

A-1: Reporting/Informing Sentence-Type Switch

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Definition

Lexical items may be classified into two:

1. **The reporting sentence** (*al-jumla al-khabariyya*) which conveys factual information such as:

البيت كبير.
The house is big.

2. **The informing sentence** (*al-jumla al-inshā'iyya*) which does not convey factual information such as:

هل البيت كبير؟
Is the house big?

Informing sentences may be used to express the interrogative, the imperative, prohibition, the vocative and wishes, praise, dispraise, astonishment, hope, oaths and legal contracts.

For rhetorical purposes, a reporting sentence may be used when an informing sentence is expected, and vice versa.[\[1\]](#)[\[2\]](#)[\[3\]](#)

Examples

1) Use of an informing sentence in place of an expected reported sentence:

فاطمة: هل أكلت التفاح؟

سليم: ألا تعلمين أنني أكل تفاحة كل صباح؟

Fatima: Did you eat the apple?

Salim: Don't you know that I eat an apple every morning?

Explanation

It is expected that Salim would respond to Fatima's question with a reporting sentence such as, "Yes, I ate the apple." Instead, he responds with an informing sentence, by asking Fatima a [rhetorical question](#).

2) Use of a reporting sentence in place of an expected informing sentence:

When a student is caught cheating in an exam, the teacher says:

المعلم: الغش انتهاك جسيم للثقة المقدسة بين المعلم وطالبه.

Teacher: Cheating is a severe violation of the sacred trust between the teacher his student.

Explanation

In such a situation, the student expects a severe rebuke from the teacher in the form of an informing sentence such as "Never try to cheat again, or you'll be expelled!" Instead, the teacher delivers a reporting sentence which is intended to have a more profound impact on the student.

References

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Permanent page link: <https://doi.org/10.64393/balaghah.Q40>