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Interpreting Tautological Constructions in Arabic and English

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***Abstract*—Tautologies are discussed extensively within the framework of two opposing views: the pragmatic and the semantic. The former view holds that tautologies are common across many languages and can be interpreted in a similar manner, while the latter contends that tautologies are language-specific, meaning that an accurate interpretation can only be obtained based on the language in use. This study explores the use of tautological constructions in Arabic and English by looking at areas of similarities and differences in both languages in terms of forms and functions. A corpus of 500 tautological utterances is collected in both English and Arabic. Numerous data collection tools are utilized, namely observation of dialogues taking place between individuals, a task requesting the participants to provide tautological expressions that they use in their daily life and referring to source books and research articles. The cross-linguistic comparison made in this study is limited to modern standard Arabic vs. modern written English to prevent confusion caused by mixing variants. To enrich the study, colloquial Arabic examples are used, but only within-Arabic illustrations, and are not compared directly to written English. The findings reveal that there are many areas of similarities between the tautological systems in English and Arabic, however, areas of differences transcend similarities by far. The differences are exhibited in both forms and functions in the sense that, in many cases, Arabic and English tautologies are formed differently. In addition, Arabic covers a broader spectrum of tautological functions than English, owing to Arabic's heavy reliance on tautologies. The study lends support to the mediating position that some tautologies can only be interpreted within the context of a specific language, while others can be interpreted similarly across languages.**

***Index Terms*—tautologies, pragmatic view, semantic view, language specific, mediating position**

I. Introduction

The etymology of the word *tautology* is derived from the Greek terms *tauto* and *logos*, which are interpreted as *the same word* (Kakharova, 2025). Numerous definitions of tautology have been advanced by linguists. Pomorska (1987) contends that tautology is duplication or repetition of the same word over and over by utilizing the exact or similar words in meaning. This definition aligns with Shehab (2004) who maintains that tautology is a superfluous reiteration of meaning by using semantically akin words. Likewise, Urujzian (2016, p. 11) believes that "tautology is series of statements that comprise an argument, whereby the statements are constructed in such a way that the truth of the proposition is guaranteed. Consequently, the statement conveys no useful information regardless of its length or complexity." Overall, although these definitions offer helpful starting points for comprehending tautology, they frequently portray the phenomenon in a limited way that ignores its extensive pragmatic and communicative purposes.

Pomorska (1987), Shehab (2004), Urujzian (2016), and Eltaif (2025) define tautology as mere redundancy, duplication, or logical repetition that does not transmit any new information. However, these definitions run the danger of ignoring tautologies' communicative and functional usefulness in normal conversation and reducing them to stylistic errors or superfluous repetitions. This study, on the other hand, takes the pragmatic view of tautology, which views these constructions as being extremely context-sensitive and deliberate. From a pragmatic perspective, tautologies like *rules are rules* or *a friend is a friend*, do more than just reiterate meaning; depending on the context, tone, and cultural usage, they can also emphasize a point, imply duty, or indicate resignation. This study, therefore, treats tautologies as communicative tactics that draw their interpretive force from speech context and speaker purpose, rather than as semantically meaningless.

Looking at tautological expressions with a meticulous eye, one could posit that those expressions signify deep connotations and serve numerous functions that are variant across languages. Strictly speaking, the perception of

tautologies should go beyond the superficial meaning and cannot only be characterized as mere redundancy (Balhouq & Ethelb, 2023). It is also worth noting that the phenomenon under discussion is not necessarily affected by historical or social dialectal variations, since tautological constructions primarily rely on semantic and pragmatic mechanisms rather than shifts in dialect or historical language change. Tautology is seen as a pervasive linguistic phenomenon across languages and the utilization of tautological expressions, in effect, varies in terms of structure, choice of words, and tone of voice. While a great emphasis is placed on learning the grammaticality of the language and building a large repertoire of vocabulary, tautologies are overlooked, despite their fundamental role in communication. An indispensable requirement of having a good command of a second language in both writing and speaking is the use of tautologies (Balhouq & Ethelb, 2023; Udoka, 2024). This is inherently ascribed to the proposition that tautologies occupy a mediating position between the pragmatic and semantic systems of a language, thus familiarity with the denotative meaning is insufficient unless the import of an expression is fully acquired. Keach (2004) argues that the pragmatic value of tautologies, using different words to restate or intensify meaning, bears high communicative power. Therefore, tautologies can be employed to convey an emotive function in language, reflecting the feelings and thoughts of the speaker (Okamoto, 1993). Within the realm of literature, Al-Marsumi (2017) contends that tautology reflects the aesthetic appeal of a poem, by emphasizing the form of creative writing, making the text eye-catching and engaging to the reader. In addition, reiteration of meaning is used as a linguistic device to convey a sense of humor among interlocutors (Tawalbeh et al., 2023).

In English, the use of tautology covers a broad spectrum of communicative purposes, including acceptance and resignation, denial of difference, obligation, derision, and intended vagueness. With respect to Arabic context, the use of tautological expressions transcends the aforementioned communicative purposes to include five main categories of tautologies, namely assessment, absolute generalization, fatalistic, obligation, and indifference (Farghal, 1992).

Despite the pragmatic universality and semantic specificity of tautology, empirical cross-linguistic studies that reconcile these two perspectives remain scarce. Beyond the inputs of previous studies (e.g., Grice ,1975; Wierzbicka, 1991; Balhouq & Ethelb, 2023; Farghal, 1992), the central contribution of this research lies in its mediating position. Rather than privileging either pragmatic universality or semantic language-specificity, the study contributes to the premise that the pragmatic functions of tautologies can be common cross-linguistically, taking into account language-specific tautologies. This offers an empirically grounded reconciliation of the two perspectives.

Based on the above discussion, the current study poses the research question below.

Q1: How are tautological expressions interpreted in Arabic and English?

II. Literature Review

In an attempt to understand the machinery of conversation, Grice (1975) laid some universal principles that are necessary to proceed with conversation and establish successful communication between the sender and the recipient. To this end, Grice proposed the cooperative principle, made up of four maxims that speakers must comply with when communicating.

1. Maxim of quantity: It is also termed as the *informativity* maxim, positing that the two parts of conversation have to be informative, as speech is a cooperative effort, containing a continuum of connected stretches. Nevertheless, the speakers must not flout the quantity maxim by prolixity and being more informative than required.
2. Maxim of quality: This maxim rests primarily on the notion that a speaker's contribution must be true, meaning that s/he is not expected to tell what they do not believe to be true.
3. Maxim of relevance. This maxim posits that the information provided by the speaker should be directly relevant to topic of discussion, whereas any irrelevant information must be ignored.
4. Maxim of manner. This maxim is concerned with the way of delivering information, in that a speaker should avoid opacity and words that might bear multiple senses.

Within the context of cooperative principle, Grice argues that utilizing tautological expressions flouts maxim of quantity, owing to the fact that cooperativeness implies efficiency and economy in language use. Thus, using nominal tautologies like *business is business* and *war is war* provides superfluous information that must be overlooked or omitted. To put it another way, the conversation must be informative with the fewest possible words, leaving considerable room for cooperation between the sender and the recipient so that the power of pragmatics becomes evident in the conversation (Li, 2004). Sharing a similar belief, the pragmatists Brown and Levinson (1987) argue that tautological expressions provide superfluous information that do not inherently contribute to conversation. Strictly speaking, the pragmatic value of tautologies is language-independent insofar as tautologies convey cross-cultural signification that can be decoded from conversation.

The universality of tautological utterances expressed by Grice is played down by Wierzbicka (1991, p. 96) who argues that "the communicative import of tautologies is conventionally encoded in a given construction and is not calculable from any language-independent pragmatic maxims." Wierzbicka defends her position by saying that several tautologies in English do not have counterparts in other languages and, in the event that English tautological constructions have literal counterparts in other languages, their import is not analogous. By adopting this standpoint, Wierzbicka advocates the "radical semantic approach," which holds that tautologies are language-dependent, mirroring the conversational

specificity of the language in question. Thus, to decode the implicit import of tautologies, one needs to take into account the context of each language to catch the intended meaning (Escandell-Vidal, 1990; Farghal, 1992; Okamoto, 1993).

The two opposing views of tautology, e.g. the pragmatic view and the semantic view, have evolved into macro-frame and micro-frame tautologies as proposed by Miki (1996). Macro-frame tautology refers to the notion that tautological implicature is common across languages. Put differently, this frame describes tautologies that have literal counterparts in other languages. This position aligns closely with the initial work on the pragmatic approach to tautology, led by Grice (1975) and Brown and Levinson (1987). On the other hand, the micro-frame view refers to more localized concepts, in that it underscores the importance of nuances in conversation to construe meaning. The micro-frame view holds that tautological constructions are language-specific, taking into consideration the cultural aspect of the language, in the sense that the non-native language speaker has to be well-versed in the target language culture in order to successfully decode those culturally-oriented tautologies.

The previous tautological frameworks are best represented in the Arabic and English sentences الحرب حرب (*al-ḥarb ḥarb*: War is war). In English and Arabic, the clause W*ar is war* does not purely signify redundancy or superfluous reiteration of the meaning of war, nevertheless, *war* is understood in the context of bringing about deconstruction and insecurity. Reiteration of *war* does not imply mere repetition but reaffirms the lexical item's pragmatic value. Despite some similarities, Arabic and English tautologies vary considerably, as appears in the example الكبير كبير (*al-kabīr kabīr*: Big is big). The tautology *al-kabīr kabīr* is used in Arabic to affirm the notion of being great or attributing the feature of greatness to somebody, whereas English does not employ this construction. In Arabic, to understand the signification of *al-kabīr kabīr*, one needs to be knowledgeable about the Arabic culture so that the utterance can only be interpreted within the target language context.

According to Farghal (1992) and Kwon (2014), determining the right meaning of tautologies is affected by multiple factors that work in tandem. They maintain that specificity or genericity of tautological expressions play a role, in the sense that common tautologies across languages are more readily grasped than specific tautologies. On the other hand, Gibbs and McCarrell (1990) posit that, in the case of nominal tautologies, presumably the most common type, a noun type is integral to understanding those constructions. Tautologies involving human nouns (e.g., teacher, farmer, or abstract nouns signifying human activities) are simpler than tautologies involving mere abstract nouns (e.g., car, house, etc.). Levinson (1983) argues that one of the most prominent factors in determining the meaning of tautologies is the situation or the context in which they are uttered. Strictly speaking, the same tautological utterance could convey two senses based on the context. In Arabic, for instance, interpretation of tautologies is profoundly pragmatic, denoting that they are context-dependent. For example, calling somebody أَسَدٌ أَسَد (*asadun asad*: A lion is a lion) in Arabic, in a situation where that person successfully accomplished a task or when he/she excelled at a specific activity, could convey a positive meaning of encouragement and compliment. In contrast, the same tautological construction might be uttered in a situation where a person failed to fulfill a task, signifying a sarcastic import.

Yet, not only does context matter in Arabic, but also the speaker's intonation is at play in determining the meaning of tautologies. Farghal (1992) features several communicative functions of tautologies that are drawn from speakers' intonation. For example, the tautological construction الزّوج زوج, (*az-zawdʒ zawdʒ:* A husband is a husband) can express three different meanings depending on the context and intonation in Arabic: a wife must fulfill her obligations towards her husband, absolute generalizability, and appreciation. Within the realm of Jordanian Arabic, the meaning of الزّوج زوج (*az-zawdʒ zawdʒ*) could be said in a context where a mother, for instance, instructs her daughter to take a good care of the daughter's husband by stressing the first syllable of the first word *az-zawdʒ*. In addition, the tautology (*az-zawdʒ zawdʒ*) conveys the meaning of absolute generalizability, where a wife is complaining about the unruly behavior of her husband, signaling that all husbands are the same. To express this meaning, a speaker must utter the phrase with low intonation of both words.

While sharing common features, tautologies in English and Arabic are sharply distinct in terms of forms and functions. To be more specific, nominal tautologies are the commonest type of tautologies used in the two languages. Nevertheless, the structure and the import of nominal tautologies are dissimilar, despite some superficial similarities. In English, all nominal tautologies are structured as N+*copula*+N; while in Arabic, nominal clauses are constructed by using a two-noun combination without adding a verb or a copula, since verbless clauses are licit. In addition, the pragmatic implications of tautologies in both languages are not always similar, insofar as a tautological expression could carry several different meanings, as previously stated. Despite extensive research on tautologies and pragmatics, there remains a lack of cross-linguistic studies that examine how the interpretation of tautologies does not appear to be directly shaped by historical or social dialects, but rather by universal pragmatic cues and language-specific semantic frameworks. In other words, the present study takes a mediating standpoint between the radical semantic and the radical pragmatic approaches. Arguably, this study seeks to examine how the use of tautological expressions in English and Arabic can be both context-dependent and generic based on the tautology in use.

III. Methodology

A. Research Design

This study is qualitative in nature in which the data collected from the participants are expressed verbally. In other words, the process of data collection and analysis does not mainly rely on statistical methods or numerical values to obtain

the results. According to Bryman (2008, p. 366), qualitative research is defined as "a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data." This section articulates the data collection methods used and the sampling procedures.

B. Data Collection Methods

The interpretation of tautological expressions is carried out by analyzing context, intonation, and semantic-pragmatic functions. For instance, the Arabic expression الزّوج زوج (*az-zawdʒ zawdʒ*), may mean obligation, generalization, or appreciation depending on context, while the English tautology *a promise is a promise* indicates obligation across contexts. These comparative interpretations are validated through cross-checking with native speakers.

In a bid to collect the required data for the present study, three data collection methods are utilized. First, observation of individuals' conversations is employed, focusing on various topics. The setting of the conversations is also varied, including home, workplace, and social gatherings, in addition to TV shows. This method requires taking notes and sometimes recording the entire conversation. The second data collection method is to request university students to collect the tautological expressions that they use in daily life. The third method is to systematically review source books, research articles, and scripts. To be more specific, this method is chiefly employed when collecting data related to the use of tautologies in English, since English is practiced in limited situations within Jordanian context, where the study is implemented. A corpus of 500 tautological utterances is compiled in both English and Arabic. Those utterances, then, are split into two types: tautologies that are common in both English and Arabic and tautologies that are language-specific. The study combines naturally occurring data with elicited examples, treating both as complementary sources of evidence, with naturally occurring data forming the core of the analysis and elicited examples serving a confirmatory and illustrative function to enhance rigor.

C. Sampling Procedures

The study includes the participation of 20 post-graduate students pursuing their Master's in Applied linguistics, during the 2024/2025 academic year, who are requested to gather tautological utterances. Many of the participants are Jordanians. Other Arab nationalities participate in the study including, Palestinians, Saudis, Syrians and Iraqis. For selecting the participants, the convenience non-probability method is employed. A corpus of 500 tautological utterances is collected in both English and Arabic using the three data collection methods described above. The cross-linguistic comparison made in this study is limited to modern standard Arabic vs. modern written English to prevent confusion caused by mixing variants. For the sake of richness, examples from colloquial Arabic are kept, but they are only used within-Arabic illustrations and are not compared directly to written English.

The study describes the derivation of interpretations in order to address all methodological issues. The tautological constructions' tokens are first annotated for (i) form (nominal, clausal, etc.); (ii) variety/register (English—spoken/written, Qur'anic Arabic [QA], Colloquial Jordanian Arabic [CJA], or Modern Standard Arabic [MSA]); (iii) discourse context (occurring before or after turns); and (iv) prosody/intonation, when available. Second, the study uses a unified inventory to identify the communicative function employed: emphasis/confirmation, exaggeration/intensification, obligation/commitment, denial of difference, acceptance/resignation, assessment/evaluation, indifference, and fatalistic stance. Third, each token is viewed from a usage-based/constructional perspective, that is to say, it is a traditional combination of form and meaning, significance of which is assigned by repeated use rather than just logical redundancy. In order to settle disagreements through conversation, the researchers independently annotated a subset of cases; the final classification shows consensus.

IV. Results and Discussion

This section discusses the results of the study with reference to the research question, "*How are tautological expressions interpreted in Arabic and English?"* The corpus of tautological utterances has been compiled into the tables below in Arabic, with an English transliteration, and then the analogous English translation. A discussion of the pragmatic and semantic interpretation of the tautological utterances follows each table. The discussion begins with the Arabic tautologies and then addresses those that are in English.

Table 1
Assessment Tautologies

Item	Arabic	Transliteration	English
1	الحلو حلو	*al-ḥilu ḥilu*	a nice person
2	الرجل رجل	*al-radʒul radʒul*	a man is a man
3	الغبي غبي	*al-ġabi ġabi*	An idiot is an idiot.
4	الولد ولد	*al-walad walad*	A boy is a boy.

A close look at the phrases above reveals that the tautological constructions are categorized according to their communicative functions or meaning in Arabic. Tautologies structured as N+N or Adj+Adj can communicate several meanings and can be interpreted differently, depending on the context. For instance, *al-ḥilu ḥilu* and *al-radʒul radʒul*,

Items 1 and 2 above, could convey the notion of assessment, by ascribing pleasant characteristics to somebody or commending somebody. However, when dropping the definite article *al* from the constructions, both then signify indifference, indicating that the speaker has no interest in whether or not that person bears those attractive qualities. In a similar vein, the tautologies *al-ġabi ġabi* and *al-walad walad,* as displayed in Items 3 and 4, are utilized to communicate several meanings. First, both expressions are employed to denote assessment implicature by assigning negative attributes to a person, indicating that the person is incapable of intelligent thought, as in *al-ġabi ġabi*, or is behaving in a childish manner, as in *al-walad walad*. In contrast, the same tautologies are used when a speaker shows indifference by omitting the definite article *al* in both words, thus becoming *ġabi ġabi* or *walad walad*. In addition, such nominal tautologies can be used in Arabic to express the notion of absolute generalization, meaning that all unenlightened people are the same, *al-ġabi ġabi*, and all children are the same in terms of their characteristics or behavior, *al-walad walad*. Likewise, *al-radʒul radʒul* signifies that all men share similar features. More communicative functions of Arabic tautologies appear in the Table below.

TABLE 2
FATALISTIC TAUTOLOGIES

Item	Arabic	Transliteration	English
5	راسب راسب	*rāsib rāsib*	He failed the course.
6	الي راح راح	*illi rāḥ rāḥ*	Let bygones be bygones.
7	الي صار صار	*illi ṣār ṣār*	Let bygones be bygones.
8	الي بدو يصير يصير	*illi bidu jṣi:r jṣi:r*	What will be will be.

A further analysis of tautologies in Arabic indicates that such constructions can be utilized to communicate fatalistic implicature, as in Items 5, 6, 7, and 8 above. Those tautologies may imply future signification, *illi bidu jṣi:r jṣi:r*, present signification, *rāsib rāsib*, or past signification, *illi rāḥ rāḥ* and *illi ṣār ṣār*. It is worth noting that in Arabic, particularly Jordanian Arabic, past tautologies signifying fatalistic import are the most common type. In Arabic, fatalistic tautologies are split into two types: those that signify acceptance and those that signify denial. Items 6 and 7 represent acceptance of fate, insofar as the speaker does not express complaint or denial about what has been afflicted, but rather complete surrender. Conversely, the construction in Item 8, *illi bidu jṣi:r jṣi:r,* may be interpreted within a context of denial or non-acceptance of the fact, thus the speaker assumes the risk whatever the consequences. Furthermore, Item 5, *rāsib rāsib*, may be used fatalistically, wherein the speaker accepts the possibility of failing an exam or a course. Below, we see that Arabic tautologies are also used to signify the notion of obligation.

TABLE 3
OBLIGATION TAUTOLOGIES

Item	Arabic	Transliteration	English
9	اياك ثم اياك	*iyyāka θumma iyyāka*	Watch out! or Be careful!
10	سيارة سيارة	*sayyāra sayyāra*	a car is a car
11	لما بدرس برس	*lamma badrus badrus*	When I study, I study hard.
12	كامل مكمل	*kāmil mkammal*	extremely perfect

Item 9, *iyyāka θumma iyyāka*, may be used with illocutionary force to convey a menacing of warning to the listener or with perlocutionary force to indicate care for the listener's well-being. However, Item 9, *sayyāra sayyāra,* indicates the ideal car simply by doubling the noun, with the second iteration as an intensifier. Similarly, Item 12, *kāmil mkammal*, is commonly used in Jordanian Arabic to assert that the subject under discussion fulfills all the criteria of perfection; for instance, if someone buys a new house, the buyer would say the house is *kāmil mkammal* (i.e., immaculate and flawless). In addition, Item 11, *lamma badrus badrus*, and all similar constructs (*lamma* + *ba*+V + *ba*+V) are primarily used to communicate the meaning of commitment towards fulfilling some obligations. Expressions like *lamma baʃʃtaġil baʃʃtaġil*, *lamma bana:m bana:m*, and *lamma ba:kul ba:kul* all convey the same meaning of fulfilling one's obligations. This leads us to a further implicature conveyed by tautologies in Arabic: exaggeration, as displayed in the sentences below.

TABLE 4
EXAGGERATION TAUTOLOGIES

Item	Arabic	Transliteration	English
13	كذب كذبا	*kaˈðˤa.ba kaˈðˤa.ban*	He told a blatant lie.
14	ركض ركضا	*raˈka.ḍa rakˈḍan*	He ran like crazy.
15	ضرب صربا	*ḍaraba ḍarban*	He gave him a hell of a beating.
16	سحبه سحبا	*saḥabahu saḥban*	He gave it a good yank.
17	سقط سقوطا مدوّيًا	*saqaṭa suqūṭan mudawiyyan*	He fell with a loud crash.

The sense of exaggeration in Arabic has a V+N+(suffix)*an* construction, as seen in Table 4. Tautological expressions are widely utilized as exaggeration, such as Item 13, *kaˈðˤa.ba kaˈðˤa.ban*, which implies that the lie was extraordinary. Likewise, Item 14, *raˈka.ḍa rakˈḍan*, without duplicating the word *rakaḍa+an,* will remain incomplete, regarding the length of distance and time elapsed in running. In Item 15, *ḍaraba ḍarban*, conveys beating somebody in exaggerated manner, thus by repeating the verb *ḍaraba* and adding the suffix *an*, evokes a sense of severity. In addition, Items 16 and 17, *saḥabahu saḥban* and *saqaṭa suqūṭan mudawiyyan*, are understood in a similar vein such that the former signifies pulling something/somebody with great effort, while the latter indicates the notion of falling noisily. It goes without saying that duplicating the meaning in the previously mentioned constructions is not in vain but serves an integral complementary function, without which the pragmatic value is either incomplete or misinterpreted. When employing exaggeration in Arabic, the tautology is formed by reconstructing a single lexical item into its verbal and nominal forms, where the noun is directly derived from the verb and bears similar semantic features, as in *kaˈðˤa.ba kaˈðˤa.ban*, *ḍaraba ḍarban*, *kassaru taksi:r*, *maʃema maʃi*. Not only does this construction serve to exaggerate the action, but it does so with the fewest words possible. Consider the following, ضرب الملاكم خصمه بشكل مبرح (*ḍaraba al-mulakimu xaṣmahu bi-šaklin mubriḥ*, "The boxer beat his opponent severely"), the entire sentence could be replaced by the tautological expression *ḍarabahu ḍaraban*, so that the meaning is communicated with the fewest words possible but in an exaggerated manner. While the tautologies in the previous examples intensify and exaggerate the pragmatic value, the Arabic tautological expressions below evoke a sense of indifference.

TABLE 5
INDIFFERENCE TAUTOLOGIES

Item	Arabic	Transliteration	English
18	عادي عادي	*ʾa:di ʾa:di*	It is ok.
19	ماشي ماشي	*māši māši*	It is ok.
20	سلامتك سلامتك	*salāmtak salāmtak*	Please, feel better soon.

Item 18, *ʾa:di ʾa:di*, carries the sense of indifference to the listener, such that the speaker is not concerned about the outcome regarding the circumstances being faced. The construction in Item 19, *māši māši*, can also communicate the notion of indifference. More specifically, *māši māši* is said in Jordanian Arabic with falling intonation to demonstrate that the speaker is not expecting more from the listener. In Item 20, the tautological expression denotes a sense of concern on the part of the speaker for the health of the listener, thus conveying great empathy. However, the pragmatic import of the utterance indicates the notion of indifference. Though reduplication is an effective tautological construction, it is possible to employ the dual form in Arabic to impress upon the listener the import of the expression, as in مشينا على رجلينا (*mašeıma ʿala ridʒleīna*, "We walked on foot") and شفته بعيني *(šuftu bi-ʿeini*, "I saw him with my own eyes."). The previous two constructions evoke confirmation by denoting the means by which people use to walk or by testifying that an individual witnessed something or someone. Similarly, in the expression هي هي نفسها (*hiyye hiyye nafs-ha*, "It's exactly the same"), the word *hiyye* is duplicated with the exact word once and with the synonym *nafsha* to denote the same implicature. All the examples above can not be interpreted semantically as pragmatics is the driving force in determining the meaning of those utterances. Admittedly, pragmatics plays an inevitable role in decoding the meaning and, in effect, creating fruitful communication (Almahameed & Farghal, 2024).

In addition to the aforementioned interpretations of Arabic tautologies, Tautologies could evoke other interpretations that are, to some extent, specific to Quranic context. Arguably, tautologies in the context of the Holy Quran are not recognized as redundancy (Balhouq & Ethelb, 2023). The examples below illustrate some tautological constructions stated in the Holy Quran.

TABLE 6
TAUTOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTIONS IN THE HOLY QURAN

Item	Arabic	Transliteration	English
21	كلا اذا دكت الأرض دكا دكا	*kallā idhā dukkati al-arḍu dakkan dakkan*	No! When the earth is crushed, crushed completely
22	وَجَاءَ رَبُّكَ وَالْمَلَكُ صَفًّا صَفًّا	*wa-jāʾa rabbuka wa-l-malaku ṣaffan ṣaffan*	And your Lord will come, and the angels, in rows upon rows.
23	وحملت الأرض والجبال فدكتا دكة واحدة	*wa-ḥumilati al-arḍu wa-l-jibālu fa-dukkatā dakkan wāḥidan*	And the earth and the mountains will be lifted and then smashed with a single blow.
24	وَنُزِّلَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ تَنْزِيلًا	*wa-nuzzila al-malāʾikatu tanzīlan*	And the angels will be sent down in full descent.
25	هَيْهَاتَ هَيْهَاتَ لِمَا تُوعَدُونَ	*hajjha:t hajjha:t limā tūʾadūn*	Far, far removed is what you are promised.
26	فَإِذَا الَّذِي اسْتَنْصَرَهُ بِالْأَمْسِ يَسْتَصْرِخُهُ	*fa-idhā alladhī istanṣarahu bi-l-amsi jastaṣrixuhu*	The one who had sought his help the day before is now crying out to him again.
27	الْحَاقَّةُ مَا الْحَاقَّةُ	*al-ḥāqqatu mā al-ḥāqqah*	The inevitable Truth, but what is the inevitable Truth?
28	وَيُطَافُ عَلَيْهِم بِآنِيَةٍ مِن فِضَّةٍ وَأَكْوَابٍ كَانَتْ قَوَارِيرَ قَوَارِيرَ مِن فِضَّةٍ	*wa-yutāfu ʿalayhim bi-āniyatin min fiḍḍatin wa-akwābin kānat qawārīra qawārīra min fiḍḍah*	And vessels of silver will be passed around them, and cups that are crystal-clear, crystal made of silver.

Tautological constructions in the Holy Quran are characterized by their unique styles that are varied from standard Arabic and local varieties of Arabic. The verses in Items 21 and 22 exhibit tautologies in the constructions دكا دكا (*dakan daka*) and صَفًّا صَفًّا (*Ṣafan Ṣafa*). Unlike tautologies in standard and colloquial Arabic, those two tautologies convey the meaning of hierarchy of actions, in the sense that they tell the story of how the earth will be pounded and crushed on the day of judgment. More specifically, the earth will be hit repeatedly, strike after strike, while the second verse denotes that Almighty God together with angels will appear rank after rank; therefore, the tautologies here do not express mere redundancy, but serve the function of hierarchy. A close look at the verses in Items 23, 24, and 25 indicates that the tautological expressions in two of the sentences invite confirmation implicature. In Item 23, the verse contains فدكتا (*fadukata*) twice, once with the suffix *an* دكتا (*dakatan*) and once by using a synonym واحدة (*waḥidah*). In the verse in Item 24, the tautology conveys confirmation, but with a different pattern in which the word نُزِّلَ (*nuzzila*) is repeated, though in the form of a noun تَنْزِيلًا (*tanzi:la*:). In a similar vein, the word هَيْهَاتَ (*hajjha:t*), in Item 25, is duplicated to serve the function of reaffirmation. The expression هَيْهَاتَ (*hajjha:t*) is employed in this context to describe something as being far-fetched or far beyond one's reach, hence repetition confirms and reinforces the meaning of impossibility.

In Item 26, the tautology of the Quranic verse conveys a unique meaning. Strictly speaking, the past tense verb اسْتَنْصَرَهُ (*stanṣarahu*) is repeated by using another verb يَسْتَصْرِخُهُ (*jastaṣrixuhu*) to communicate a similar meaning, which is request of assistance. Nevertheless, employing two verbs, bearing similarity in meaning, aims at revealing the aesthetic aspect of the Quranic language, making the language richer and more powerful by varying the lexical choices in the text. One of the unique patterns of tautologies that might be specific to the holy Quran is duplicating the implicature in a form of a question not a statement as appears in the verse in Item 27. In this verse, the noun الحاقة (*ʾlḥa:qah*) is duplicated in a form of inquiry for the purpose magnifying the topic of inquiry. The inquiry in this Quranic verse is rhetorical and does not require an answer to the question; however, the use of the tautology reinforces how great the matter of inquiry is. Another unique tautological pattern that can be a distinctive feature of Quranic language appears in verse in Item 28. In this verse, the noun قَوَارِيرَ (*kawa:ri:r*) is duplicated by using the same noun. Such repetition in this context serves a double function. First, repeating قَوَارِيرَ (*kawa:ri:r*) can help to build a connection between what precedes and what follows قَوَارِيرَ (*kawa:ri:r*), which in turn enhances clarity and disambiguates the meaning. Second, repetition here is employed as a rhetorical device to touch the emotions of readers. This aligns with Marzuqi and Muzakki (2025) who contend that the use of tautological expressions in the holy Quran creates coherence and serves a stylistic function of revealing the aesthetic features in the holy Quran.

These examples of tautologies in Quranic Arabic, as well as Modern Standard Arabic and Jordanian Colloquial Arabic, highlight the variety of dialects across which Arabic must function. While English tautological expressions serve numerous functions and convey several meanings that bear some resemblance to their Arabic counterparts, the areas of difference are seemingly greater. In English, tautological constructions serve the function of acceptance or denial of difference within the same category. By way of example, *Love is love* denote acceptance, whereas *a boy is a boy* and *a husband is a husband* indicate denial of difference. The first tautology accepts a certain truth that love is a source of mercy and empathy among and between people. Interestingly, those tautologies are interpreted the same in English and Arabic, thus making their import generic across the two languages. However, some nominal tautologies in Arabic behave differently than in English, such as أَسَدٌ (*asadun asad*), which is Arabic-specific, describing a person's bravery by duplicating *lion*.

With respect to *A boy is a boy*, there is a denial of difference among boys: all are the same in terms of their boyish behavior. In the same way, *A husband is a husband* denies any difference among husbands in terms of their negative or positive characteristics. While the preceding two tautologies can be generalized to Arabic, for which the exact implicature may be communicated, Arabic, however, uses other tautologies of denial of difference that bear no resemblance to English, such as *black is black*. The implication, of course, is that all black things share the same quality of becoming dirty very quickly, making this tautology Arabic-specific as there is no apparent analogue. In Arabic, many other tautologies are utilized to convey the import of denial of difference with no equivalents in English such as *plastic is plastic, strong is strong and weak is weak etc*. Though, English uses some tautologies to affirm the implicature such as *I personally wrote the report*, Arabic acts differently when using tautologies for confirmation as in the construction نار موٴلّعة (*nār mwallaʿah,* "blazing fire") or حلفت يمينا (ḥalafat yamīnan, "I took an oath"). It is evident in both constructions that there is redundancy in the sense that *mwallaʿah* implies the meaning of fire and *yamīn* implies the illocutionary force of *ḥalafit*. Such redundancy communicates greater pragmatic value and chiefly used for emphasis.

English tautologies can evoke obligation, such as *a promise is a promise* and *a business is a business*, which may be understood in terms of fulfilling one's obligations towards others. The former implies the importance of keeping one's promise, whereas the latter denotes the importance of performing obligations towards one's business. While the preceding two tautologies are possible in both English and Arabic, Arabic utilizes other tautologies to signify the notion of obligation that vary from English. Farghal (1992) elaborates on this function with the Arabic tautology أمّك أمّك (*ʻumm-ak ʻumm-ak*, "your mother, your mother"), implying the son's obligation to his mother. Moreover, English, consistent with human communication universally, relies on augmented tautological expressions to bridge pragmatic gaps and to achieve the maximal level of understanding among the interlocutors (Cherry,1978). This is best demonstrated by *She does not never fail a course.* Modern English speakers sometimes employ negative concord, a relic of Old English and cognate Germanic languages and counter to current grammatical norms, to fully convey the import of an utterance. While negative concord

flouts the English rules of grammar, it conforms with the Arabic rules as appears in the sentence ما جاء ولا حدا *ma: d͡ʒa:'a wala ḥada*. Such sentence is widely used in Arabic with various forms.

English tautologies can communicate an array of meanings. For example, the tautology *Rules are rules* does not merely restate the existence of rules but highlights their binding and inescapable nature as well (Farghal, 1992; Li, 2004). In both English and Arabic, this construction functions as a form of emphatic reinforcement, stressing that rules must be followed regardless of personal feelings or specific circumstances. Rather than being perceived as redundant, the repetition strengthens the pragmatic force of the utterance, affirming the inevitability of compliance and the authority that rules carry in regulating behavior. Similar to other nominal tautologies, this one offers a universal underlying meaning that is not limited to one language, though the Arabic usage frequently has more impact because of cultural and historical ties to warfare, thus amplifying its pragmatic force. On the other hand, the tautology *enough is enough* outlines the perception of reaching a limit, which more often indicates irritation, pressure, or some form of finality (Wierzbicka, 1991). Here, repetition enhances the force of the illocutionary act which signifies the end of patience in a particular context. While the English form is a conventionalized idiom, the Arabic counterpart does the same, and sometimes more, especially if accompanied by falling intonation. So, in both languages, the construction goes beyond redundancy and operates as emphatic framing that alters the nature of the interaction. A close look at the examples below will reveal more.

The phrase *A square has four sides* is a case of logical tautology because a defining characteristic of a square is by definition its four equal sides. So, the construction does not provide any new information but simply shows one more example of a pleonastic tautology, where repeated elements both give new information and, at the same time, confirm properties of the already known information (Levinson, 1983). While these are less pragmatically charged than idiomatic tautologies, they nevertheless show how one can operate at the semantic level to restate categorical knowledge found in different languages. The tautology *It is what it is,* is not logical but pragmatic in nature, thus it signals resignation or acceptance of an unchangeable reality (Levinson, 1983; Okamoto, 1993). Both English and Arabic, make use of this device for the purpose of indicating the unenviable situation. The last tautology considered in the present study is *A friend is a friend*, which carries evaluative or affective features, confirming loyalty and the value of friendship. While the phrase in English is most frequently used to present the general truth of the friend having good qualities, in Arabic it is more about the culture that highly values companionship and solidarity. As per the point raised by Balhouq and Ethelb (2023) and Al-Marsumi (2017), these types of tautologies are not merely redundant but also serve as expressive and aesthetic functions, evoking and reinforcing social values and emotional bonds.

Having discussed the occurrence of tautologies in both Arabic and English, more emphasis has been placed on those in Arabic, because Arabic relies on tautological constructions more than English. This phenomenon arises due to the varied functions Arabic tautologies serve and to the numerous meanings, which may be afforded to them; thus, it is fitting to allude to the myriad Arabic-specific tautologies with no English counterparts. Some tautologies, nevertheless, are common in both Arabic and English. Therefore, and based on the analysis above, it is reasonable to conclude that tautologies sit squarely within a mediating position between the pragmatic view and the semantic view, insofar as tautological constructions can be both language-dependent and cross-lingual, based on the tautology in use.

V. Conclusion

This study looks at the use of tautological constructions in Arabic and English. The study attempts to explore how those expressions are interpreted in the two languages and, more specifically, whether English and Arabic decode tautological constructions in a similar manner or differently. To collect the data needed for this study, numerous data collection methods are employed: observation of daily life talks; requesting university students to provide the tautologies they use in their conversation with others; and, referring to previous research and source books, discussing the occurrence of tautologies in English and Arabic. The results of the study reveal that some tautologies are Arabic-specific in terms of form and function, while others can be common in both languages. It could be concluded that the results of this study are in support of the mediating position between the pragmatic and the semantic views, denoting that tautologies can be both language-oriented and common across many languages. This study draws on Modern Standard Arabic, Jordanian Colloquial Arabic, and Quranic Arabic. While this mix allows a richer illustration of tautological functions, it also introduces a limitation. Contrasting spoken colloquial Arabic with written English or Quranic Arabic may obscure some findings. Future research could standardize the varieties for clearer cross-linguistic comparison. In addition, future research could address other Arabic local verities so that the scope of analysis is widened for inclusive understanding of tautologies.

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