

# A-8: Definiteness and Indefiniteness

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From The Encyclopedia of Arabic Rhetoric

## 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.<sup>[1][2]</sup>

## Examples

### 1) Use of demonstrative pronouns to glorify, belittle, or mock<sup>[3]</sup>

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 *alladhī* (who) to avoid mentioning the name of the person.

## References

- ↑ Ḥafnī Nāṣif, Muḥammad Diyāb, Sultan Muḥammad and Muṣṭafā Ṭammām, *Durūs al-Balāgha* [↗](#) (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2012), 49-56, [ISBN 9786144162798](#).
- ↑ 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* [↗](#), LINCOS Studies in Communication 04 (Munich: Lincom Europa, 2010), 75-77, [ISBN 9780415386098](#).

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