with the rules regarding pluralization; further, they comply with the syntactic rules of verbal Arabic sentence.

8.7 Singular ↔ Plural Nouns Variation

Particular nouns can change their number from singular to plural and vice versa with respect to the syntactic construction of the sentence. This sort of variation is available in the two next proverbs.

Proverb 13: ⟨ أَهِنْ مَالَكَ وَلَا تُهِنْ نَفْسَكَ ⟩ ⟨Despise your purse, but consider your person⟩

Concerning this compound MSAP whose clauses are structurally parallel, the first noun مَالَكَ is singular in the first main clause and the second noun نَفْسَكَ is also singular in the second main clause, too. Both two nouns function as direct object in both independent clauses.

Proverb 14: ⟨ أَهِنْ فُلُوسَكَ وَلَا تُهِنْ نُفُوسَكَ ⟩ ⟨Despise your purse, but consider your person⟩

The first singular noun in proverb 13 above transforms into semantically similar noun but with the plural form, it is فُلُوسَكَ placed in the same slot of proverb 14. Similarly, it is very necessary for the second singular noun in the second main clause of proverb 13 to turn into the corresponding plural form of the same stem and in the same slot.

8.8 Mood Variation

Proverbs and their alternatives sometimes show different types of mood.

Proverb 15: ⬛ مَنْ كَانَ بَيْتُهُ مِنْ زُجَاجٍ فَلَا **يَرْشُقَنَّ** النَّاسَ بِالحِجَارَة⬛ People who live in glass houses should not throw stones⬛

The mood of the verb in the main clause is energetic or emphatic since the imperfect verb يَرْشُقَ in the independent clause is attached to the termination نَّ –*nna* to express intensification and emphasis.

Proverb 16: ⬛ مِنْ كَانَ بَيْتُهُ مِنْ زُجَاجٍ فَلا **يَرْشُقُ** بُيُوتَ النَّاسِ بِالحِجَارَة⬛ ⬛People who live in glass houses should not throw stones⬛

Being different from proverb 15 in its structure, the mood of the imperfect verb يَرْشُقُ is indicative as it is not preceded by any affecting particle; therefore, dhamma is used at the end of the last radical. Although the mood of the verb transforms from energetic to indicative, the meaning of both proverbs is still alike. Still, another difference can be pointed out regarding the direct object which undergoes syntactic and semantic changes; structurally and semantically two different noun phrases.

8.9 Tense and Aspect Variation

The tense of some proverbs in MSA transforms from past to present and vice versa.

Proverb 17: ⬛الطَّبْعُ **غَلَبَ** التَّطَبُّعَ⬛ ⬛Change of a habit cannot alter nature⬛

The tense of the verb in this proverb refers to absolute past or perfect. The same verb form also expresses other verbal categories; these are perfect aspect, active voice and indicative mood.

Proverb 18: ⬛الطَّبْعُ **يَغْلِبُ** التَّطَبُّعَ⬛ ⬛Change of a habit cannot alter nature⬛

The perfect verb in proverb 17 is replaced by its imperfect counterpart, which is يَغْلِبُ, to refer to absolute present or imperfect tense. It again exposes imperfect aspect, active voice and indicative

mood. In spite of changing the tense and aspect of the proverbs, their meaning remains the same.

8.10 Definiteness Variation

Proverbs are also subject to other sorts of transformation, particularly in noun phrases.

Proverb 19: ⟨دِرْهَمُ وِقَايَةٍ خَيْرٌ مِنْ قِنْطَارِ عِلاجٍ⟩ A stich in time saves nine⟩

In this proverb, both the subject and complement of preposition are definite by means of genitive construct. The nouns دِرْهَمُ and قِنْطَارِ are added by the following nouns وِقَايَةٍ and عِلاجٍ, respectively. The subject and the prepositional complement are structurally alike in the sense that both of them are definite nouns, i.e nouns in construct.

Proverb 20: ⟨الوِقَايَةُ خَيْرٌ مِنَ العِلاجِ⟩ Prevention is better than cure⟩

Concerning this basic proverb, both the subject الوِقَايَةُ and the complement of preposition العِلاجِ are definite by means of their attachment to the definite particle ال "the".

8.11 Reduction and Downgrading

Moon (1998: 131) states that some fixed expressions, like proverbs, may be reduced or downgraded into smaller linguistic units, more clearly, compound to single clause or a clause to a phrase. Downgrading is one type of variation. Different sentences and clauses of MSAPs undergo such variation as will be explained in the next sub-sections.

8.11.1 Simple ↔ Compound Sentence Variation

Many MSAPs exhibit clear syntactic variations, they change from the compound sentence types to the simple ones as realized in the following proverbs:

Proverb 21: ⟨ فِي التَّأَنِّي السَّلامَة وَ فِي العَجَلَةِ النَّدَامَة⟩ Haste brings regret, patience brings safety⟩

This proverb is represented by a compound sentence. The first main clause of the proverb is فِي التَّأَنِي السَّلامَة and it is a nominal simple

clause whose pattern is AS. It can be coordinated with another parallel main clause having the same pattern by using the linking particle وَ "and".

Proverb 22: ⟨فِي العَجَلَةِ النَّدَامَةِ⟩ ⟨Haste makes waste⟩

    In this proverb, it is the second main clause of proverb 21 that can stand alone as an independent proverb by itself and without affecting the meaning of its previous alternative. The syntactic structure of this proverb is AS. The predicate which is the prepositional phrase فِي العَجَلَةِ precedes the subject النَّدَامَة. In other words, the simple nominal sentence replaces the compound one.

    Another kind of variation in simple and compound proverbs is explained in proverbs 23 and 24:

Proverb 23: ⟨الجَارُ قَبْلَ الدَّارِ وَ الرَّفِيقُ قَبْلَ الطَّرِيقِ⟩⟨Seek the neighbour before the house, the companion before the journey⟩

    The first simple main clause is الجارُ قبْلَ الدَّارِ, its pattern is SA. This clause is coordinated with another identical clause, also having the same pattern, by means of the particle وَ "and" which is الرَّفِيقُ قَبْلَ الطَّرِيقِ.

Proverb 24: ⟨الجَارُ قَبْلَ الدَّارِ⟩ ⟨You must ask your neighbour if you shall live in peace⟩

    Concerning this MSAP, syntactic variation or interchangeability in simple and compound sentences occurs when the simple sentence proverb, whose pattern is SA, is cut off and used instead of the compound.

Proverb 25: ⟨مَا حَكَّ جِلْدَكَ مِثْلُ ظُفْرِكَ فَتَوَلَّ أَنْتَ جَمِيعَ أَمْرِكَ⟩ ⟨If you want a thing well done, do it yourself⟩

    Actually, this poetic proverb is composed of two independent clauses coordinated by the linking prefixing particle ف "and". It is noticeable that the first verbal clause has the negative form and the second verbal clause begins with the imperative form.

Proverb 26: ⬚ ⬚مَا حَكَّ جِلْدَكَ مِثْلُ ظَفْرِكَ⬚ ⬚Paddle your own canoe⬚

The proverb in 25 can be squeezed by downgrading process. The second clause of the proverb above can be dropped with its preceding coordinator to construe or yield proverb 26 which merely consists of the first main clause.

8.11.2 Complex ↔ Complex- compound Sentence Variation

Syntactic variation also appears in the complex sentence and complex sentences that are coordinated altogether, i.e. of the mixed type, as follows:

Proverb 27: ⬚ ⬚مَنْ جَدَّ وَجَدَ وَ مَنْ زَرَعَ حَصَدَ⬚ ⬚No gain without pain⬚

The first complex sentence مَنْ جَدَّ وَجَدَ can be connected with another complex sentence which is مَنْ زَرَعَ حَصَدَ whose syntactic structure is quite identical with the first sentence in order to form a complex –compound or mixed type sentence.

Proverb 28: ⬚مَنْ جَدَّ وَجَدَ⬚ ⬚No gain without pain⬚

However, in this proverb, it is one of the complex sentences which behaves as one MSAP. The subordinate clause is مَنْ جَدَّ, as it begins with the indefinite pronoun subordinator مَنْ "who". It syntactically functions as a subject of the whole complex sentence. The main clause of this proverb is the perfect verb وَجَدَ which contains the hidden subject and can stand independently. Moreover, retaining or using the second complex sentence exclusively is also possible.

8.11.3 Noun phrase ↔ Nominal Subordinate Clause Variation

A noun phrase may replace a nominal subordinate clause in the syntactic structure of the proverbial sentence.

Proverb 29: ⬚إِذَا أَرَدْتَ أَنْ تُطَاعَ فَأْمُرْ بِمَا يُسْتَطَاعُ⬚ ⬚He that would be obeyed, must wisely command⬚

The nominal subordinate clause following the imperative verb فَامُرْ is بِمَا يُسْتَطَاعُ. This clause serves as an object of preposition in which the relative pronoun مَا is attached to the inseparable preposition بـ; furthermore, it occupies the slot of the object in the main clause of this conditional complex proverbial sentence.

Proverb 30: ⍰ إِذَا أَرَدْتَ أَنْ تُطَاعَ فَأَسْأَلِ **الْمُسْتَطَاعَ**⍰He that would be obeyed, must wisely command⍰

In this proverb, the noun phrase الْمُسْتَطَاعَ substitutes the nominal subordinate clause stated in proverb 29 without involving any semantic change in the proverb. This noun phrase serves as direct object in the main clause of this proverb because it follows the transitive verb إِسْأَلْ which involves some semantic variation since the verbs إِسْأَلْ and أُمُرْ in the proverb above are somehow semantically not analogous; thus, interchangeability of the verbs is not in one-to-one correspondence.

8.11.4 Multiplicity of Subordinate Clauses Variation

Variation in a number of subordinate clauses has been observed as in the two following proverbs:

Proverb 31: ⍰ غِنَى النَّفْسِ **لِمَنْ يَعْقِلُ** أَفْضَلُ مِنْ غِنَى الْمَالِ⍰Contentment is above wealth⍰

This complex proverb involves two subordinate clauses. The major subordinate clause is that of comparison. Another subordinate clause is a comment clause which has been medially inserted between the constituents of the proverbial sentence; it is لِمَنْ يَعْقِلُ. It means that more than one subordinate clause are included in this proverb. Nevertheless, the comment clause can be excluded yielding proverb 32.

Proverb 32: ⍰ غِنَى النَّفْسِ **خَيْرٌ** مِنْ غِنَى الْمَالِ⍰Contentment is above wealth⍰

This is the variant complex proverb which contains just one subordinate clause, namely comparative. The comparative subordinate clause begins with the comparative word خَيْر, which

replaces structurally and semantically the equivalent elative word أَفْضَلُ used in proverb 31.

8.11.5 Negative Sentence Variation

Syntactic variation occurs in the negative sentence. Single or correlative negation is found in two separate current proverbs revealing the same meaning.

Proverb 33: ⬜ لَا يَأْسَ مَعَ الْحَيَاةِ وَلَا حَيَاةَ مَعَ الْيَأْسِ⬜ ⬜Only the dead lose hope⬜

As pointed out earlier, correlation in negation is apparent in this proverb. The first nominal main clause is negated by لَا and the second one is also negated by the same particle which is preceded by the coordinator وَ "and". Furthermore, the noun phrases in this compound proverb are rather mobile.

Proverb 34: ⬜ لَا يَأْسَ مَعَ الحَيَاةِ⬜ ⬜While there is life, there is hope⬜

This proverb can be described as a reduced form of proverb 33, that is, the first main clause is treated as an independent proverb and the second main clause is totally deleted. One negative particle, which is لَا "not", is used to negate the noun يَأْسَ in this nominal simple MSAP.

8.11.6 Deletion of the particle إِنَّ "indeed"

The particle إِنَّ "indeed" can be omitted from the structure of proverbs but their meaning can be still understood clearly. Within MSAPs, this deletion process has been observed in the two final MSAPs without affecting their own syntactic structures as well.

Proverb 35: ⬜ إِنَّ الطُّيُورَ عَلى أَشْكَالِهَا تَقَعُ⬜ ⬜Birds of a feather flock together⬜

The particle إِنَّ meaning "indeed" introduces the sentence of this proverb which begins with its subject الطُّيُورَ in the accusative case. The pattern of this proverb is SAV.

Proverb 36: ⬜الطُّيُورُ عَلَى أَشْكَالِهَا تَقَعُ⬜ ⬜Birds of a feather flock together⬜

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The particle إِنَّ "indeed" introducing the verbal sentence in proverb 35 is here omitted without deforming or distorting the original proverb; however, the subject الطّيُورُ in this MSAP is in the nominative case. The pattern of proverb 36 is SAV, too.

9. Conclusion

Having analysed and discussed the data sample, it can be concluded that syntactic variations are remarkably noticeable in MSAPs but with a relatively limited number, especially those having longer structures.

Although previous related studies on proverbs highlighted that the structure of proverbs do not change, variation in the syntactic structures of MSAPs does exist with retaining the same meaning. It means that the structure of MSAPs is flexible, moreover, the syntactic forms of MSAPs are not totally frozen but relatively fixed. This flexibility permits more creativity in their use because MSAPs may change their structure in order to befit the context where they are used. Most of these recognizable variations are involved in deletion, reduction and downgrading. Consequently, some MSAPs can be treated as "kernel" part of the original proverbs. Such variations seem to exist in some proverbs, i.e. they are not obsolete at all.

In most of the collected instances, each MSAP shows its own syntactic variation which is different from other syntactic variations in other MSAPs. Syntactic variation is mostly found in longer structures of MSAPs, namely compound and complex sentence MSAPs while strict fixity somewhat arises in simple sentence MSAPs. It means that the longer structure a proverb has the higher syntactic variations it accepts.

Proverbs are popular expressions uttered by people, hence, they are subject to multiple syntactic changes and transformations like ellipsis, foregrounding and backgrounding. The reason behind these linguistic phenomena is the oral use and the excessive transmission of these proverbs from one person to another across the passage of time and different regions. Due to different social and cultural factors and background knowledge of their speakers, proverbs have their

own journey of changes in their pronunciations and syntactic structures in particular.

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بعض التنوعات النحوية في الأمثال العربية الفصحى الحديثة

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المستخلص

تُعدُّ اللغات في حالة تغيّر مستمر ثابت الاستمرارية ناتج عن طبيعتها بوصفها لغات تواصل؛ لذلك فانّ التنوع يحدث في كل اللغات؛ لأنّها تكون حيّة مثل متكلميها، والدراسة الحالية متعلقة بنوع جديد من الأمثال ألا وهي الأمثال في اللغة العربية الفصحى الحديثة؛ لذا البحث الحالي هو بصورة أساسية متعلق بعرض بعض التنوعات النحوية في الأمثال العربية الفُصحى الحديثة، لقد أُعتُقِد أنّ الأمثال هي عبارة عن أشكال جامدة لا تتغيّر إلا أنّ بعض الباحثين ذكروا أنّ الأمثال قد تخضع إلى تغيرات وتطورات مع مرور الزمن، وطبقاً لهذا فالبحث الحالي يُركز بصورة أساسية على تفحص التنوع في البُنى النحوية لبعض الأمثال العربية الفصحى الحديثة بالإشارة إلى تراكيبها النحوية مع أيّة عمليات نحوية تؤسس لهذا التنوع، وللتوضيح أكثر نقول: الدراسة تنوي إلى تفحص أي تنوع في البنى النحوية لنفس الأمثال الذي يكون موجوداً في هذه الأمثال العربية الفصحى الحديثة وكذلك إلى أي تكون الأمثال ثابتة نسبيًا أو جامدة تماماً من حيث بُنيتها النحوية، فضلًا عن ذلك التنوع في التراكيب النحوية يُؤخذ بالحسبان من الإشارة إلى طريقة الثبات المستخدمة عالمياً في تفحص التنوعات المختلفة ومن ضمنها تنوع التراكيب النحوية والثبات النسبي في العبارات التي تتضمن الأمثال.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تعريف الأمثال، الجمود، الثبات النسبي.