

Alternation and Reposition in Arabic Stylistics: A Conceptual Reappraisal and Its Application to the Arabic Poetry

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Abstract

This article revisits the concepts of alteration and repositions from the perspective of contemporary stylistics. Rather than treating them solely as grammatical deviations, the study conceptualizes both phenomena as strategic linguistic choices that enrich meaning, foreground particular semantic elements, and shape poetic expression. Drawing upon classical Arabic rhetorical scholarship and modern stylistic theory, the article proposes a comprehensive framework for understanding alternation and reposition as stylistic mechanisms operating across lexical, syntactic, and semantic levels. To demonstrate the analytical applicability of this framework, selected poems by Mahmud Sami al-Barudi are examined qualitatively. The analysis shows that alternation and reposition are not merely ornamental rhetorical devices but constitute deliberate stylistic strategies through which the poet intensifies emotional expression, expands semantic possibilities, creates textual cohesion, and directs readers' interpretive attention. These findings contribute to bridging the gap between classical Arabic rhetoric and contemporary stylistic analysis while offering a more comprehensive approach to the linguistic study of Arabic literary texts.

Keywords: Arabic stylistics, Alteration, Reposition, Arabic Poetry.

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji kembali konsep alternasi dan reposisi dari perspektif stilistika kontemporer. Alih-alih memandang keduanya semata-mata sebagai penyimpangan gramatikal, penelitian ini mengonseptualisasikan alternasi dan reposisi sebagai pilihan-pilihan linguistik yang bersifat strategis untuk memperkaya makna, menonjolkan unsur-unsur semantis tertentu, serta membentuk ekspresi puitik. Dengan memadukan khazanah retorika Arab klasik dan teori stilistika modern, artikel ini menawarkan suatu kerangka konseptual yang komprehensif untuk memahami alternasi dan reposisi sebagai mekanisme stilistika yang bekerja pada tataran leksikal, sintaktis, dan semantis. Untuk menunjukkan penerapan kerangka tersebut, penelitian ini menganalisis secara kualitatif sejumlah puisi karya Mahmud Sami al-Barudi. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa alternasi dan reposisi bukan sekadar perangkat retorik yang bersifat ornamental, melainkan strategi stilistika yang digunakan secara sadar oleh penyair untuk memperkuat ekspresi emosional, memperluas kemungkinan pemaknaan, membangun kohesi tekstual, serta mengarahkan perhatian interpretatif pembaca. Temuan ini berkontribusi dalam menjembatani kesenjangan antara retorika Arab klasik dan analisis stilistika kontemporer, sekaligus menawarkan pendekatan yang lebih komprehensif bagi kajian linguistik terhadap teks-teks sastra Arab.

Kata Kunci: Stilistika Arab, Alterasi, Reposisi, Puisi Arab.

INTRODUCTION

Stylistics has become one of the most productive interdisciplinary approaches in linguistic and literary studies because it investigates how language choices produce particular meanings and aesthetic effects. Rather than viewing literary language as a deviation from ordinary language, contemporary stylistics considers every linguistic selection to be a motivated choice reflecting the communicative intention of the author (Leech, 2008; Simpson, 2004). Through stylistic analysis, linguistic structures are interpreted not merely as grammatical forms but also as functional resources for constructing meaning, emphasizing ideas, shaping readers' perceptions, and generating aesthetic experience.

Within the Arabic intellectual tradition, the study of style predates the emergence of modern stylistics. Classical scholars developed sophisticated theories under the discipline of *balāghah*, particularly within *‘ilm al-ma‘ānī*, to explain why specific linguistic structures are preferred over other grammatically acceptable alternatives. Their analyses demonstrate that linguistic choices are never arbitrary but instead correspond to contextual, semantic, and rhetorical considerations. Consequently, many concepts now examined in modern stylistics have long existed within Arabic rhetoric under different terminologies and theoretical assumptions (Al-Jurjani, 1992; Qalyubi, 1997).

Among these concepts, *tanāwub* (alternation) and *taqdim wa ta'khir* (reposition) occupy particularly significant positions. *Tanāwub* refers to the substitution or alternation of one linguistic form for another that shares semantic affinity while simultaneously introducing additional semantic nuances. Instead of functioning as a simple lexical replacement, alternation enables multiple semantic layers to coexist within a single expression, thereby increasing lexical richness and interpretative possibilities (Sulaiman, 2004). Likewise, *taqdim wa ta'khir* concerns the rearrangement of syntactic constituents from their canonical order. Such rearrangement is not considered a violation of grammatical rules but rather a deliberate rhetorical strategy employed to achieve emphasis, exclusiveness, topicalization, suspense, or emotional intensity (Al-Jurjani, 1992).

Despite their importance, existing scholarship has predominantly examined these concepts within Qur'anic studies. Numerous studies explore alternation and reposition as manifestations of Qur'anic eloquence, yet comparatively few investigate their operation in Arabic poetry, where stylistic creativity is equally prominent. Moreover, many previous discussions remain largely descriptive, focusing on identifying examples without sufficiently explaining the linguistic mechanisms underlying these stylistic phenomena. Consequently, classical Arabic stylistic concepts are often treated independently from developments in contemporary stylistics, discourse analysis,

semantics, and functional linguistics. This theoretical separation creates an important scholarly gap. Modern stylistics increasingly emphasizes that literary language should be understood through interactions among syntax, semantics, pragmatics, discourse organization, and cognitive interpretation. Therefore, revisiting classical Arabic rhetorical concepts within broader linguistic perspectives may provide a more comprehensive understanding of Arabic literary expression while simultaneously demonstrating the continuing relevance of the Arabic rhetorical tradition in contemporary linguistic scholarship.

This article seeks to bridge this gap by reconceptualizing *tanāwub* and *taqdim wa ta'khir* as stylistic mechanisms rather than merely rhetorical labels. Instead of limiting the discussion to grammatical description, the study integrates insights from classical Arabic rhetoric with contemporary stylistic theories concerning lexical choice, information structure, foregrounding, semantic extension, and textual interpretation. Such integration allows these traditional concepts to be examined as dynamic linguistic processes operating across multiple levels of language. The theoretical discussion is subsequently applied to selected poems of Mahmud Sami al-Barudi, one of the leading figures of the nineteenth-century Arabic literary revival (*al-Nahḍah*). Al-Barudi's poetry provides particularly suitable material because of its remarkable linguistic sophistication and its extensive employment of classical rhetorical devices within modern poetic expression. By analyzing alternation and reposition in his poetry, this study demonstrates how these stylistic mechanisms contribute to semantic expansion, emotional intensification, textual cohesion, and poetic aesthetics.

Accordingly, this article pursues two principal objectives. First, it reconceptualizes *tanāwub* and *taqdim wa ta'khir* through an integrated framework combining classical Arabic rhetoric with contemporary stylistics. Second, it illustrates the practical applicability of this framework through stylistic analyses of selected poems by Mahmud Sami al-Barudi. Through this approach, the study aims to contribute to the ongoing dialogue between traditional Arabic linguistic scholarship and modern linguistic theories while enriching stylistic approaches to Arabic literary texts.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research design grounded in library research and textual analysis. Qualitative inquiry is particularly appropriate because the primary objective of the study is not to measure linguistic frequency but to interpret stylistic phenomena and explain how linguistic choices contribute to meaning construction within Arabic literary discourse (Creswell & Poth,

2018). Accordingly, the research emphasizes interpretative analysis rather than statistical generalization.

The primary data consist of selected poetic verses from the *Dimān* of Mahmud Sami al-Barudi (Al-Barudi, 1998). These poems were purposively selected because they contain representative examples of *tanāwub* (alternation) and *taqdim wa ta'khir* (reposition), two stylistic phenomena that constitute the focus of this study. Rather than attempting to examine the entirety of Al-Barudi's poetic corpus, the analysis concentrates on passages that clearly illustrate the interaction between lexical selection, syntactic arrangement, and semantic interpretation. Secondary sources include classical works on Arabic rhetoric and modern scholarship on stylistics, semantics, discourse analysis, and functional linguistics.

Data collection was conducted through documentation techniques. Relevant poetic excerpts were identified, classified, and grouped according to the occurrence of alternation and reposition. Each textual unit was subsequently organized into analytical categories corresponding to the theoretical framework developed in this article. This procedure enabled systematic comparison between linguistic structures and their stylistic functions. The analysis employed qualitative stylistic analysis supported by close reading. Close reading allows literary texts to be examined in detail by attending to lexical choices, syntactic organization, semantic relations, and contextual interpretation (Barry, 2020). Within this framework, every selected verse was analyzed through four consecutive stages. The first stage involved identifying the linguistic structure in which alternation or reposition occurred. The second stage examined the linguistic mechanism underlying each stylistic phenomenon. The third stage interpreted the semantic and stylistic effects generated by the linguistic choice. Finally, the fourth stage interpreted the findings within broader theoretical perspectives by integrating concepts from classical Arabic rhetoric with contemporary stylistic theories.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Conceptualizing Alternation (*Tanāwub*) in Arabic Stylistics

The phenomenon known as *tanāwub* has occupied an important position in the Arabic rhetorical tradition, although its conceptualization has evolved considerably across different periods of Arabic linguistic scholarship. Classical grammarians primarily discussed lexical substitution within the framework of syntax (*naḥw*) and semantics (*dalālah*), whereas rhetoricians later approached it as a stylistic phenomenon that contributes to eloquence (*faṣāḥah*) and rhetorical effectiveness (*balāghah*). Consequently, *tanāwub* should not be understood merely as grammatical

substitution but rather as an intentional linguistic strategy through which an author exploits semantic proximity between lexical items to generate richer layers of meaning.

Lexicographically, the term *tanāwub* derives from the Arabic root n-w-b (نوب), which conveys the general meaning of replacing, succeeding, alternating, or taking the place of another. Classical Arabic dictionaries provide several closely related meanings. In *Lisān al-‘Arab*, Ibn Manẓūr explains that the term encompasses *al-tabādul* (exchange), *al-iḥlāl* (placing one thing in the position of another), and *al-taqāsum* (distribution or succession), all of which involve some form of substitution between related entities (Ibn Manẓūr, n.d.). Likewise, *al-Mu‘jam al-Wasīṭ* defines the verb *nāba* as "to replace another" or "to perform the function of another," emphasizing functional interchangeability rather than absolute equivalence (Ḍaif, 2004). These lexical meanings subsequently acquired a more technical interpretation within Arabic stylistics. Rather than referring to ordinary substitution, *tanāwub* came to denote the replacement of one lexical or grammatical form with another whose semantic field overlaps but is not entirely identical. The stylistic value of alternation therefore lies precisely in this partial semantic overlap. Because the substituted form preserves traces of its original lexical meaning while simultaneously invoking the meaning of the expected expression, readers are encouraged to construct multiple interpretive possibilities simultaneously.

Among contemporary Arab linguists, Faṭḥullah Ahmad Sulaiman (2004) offers one of the most comprehensive formulations of *tanāwub*. He defines it as the placement of one linguistic element—whether a noun, verb, verbal noun, or particle—in the position normally occupied by another linguistically related element. Importantly, this substitution is not arbitrary. It presupposes a semantic relationship (*‘alāqah ma‘nawīyyah*) between the two forms, allowing the replacement to preserve textual coherence while simultaneously expanding semantic interpretation. Consequently, alternation represents an act of stylistic selection rather than grammatical deviation. This understanding distinguishes *tanāwub* from simple synonymy. Whereas synonymous expressions are often treated as semantically interchangeable, alternation deliberately exploits subtle semantic differences between related lexical items. The selected expression carries not only its own lexical meaning but also evokes the semantic expectations associated with the expression that could have occupied the same position. In other words, alternation creates semantic layering through lexical choice.

From the perspective of modern stylistics, this mechanism corresponds closely to the principle that literary language derives much of its expressive power from motivated linguistic selection. Every lexical choice simultaneously excludes alternative possibilities while inviting

readers to infer why one expression has been preferred over another. Consequently, the stylistic significance of *tanāwub* extends beyond lexical replacement to encompass processes of semantic enrichment, foregrounding, and interpretive openness.

Building upon the classical tradition, this study defines *tanāwub* as a stylistic mechanism in which an author intentionally replaces an expected linguistic form with another semantically related form in order to generate additional semantic, rhetorical, or pragmatic effects. The replacement does not eliminate the meaning of the omitted expression; instead, both meanings coexist within the interpretive space created by the text.

This conceptualization differs from ordinary lexical substitution in several respects. First, alternation presupposes semantic affinity rather than complete equivalence. Two lexical items participating in *tanāwub* share a common semantic domain but differ in one or more semantic features. The stylistic effect emerges precisely from these differences. Second, alternation constitutes an act of linguistic choice. Since Arabic grammar often permits several acceptable expressions for the same communicative function, selecting one alternative instead of another inevitably conveys additional information regarding emphasis, evaluation, emotional intensity, or conceptual perspective. Third, alternation expands semantic interpretation. Readers are expected to process not only the lexical meaning of the expression actually used but also the semantic implications associated with the omitted alternative. This dual activation of meaning distinguishes *tanāwub* from ordinary lexical variation.

Accordingly, alternation may be understood as a form of semantic foregrounding. By deviating from the most predictable lexical selection while remaining within acceptable grammatical boundaries, the text directs readers' attention toward the chosen expression and encourages deeper semantic processing.

The linguistic operation of *tanāwub* exhibits several defining characteristics. The first is *semantic overlap*. The replacing and replaced expressions must share sufficient semantic commonality to maintain textual coherence. Without such overlap, interpretation would become incoherent rather than stylistically enriched. The second characteristic is *functional compatibility*. Alternating forms normally occupy identical grammatical environments. A substituted verb, noun, or particle performs the same syntactic function as the expected expression even though its lexical meaning differs. Third, *tanāwub* produces semantic accumulation rather than semantic replacement. The omitted expression continues to participate implicitly in textual interpretation, allowing readers to construct richer conceptual representations. Fourth, alternation frequently introduces foregrounding. Modern stylistic theory considers foregrounding to be the process through which

certain linguistic forms become perceptually prominent because they depart from readers' expectations (Leech, 2008; Simpson, 2004). In Arabic literary discourse, *tanāwub* achieves precisely this effect by replacing expected lexical forms with semantically related alternatives. Finally, alternation often increases interpretive openness. Since multiple semantic possibilities remain simultaneously active, literary texts employing *tanāwub* tend to support richer hermeneutic interpretation than texts relying solely on conventional lexical choices. These characteristics collectively indicate that *tanāwub* should be viewed as a semantic and stylistic phenomenon rather than a purely grammatical one.

Types and Stylistic Functions of Alternation

Following Sulaiman (2004), alternation in Arabic may be classified into four principal categories according to the linguistic units involved. The first category is verbal alternation (*tanāwub fī al-afʿāl*), where one verb replaces another while preserving partial semantic similarity. This category constitutes the most productive form of alternation because Arabic verbs encode lexical meaning together with argument structure, transitivity, and semantic roles. Consequently, replacing one verb with another frequently produces subtle shifts in meaning that cannot be explained solely through grammar. The second category is nominal alternation (*tanāwub fī al-asmāʾ*), involving substitution among nouns that occupy equivalent syntactic positions but differ in semantic specificity or rhetorical force. Such alternation frequently contributes to metaphorical extension, conceptual refinement, and lexical intensification. The third category is alternation among verbal nouns (*tanāwub bayna al-maṣādir*). Since Arabic verbal nouns often express actions independently of tense and aspect, replacing one verbal noun with another enables poets to modify conceptual abstraction, emotional intensity, and textual emphasis. The fourth category is particle alternation (*tanāwub bayna al-ḥurūf*), in which one particle functions in contexts conventionally associated with another. Although particles possess relatively limited lexical content, they exert considerable influence upon grammatical relations, logical connections, and pragmatic interpretation. Consequently, particle alternation frequently produces nuanced rhetorical effects that exceed purely syntactic explanation.

Regarding the stylistic functions, from the foregoing discussion, it becomes evident that *tanāwub* performs multiple stylistic functions extending far beyond lexical substitution. First, alternation facilitates semantic enrichment by activating multiple conceptual domains simultaneously. Second, it produces lexical economy, allowing a single expression to convey meanings that would otherwise require several lexical items. Third, alternation enhances foregrounding, thereby increasing readers' cognitive attention toward selected linguistic forms.

Fourth, it contributes to emotional intensification, particularly in poetic discourse where subtle lexical distinctions often carry substantial affective significance. Finally, alternation promotes interpretive plurality. Because the substituted and expected expressions remain conceptually connected, literary meaning emerges not from one lexical item alone but from the dynamic interaction between them. This interaction ultimately constitutes one of the defining characteristics of Arabic literary style.

Conceptualizing Reposition (*Taqdīm wa Ta'khīr*) in Arabic Stylistics

Among the most extensively discussed stylistic phenomena in Arabic rhetoric is *taqdīm wa ta'khīr*, literally meaning “advancement and postponement” or, in contemporary linguistic terminology, “reposition.” Unlike many languages whose syntactic organization depends heavily on fixed constituent order, Arabic allows considerable flexibility in arranging sentence elements. This flexibility provides speakers and writers with a wide range of expressive possibilities, enabling them to manipulate word order in accordance with semantic, rhetorical, and communicative objectives.

Classical Arab rhetoricians regarded word order as one of the primary determinants of eloquence. For them, meaning was not produced solely by lexical items but also by the relationships established among those items within a syntactic structure. Consequently, changing the position of a constituent was never considered a purely formal operation. Rather, it reflected a deliberate choice that altered emphasis, focus, perspective, and interpretive salience.

The most influential treatment of this phenomenon appears in the works of ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, particularly *Dalā'il al-I'jāz*. Al-Jurjānī argues that rhetorical excellence derives from *naẓm* (syntactic arrangement), namely the systematic organization of linguistic elements according to contextual and semantic requirements (Al-Jurjānī, 1992). From this perspective, reposition constitutes a central mechanism through which speakers organize meaning and guide interpretation. Al-Jurjānī distinguishes between two broad forms of reposition. The first involves changing the order of constituents without altering their grammatical functions. Examples include placing the predicate before the subject or advancing a prepositional phrase before the main clause. The second involves changing both position and grammatical status, as when an object is advanced to become the topic of a sentence. This distinction demonstrates that reposition is not merely a matter of sequence but may also influence grammatical interpretation and discourse structure.

Modern linguistic scholarship has further expanded this understanding. Rather than viewing *taqdīm wa ta'khīr* solely as a rhetorical device, contemporary linguists interpret it as a manifestation of information management within discourse. Reposition determines how

information is distributed, highlighted, foregrounded, and processed by readers or listeners. Consequently, the phenomenon may be examined through the lenses of functional grammar, discourse analysis, pragmatics, and information structure.

In term of defining reposition in Arabic stylistics, *taqdim wa ta'khir* is defined as the intentional rearrangement of syntactic constituents from their expected or canonical order in order to achieve specific semantic, rhetorical, pragmatic, or discourse-related effects. This definition emphasizes several important points. First, reposition presupposes the existence of an expected order. Arabic grammar provides conventional patterns according to which sentence elements are typically arranged. These patterns function as a cognitive baseline against which stylistic deviations become meaningful. Second, reposition is intentional rather than accidental. The movement of constituents serves communicative purposes and therefore contributes directly to meaning construction. Third, reposition affects not only syntax but also discourse interpretation. By altering the sequence of information presentation, authors can direct readers' attention toward particular elements while reducing the prominence of others. Fourth, reposition frequently interacts with other stylistic devices such as alternation, metaphor, repetition, and parallelism. Consequently, its stylistic effects should be interpreted within the broader context of textual organization.

In this regard, one of the most productive ways of understanding *taqdim wa ta'khir* is through the concept of information structure. In modern linguistics, information structure concerns how speakers organize information according to communicative priorities (Halliday, 2014). Every utterance contains information that is more prominent than other information. Speakers therefore arrange linguistic elements strategically to indicate which parts of a message deserve particular attention. Reposition serves precisely this function. When an element is advanced from its expected position, it often acquires increased informational prominence. Readers naturally interpret the fronted constituent as carrying special communicative significance. In contrast, postponed elements tend to receive comparatively less emphasis.

From this perspective, reposition can be understood as a mechanism for managing attention. The movement of constituents influences how readers process information, construct meaning, and evaluate textual significance. This interpretation closely parallels Halliday's distinction between Theme and Rheme. Theme refers to the point of departure of a clause, while Rheme contains information developed from that starting point. Through reposition, Arabic authors may transform elements that would normally appear within the Rheme into thematic positions, thereby restructuring the communicative organization of the sentence. Accordingly, *taqdim wa ta'khir* may

be regarded as an Arabic manifestation of broader discourse principles governing information distribution and communicative prominence.

Modern stylistics frequently employs the concept of foregrounding to explain literary language. According to foregrounding theory, certain linguistic forms attract attention because they depart from expected patterns (Leech, 2008; Simpson, 2004). Reposition functions as one of the most powerful foregrounding devices in Arabic literature. When a constituent appears in an unusual position, readers immediately notice its prominence. This prominence encourages deeper processing and often signals the presence of important semantic or emotional content. For example, advancing an object before the verb may draw attention to the affected entity rather than the action itself. Similarly, advancing an adverbial phrase may emphasize circumstances, locations, or temporal dimensions that would otherwise remain secondary. Foregrounding therefore explains why reposition frequently appears in poetic discourse. Poetry seeks not merely to communicate information but also to intensify perception, evoke emotion, and stimulate interpretation. Reposition contributes to these objectives by disrupting ordinary linguistic expectations and directing attention toward selected textual elements.

Major Types of Reposition in Arabic

Arabic allows a wide range of constituent movements. Among the most common types are the following: 1) Fronting of the Object (*Taqdim al-Maf'ul*). In this pattern, the direct object precedes the subject or verb. Such fronting often serves functions of emphasis, exclusiveness, or emotional intensity. The object becomes the primary focus of attention, while the action itself becomes secondary. 2) Fronting of Circumstantial Expressions (*Taqdim al-Hāl*). Circumstantial expressions (*hāl*) may be advanced before the constituent they describe. This reposition frequently highlights a particular state, condition, or emotional circumstance, thereby intensifying descriptive imagery. 3) Fronting of Purpose Expressions (*Taqdim al-Maf'ul li-Ajlih*). Expressions indicating purpose or motivation may be advanced to foreground the reason behind an action. In such cases, causal significance becomes more prominent than the action itself. 4) Fronting of Adverbial Elements (*Taqdim al-Zarf*). Temporal and spatial expressions are frequently repositioned in Arabic discourse. Their advancement often signals particular concern with time, place, duration, or contextual framing. 5) Fronting of Prepositional Phrases (*Taqdim al-Jār wa al-Majrūr*). Prepositional phrases may occupy sentence-initial positions for purposes of emphasis, specification, contrast, or topicalization. This category constitutes one of the most productive forms of reposition in both literary and Qur'anic discourse.

Regarding the functions of reposition, classical and modern scholarship collectively indicate that reposition serves several major communicative functions. The first is emphasis, whereby advanced constituents receive greater prominence than they would in canonical order. The second is specification (*takhsīs*), which restricts interpretation and directs attention toward a particular referent. The third is topicalization, through which a constituent becomes the point of departure for subsequent discourse. The fourth is suspense and anticipation. Delaying certain elements encourages readers to await crucial information, thereby enhancing textual engagement. The fifth is emotional intensification, especially in poetry where syntactic arrangement contributes directly to affective expression. The sixth is aesthetic organization, enabling authors to achieve rhythmical, phonological, and rhetorical balance. Taken together, these functions demonstrate that reposition is fundamentally a meaning-making strategy. The movement of constituents is not motivated by grammatical necessity but by communicative purpose.

From the perspective of contemporary linguistics, *taqdim wa ta'khir* may be interpreted as the intersection of syntax, discourse, and cognition. Within Functional Grammar, reposition reflects speakers' efforts to organize information according to communicative priorities (Halliday, 2014). Within Pragmatics, reposition signals speakers' assumptions concerning what information is most relevant, accessible, or worthy of attention. Within Discourse Analysis, reposition contributes to textual cohesion by establishing topics, maintaining continuity, and guiding interpretive progression. Within Cognitive Linguistics, reposition influences conceptual prominence. Fronted elements become cognitively salient, increasing their accessibility within readers' mental representations of the discourse. These perspectives reveal that classical Arabic rhetorical insights anticipated many concerns that later emerged in modern linguistic theory. Rather than representing an outdated rhetorical concept, *taqdim wa ta'khir* remains highly relevant for contemporary investigations of language, discourse, and literary style.

Alternation and Reposition in the Poetry of Mahmud Sami al-Barudi

The theoretical framework developed in the preceding sections provides an analytical foundation for examining stylistic choices in Arabic literary discourse. This section applies the concepts of alternation (*tanāwub*) and reposition (*taqdim wa ta'khir*) to selected poems of Mahmud Sami al-Barudi. Rather than treating these linguistic phenomena as isolated rhetorical ornaments, the analysis demonstrates that they function as integrated stylistic strategies that contribute to semantic expansion, emotional intensity, and textual organization.

Al-Barudi's poetry represents an appropriate corpus for stylistic investigation because it combines the linguistic elegance of classical Arabic poetry with the expressive concerns of the

nineteenth-century *Nabḍah*. His diction consistently reflects careful lexical selection, syntactic flexibility, and rhetorical precision. Consequently, many apparent grammatical irregularities are more accurately interpreted as deliberate stylistic choices designed to enrich poetic meaning.

a. Verbal Alternation

One of the most productive manifestations of *tanāwub* in Al-Barudi's poetry occurs at the verbal level. Verbs in Arabic encode not only actions but also argument structure, semantic roles, and pragmatic orientation. Consequently, replacing one verb with another often produces multiple layers of meaning simultaneously. The following verse illustrates this phenomenon:

لقد أودع البينُ المشتَّ بمهجتي # ندوبًا، كآثر الوشم من كف واشم

The verb أودع normally functions as a transitive verb requiring a direct object without the mediation of a preposition. In this verse, however, the verb appears with the preposition ـِ، creating an argument structure that differs from its conventional grammatical pattern. Classical Arabic grammar would ordinarily expect another verb whose lexical semantics naturally licenses the preposition, such as ترك.

From the perspective of alternation, this construction should not be interpreted as grammatical inconsistency. Rather, أودع functions as a stylistic substitute for another semantically related verb while simultaneously preserving its own lexical implications. Whereas ترك simply denotes "to leave," أودع additionally conveys the notion of entrusting or depositing something for safekeeping. Consequently, the poet does not merely state that separation left scars upon his heart; he suggests that separation intentionally deposited enduring wounds within it.

This lexical choice generates semantic accumulation rather than replacement. Readers simultaneously access the meanings associated with both verbs, thereby producing a richer emotional representation than either verb could convey independently. The resulting stylistic effect exemplifies the semantic layering characteristic of *tanāwub*.

From a modern stylistic perspective, the substitution also constitutes lexical foregrounding. Because the selected verb departs from readers' grammatical expectations while remaining semantically interpretable, it attracts increased cognitive attention and encourages deeper interpretive engagement.

A similar phenomenon appears in another verse:

وطاب لعينه فيها السهاد تجافى النوم في طلب المعالي

The verb تجافى is conventionally classified as an intransitive verb. Nevertheless, Al-Barudi employs it transitively by assigning the direct object النوم. Such usage implicitly evokes another verb, namely هجر, which ordinarily governs a direct object and expresses the meaning of abandoning or deserting. Yet Al-Barudi deliberately avoids this stronger lexical choice. The distinction is stylistically significant. هجر conveys complete and decisive abandonment, whereas تجافى suggests gradual distancing or voluntary withdrawal. The poet therefore portrays sleeplessness not as an abrupt rejection of sleep but as an intentional process of self-discipline undertaken in pursuit of noble aspirations. The alternation thus softens the emotional profile of the action while simultaneously emphasizing perseverance rather than violence. The semantic effect arises precisely because both lexical meanings remain available during interpretation.

b. Nominal Alternation

Alternation likewise operates at the nominal level. Consider the following verse:

هوئى كضمير الزند، لو أن مدمعي # تأخر عن سقياه لاحترق الصدر

The noun مدمع literally denotes the place from which tears emerge rather than the tears themselves. In ordinary discourse, one would expect the noun دمع. Instead of referring directly to tears, Al-Barudi selects the spatial noun associated with their source. This alternation shifts readers' attention from the visible manifestation of grief toward its physiological origin. The emotional experience is therefore internalized. Rather than emphasizing tears as external signs of sorrow, the poem foregrounds the place within the body from which emotional suffering originates. Such a shift illustrates how nominal alternation may redirect conceptual focus without altering the overall propositional meaning of the verse.

c. Alternation of Verbal Nouns

Alternation also occurs among verbal nouns (*maṣādir*), allowing poets to manipulate degrees of abstraction and emotional intensity. For example,

يلومونني أن هممتُ وجدا بحسنها # وأي امرئ بالحسن ليس يهيم

The verbal noun *وجداً* replaces the more predictable *هياماً*, although both belong to closely related semantic fields associated with passionate love. The substitution is not arbitrary. While *هيام* generally denotes overwhelming romantic obsession, *وجد* carries broader connotations of emotional longing, spiritual attachment, and profound inward affection. Consequently, the selected verbal noun expands the semantic horizon of the verse beyond romantic desire alone. The alternation therefore transforms the emotional landscape of the poem by presenting love as both psychological experience and existential condition.

d. Reposition through Object Fronting

Among the various forms of *taqdim wa ta'khir*, object fronting appears particularly frequently in Al-Barudi's poetry. Consider the following verse:

صحبته زماناً يغضب الحرَّ عبده فإن يك فارقت الرضا فلبعدما

The object *الحرَّ* precedes the subject *عبده*. From a purely grammatical perspective, the sentence remains perfectly acceptable even if the canonical constituent order were restored. However, Al-Barudi deliberately advances the object because it constitutes the informational focus of the verse. The poem does not merely describe an action performed by a servant. Instead, it emphasizes the humiliation experienced by the free man. Fronting therefore directs readers' attention toward the affected participant before revealing the agent responsible for the action. This constitutes a clear example of information packaging. The poet organizes the sentence according to communicative importance rather than grammatical default.

e. Stylistic Interaction between Alternation and Reposition

Although alternation and reposition have been discussed separately for analytical clarity, they frequently operate together within Al-Barudi's poetry. Alternation enriches lexical meaning through semantic layering, whereas reposition organizes discourse through informational prominence. Their interaction produces several important stylistic consequences. First, lexical selection determines what meanings become available for interpretation. Second, constituent order determines which of those meanings receive interpretive priority. Third, the interaction between lexical choice and syntactic organization creates foregrounding at multiple linguistic levels simultaneously. Consequently, poetic meaning emerges not from isolated words nor

from syntactic arrangement alone but from the dynamic interaction between vocabulary, grammar, discourse organization, and rhetorical intention. This interaction demonstrates that Arabic poetic language should be understood as an integrated stylistic system rather than a collection of independent rhetorical devices. Both alternation and reposition function as complementary mechanisms through which Al-Barudi constructs semantic complexity, emotional depth, and aesthetic elegance.

A Discussion of Alternation and Reposition as Mechanisms of Meaning Construction

The foregoing analyses demonstrate that *tanāwub* (alternation) and *taqdim wa ta'khir* (reposition) are considerably more than rhetorical embellishments or isolated grammatical phenomena. Rather, they constitute systematic linguistic strategies through which Arabic literary discourse constructs meaning. Their significance lies not in violating grammatical conventions but in exploiting the expressive potential embedded within the Arabic linguistic system itself. Consequently, both phenomena should be understood as mechanisms of meaning construction rather than merely figures of speech inherited from the classical rhetorical tradition.

One important implication emerging from this study concerns the relationship between Arabic rhetoric and modern stylistics. Although developed within different intellectual traditions, both disciplines share a common assumption: linguistic choices are motivated rather than arbitrary. Modern stylistics argues that every lexical, grammatical, or syntactic selection reflects communicative intention (Leech, 2008; Simpson, 2004). Likewise, classical Arabic rhetoricians consistently maintained that changes in lexical selection or constituent order are driven by contextual, semantic, and rhetorical considerations rather than by grammatical freedom alone (Al-Jurjānī, 1992).

Viewed from this perspective, *tanāwub* represents an Arabic manifestation of what contemporary stylistics identifies as motivated lexical selection. Every instance of alternation simultaneously activates two semantic domains: the lexical meaning of the selected expression and the conceptual expectations associated with the omitted alternative. Meaning therefore emerges through interaction rather than substitution. This observation supports the principle that literary language is inherently polysemous. Literary texts rarely communicate a single fixed meaning. Instead, they invite readers to construct meaning by negotiating relationships among lexical alternatives, contextual information, and cultural knowledge. Alternation provides one linguistic mechanism through which such semantic plurality becomes possible.

The analysis of Al-Barudi's poetry further demonstrates that alternation consistently generates semantic enrichment. When the poet employs *أودع* instead of a more predictable verb

such as ترك, readers simultaneously process notions of leaving, depositing, preserving, and emotional permanence. Likewise, when تجافى replaces هجر, the poem depicts gradual emotional distancing rather than abrupt abandonment. These examples illustrate that lexical alternation expands conceptual representation instead of merely replacing one lexical item with another. Such findings resonate strongly with contemporary theories of lexical semantics, which maintain that lexical items activate conceptual networks rather than isolated dictionary meanings. Within these networks, semantic interpretation develops through associations among neighboring concepts rather than through independent lexical definitions. Consequently, *tanāwub* may be understood as a stylistic strategy for activating overlapping semantic networks while preserving textual economy.

The present study likewise demonstrates that *taqdim wa ta'khir* extends beyond syntactic rearrangement. Reposition fundamentally reorganizes discourse by altering informational prominence. Instead of changing propositional content, constituent movement changes the perspective from which that content is interpreted. This observation corresponds closely to Halliday's theory of information structure (Halliday, 2014). According to Systemic Functional Linguistics, speakers organize clauses around communicative priorities rather than purely grammatical requirements. Fronted constituents typically function as thematic points of departure, guiding readers toward the intended interpretation before introducing new information.

The analysis of Al-Barudi's object fronting illustrates this principle clearly. Advancing الحرّ before عبده does not alter the event described by the sentence. Instead, it redirects readers' attention toward the victim of humiliation rather than its agent. Information structure therefore becomes a stylistic resource for shaping interpretation. A similar relationship can be observed through the concept of foregrounding. Foregrounding theory proposes that literary language attracts attention by departing from readers' linguistic expectations (Leech, 2008). Both alternation and reposition systematically achieve this objective.

Alternation foregrounds lexical selection by replacing expected vocabulary with semantically related alternatives. Reposition foregrounds syntactic organization by departing from canonical constituent order. Although operating at different linguistic levels, both mechanisms increase perceptual salience and encourage deeper cognitive processing. Consequently, foregrounding in Arabic literary discourse should not be restricted to phonological repetition or metaphorical expression. Lexical substitution and constituent movement likewise function as highly productive foregrounding devices.

Another important finding concerns the interaction between lexical and syntactic stylistics. Previous scholarship frequently discusses *tanāwub* and *taqdim wa ta'khir* as independent rhetorical

phenomena. The present study suggests a different interpretation. The analysis indicates that lexical choice and constituent order frequently cooperate in constructing textual meaning. Alternation determines which conceptual possibilities become available, whereas reposition determines which of those possibilities become communicatively prominent. Meaning therefore emerges from interaction among multiple linguistic levels rather than from isolated rhetorical devices. This interaction reflects the multidimensional character of literary discourse, in which lexical semantics, syntax, discourse organization, and pragmatics continuously influence one another.

The findings also contribute to current discussions regarding the relationship between Arabic rhetorical heritage and contemporary linguistic theory. Rather than treating *balāghah* as a historical discipline disconnected from modern linguistics, this study demonstrates substantial theoretical continuity between classical Arabic scholarship and recent developments in stylistics, discourse analysis, and functional linguistics.

Classical rhetoricians may not have employed contemporary terminology such as "foregrounding," "information structure," or "lexical salience." Nevertheless, many of their explanations anticipated these concepts by emphasizing intentional linguistic selection and contextual appropriateness. Reinterpreting classical terminology through contemporary linguistic frameworks therefore does not replace traditional scholarship but rather reveals its continuing explanatory relevance.

Finally, the analysis of Al-Barudi's poetry illustrates that Arabic poetic language achieves its expressive power through systematic linguistic organization rather than ornamental deviation alone. Alternation and reposition should therefore be understood as complementary stylistic mechanisms operating simultaneously across lexical, syntactic, semantic, and discourse levels. Accordingly, this study proposes that future investigations of Arabic literary discourse move beyond descriptive classifications of rhetorical figures toward integrative linguistic analyses capable of explaining how multiple stylistic resources cooperate in constructing literary meaning. Such an approach not only enriches Arabic stylistic scholarship but also facilitates meaningful dialogue between Arabic rhetorical studies and contemporary linguistic theory.

CONCLUSION

This article has re-examined the classical Arabic rhetorical concepts of *tanāwub* (alternation) and *taqdīm wa ta'kbir* (reposition) from the perspective of contemporary stylistics. Rather than treating these phenomena as isolated rhetorical figures or grammatical irregularities, the study has argued that both constitute systematic linguistic mechanisms through which Arabic literary

discourse constructs meaning. The conceptual analysis demonstrates that *tanāwub* is fundamentally a process of motivated lexical selection. Through the substitution of semantically related lexical items, alternation enables multiple conceptual meanings to coexist within a single textual expression. Consequently, semantic interpretation develops through interaction between the selected lexical item and the lexical alternative implicitly evoked by the discourse. This process transforms lexical substitution into semantic enrichment, allowing Arabic literary language to achieve remarkable expressive density without sacrificing linguistic economy. Likewise, the present study has shown that *taqdīm wa ta'khir* should not be understood merely as constituent inversion. Reposition represents a discourse-organizing strategy that regulates informational prominence, thematic progression, communicative emphasis, and readers' interpretive attention. By reorganizing constituent order, Arabic authors manipulate not only grammatical structure but also cognitive salience, thereby influencing how readers process textual information.

The stylistic analysis of selected poems by Mahmud Sami al-Barudi further confirms that these two mechanisms operate simultaneously rather than independently. Alternation enriches lexical meaning through semantic layering, whereas reposition organizes discourse by foregrounding particular constituents. Their interaction produces a multidimensional stylistic effect in which lexical semantics, syntax, discourse organization, and rhetorical intention cooperate to construct poetic meaning. Accordingly, Al-Barudi's poetry illustrates that Arabic literary style derives its expressive power not from ornamental deviation alone but from systematic linguistic organization.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to Arabic stylistics in three important respects. First, it proposes a reconceptualization of *tanāwub* and *taqdīm wa ta'khir* as mechanisms of meaning construction rather than merely rhetorical classifications inherited from classical *balāghah*. Second, it establishes a conceptual dialogue between classical Arabic rhetorical theory and contemporary linguistic approaches, particularly stylistics, lexical semantics, information structure, and discourse analysis. Third, it demonstrates that many insights developed by classical Arabic rhetoricians remain theoretically relevant when interpreted through modern linguistic frameworks. The findings also suggest broader methodological implications for Arabic literary studies. Future stylistic analyses should move beyond descriptive identification of rhetorical devices toward integrated linguistic interpretations capable of explaining how lexical selection, syntactic organization, semantic interpretation, and discourse structure interact within literary texts. Such an approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of Arabic literary expression while strengthening the contribution of Arabic rhetorical scholarship to contemporary linguistic research.

Despite these contributions, the present study has several limitations. The analysis is confined to selected poems by Mahmud Sami al-Barudi and focuses exclusively on two stylistic phenomena. Other rhetorical mechanisms discussed in Arabic stylistics, such as *iltifāt*, repetition, metaphor, parallelism, and phonological patterning, remain outside the scope of the present investigation. Moreover, this study adopts a qualitative stylistic approach without incorporating quantitative corpus-based analysis, which may reveal broader distributional patterns across Arabic literary texts.

Future research may therefore expand the present framework by examining larger poetic corpora representing different historical periods and literary traditions. Comparative investigations between Qur'anic discourse, classical poetry, and modern Arabic literature may further illuminate the continuity and transformation of Arabic stylistic practices. Additionally, integrating corpus linguistics, cognitive stylistics, and computational text analysis would provide new methodological perspectives for investigating the dynamic interaction between linguistic form and literary meaning in Arabic discourse.

Ultimately, this study argues that Arabic stylistics possesses theoretical resources that extend well beyond the historical boundaries of classical rhetoric. Reinterpreted through contemporary linguistic perspectives, *tanāwub* and *taqdīm wa ta'kbīr* emerge as sophisticated mechanisms of lexical, syntactic, semantic, and discourse organization. Their continued relevance demonstrates that the Arabic rhetorical tradition remains an important intellectual partner in contemporary discussions of language, literature, and meaning construction.

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