

# Arabic Rhetoric

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From The Encyclopedia of Arabic Rhetoric

Arabic Rhetoric (known in Arabic as *al-balāgha*) refers to the science associated with the "study of aesthetic effectiveness," or the "conveying of meaning in the best of verbal forms."<sup>[1]</sup> It may be used to enhance the persuasiveness of speech, although it does not have the negative connotations associated with the English word "rhetoric."

Arabic Rhetoric overlaps with "eloquence" (*fasaha*) which refers to the clarity of speech, and is a distinct field in Arabic linguistics alongside grammar, morphology, stylistics, logic and poetics. Arabic Rhetoric has been described as the "flesh and blood of the Arabic language."<sup>[2]</sup> In simple terms, it is the use of rhetorical devices such as metaphor, simile, alliteration, and modifications to word order to change the meaning of the sentence, as a means to more effective, engaging and efficient communication.

Arabic Rhetoric has existed since the era of pre-Islamic poetry (prior to approximately 650 AD) up to the present day. The oral sciences of this field underwent a process of classification, consolidation and written documentation between 750 AD and 1400 AD. This resulted in a broad division of Arabic Rhetoric into three categories that remains to the present day:

- A) Word Order & Sentence Construction (*'ilm al-ma'āni*),
- B) Figurative Speech (*'ilm al-bayān*) and
- C) Linguistic Embellishments (*'ilm al-badī'*).

## References

1. ↑ Kate Zebiri, 'Towards a Rhetorical Criticism of the Qur'an', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 5, no. 2 (2003): 95–120, <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2003.5.2.95>.
2. ↑ Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Arabic Rhetoric: A Pragmatic Analysis* (Oxford: Routledge, 2006), i, ISBN 9780415386098. DOI: 10.4324/9780203965399

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