

CD-5: Referential Shift

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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 فَلْيَصُومْهُ

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 Tammām, *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
- ↑ Ahmad al-Hāshimī, *Jawāhir al-Balāgha fī al-Ma'ānī wa-al-Bayān wa-al-Badī'* (Windsor: Hindāwī Foundation, 2019), 364, ISBN 9781527316386.

Categories: Arabic Rhetorical Devices | Linguistic Embellishments ('ilm al-badī') | Indirectness & Ambiguity

Permanent page link: <https://doi.org/10.64393/balagha.Q80>

This page was last edited on 17 November 2025, at 00:29.

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