

CD-5: Referential Shift

Page	Discussion	Read
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From The Encyclopedia of Arabic Rhetoric

Definition

The communicator mentions something, and then later uses a personal pronoun or demonstrative pronoun to apparently refer back to that thing. However, something related but different is intended by the pronoun. This could be a different meaning of a homonym (semantic shift), or a related but distinct **referent** (referential shift). This ambiguity creates a rhetorical effect by playing on the listener’s assumption of continuity, only to redirect their interpretation.^{[1][2][3]}

Example

فَمَنْ شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ

Quran 2: 185

So whoever is present this month, let them fast **it**.

Explanation

The word *shahar* (month) refers to the new crescent moon signifying the start of the month of Ramadan. Whereas the *hu* (it) apparently refers to the crescent moon, but actually refers to something else - the days of Ramadan - and not the crescent moon itself.

References

- ↑ Hafnī Nāṣif, Muḥammad Diyāb, Sultan Muḥammad and Muṣṭafā Ṭammām, *Durūs al-Balāgha* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2012), 108-109, [ISBN 9786144162798](#).
- ↑ W. P. Heinrichs, ‘Rhetorical Figures’, in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature* , ed. Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (London: Routledge, 1998), 657, [ISBN 0415068088](#). DOI: [10.4324/9780203020425](#)
- ↑ Aḥmad al-Hāshimī, *Jawāhir al-Balāgha fī al-Maʿānī wa-al-Bayān wa-al-Badīʿ* (Windsor: Hindāwī Foundation, 2019), 364, [ISBN 9781527316386](#).

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