

A-8: Definiteness and Indefiniteness

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Definition

Definiteness and indefiniteness can be marked by the use of proper nouns, nicknames, personal pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, relative pronouns, genitive constructions, [the vocative](#) and the definite article *al-*.

Rhetorical effects may be achieved by the use of definiteness where indefiniteness is expected, and vice-versa, as well as by their use in unexpected ways.^{[1][2]}

Examples

1) Use of demonstrative pronouns to glorify, belittle, or mock^[3]

أهذا مدير الشركة؟

Is this the manager of the company?

Explanation

In this example, the use of *hadha* (this) rather than *huwa* (he) is a way of dehumanising and belittling the person.

2) Use of relative pronoun to conceal someone's identity

قابلتُ الذي كتب لي الرسالة الغريبة.

I met the one who wrote me the strange letter.

Explanation

The communicator has used *alladhi* (who) to avoid mentioning the name of the person.

References

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- ↑ Hashim Muhammad, *First Steps to Understanding Balaghah* (Leicester: Al-Qalam Publications, 2016), 29-36, ISBN 9780957653474.
- ↑ Basil Hatim, *Arabic Rhetoric: The Pragmatics of Deviation from Linguistic Norms*, LINCOM Studies in Communication 04 (Munich: Lincom Europa, 2010), 75-77, ISBN 9780415386098.

Categories: Arabic Rhetorical Devices | Sentence Construction & Syntactical Stylistics ('ilm al-ma'ānī)

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