

A-9: Use of Pronoun in Place of Noun

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Definition

In Arabic, pronouns typically refer back to a previously mentioned noun. However, for rhetorical purposes, a pronoun can be used before the noun it refers to is introduced. This can create uncertainty, heighten the addressee's interest, or increase the impact when the [referent](#) is eventually introduced. It can also signal a shared knowledge of the [referent](#) which not all parties have, thus creating tension or suspense.[\[1\]](#)[\[2\]](#)

Example 1

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ

Say, "He is Allah — The One and Only".

[Qur'an 112:1](#)

Explanation

The [huwa](#) creates uncertainty before doubt is removed about the referent: Allah.

Example 2

When Salim returns from having met Karim:

فاطمة: مَاذَا قلْتَ لِهِ؟

Fatima: What did you say to [him](#)?

Explanation

Fatima uses the personal pronoun [lahu](#) rather than mentioning his name. This is because the Salim already knows who Fatima is referring to.

See also

-  [A-10: Use of Noun in Place of Pronoun](#)
- [Cataphora](#)
- [Exophora](#)

References

- ↑ Basil Hatim, *Arabic Rhetoric: The Pragmatics of Deviation from Linguistic Norms*, LINCOM Studies in Communication 04 (Munich: Lincom Europa, 2010), 73-75, ISBN 9780415386098.
- ↑ Hashim Muhammad, *First Steps to Understanding Balaghah* (Leicester: Al-Qalam Publications, 2016), 47, ISBN 9780957653474.

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

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