

A-12: Foregrounding and Backgrounding

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From The Encyclopedia of Arabic Rhetoric

*Also known as **Anastrophe***

Definition

Foregrounding is the bringing forwards of particular [lexical items](#) to nearer the beginning of the sentence. This emphasises or gives more importance to the lexical items which are foregrounded.^{[1][2][3][4]}

This can be utilised in the following situations:

- To convey implied information about the hierarchy of the lexical items within the sentence.
- To give good news or reassurance before giving bad news or criticism
- To control the order in which information is given, such as starting with the general, then proceeding to the specific, or vice-versa.
- To express astonishment, or to arouse fear in the addressee

Conversely, **backgrounding** is the moving of lexical items towards the end of the sentence. It may reduce the emphasis on those items, or it may also build a sense of suspense in the addressee. Foregrounding and backgrounding may also be employed for the purpose of the rhythm or metre of a sentence or verse of poetry.

Example

فَإِذَا أَنْزَلْنَاهَا عَلَىٰهَا الْمَاءِ اهْتَزَّتْ وَرَبَتْ

And when We pour down rain on it, it is **stirred to life**, it **swells**.

[Qur'an 22:5](#)

Explanation

Foregrounding “ihtazzat” (it stirred) serves to create a vivid, emotionally resonant image of the earth's revival, aligning more closely with perception, enhancing rhythm, and supporting the theme of resurrection.


See also

- [Anastrophe](#)

References

1.

↑

Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Arabic Rhetoric: A Pragmatic Analysis*  (Oxford: Routledge, 2006), 121-122, [ISBN 9780415386098](#). DOI: [10.4324/9780203965399](#)

2.

↑

Ḥafnī Nāṣif, Muḥammad Diyāb, Sultan Muḥammad and Muṣṭafā Ṭammām, *Durūs al-Balāgha* [↗](#) (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2012), 45-47, [ISBN 9786144162798](#).

3.

↑

Wafaa Batran, ‘[Fronting](#)’ [↗](#), in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics Online*, ed. Lutz Edzard and Rudolf Erik de Jong (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

4.

↑

Basil Hatim, *Arabic Rhetoric: The Pragmatics of Deviation from Linguistic Norms* [↗](#), LINCOM Studies in Communication 04 (Munich: Lincom Europa, 2010), 100, [ISBN 9780415386098](#).

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التقديم والتأخير

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Category

[Sentence Construction & Syntactical Stylistics \('ilm al-ma'ānī\)](#)

Synonym

Anastrophe

[Balagha-Corpus.com](#)

Corpus data

[See examples](#)

[Balaghascore.com](#)

Code

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