



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Navigating contronyms: A cognitive-semantic analysis of the Arabic semi-preposition /warā'a/

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## Abstract

## Background

This study examines the Arabic semi-prepositional contronym /warā'a/ in the Holy Quran, which conveys the dual meanings of 'behind' and 'in front of.' By employing cognitive linguistic frameworks—Prototype Theory, Image Schema Theory, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, and Frame Semantics—the research investigates the cognitive mechanisms underlying the term's semantic versatility.

## Methods

An in-depth cognitive linguistic analysis was conducted, supported by collocational analysis to explore how /warā'a/ is interpreted in diverse contexts. The study analyzed both prototypical spatial meanings and their metaphorical extensions, focusing on semantic priming and contextual interpretation.

## Results

The findings reveal that the prototypical spatial meaning of /warā'a/ ('behind') dynamically extends to metaphorical and temporal contexts, encompassing ideas of concealment, control, deliberate ignorance, future anticipation, and other nuanced interpretations. The research highlights the role of semantic priming in shaping contextual meanings and offers actionable insights for translation accuracy in religious texts.

## Conclusions

This study fills gaps in existing research by providing a detailed

exploration of /warā'a/'s semantic complexity. It bridges theoretical insights and practical applications, offering innovative strategies for linguistics and translation studies. Future research directions include cross-linguistic studies of contronyms, psycholinguistic experiments on contradictory meanings, and culturally-informed cognitive-semantic translation strategies. This work contributes significantly to Arabic linguistics and cognitive translation studies.

### Keywords

Arabic linguistics, Cognitive Semantics, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, contronyms, Frame Semantics, Image Schema Theory, Prototype Theory, semantic analysis, the Holy Quran; warā'a

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## 1. Introduction

Relying solely on isolated sections of text to understand and evaluate discourse can lead to fragmented semantic findings and undermine the validity of conclusions. This risk is particularly significant when vocabulary is viewed in isolation, limited by narrow lexical boundaries, rather than being situated within a broader context that encompasses entire sentences and texts. Additionally, vocabulary cannot be fully understood without considering cognitive semantics. Although many studies have analyzed vocabulary, they often do not delve into the deeper cognitive semantic theories that extend beyond individual words and sentences. Cognitive semantics, as a tool for lexical studies, posits that the meaning of a lexical item refers to a mental concept derived from one's experiences and encyclopedic knowledge (Lemmens, 2015; Hammadi, 2023).

Given these discussions, this study investigates specific verses of the Holy Quran from a cognitive semantic perspective, focusing on the semi-prepositional contronym /warā'a/, which means both 'behind' and 'in front of.' The main question is how cognitive semantics connects minds, human experiences, and language to explain opposing abstract ideas and thoughts. The study commences with an elucidation of the principles and theory of cognitive semantics. Subsequently, it applies Frame Semantics (FS) along with several other cognitive linguistic (CL) theories, including Prototype Theory, Image Schema Theory, and Conceptual Metaphor Theory, to gain profound insight into the semantic force of /warā'a/ in the Holy Quran. This approach aims to transition from theoretical understanding to practical application, shedding light on the potential cognitive and linguistic challenges involved in translating /warā'a/ into English or any other language.

The study opens with a literature review, highlighting gaps in the current research on /warā'a/. These gaps include the limited exploration of its cognitive semantic analysis, the nuanced understanding of its dual meanings, and the lack of in-depth analysis of its application in different contexts. The research then delves into the contradictory meanings of /warā'a/, emphasizing its primary sense, investigating the interplay between various senses, and elucidating these meanings through detailed analysis.

Following this, the study identifies and discusses the different frames in which /warā'a/ is used across various contexts. This also includes an analysis of the words that commonly appear with /warā'a/ to gain deeper insights into its application. The study concludes by summarizing the findings, drawing conclusions, and offering recommendations for future research.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Cognitive semantics

Cognitive semantics, a recent branch of cognitive linguistics, focuses on the mental processes and cognitive abilities that facilitate the analysis and comprehension of speech (Lemmens, 2015). This field intersects with psycholinguistics, cognitive psychology, philosophy of mind, artificial intelligence, and other disciplines, providing insights into various cognitive phenomena (Sinha, 2010). Lakoff and Turner (1989) demonstrated that metaphors and rhetorical devices are intrinsic to all aspects of mental thought and daily life, extending beyond literary language and poetic imagination. These elements are seen as cognitive phenomena linked to how the human mind constructs conceptual systems and cognitive models.

Cognitive theories often propose that lexical meaning is conceptual, suggesting that a word's meaning is a mental construct based on individual experiences rather than a direct reference to the real world (Jackendoff, 1989). This implies that semantics is not objective, and that semantic knowledge is intertwined with encyclopedic knowledge. Understanding lexical meaning as dynamic and evolving is a key feature of cognitive semantics (Vvyan and Melanie, 2006).

According to Vvyan and Melanie (2006), cognitive semantics studies the representation of knowledge (conceptual structure) and the formation of meaning (conceptualization). This approach emphasizes that grammar reflects a worldview embedded in culture, and that language knowledge and contextual understanding are acquired through general cognitive resources rather than a specific language module.

Classical semantic theories often explain meaning through truth conditions and propositional functions, where the significance of an utterance is tied to its truth value (Speaks, 2019; Meena, 2012). For instance, the statement 'snow is white' is true if and only if snow is white. In contrast, cognitive semantic theories argue that lexical meaning is conceptual, corresponding to mental ideas rather than direct references to the real world. Consequently, statements like 'All bachelors are unmarried males' are viewed as part of everyday knowledge rather than linguistic facts (Meena, 2012).

By employing concepts like framing and mental spaces, cognitive semantics addresses the full range of grammatical moods, suggesting that meaning is constructed rather than fixed. Words are seen as having 'default builds,' with context and intent playing crucial roles in making meaning comprehensible (Schmid, 2012).

Traditional theories are challenged by cognitive semantics for providing explanations that go beyond truth-conditional and word-based accounts, focusing instead on the structure of concepts (Schmid, 2012). Cognitive semantics is dedicated to analyzing image patterns and conceptual metaphors, demonstrating how abstract concepts such as generosity, love, truth, and morals are linked to fundamental physical experiences. This connection is essential for creating meaningful and detailed representations of abstract ideas, grounded in human experiences and cognitive processes (Meena, 2012; Lemmens, 2015; Hammadi, 2023).

## 2.2 Theories of cognitive semantics

Cognitive semantics extends beyond linguistic structures, encompassing various aspects of the human mind (Hammadi, 2019, 2023). To gain a deep understanding of cognitive semantics, which relies on mental mechanisms to create meaning, it is essential to consider its foundational theories. Among the various cognitive linguistic theories, several stand out as exceptionally suitable for analyzing contronyms like /wara'a/ due to their robust emphasis on context and their structured approaches to understanding meaning construction:

1. **Prototype theory** (Rosch, 1973) is essential for this analysis, as it identifies meanings through characteristic instances within a category, known as prototypes. Prototypes serve as cognitive reference points, helping to clarify the core and peripheral meanings of /wara'a/ in different contexts. This theory's ability to highlight how typical examples shape our categorization and understanding of words makes it particularly effective for examining the dual meanings of /wara'a/ ('behind' and 'in front of').
2. **Image schema theory** (Hampe, 2005) provides profound insights into how spatial relationships and physical experiences shape our understanding of abstract concepts. This theory elucidates the spatial and temporal meanings of /wara'a/, demonstrating how these meanings are deeply grounded in our bodily experiences.
3. **Conceptual metaphor theory** (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) is indispensable in this context, explaining how metaphorical thinking extends our understanding of spatial terms into more abstract domains. This is particularly useful for exploring how /wara'a/ operates in spatial, metaphorical, and temporal contexts, offering a nuanced understanding of its meaning extensions.
4. **Frame semantics** (Fillmore, 1982) is arguably the most effective theory for analyzing contronyms due to its strong emphasis on context and its structured approach to understanding meaning construction. This theory allows for a detailed examination of how a single lexical item can evoke multiple, context-dependent interpretations. Frame Semantics integrates related knowledge and situational elements into the analysis, making it essential for accurately capturing the dual meanings inherent in contronyms.

By employing these cognitive linguistic theories, the study aims to provide an exceptionally comprehensive understanding of /wara'a/, illustrating how its meanings are constructed and interpreted across different contexts. These theories collectively offer a highly nuanced and context-sensitive approach to analyzing the complex, context-dependent nature of contronyms, solidifying the legitimacy and strength of this research framework.

## 2.3 Cognitive semantics and Arabic language

The exploration of cognitive semantics within the realm of Arabic linguistics has garnered significant scholarly attention in recent years. This field investigates how meaning is constructed and understood in the human mind, particularly through the study of language. The intersection of cognitive linguistics and Arabic translation poses unique challenges and opportunities, given the rich semantic and cultural nuances inherent in the Arabic language. Various studies have sought to unravel these complexities, employing cognitive frameworks to analyze the translation of religious texts, philosophical terminology, spatial nouns, and metaphors. This review delves into key studies in this domain, highlighting their contributions and identifying gaps that my research on Arabic contronyms using frame semantics along with various other cognitive linguistic methodologies aims to address.

Balla and Siddiek (2017) delve into the intricate challenges of translating the Qur'an from Arabic to English, emphasizing the critical role of frame semantics in ensuring accurate translations. The study aims to measure the conceptual differences between Arabic and English by analyzing specific words from the Qur'an and examining how different English frames can influence the translation process. The authors highlight the importance of understanding both linguistic and cultural contexts to avoid misinterpretations, proposing that linguistic background plays a more significant role than cultural knowledge in translation accuracy. Evaluating five translations, the research concludes that Yusuf Ali's translation is the most appropriate, followed by Pickthall's. The study highlights the necessity of precise translations to facilitate better understanding and dialogue between Muslim and non-Muslim audiences, thereby promoting global peace and mutual

respect. Additionally, the paper contributes to fields such as sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and theoretical linguistics by providing insights into the complexities of lexical semantics and translation strategies.

Similarly, [Hassan \(2017\)](#) examines the challenges of translating Western philosophical terms into Arabic, focusing on epistemological differences and the reliance on cognitive frames. Using the specialized encyclopedia of Abdel Rahman Badawi as a primary source, the study employs Frame-Based Terminology Theory to analyze the translation process. It highlights the complexities arising from the paradigmatic structure of terminological knowledge bases, which contain hidden semantic relations. The study underscores the necessity for translators to go beyond mere linguistic knowledge and consider the conceptual entities that terms refer to, advocating for a cognitive and functional perspective in translation. This research contributes to the discourse on translating philosophical terms by exploring how Badawi navigates these challenges, ultimately arguing that difficulties in translation often represent deeper epistemological barriers.

Building on this, [Mardiah, Wastono, and Abdul Muta'ali \(2019\)](#) provide a comprehensive cognitive linguistics analysis of the Arabic spatial noun 'fawqa' using the Principled Polysemy Model (PPM) developed by Tyler and Evans. By examining a large corpus of data, the authors demonstrate that 'fawqa' is a polysemous lexeme with a primary sense related to spatial relations, specifically indicating a 'higher than' position with proximity. However, the research also reveals that 'fawqa' extends to non-spatial and abstract meanings, such as importance or superiority, all of which are systematically connected to its primary spatial meaning. Their study challenges the classical cognitive linguistics perspective that often limits semantic variation to physical-geometry concepts, showing that Arabic spatial nouns have a complex semantic structure that reflects the interaction between cognition and linguistic expression. The findings highlight the importance of considering both spatial and non-spatial uses of spatial nouns to fully understand their semantic networks.

[Khan, Badshah, and Khan \(2019\)](#) further investigate the semantic complexity of the Arabic preposition 'min' from a cognitive linguistic perspective. Utilizing data from the Quran, the research explores how the preposition 'min' operates within the source-path-goal image schema, not only in spatial contexts but also in mapping abstract concepts, emotional states, and relationships with supernatural entities. The findings reveal that while 'min' exhibits idiosyncratic behavior and diverse semantic arguments in different contexts, it supports the argument that language use cannot be reduced to static mappings in the human conceptual system. The study underscores the polysemous nature of 'min' and recommends further research to explore its semantic patterns and those of other prepositions in Arabic.

In a similar vein, [Abdelhameed \(2019\)](#) investigates the use of conceptual metaphors in the Holy Qur'an, focusing on how these metaphors contribute to the understanding and significance of prayer for Muslims. Utilizing the Conceptual Metaphor Theory by [Lakoff and Johnson \(1980\)](#) and the Pragglejaz Metaphor Identification Process (MIPVU), the study examines three types of metaphors: structural, ontological, and orientational. Specifically, it explores the metaphorical conceptualizations of prayer as a building, a mentor, and an upward movement. The research aims to demonstrate how these metaphors enhance the image of prayer and contribute to the inner peace of Muslims. Additionally, the study discusses the broader implications of conceptual metaphor theory in religious discourse and evaluates the applicability of the MIPVU tool in analyzing Arabic metaphorical texts. The findings emphasize the cognitive and explanatory functions of metaphors in religious contexts, highlighting their role in conveying complex spiritual and doctrinal concepts.

Continuing this exploration, [Jumaah, Rashid, Bin Abdul Jabar, and Ali \(2020\)](#) provide an in-depth analysis of the Arabic verb 'ra'a' (to see) as used in fiction writing. Utilizing a cognitive semantic framework, the authors investigate how this verb transcends its primary meaning of visual perception to encompass a range of abstract and metaphorical interpretations in literary contexts. The analysis highlights the cognitive processes involved in these semantic extensions, illustrating how 'ra'a' can signify understanding, realization, and various forms of mental visualization. The study also considers the influence of cultural and contextual elements on the verb's usage, demonstrating how writers employ 'ra'a' to create rich, multi-layered narratives. By examining these dynamics, the research offers valuable insights into the intricate relationship between language, thought, and culture in Arabic fiction, contributing to the broader field of cognitive linguistics and literary studies.

[Hammadi \(2023\)](#) extends this cognitive semantic approach to understanding the abstract messages in the Quran. By employing the theory of conceptual metaphor by [Lakoff and Johnson \(1980\)](#), the study demonstrates how cognitive semantics links human experiences, language, and abstract ideas to create mental imagery that aids in comprehending Quranic messages. The research highlights that understanding these messages requires not only linguistic knowledge but also encyclopedic and mental perceptual knowledge. This approach contrasts with previous studies that primarily focused on lexical meaning, rhetorical strategies, or pragmatic principles, thereby filling a gap in the literature by emphasizing the cognitive semantic aspects of Quranic interpretation.

While these studies provide significant insights into various aspects of cognitive semantics in Arabic, there remain gaps in understanding the cognitive processes underlying contronyms, or words with contradictory meanings, in Arabic. My study on contronyms using frame semantics, and other cognitive linguistic theories, aims to address these gaps by investigating how these theories can elucidate the dual meanings of contronyms and their translation challenges. By analyzing the Arabic semi-prepositional contronym /warā'a/ and its use in different contexts, this research aims to explore the cognitive and contextual factors that influence the interpretation of this unique linguistic phenomenon. Specifically, the study will focus on the Arabic semi-prepositional contronym /warā'a/, which can mean both 'behind' and 'in front of'. By examining samples from the Holy Quran, the study will analyze how /warā'a/ is understood and translated, considering the influence of linguistic and cultural frames on its interpretation. This research will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the bilingual mental lexicon, translation strategies for contronyms, and the cognitive mechanisms involved in processing ambiguous lexical items, thus advancing both theoretical and applied linguistics.

## 2.4 Contronyms in Arabic

Words that possess opposite senses are referred to in the literature by various terms such as 'contronyms,' 'autoantonyms,' and 'Janus words,' among others. While these terms are often treated as synonyms, there are significant distinctions within this category. Karaman (2008) suggests using the umbrella term 'contronymy' for the entire phenomenon and proposes dividing it into subcategories to account for the differences, such as contronymy based on antonymy, incompatibility, reversivity, complementarity, and conversivity. This expansive definition includes all cases of sense opposition, characterizing contronymy as "a type of polysemy where at least two meanings of a single lexical item stand in direct contradiction to one another" (Karaman, 2008, p. 175).

The Arabic language is abundant in /al'ʔaq.dā:d/ 'contronyms,' which are words that possess two opposite meanings. This phenomenon, known as autoantonymy, demonstrates the richness and complexity of Arabic. A notable example is /al.ba'si:r/ 'sighted,' which can refer to both a person who can see and a person who is blind. The intended meaning of these contronyms is highly context dependent. This phenomenon should not be confused with /al.muf.ta'rak al'laf.ði/ 'homonymy' or /tafad.du:d al.ma:ʃa:.ni/ 'polysemy.' Homonymy, illustrated by the lexeme /saaq/ 'leg,' refers to a word that has multiple meanings, such as a part of the human body and a part of a plant structure. Polysemy, demonstrated by /ra'bī:ʃ/ 'spring,' refers to a word that has related meanings, such as a person's name, two Hijri months ('Rabee' I and 'Rabee' II), and one of the four seasons. While all these sense relations require context for clarity, contronyms are unique in that they encapsulate oppositeness within a single word. Unlike homonymy and polysemy, where meanings are different but not contradictory, contronyms involve inherently opposite meanings.

Arab linguists have sought to explain the phenomenon of /al'ʔaq.dā:d/ 'contronyms.' Al-Samara'i (1997) attributes it to linguistic evolution and semantic change. For instance, Nassar (2003) cites the verb /yubaadil/ 'to exchange,' which historically meant both /yaʃtarī/ 'to buy' and /yabīi/ 'to sell,' reflecting the barter system before the advent of money (Nassar, 2003, p. 20).

Contronymy, or /al'ʔaq.dā:d/, also falls under the broader category of /tafad.du:d al.ma:ʃa:.ni/ (polysemy), where a single word exhibits different shades of meaning. What sets contronymy apart is the unique phenomenon where a single word conveys two entirely opposite meanings. For instance, the word /nahil/ can signify both 'thirsty' and 'quenched,' while /jawn/ can denote both 'black' and 'white.'

Arab linguists have outlined specific criteria for identifying a lexeme as a contronym (Nassar, 2003). One key criterion is that the morphological structure of the lexical item must remain identical when expressing its two opposing meanings. For instance, /ma?tam/ 'obsequies' refers to a gathering of women either for a joyful occasion or a funeral, maintaining the same morphological form [maʃtal]. Secondly, the two opposite meanings should be present in Standard Arabic. Thirdly, these meanings should be commonly recognized among Arabs and not obsolete. Lastly, both meanings should be genuine and not figurative. For example, /ka?ʃ/ 'cup' should not count as a contronym since one meaning (the container) is genuine while the other (the contained) is figurative. This fourth condition has been a point of contention among Arab linguists, with some accepting and others rejecting it (Nassar, 2003, pp. 26-55).

Linguists like Al-Barghouti (2004) have emphasized the abundance of contronyms in Arabic, citing examples such as /saleem/, which refers to both 'a person who is cured' and 'a person who has just been bitten by a snake'; /mawla/, meaning both 'master' and 'slave'; /wala/, signifying either 'to follow' or 'to lead'; and /umma/, which denotes either 'the entity that is followed' or 'the entity that follows and is guided.' Al-Barghouti attributes this linguistic phenomenon to the Bedouin roots of Arabic, arguing that the desert environment fosters a sense of unity and homogeneity. He also suggests that this feature may reflect a broader worldview of continuity and interconnectedness within the universe.

Although theological dictionaries, articles, and related resources offer substantial insights into the meanings of Arabic contronyms, their presentation often adheres to a structuralist approach. Despite their comprehensiveness, these resources provide limited guidance on the conceptualization of the prepositional contronym /warā'a/. Cognitive semantics, however, focuses on mental frames, schemas, and conceptual structures in the construction of meaning, shedding light on how the mind processes and interprets complex lexical phenomena (Croft & Cruse, 2004; Evans & Green, 2006; Fillmore, 1982). By integrating both contextual and cognitive perspectives, this research aims to bridge the divide between traditional linguistic analyses and cognitive semantics, offering a more comprehensive understanding of how contronyms operate within Quranic texts.

Building on the foundation of various cognitive theories, this section will begin with the method and then proceed to a detailed analysis of the preposition /warā'a/ from the perspective of cognitive linguistics. By analyzing the usage of /warā'a/ in different contexts, we aim to uncover how its primary spatial meaning extends to other, more abstract interpretations, and how these meanings are interconnected within the framework of cognitive semantics.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1 Delimitation of the data

This research employs an interpretive qualitative approach to provide a detailed description of the cognitive phenomena and the contextual frames that activate the different meanings of /warā'a/ in the Holy Quran. Through a comprehensive textual analysis of Quranic verses (refer to underlying data: Appendix A), I identified all instances where /warā'a/ is used with four different meanings in the Quran: 'behind,' 'in front of,' 'beyond,' and 'after.' To give this study focus, I aim to provide a detailed analysis focusing on the primary senses of /warā'a/ - 'behind' and 'in front of' - as contronyms in Arabic, excluding the secondary meanings of 'beyond' and 'after,' to explore their nuanced interpretations and implications. The analysis is grounded in a widely accessible and revered text, ensuring both the integrity and universality of the study's findings.

The study employs the following cognitive linguistic methodologies to analyze the selected verses:

1. **Prototype theory:** This theory examines how /warā'a/ functions as a prototype within its category, serving as a cognitive reference point for its various meanings. By identifying the prototypical uses of /warā'a/, the study highlights how these typical instances influence the understanding of its less typical, context-dependent meanings.
2. **Image schema theory:** This theory explores how spatial relationships and physical experiences shape the understanding of /warā'a/, particularly its spatial and temporal meanings. By examining these schemas, the study elucidates how bodily experiences influence the perception of /warā'a/.
3. **Conceptual metaphor theory:** This methodology analyzes how metaphorical thinking extends the spatial meanings of /warā'a/ into more abstract domains, especially in temporal contexts. It reveals the cognitive mechanisms that allow /warā'a/ to function metaphorically, broadening its interpretive scope.
4. **Frame Semantics:** This approach identifies the frames and frame elements activated by the use of /warā'a/ in different contexts. It helps in understanding how different contexts trigger different meanings of /warā'a/, providing a structured analysis of its dual senses.

This study employs an integrative cognitive linguistic framework to explore the function of /warā'a/ as a contronym in the Holy Quran. This multidimensional approach deepens the analysis of /warā'a/ and makes a meaningful contribution to the fields of cognitive semantics and Arabic linguistics. It highlights the complex interconnections between language, cognition, and context, offering valuable perspectives for future research. The translation and transliteration of the verses were sourced from the Noble Quran website (<https://quran.com/>). The detailed analysis is presented in the following section.

### 4. A Cognitive analysis of /warā'a/

#### 4.1 Dual syntactic categorization of /warā'a/

Arabic literature (e.g., Wright, 1967; Haywood and Nahmad, 1962; Sayyuti, 1985; Sibawayh, 1988; Al Gholayini, 1994; Al Hasyimi, 2010; Badawi, Carter, and Gully, 2004; Ryding, 2005, 2014) identifies two types of prepositions in the language: pure prepositions and semi-prepositions. Pure prepositions are mono-functional and serve exclusively as prepositions. In contrast, semi-prepositions are multi-functional and can act as adverbs, nouns, and prepositions.

In Arabic terminology, a semi-preposition is referred to as 'zarf.' There are two kinds of zarf in Arabic: zarf makan (adverb of place) and zarf zaman (adverb of time). Examples of lexemes that function as zarf makan include /amaama/ (in front of), /warā'a/ (behind/in front of), /xalfa/ (behind), /taħta/ (under), /fawqa/ (above), and /'dʒa:.nib/ (beside). Lexemes that serve as zarf zaman include /baħd/ (after), /qabla/ (before), and /ħi:na/ (when). These lexemes are actually derivative nouns or content words, but they also function as semi-prepositions.

The preposition /warā'a/ belongs to the category of semi-prepositions or zarf makan, as it essentially has a dual function (Ryding, 2005; Saeed, 2014). It can be classified as a noun since it shares the characteristics of Arabic nouns. At the same time, /warā'a/ can also be classified as a preposition, exhibiting characteristics of pure prepositions (Saeed, 2014). This duality is reflected in its usage within the Holy Quran, where /warā'a/ functions both as a noun, describing objects, and as a locative adverb, indicating spatial relationships, showcasing its semantic versatility.

Al-Anbari (1987) explains that /warā'a/ conveys both the meanings of 'behind' and 'in front of' due to its dual role as a semi-preposition. According to Ibn Manzur (1981), anything concealed from view can be referred to as /warā'a/, regardless of whether it is positioned behind or in front. Notably, Ibn Duraid, renowned for his seminal lexicographical work *Jamharat al-Lugha* (compiled in 321 AH), was the first to identify /warā'a/ as a contronym.

#### 4.2 Prototypical meaning of /warā'a/

In semantics and psycholinguistics, the term "prototype" refers to the most representative or typical member within the category denoted by a referring expression. Put differently, it is the core semantic representation or the most salient meaning among the various interpretations of a word (Evans & Green, 2006). Within this framework, the meanings of a semi-preposition are conceptually linked and revolve around a central prototype.

It is usually assumed that the initial meaning of a particular preposition is likely its prototype meaning. The first entry listed in dictionaries typically contains the prototypical meaning of a preposition (Wu, 2017). As Xiong (2008) stated, 'The earliest attested meaning can be found in the dictionary' (p. 40). According to this view, we can assume that the prototypical meaning derives from the earliest meaning, whereas non-prototypical meanings evolve from the prototypical meaning.

After consulting several dictionaries, the prototypical meaning of /warā'a/ can be determined (Al-Anbari, 1987; Ibn Manzur, 1981; Umar, 2008). The first entry of /warā'a/ in Contemporary Arabic Dictionary typically describes it as 'behind' (Umar, 2008). The root of the word /warā'a/ is a trilateral root consisting of three Arabic letters: wāw rā yā. The original meaning of this root is concealment and covering (Umar, 2008). This primary meaning (i.e., behind) is reflected in some verses (Table 1), where /warā'a/ is used to indicate a spatial relationship where the trajectory (TR) is positioned behind the landmark (LM). Therefore, the prototypical meaning of /warā'a/ denotes a spatial relationship where the TR is

**Table 1. Spatial sense of /warā'a/ 'behind'.**

<b>Behind (spatial)</b>			
<b>No</b>	<b>Excerpt and its transliteration</b>	<b>Chapter and Verse</b>	<b>Translation</b>
1	<p>وَإِذَا كُنْتُ فِيهِمْ فَلَمَّا قَاتَلُوكُمْ طَافُوا مِنْهُمْ مَعَكُ وَلَيَأْخُذُوكُمْ أَمْلَاهُمْ      فَإِذَا سَخَنُوا هَلَكُوكُوا مِنْ وَرَائِكُمْ وَلَنَاتُ طَافُوا أَخْرَى لَمْ يَحْصُلُو عَلَيْكُمْ      وَلَيَأْخُذُوكُمْ حَذْرٌ هُمْ وَأَسْلَحُوكُمْ وَلَا الَّذِينَ هَكُورُوا لَوْ تَأْتُقُونَ عَنْ أَسْلَحُوكُمْ      وَأَمْتَكُنُمْ فَيُبَلِّوْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِيَّةً وَاجْدَهْ وَلَا مُنْجَحْ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنْ كَانُوكُمْ أَذْيَ منْ      مَطْرِ أوْ كُنْتُمْ مَرْضَى أَنْ تَضْغُوا أَشْلَحُوكُمْ وَخُدُوْجَ حَذْرَكُمْ إِنْ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمْ      الْكَافِرُونَ عَذَابًا مُهِبِّا</p> <p>Wa idhā kūnū fīhim fa-aqamta lahumu aš-ṣalāṭa      faltaqum tājifatū minhum ma'aka walyakhudhū      aslihatahum fa-idhā sajadū falyakūnū min      warā'ikum walta'ti tājifatū ukhrā lam yuṣallū      falyuṣallū ma'aka walyakhudhū hīdhrahū wa      aslihatahum. Wadda alladhīna kafarū law      tagħfulūna 'an aslihatikum wa-amti'atikum      fayamilūna 'alaykum maylatawāħida. Walā      junħa 'alaykum in kāna bikum adħan min      matarrin aw kuntum mardā an taħda'ū      aslihatakum. Wa khudhū hīdhrahū. Inna allāha      d'adda lilkāfirīna 'adhħāban muhiñan.</p>	Chapter 4: Nisāa, Verse 102	<p>When thou (O Apostle) art with them and standest to lead them in prayer let one party of them stand up (in prayer) with thee taking their arms with them: when they finish their prostrations let them take their positions <u>behind</u> and let the other party come up which hath not yet prayed and let them pray with thee taking all precautions and bearing arms: the unbelievers wish if ye were negligent of your arms and your baggage to assault you in a single rush but there is no blame on you if ye put away your arms because of the inconvenience of rain or because ye are ill; but take (every) precaution for yourselves. For the unbelievers God hath prepared a humiliating punishment.</p>

**Table 1.** Continued

<b>Behind (spatial)</b>			
No	Excerpt and its transliteration	Chapter and Verse	Translation
2	<p>يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَدْخُلُوْبَيْتُ النَّبِيِّ إِلَّا أَنْ يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ إِلَى طَعَامٍ غَيْرِ نَاطِرِيْنَ إِلَّا وَلَكُمْ إِذَا دُعِيْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوْبَيْتُ فَإِذَا طَعَمْتُمْ قَاتِشَرُوْبَيْتُ وَلَا مُسْتَأْسِيْسَيْنَ لَحَدِيْثَ إِنْ ذَلِكُمْ كَانُوْذِيْلِيْبِيْ فِيْسَتَخِيْيِيْ مِنْكُمْ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَبْتَسِيْي مِنَ الْحَقِّ وَإِذَا مُسْتَأْسِيْسَيْنَ فَمُتَنَّجِيْلِيْ مِنْ زَرَاءَ حَجَابِيْ ذَلِكَ أَهْرَيْ لَغُوبِيْكُمْ وَلَغُوبِيْنَ وَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ إِنْ تُؤْذَنُوْرَشُولَ اللَّهِ وَلَا إِنْ تَنَكِحُوْزَاجِيْ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ (إِنْ ذَلِكُمْ كَانَ عَذَنَ اللَّهِ عَظِيْمًا)</p> <p>Yā ayyuhā alladhīnā āmanū lā tadkhulū buyūta an-nabī illā an yu'dhāna lakum ilā tā'āmin ghayra nāzirinā ināhu walākin idhā dū'itum fa- udkhulū fa-idha tā'īmtum fa-intashirū walā musta'nīshā lihādīthīn. Inna dhālikum kāna yu'dhī an-nabiyya fayastahyi minkum. Wa'llāhu lā yastahyi mina al-haqqa. Wa idhā sa'altumūhunna matā'an fa-s'alūhunna min warā'i hijābin. Dhālikum aṭharu liqlūbikum waqulūbihinna. Wa mā kāna lakum an tu'dhū rasūla allāhi walā an tankihū azwājahu min ba'dihā abadan. Inna dhālikum kāna 'inda allāhi az̄imān.</p>	Chapter 33: Ahzāb, Verse 53	O ye who Believe ! Enter not the Prophet's houses,— Until leave is given you,— for a meal, (and then) Not (so early as) to wait For its preparation: but when Ye are invited, enter; And when ye have taken Your meal, disperse, Without seeking familiar talk. Such (behaviour) annoys The Prophet: he is ashamed To dismiss you but God is not ashamed (to tell you) the truth. And when ye Ask (his ladies) For anything ye want, Ask them from <u>behind</u> A veil: that makes For greater purity for Your hearts and for theirs. Nor is it right for you That ye should annoy God's Apostle, or that Ye should marry his widows After him at any time. Truly such a thing is In God's sight an enormity.
3	<p>وَمَا كَانَ لِيَشَرُّ أَنْ يَكْلِمَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا وَخُبِّاً أَوْ مِنْ زَرَاءَ حَجَابِيْ أَوْ بِرِيْسِلَ رَشُوْلِيْ(فَوْحِيِيْ بِإِذْنِهِ مَا يَتَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ عَلَى حِكْمَةِ) Wa mā kāna libasharīn an yukallimahu allāhu illā wahyān aw min warā'i hijābin aw yursila rasūlan fayūhiya bi'idhnihi mā yashā'u. Innahu 'aliyyun ḥakīmuṇ.</p>	Chapter 42: Shūra, Verse 51	<i>It is not fitting For a man that God Should speak to him Except by inspiration, Or from <u>behind</u> a veil, Or by the sending Of a Messenger To reveal, with God's permission, What God wills: for He Is Most High, Most Wise.</i>
4	(إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَنَادُونَكَ مِنْ زَرَاءَ الْخَجَرِتِ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقُلُونَ) Inna alladhīnā yunādūnaka min warā'i al- ḥujurāti aktharuhum lā ya'qilūna.	Chapter 49: Hujurāt, Verse 4	<i>Those who shout out To thee from <u>behind</u> The Inner Apartments— Most of them lack understanding.</i>
5	<p>يَوْمَ يَقُولُ الْمُنَافِقُوْنَ وَالْمُنَاهَقُوْنَ لِذِيْنَ آمَنُوا انْظُرُوْنَا نَقْبَيْنِ مِنْ بَوْرَكُمْ قِيلِيْ(إِنْ جَعْوَرَا وَرَاعِكُمْ فَالْمُنَاهَقُوْنَ لُورَا فَضَرِبَتِيْنُهُمْ بِسُورَ لَهُ بَابٌ بَانِيْلَهُ فِيْ الرَّخْخَةِ وَظَاهِرُهُ مِنْ قِبَلِهِ الْعَذَابِ)</p> <p>Yawma yaqūlu al-munāfiqūna wal-munāfiqātu lillādhīnā āmanū unzurūnā naqtabis min nūrikum qīla irjū warā'akum fal-tamisū nūran faḍuriba baynahum bisūrin lahu bābul bātinuhu fihi ar-rahāmatu wa zāhiruhu min qibali al-adhābi.</p>	Chapter 57: Hadīd, Verse 13	<i>One day will the Hypocrites—Men and women—say To the Believers: "Wait For us ! Let us borrow(A light)from your Light !" It will be said: "Turn <u>behind</u>! Then seek a light (where Ye can) !" So a wall Will be put up betwixt them, With a gate therein. Within it will be Mercy Throughout, and without it, All alongside, will be (Wrath and) Punishment !</i>
6	<p>لَا يَقَاتِلُوكُمْ جَمِيعًا إِلَّا فِي قُرْيٍ مُحَصَّنَةٍ أَوْ مِنْ زَرَاءَ خَدْرٍ يَأْسِنُهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ (شَدِيدٌ خَسْنَهُمْ جَمِيعًا وَقَوْنَهُمْ شَنِيْ ذَلِكَ يَأْسِنُهُمْ قَمْ لَا يَعْقُلُونَ) Lā yuqāṭilūnakum jamī'an illā fī qurān muḥaṣṣanatīn aw min warā'i judurīn. Ba'suhum baynahum shadīdūn. Taħsabuhum jamī'an waqulūbuham shattā. Dhālika bi-annahum qawmūn lā ya'qilūn.</p>	Chapter 59: Hashr, Verse 13	<i>They will not fight you (Even) together, except In fortified townships, Or from <u>behind</u> walls. Strong is their fighting (spirit) Amongst themselves: Thou wouldst think They were united, But their hearts are divided: That is because they Are a people devoid Of wisdom.</i>
7	(فَمَآ مَنْ أُوتَيَ كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِيْنِهِ فَيَقُولُ هَاؤُمْ أَفْرُوا كِتَابِيْ) Wa-amma man ūtiya kitābahu warā'a zāhrihi.	Chapter 84: Inshiqaq, Verse 10	<i>But he who is given His Record <u>behind</u> his back.</i>

located behind the LM. This fundamental spatial meaning serves as the basis from which other, more abstract or context-dependent meanings of /warā'a/ are derived.

#### 4.3 Image schema of /warā'a/

In cognitive linguistics, image schemata are defined by the spatial position and movement of the Trajector (TR) and the Landmark (LM). The TR is the focal entity whose spatial orientation or movement is determined, while the LM serves as the reference point. The trajectory followed by the TR is referred to as the Path (Hu, 2008). A detailed examination of image schema theory reveals that the schema associated with /warā'a/ aligns with the source-path-goal schema. This schema comprises three key elements: the source (the origin point), the goal (the endpoint or destination), and the path (the connection between the source and goal). When both the TR and LM remain stationary, the Path is effectively zero.

#### 4.4 Static and dynamic meaning of /warā'a/

Human beings consistently perceive objects moving from one point in space toward another. This perception of objects' movement along a path creates a structured image in the human conceptual system (Johnson, 1987), mirroring the brain's organization (Dodge and Lakoff, 2005). The spatial concept of the path schema is intricately expressed in language. In the context of my research, this paper found five instances where the preposition 'min' is used before /warā'a/ to convey a strict geometric sense of the source-path-goal schema. These instances highlight how 'min' interacts with /warā'a/ to provide nuanced spatial and conceptual meanings (Khan, Badshah, and Khan, 2019).

When the TR remains relatively still at a certain point or within an area of the LM, the meaning of /warā'a/ is static. Conversely, when the TR is continuously moving towards an endpoint across the LM, the meaning of /warā'a/ is dynamic. Here are some examples to illustrate these meanings:

1. Yakhtabi'u      al-'adu      warā'a      al-hadabah

Hides      the-enemy      behind      the-hill

The enemy hides behind the hill.

2. Wada'a      al-kitab      warā'a      at-tilfaz

Placed-he      the-book      behind      the-television

He placed the book behind the television.

In example (1), /warā'a/ demonstrates a static sense, meaning 'behind.' Here, the TR is 'the enemy,' and the LM in this scenario is "the hill," representing a solid and fixed spatial reference point. Here, the TR and the LM are fully overlapping, indicating that the TR is positioned directly on or within the boundaries of the LM, resulting in complete spatial alignment between the two entities.

In example (2), /warā'a/ indicates a dynamic sense, meaning 'behind.' Here, the TR is 'the book,' and the LM is 'the TV.' The Path is the action of placing the book. By understanding the static and dynamic applications of /warā'a/, we gain insight into its complex spatial meaning.

Beyond its fundamental spatial meaning, /warā'a/ also conveys metaphorical meanings that emerge as extensions of its original sense. The following section analyzes the metaphorical meanings of /warā'a/ across several domains. By examining these metaphorical uses, the study aims to uncover the rich semantic landscape of /warā'a/, demonstrating its versatility in both concrete and abstract contexts.

#### 4.5 Metaphorical meaning of /warā'a/

In the context of /warā'a/, this semi-prepositional contronym extends beyond its spatial meaning of 'behind' to acquire metaphorical senses. /warā'a/ is often used metaphorically to signify actions, intentions, or influences that are hidden, unseen, or operating in the background. For instance, God says in Al-Buruj, verse 20:

وَاللَّهُ مِنْ وَرَائِهِمْ مَحِيطٌ 3.

Wa-llahu      min      wara'ihim      muhiitun

And-God      from      behind-them      encompassing

And Allah encompasses them from behind!

The use of /warā'a/ metaphorically conveys the idea of Allah's omnipresence and omniscience, encompassing all actions and intentions, even those that are hidden or not immediately apparent. This metaphorical usage emphasizes the theme of concealed oversight and the comprehensive awareness of divine presence over all hidden aspects of human behavior.

Also, /warā'a/ can denote ignoring or disregarding something by metaphorically putting it 'behind one's back.' Numerous studies have examined how metaphorical mappings extend the meanings of body part terms (e.g., back)

beyond their basic referential use. These terms are used to express concepts related to space (Heine, 1997; Svorou, 1993), emotion (Enfield and Wierzbicka, 2002; Kövecses, 2003), as well as knowledge, reasoning, social interactions, and values (Kraska-Szlenk, 2014). While all languages use body part terms metaphorically, they differ in how specific body parts are utilized (Kövecses, 2005). In the following analysis, the metaphorical use of /warā'a/ illustrates how physical orientation of the ‘back’ can translate into abstract thinking of ignoring and disregarding:

4. فَتَبَذَّلُوا وَرَاءَ ظُهُورِهِمْ Al-Imran, verse 187)

Fa-nabadhu-hu warā'a zuhurihim

So-threw they-it behind backs-their

They threw the Scripture away behind their backs

Here, /warā'a/ is used metaphorically to signify ignoring or deliberately overlooking something. The act of putting something ‘behind’ one’s back signifies a removal from immediate attention or concern, highlighting how spatial orientation can inform our understanding of abstract concepts. This metaphorical extension aligns with the embodied cognition perspective, where our bodily experiences influence our abstract thought processes (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999).

#### 4.6 From spatial domain to temporal domain

The conceptualization of space and time differs significantly. While the concept of space can be directly experienced, the concept of time is abstract and often defined through metaphor. Time can be conceptualized as a bounded space, where events or periods are perceived as points or segments within that space (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 1999).

It has often been observed that time can be conceptualized in two ways to map the timeline onto the front-back axis: either time is stationary, and the observer moves through it, or the observer is stationary, and time moves past them (Clark, 1973; Gentner, 2001; Evans, 2003; Lakoff, 1993; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 1999; Traugott, 1978). According to Clark (1973), these two models are known as the moving-ego and moving-time models. The moving-ego model is relevant here when /warā'a/ means ‘in front of.’ It is as if the observer is moving through life, facing the future, and what lies ahead is in front of him. For instance, God says in Ibrāhīm, verse 16:

5. مَنْ وَرَأَنِيهِ جَهَنَّمَ وَيُسْقَى مِنْ مَاءٍ صَدِيدٍ

Min warā'a-ihi jahannamu wa yusqā min mā'in sadīd

From behind-him hell and given-him from water fetid

In front of such a one Is Hell, and he is given, for drink, boiling fetid water.

The act of disobedience is depicted as a landmark on a path directly facing the upcoming event of punishment. The fundamental perception of /warā'a/ in example (5) involves the positioning of two items on a path schema in a face-to-face orientation. The act in the time series in the previous example is mapped as a landmark on a path, following other event or act in the sequence. Thus, the path schema is employed to demonstrate the conceptual correlation between space and time through the use of the semi-preposition /warā'a/. Furthermore, the source-path-goal schema is employed to articulate the progression of time from past or current to the future.

Traditional Arab grammarians (e.g., Ibn Manzur, 1981; Al-Anbari, 1987) did not provide a satisfactory explanation for the use of spatial prepositions with such abstract temporal concept. However, cognitive theorists view this usage as a result of the intrinsic link between space and time in the human mind. The metaphors ‘time is bounded space’ and ‘time is an object in motion through space’ elucidate how spatial prepositions are used to describe temporal phenomena in language (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 1999). Within the scope of my research, six instances were found where /warā'a/ is embodying the ‘time is space’ metaphor (Table 2). These instances underscore how /warā'a/ interacts with temporal notions, offering refined spatial and conceptual interpretations. This transition from special to temporal domain sets the stage for applying frame semantics to further dissect the multiple senses of /warā'a/, including its spatial, metaphorical, and temporal dimensions.

**Table 2. Temporal sense of /warā'a/ 'in front of'.**

<i>In front of (Temporal)</i>			
No	Excerpt and its transliteration	Chapter and Verse	Translation
1	(من وزارٍهٗ جهَنْمٌ وَيُشَقِّي مِنْ مَاءٍ صَدِيقٍ) Min warā'ihi jahannamu wa yusqā min mā'in sadid	Chapter 14: Ibrāhīm, Verse 16	<i>In front of such a one Is Hell, and he is given, For drink, boiling fetid water.</i>
2	يَتَجَرَّعُهُ وَلَا يَكُذُّبُهُ وَيَأْتِيهِ الْمَوْتُ مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ وَمَا لَهُ بِعِيشٍ (وَمِنْ وزارٍهٗ عَذَابٌ غَلِيلٌ) Yatajarra'uuhu wa lā yakādu yusīghuhu wa ya'tīhi al-mawtu min kulli makān wa mā huwa bi-mayyitīn wa min warā'ihi'adhbun ghalīdh	Chapter 14: Ibrāhīm, Verse 17	<i>In gulps will he sip it, But never well he be near Swallowing it down his throat: Death will come to him From every quarter, yet Will he not die: and In front of him will be A chastisement unrelenting.</i>
3	أَمَا السَّفِينَةُ فَكَانَتْ لِمَسَاكِينٍ يَعْمَلُونَ فِي النَّحْرِ فَلَمَّا أَنْ أَعْيَهَا وَكَانَ (وَزَاءُهُمْ مَلِكٌ يَأْخُذُ كُلَّ سَفِينَةٍ عَصَبَاهَا) Amma as-safinatu fakānat li-masākīn ya'malūna fi al-bahr fa-aradtu an aībahā wa kāna warā'ahum malikun ya'khudhu kulla safinatin ghasbā	Chapter 18: Kahf, Verse 79	<i>As for the boat, It belonged to certain Men in dire want: They plied on the water: I but wished to render it Unserviceable, for there was in front of them a certain king Who seized on every boat By force.</i>
4	لَعَلِي أَعْمَلُ صَلَاخًا فِيمَا تَرَكْتُ كَلَّا إِنَّهَا كَلَّةٌ هُوَ قَاتِلُهَا وَمِنْ وزَارِهِمْ (بِزَرْخٍ إِلَى يَوْمٍ يَبْعَثُونَ) La'allī a'malu salīhan fīmā taraktu kallā innahā kalimatun huwa qā'iluhā wa min warā'ihim barzakhun ilā yawm yub'athūn	Chapter 23: Mū-minūn, Verse 100	<i>In order that I may Work righteousness in the things I neglected."—"By no means ! It is but a word he says."— in front of them is a Partition Till the Day they are Raised up.</i>
5	مِنْ وزَارِهِمْ جَهَنْمٌ وَلَا يُغْنِي عَنْهُمْ مَا كَسَبُوا شَيْئًا وَلَا مَا أُنْخُرُ مِنْ (دُونَ اللَّهِ أُولَيَاءٌ وَلَنْهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ) Min warā'ihi jahannamu wa lā yughni 'anhūm mā kasabū shay'an wa lā mā ittakadhu min dūni allāhi awliyā'a wa lahum'adhbun'azhīm	Chapter 45: Jātiya, Verse 10	<i>In front of them is Hell: and of no profit To them is anything They may have earned, Nor any protectors they May have taken to themselves Besides God: for them Is a tremendous Penalty.</i>
6	(إِنْ لَوْلَاءَ يَجْنُونَ الْغَاجِلَةَ وَيَذْرُونَ وَرَاءَهُ بُؤْمًا قَبِيلًا) Inna hā'lā'i yuhibbūna al-'ajilata wa yadharūna warā'ahum yawman thaqīl	Chapter 76: Insān, Verse 27	<i>As to these, they love The fleeting life, And put off in front of them A Day (that will be) hard.</i>

#### 4.7 Frame semantics

Frame semantics, developed by Fillmore (1982), provides a powerful lens through which to analyze the meanings of words based on the cognitive frames they activate. Previous analyses have already identified the multiple senses of the Arabic semi-preposition /warā'a/ that revolve around the concept of concealment or being hidden (e.g., Al-Anbari, 1987; Ibn Manzur, 1981; Umar, 2008). This section will explore these senses—spatial, metaphorical, and temporal—through the application of frame semantics theory, detailing how each sense evokes specific frames.

#### Sense 1: Behind

##### 1.1 Spatial

In its primary spatial sense, /warā'a/ indicates a position behind another object. This sense can be further divided into static and dynamic contexts, each activating the 'SPATIAL CONFIGURATION' frame.

###### 1.1.1 Static context

When /warā'a/ is used in a static context, it describes an object's fixed position behind another object. For instance, in the 53<sup>rd</sup> verse of Al-Ahzab, God says:

6. وَإِذَا سَأَلْتُنَّهُنَّ مَتَاعًا فَاسْأَلُوهُنَّ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ

Wa	idhā	sa'al-tumū-hunna	matā'an	fa-s'alū-hunna	min	warā'a	hijab
And	when	ask-you-them	anything	then-ask-you-them	from	behind	curtain

And when ye Ask (his ladies) For anything ye want, Ask them from behind A veil

The addressee (TR) is positioned relative to the curtain (LM). The spatial configuration here involves understanding the addressee's location as being concealed by the curtain from a certain viewpoint. This static spatial arrangement is crucial in conveying the notion of one object being hidden from view by another.

### 1.1.2 Dynamic context

In a dynamic context, /warā'a/ describes the movement of an entity to a position behind another object. For example, in An-Nisa, verse 102, God says:

7. فَإِذَا سَجَدُوا قُلْيِكُوْنُوا مِنْ وَرَائِكُمْ

Fa-idhā	sajad-ū	fa-l-yakūn-ū	min	warā'a-'ikum
And-When	prostrated-they	then-let-them	from	behind-you

when they finish their prostrations let them take their positions behind

Example (7) involves the prostrators (TR) moving to a location relative to the addressee (LM). The elements in this frame include the moving entity, the reference object, the motion, and the path taken by the TR. The addressee, acting as the LM, conceals the prostrators once they reach their destination. The dynamic use of /warā'a/ thus encapsulates both movement and subsequent concealment.

### 1.2 Metaphorical: Knowledge and control

Beyond physical space, /warā'a/ extends metaphorically to convey knowledge and control. This use activates the 'KNOWLEDGE AND CONTROL' frame, where /warā'a/ implies being in charge of or having influence over a situation. For instance, example (3) above, which translates into 'And Allah encompasses them from behind,' positions God as an unseen but controlling force. Here, God (Agent) exerts influence over people, though this influence remains hidden from direct observation, symbolizing His unseen yet powerful presence. This metaphorical extension leverages the spatial sense of being behind to imply hidden control and knowledge.

### 1.3 Metaphorical: Intentional ignorance

Another metaphorical use of /warā'a/ involves intentional ignorance, captured by the 'INTENTIONAL IGNORANCE' frame. This frame depicts an agent deliberately ignoring something by metaphorically placing it behind his back. For example, verse (4) above, which translates to 'But they threw it away behind their backs and exchanged it for a small price,' illustrates how the agent (they) disregards the Scripture (Ignored Entity) by turning away (Action), thus placing it out of sight and mind. The Scripture is concealed, not by physical obstruction, but by a deliberate act of ignoring, leveraging the spatial metaphor of something being behind to signify intentional oversight.

## Sense 2: In Front Of

### 2.1 Temporal only

In its opposing sense, /warā'a/ can mean 'in front of' when used temporally, referring to future events. This use activates the 'TEMPORAL SEQUENCE' frame, where events are understood in relation to time.

In this context, /warā'a/ indicates that something will happen in the future, as in Ibrāhīm, verse 17, when God says:

8. وَمِنْ وَرَائِهِ عَذَابٌ غَلِيلٌ

Wa	min	warā'ihi	'adhābun	ghalīdh
And	from	in front of-him	chastisement	unrelenting

and In front of him will be A chastisement unrelenting.

In this context, /warā'a/ contrasts the present moment (Time Point) with the future merciless punishment (Future Event), illustrating the impending merciless punishment that lies ahead in the timeline. The temporal orientation signifies warning and the need for preparation. While this future punishment is not currently visible, it is anticipated, thus relating to the broader theme of concealment inherent in the semi-preposition's usage.

#### 4.8 Integrated analysis

Across its various senses, /warā'a/ consistently revolves around the notion of concealment or being hidden. Whether in spatial, metaphorical, or temporal contexts, this semi-preposition evokes frames that incorporate elements of obscuration and non-visibility.

- **Concealment frame:** This overarching frame unifies the spatial and metaphorical senses where something is either physically or metaphorically hidden.
- **Spatial concealment:** Objects are hidden from view by another object.
- **Metaphorical concealment:** Influences or efforts are not immediately visible but are present and significant.
- **Temporal concealment:** This frame applies to the temporal sense, where future events are not currently visible but are anticipated, lying ahead in time.

Through the lens of frame semantics, the Arabic semi-preposition /warā'a/ can be understood as activating various cognitive frames related to concealment, control, and temporal orientation. These frames provide a structured and nuanced understanding of how /warā'a/ can convey multiple meanings depending on the context, from spatial relationships to metaphorical influences and temporal sequences. This analysis highlights the intricate ways in which language encodes and communicates complex concepts through simple prepositions.

According to corpus linguistics and psycholinguistics research, verbs and nouns are frequently common collocates that affect the meanings of lexemes. This phenomenon, known as semantic priming, involves the activation of related semantic concepts, which in turn triggers specific interpretations of a word. Understanding these collocates is crucial for determining the contextual meaning of a word (Grasso, 2021). In the following section, I examine various collocates of /warā'a/ that frequently appear with it. My analysis focuses on how these collocates help elucidate the function and meaning of /warā'a/ within different contexts.

#### 4.9 Analysis of collocates for /warā'a/

##### 4.9.1 /Warā'a/ Meaning 'Behind'

When /warā'a/ is used to mean 'behind,' it often collocates with terms like 'veil,' 'curtain,' 'wall,' 'rooms,' and actions such as the verb 'return' and the phrasal verb 'put away.' These collocates typically indicate physical barriers or actions that result in concealment. For instance, nouns like 'veil,' 'curtain,' 'wall,' and 'rooms' function as physical barriers that obscure or conceal what is behind them. When /warā'a/ is collocated with 'veil' or 'curtain,' it indicates something hidden from view, suggesting privacy or protection. Similarly, 'wall' and 'rooms' imply that something is out of sight behind these structures. For example, veil in verse (9) serves as a physical barrier concealing God's presence.

9. (وَمَا كَانَ لِي شِرٌ أَنْ يُكَلِّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا وَخَبِيأً أَوْ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ) (Shūra, Verse 51)

Wa	mā	kāna	li-basharin	an	yukallima-hu	Allāhu	illā
And	not	was	for-human	that	speak-him	God	except

wahyan	aw	min	warā'i	ḥijāb
revelation	or	from	behind	veil

It is not appropriate for a man that God should communicate with him except through inspiration or from behind a veil.

Additionally, when /warā'a/ collocates with the verb ‘return,’ it indicates actions leading to concealment. For example, the phrase ‘return behind’ in (10) conveys the idea of retreating or moving backward to a previous position. In this context, ‘return behind’ suggests that the individuals are being instructed to go back to a place they came from, moving to a position that is no longer immediately visible or forward-facing. This action of retreating to a place behind emphasizes the concept of moving to a location where one is out of immediate attention or sight, thereby highlighting the theme of concealment and repositioning.

10. (فَيَلْ إِنْجِعُوا وَرَاءَكُمْ فَأَنْتُمْ شُوَّهُرًا) Hadīd, Verse 13)

Qīlā	irjī'ū	warā'akum	fa-ltamīs-ū	nūran
It was said	return	behind-you	and-seek-you	light

It will be said: return behind! Then seek a light

#### **4.9.2 Warā'a/Metaphorically meaning ‘Being Knowledgeable and in Charge’**

Metaphorically, /warā'a/ can signify being knowledgeable and in control of what is happening, often collocating with terms like ‘God’ and ‘encompass.’ In these contexts, /warā'a/ conveys a sense of hidden influence or comprehensive oversight. When collocated with ‘God,’ /warā'a/ implies that God is behind everything, signifying omniscience and control. This metaphorical usage suggests that while God’s presence might not be directly visible, His influence encompasses all. Similarly, ‘encompass’ collocated with /warā'a/ implies a broad scope of control or understanding, often used metaphorically to indicate comprehensive knowledge or oversight. An example might be (3) above which positions God as an unseen but controlling force, indicating God’s hidden yet all-encompassing presence and control.

#### **4.9.3 /Warā'a/ Metaphorically Meaning ‘Being Deliberately Ignorant’**

Another metaphorical use of /warā'a/ involves deliberate ignorance, typically collocating with body parts such as ‘back.’ This metaphorical sense suggests an active choice to ignore or overlook something by placing it behind oneself. When /warā'a/ is used with ‘back’ (e.g., example 4 above), it metaphorically suggests deliberate ignorance or intentional disregard. Placing something ‘behind one’s back’ implies an active choice to ignore or overlook it. Example (11) is another illustrative verse indicating a deliberate act of ignoring the favors, and thanking the Giver, by putting them behind their backs:

11. (وَنَزَّلْنَاكُمْ مَا كُلُّنَا كُنْ وَرَاءَ ظُهُورِكُمْ) An'ām, Verse 94)

Wa	tarak-tum	mā	khawwel-nā-kum	warā'a	zuhūri-kum
And	left-you	what	bestow-we-you	behind	backs-your

You have left behind all the favors We bestowed upon you.

#### **4.9.4 /Warā'a/ Meaning ‘In Front Of’**

In eschatological contexts, /warā'a/ can mean ‘in front of,’ referring to future events. It collocates with terms like ‘hell,’ ‘a chastisement unrelenting,’ ‘king who seized on every boat by force,’ and ‘partition till the Day they are raised up.’ These collocates emphasize the idea of an impending event that is not currently visible but lies ahead. For example, ‘hell’ and ‘a chastisement unrelenting,’ in example (5) above, collocated with /warā'a/ to denote something looming in the future. These collocates highlight the notion of an impending, inevitable event.

Similarly, ‘king who seized on every boat by force’ in example (12) suggests an impending threat or an authoritative figure’s future actions, indicating control and the looming presence of power:

12. (ال Kahf, Verse 79)

Wa	kāna	warā'a-hum	malikun	ya'khudhu	kulla	safinah	ghasban
And.	Was	in front of-them	a king	seizes-he.	every	ship	by force
for there was in front of them a certain king who seized on every boat by force							

Also, ‘Partition till the Day they are raised up’ in example (13) implies a temporal boundary, with /warā'a/ signifying a future event (resurrection) that lies ahead in time:

13. (Al-Mū-minūn, Verse 100)

Wa	min	warā'i-him	barzakhun	ilā	yawmi	yub'ath-ūn
And	from	in front of-them	partition	till	the Day	resurrected-they
in front of them is a Partition Till the Day they are Raised up						

When /warā'a/ is used with the phrasal verb ‘Put off,’ which is translated from ‘yadharūna,’ the meaning suggests storing something out of sight, further reinforcing the idea of concealment. An illustrative verse could be:

14. (Al-Insān, Verse 27)

Inna	hā'ulā'i	yuhibb-ūna	al-'ājilah	wa	yadhar-ūna
Indeed	these people	love-they	the-immediate	and	put away-they
warā'a-hum	yawman	thaqīlan			
in front of-them	Day	heavy			

As to these, they love the fleeting life, and put off in front of them a Day (that will be) hard.

In this context, the phrase ‘put off behind them’ implies that the forthcoming Day of Judgment is being consciously ignored or delayed, metaphorically placed out of immediate consideration or concern. This action of putting off the inevitable Day emphasizes the theme of deliberate concealment, where the significant future event is hidden from their present attention.

The analysis of /warā'a/ through its collocates reveals how this semi-preposition functions to convey notions of concealment, control, ignorance, and future events across different contexts. By understanding these collocates, we gain deeper insights into the dynamic and nuanced meanings of /warā'a/, highlighting the importance of context in interpreting its use. This exploration highlights the crucial role of collocates in shaping the nuanced meanings of /warā'a/, underscoring their significance in deciphering the multifaceted interpretations of the term.

## 5. Conclusion and recommendations

This study delves into the semantic and cognitive aspects of the semi-prepositional contronym /warā'a/ in the Holy Quran, revealing its dual meanings and cognitive implications, and demonstrating its versatile functions in various contexts. While existing sources gather extensive data on /warā'a/, they provide minimal insight into the dual meanings of the term, lacking precision in their discussions (e.g., Al-Anbari, 1987; Ibn Manzur, 1981; Umar, 2008). The word /warā'a/ challenges the traditional notion that each term has a singular meaning, as it can mean both ‘behind’ and ‘in front of’ depending on the context. This necessitates finding a method to differentiate its various uses accurately.

Utilizing cognitive linguistic methodologies such as frame semantics, prototype theory, image schema theory, and conceptual metaphor theory, the study elucidates the multifaceted functions of /warā'a/ in diverse contexts, encompassing its dual interpretations of 'behind' and 'in front of.' The findings highlight the crucial spatial prototypical meaning of /warā'a/, representing 'behind' as the fundamental and primary interpretation of the term. This primary sense extends metaphorically and temporally to encompass meanings related to knowledge, control, deliberate ignorance, and future events. Prototype theory aids in identifying the core and peripheral meanings of /warā'a/ by examining its characteristic instances, emphasizing the typical uses that shape our understanding of its various senses (Rosch, 1973). Image schema theory elucidates the spatial and temporal dimensions of /warā'a/, demonstrating how our bodily experiences influence the perception of this preposition (Johnson, 1987; Hampe, 2005). Conceptual metaphor theory explains the metaphorical extensions of /warā'a/, particularly in temporal and abstract contexts, illustrating the cognitive mechanisms that enable these extensions (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 1999). Frame semantics highlights how /warā'a/ activates different cognitive frames depending on the context, which are mental structures that shape our understanding of language by organizing concepts related to concealment and visibility (Fillmore, 1982; Petrucci, 2018).

The study also reveals that the collocates of /warā'a/, such as verbs and nouns, play a significant role in determining its contextual meanings. This phenomenon, known as semantic priming, highlights how related semantic concepts influence the interpretation of /warā'a/, further supporting the cognitive-semantic approach (Grasso, 2021). The collocational analysis reveals how the choice of words that frequently appear with /warā'a/ influences its interpretations, shedding light on the nuanced meanings related to concealment, control, deliberate ignorance, and future events based on the surrounding linguistic context.

Given these insights, several recommendations for future research are proposed. Expanding the analysis to include other naturally occurring usage data can offer a more comprehensive understanding of the usage and evolution of /warā'a/, enriching the research with a broader perspective. This extended analysis can further validate the findings, offer additional insights into the contronymic properties of /warā'a/, and enrich the understanding of its semantic range. A more comprehensive dataset would enhance the robustness of the conclusions and allow for a deeper exploration of this contronym's semantic range.

Secondly, conducting comparative studies between Arabic and other languages with similar contronyms can shed light on the cognitive mechanisms underlying contronymy across different linguistic and cultural contexts, revealing both universal patterns and language-specific variations in the conceptualization of contronyms. Understanding how different languages handle contronyms can contribute to a more nuanced theory of cognitive semantics and enrich the cross-linguistic study of semantics (Croft and Cruse, 2004; Evans and Green, 2006).

Furthermore, employing psycholinguistic experiments to investigate how native speakers process and interpret /warā'a/ in real-time can provide empirical evidence for the cognitive theories proposed in this research. These experiments could involve reaction times, eye-tracking, and brain imaging to understand the cognitive processes involved in interpreting contronyms. Experimental data would offer valuable insights into the mental mechanisms at play and help refine existing cognitive models of language processing (Dodge and Lakoff, 2005; Hayakawa and Marian, 2020; Lakoff, 1993).

Moreover, translation studies that address the challenges presented by /warā'a/ and other contronyms can provide valuable practical insights for translators, enhancing their ability to accurately convey the nuances of Quranic texts and Arabic literature in translation. Developing cognitive-semantic translation strategies can improve the accuracy and nuance of translating Quranic texts and other Arabic literature into different languages. By addressing the cognitive and contextual factors influencing the interpretation of contronyms, translators can produce more faithful and meaningful translations (Balla and Siddiek, 2017; Hassan, 2017).

Finally, integrating the findings into educational curricula for Arabic linguistics and translation studies can enhance students' understanding of cognitive semantics and its practical applications, equipping them with valuable insights into interpreting and translating complex linguistic concepts. Teaching students to recognize and interpret contronyms through a cognitive-semantic lens can improve their linguistic competence and translation skills. By integrating these insights into educational curricula for Arabic linguistics and translation studies, educators can enhance students' linguistic competence and translation skills, equipping them to engage with semantic analysis and translation challenges in diverse linguistic contexts.

In conclusion, this study significantly advances our understanding of the cognitive-semantic dynamics of the semi-prepositional contronym /warā'a/. By applying a multi-faceted cognitive linguistic framework, it offers a nuanced and context-sensitive analysis that bridges the gap between traditional linguistic studies and cognitive semantics. The

recommendations for future research provide a roadmap for further exploration, aiming to deepen our comprehension of contronyms and their cognitive underpinnings in Arabic and beyond.

#### Ethics approval statement

Ethical approval and consent were not required.

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Not applicable.

#### Credit authorship contribution statement

This research paper is solely authored by Amal Albureikan. The author has solely contributed to the conceptualization, methodology, investigation, writing, and editing of this manuscript. No other individuals have contributed to the creation of this work.

#### Data availability

The project contains the following underlying data:

Figshare: The different meanings of /warā'a/ in the Holy Quran. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.28016417> (Albureikan, 2024)

This project contains the following underlying data:

- AppendixA.pdf

Data are available under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license \(CC-BY 4.0\)](#).

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In the preparation of this research paper, Grammarly (Version 1.98.2.0) was utilized for proofreading and improving the readability of the manuscript. The tool assisted with grammar correction, stylistic enhancements, and overall content clarity, ensuring the paper adhered to academic writing standards. Its use supported the author in refining the final version of the manuscript while preserving the originality and intent of the work. The author acknowledges the contribution of this tool in enhancing the quality of the manuscript.

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# Open Peer Review

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## Version 1

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This article offers a rich and rigorous cognitive-semantic analysis of the Arabic semi-prepositional contronym /warā'a/, particularly within the Quranic context. The author draws on a well-established framework—including Prototype Theory, Image Schema Theory, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, and Frame Semantics—and demonstrates an in-depth application of these theories across a variety of textual examples. The discussion of spatial, metaphorical, and temporal meanings is nuanced and systematically integrated into the theoretical lenses provided. The literature review is comprehensive, citing both foundational and contemporary sources in cognitive linguistics and Arabic semantic studies. The analysis section is especially commendable for its clarity, coherence, and depth, supported by Quranic examples and careful transliterations. Furthermore, the emphasis on the implications for translation studies strengthens the relevance of the study across disciplines.

Minor revisions could enhance the overall flow.

- The transition between theoretical exposition and empirical examples could be tightened for better readability.
- While the discussion on metaphor and temporal extension is conceptually strong, more elaboration on cross-linguistic implications or comparative analysis with similar contronyms in other languages would further enrich the study.

Overall, this article is methodologically sound, theoretically grounded, and well-presented. It provides a valuable contribution to both Arabic linguistics and cognitive semantics.

**Is the work clearly and accurately presented and does it cite the current literature?**

Yes

**Is the study design appropriate and is the work technically sound?**

Yes

**Are sufficient details of methods and analysis provided to allow replication by others?**

Yes

**If applicable, is the statistical analysis and its interpretation appropriate?**

Not applicable

**Are all the source data underlying the results available to ensure full reproducibility?**

Yes

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the results?**

Yes

**Competing Interests:** No competing interests were disclosed.

**Reviewer Expertise:** Applied Linguistics

**I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard.**

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