

CD-3: Evasive Letterplay

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Definition

The communicator intentionally uses a word which can change its meaning through a small change in the word itself. This causes ambiguity in the communicator's intended meaning, so that the communicator may avoid being committed to one of the two meanings.[\[1\]](#)[\[2\]](#)



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Category Linguistic Embellishments ('ilm al-badī')

Subcategory Indirectness & Ambiguity

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Example

لقد ضاع شعري على بابكم
كما ضاع عقد على خالصة

My poetry was lost at your doorstep,
Just as a necklace was lost on Khālisa.

- Abū Nuwās

Explanation

And when Caliph al-Rashīd objected to the line, Abū Nuwās claimed he said **لقد ضاء شعري على بابكم - كما ضاء شعري** where the original phrase "ضاء شعري" (my poetry was lost) could be changed to "ضاء شعري" (my poetry shone), and "عقد على خالصة" (a necklace was lost) could be read as "عقد" (a necklace shone). These minor changes result in completely different interpretations of the line of poetry.

See also

- [CA-1: Incomplete Paronomasia](#)
- [Related to Equivocation](#)

References

- ↑ Hafnī Nāṣif, Muḥammad Diyāb, Sultan Muḥammad and Muṣṭafā Ṭammām, [Durūs al-Balāgha](#) (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2012), 121, ISBN 9786144162798.
- ↑ Basil Hatim, [Arabic Rhetoric: The Pragmatics of Deviation from Linguistic Norms](#), LINCOM Studies in Communication 04 (Munich: Lincom Europa, 2010), 183, ISBN 9780415386098.

Categories: Arabic Rhetorical Devices | Linguistic Embellishments ('ilm al-badī') | Indirectness & Ambiguity

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