

A-12: Foregrounding and Backgrounding

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Definition

Foregrounding is the bringing forwards of particular [lexical items](#) to nearer the beginning of the sentence. This emphasises or gives more importance to the lexical items which are foregrounded.[\[1\]](#)[\[2\]](#)[\[3\]](#)[\[4\]](#)

This can be utilised in the following situations:

- To convey implied information about the hierarchy of the lexical items within the sentence.
- To give good news or reassurance before giving bad news or criticism
- To control the order in which information is given, such as starting with the general, then proceeding to the specific, or vice-versa.
- To express astonishment, or to arouse fear in the addressee

Conversely, **backgrounding** is the moving of lexical items towards the end of the sentence. It may reduce the emphasis on those items, or it may also build a sense of suspense in the addressee. Foregrounding and backgrounding may also be employed for the purpose of the rhythm or metre of a sentence or verse of poetry.

Example

فَإِذَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَاءَ اهْتَزَّ وَرَبَّ

And when We pour down rain on it, it is [stirred to life](#), it [swells](#).

[Qur'an 22:5](#)



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Category Sentence Construction & Syntactical Stylistics ('ilm al-ma'ānī)

Synonym Anastrophe

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Explanation

Foregrounding "ihtazzat" (it stirred) serves to create a vivid, emotionally resonant image of the earth's revival, aligning more closely with perception, enhancing rhythm, and supporting the theme of resurrection.

See also

- [Anastrophe](#)

References

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