

REPET: Repetition

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From The Encyclopedia of Arabic Rhetoric



All rhetorical devices> Linguistic Embellishments (*'ilm al-badī'*)

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Definition

Encyclopedia Interpretation

Repetition is an Arabic rhetorical operation involving the recurrence of the same linguistic material within an utterance. The repeated material may consist of a lexical item or expression, or of smaller phonological material such as a recurrent sound.

From the sources

In *al-tikrār* and *al-tardīd*, the repeated material consists of the same lexical item or expression. In *al-tikrār*, the repeated item retains the same meaning and application; in *al-tardīd*, the same lexical item is repeated with a different application, and may additionally carry a different lexical meaning.^{[1][2][3]}

Encyclopedia Interpretation

In this encyclopedia, Contextual Matching (*al-mushākala*) is treated as a type of Repetition because the reviewed examples involve repeated or morphologically related wording whose later use is influenced by an earlier expression occurring in its context. Alliteration (*al-mujānasa al-istihlāliyya*) is likewise treated as a type of Repetition because its defining operation consists of recurrence of the same word-initial sound across nearby lexical items. The reviewed sources do not themselves classify either phenomenon as a subtype of *al-tikrār*.

From the sources

Contextual Matching is the mention of one thing using the wording of another because it occurs in its company or context (*dhiḵr al-shay' bi-lafẓ ḡhayrihi li-wuqū'ihī fī suḥbatihī*).^{[4][5][6][7]}

Linguistic Operations

Encyclopedia Interpretation

- The general operation consists of recurrence of the same linguistic material within an utterance. Individual types differ according to what material recurs and the conditions governing that recurrence.

From the sources

- In Same-Application Repetition (*al-tikrār*), the same lexical item or expression appears more than once with the same meaning and application.^[1]
- In Varied Repetition (*al-tardīd*), the communicator takes a lexical item used earlier in the utterance and repeats the same item with a different application. The repeated item may additionally carry a different lexical meaning, but this is not required.^{[2][3]}
- In Contextual Matching (*al-mushākala*), one thing is expressed using wording associated with another because the two occur together in the context.^{[4][5][6][7]}
- In Alliteration (*al-mujānasa al-istihlāliyya*), the same initial sound occurs at the beginning of multiple lexical items in close succession.^[8]
- Repetition is distinguished from mere redundancy: al-Khattābī held that repetition may be either praiseworthy or



التكرار، الترديد، المشاكلة

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CategoryLinguistic Embellishments ('ilm al-badī')

SubcategoryRepetition & Reinforcement

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blameworthy; the blameworthy kind is that which adds nothing beyond what was already conveyed, while the praiseworthy kind is employed in important matters that deserve care and attention, and where error or forgetfulness is feared.^[9]

Encyclopedia Interpretation

Contextual Matching and Alliteration are grouped under Repetition in this encyclopedia on operational grounds. The reviewed sources attest their respective mechanisms independently but do not explicitly classify them as forms of *al-tikrār* or *al-tardīd*.

Diagnostic Communicative Enhancements

From the sources

The following effects are attested for Repetition in the reviewed sources. No specific rhetorical effect for Contextual Matching (*al-mushākala*) is stated in the four sources reviewed for that type.^{[4][5][6][7]}

- Emphasis and affirmation.^{[1][10]}
- Reinforcing a warning: the repetition of a warning phrase with the conjunction *thumma* (then) signals that the second warning is stronger than the first.^[9]
- Completing acceptance of a claim and removing suspicion (*tuhma*).^[9]
- Enumeration of related items requiring particular attention, so that error or forgetfulness is guarded against.^[9]

Applying the Recognition Framework

The information on this page can be used to evaluate whether this device is present in a candidate [lexical item](#) using the [Specific Device Recognition](#) part of the [Universal Framework for Identifying Arabic Rhetorical Devices](#):

- Use the Definition, Mechanism, and Recognition sections of this page in [Step 1](#).
- Apply the substitution test in [Step 2](#).
- Consider contextual indicators in [Step 3](#).
- Use the Diagnostic Communicative Enhancements section of this page in [Step 4](#).

Recognition

From the sources

Repetition may be present when:

- The same lexical item or expression appears more than once — either with the same meaning and application (*al-tikrār*) or, in the case of the same lexical item, with a different application (*al-tardīd*).^{[1][2]}
- In Same-Application Repetition (*al-tikrār*), the repeated element may serve an evident rhetorical purpose such as emphasis, description, praise, or warning, rather than being an unintentional redundancy.^[9]
- Contextual Matching may be present where one thing is expressed using wording associated with another because the two occur together in the context.^{[4][5][6][7]}
- Alliteration may be present where multiple nearby lexical items begin with the same sound.^[8]

Encyclopedia Interpretation

For Alliteration, a repeated initial sound should form a noticeable local pattern rather than arise from an isolated or accidental coincidence.

Types of Repetition

Type 1: Same-Application Repetition (*al-tikrār*)

From the sources

The use of the same word or words more than once in the same form and with the same meaning and application, for the sake of emphasis in description or praise or some other purpose.^[1]

Encyclopedia Interpretation

The sources do not consistently specify whether the repeated items must appear in immediate succession. Abdul-Raof (2006) implies immediate succession in his examples, but Cachia's definition (§53) does not impose this positional constraint.^[1] The requirement of immediate succession should therefore not be treated as part of the core definition.

This device concerns repetition insofar as it functions as a lexical and rhetorical pattern based on the recurrence of the same lexical item or expression. For repetition considered specifically as a form of discourse expansion through the addition of wording beyond the minimal expression of meaning for rhetorical benefit, see [VERBOS: Verbosity](#).

Source Example

فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا
إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

Verily with hardship comes ease.

Verily with hardship comes ease.

— [Qur'an 94:5–6](#)

Explanation

The phrase *inna ma'a l-'usri yusrā* (Verily with hardship comes ease) is repeated verbatim with the same meaning, affirming the notion of relief through repetition.^[10]

Source Example

كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ
ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ

But no! You will soon come to know.

Again, no! You will soon come to know.

— [Qur'an 102:3–4](#)

Explanation

The phrase *sawfa ta lamūna* (you will soon come to know) is repeated with the same meaning. The conjunction *thumma* (then/again) indicates that the second warning is stronger and more emphatic than the first.^[9]

Source Example

فَقَدْ كَانَتْ أُمًّا ضَعِيفَةً . . . ضَعِيفَةً فِي فَقْرِهَا ، ضَعِيفَةً فِي وَحْدَتِهَا ، ضَعِيفَةً فِي حَيْرَتِهَا مَعَ الْأَقْدَارِ

She was a weak mother . . . weak in her poverty, weak in her isolation, weak in her loss with her fate.

Explanation

The word *ḍa'īfa* (weak) is repeated four times with the same form and same meaning, reinforcing the description through repetition.^[10]

Source Example

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ

So which of the favours of your Lord would you deny?

— [Qur'an 55](#)

Explanation

The phrase *fa-bi-ayyi ālā'i rabbikumā tukadhdhibān* is repeated 31 times throughout Sūrat al-Rahmān, functioning as repetition for affirmation.^[11]

Constructed Example

إِنَّ الْأُمَّةَ تَحْتَاجُ إِلَى الْعَدَالَةِ . . . تَحْتَاجُ إِلَى الْعَدَالَةِ فِي تَوَازِيْعِ الثَّرْوَةِ ، وَتَحْتَاجُ إِلَى الْعَدَالَةِ فِي تَوَازِيْعِ الْفُرْصِ ، وَتَحْتَاجُ إِلَى الْعَدَالَةِ فِي تَطْبِيقِ الْقَانُونِ

The nation needs justice . . . it needs justice in the distribution of wealth, it needs justice in the distribution of opportunities, and it needs justice in the application of the law.

Explanation

The phrase *taḥtāju ilā l-'adāla* (needs justice) is repeated four times with the same form and meaning, with each repetition adding a new domain to which the claim applies. The accumulation reinforces the breadth and urgency of the call for justice.

Type 2: Varied Repetition (*al-tardīd*)

From the sources

The use of the same lexical item more than once, each time with a different application.^{[2][3]}

Nābulṣī specifies that the repeated lexical item need not carry a different lexical meaning on each occurrence. He nevertheless regards repetition with different meanings as preferable, noting that this can remove the distinction between *al-tardīd* and *al-jinās* (paronomasia).^[2]

'Akkāwī (1996) records that al-Ḥātimī defined *al-tardīd* as the poet taking a word from a verse with one meaning, then repeating it in the same verse with a different meaning.^[3] Ibn Rashīq called it *al-tardīd*; al-Baghdādī and al-Tabrīzī called it *al-ta'attuf*.^[3]

Source Example

وَهُوَ الْعَظِيمُ مِنَ الرَّبِّ الْعَظِيمِ أَتَى يُبْدِي الْعَظِيمَ مِنَ الْآيَاتِ وَالْحِكَمِ

He is the **great** one, [apostle] of the **Great** Lord, who came
To display **great** signs and wisdom.
— Al-Nābluṣī^[2]

Explanation

The word *al-'azīm* appears three times with different applications: first as a predicate referring to the Prophet, second as a qualifier referring to the Lord, and third as part of the direct object referring to the signs. Nābulṣī additionally draws attention to the word appearing in each of the three grammatical cases: nominative, genitive and accusative.^[2] The example illustrates that *al-tardīd* does not require the repeated lexical item to acquire wholly different lexical meanings; change of application is sufficient.^[2]

Constructed Example

جَاءَ الْكَبِيرُ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ، وَسَلَّمَ عَلَى الْكَبِيرِ فِي السَّنِّ، وَتَحَدَّثَا عَنِ الْكَبِيرِ مِنَ الْأُمُورِ

The great man of the people arrived, greeted the man great in age, and they spoke about the great matters.

Explanation

The lexical item *al-kabīr* (great/elder/major) is repeated with different applications: first to a person of status, second to a person of advanced age, and third to matters of importance. The repeated item therefore changes application across its occurrences.

Type 3: Contextual Matching (*al-mushākala*)

Encyclopedia Interpretation

Contextual Matching is treated here as a third type of Repetition. The classical sources reviewed define it independently and do not explicitly classify it as a form of Repetition.

From the sources

Contextual Matching is the mention of one thing using the wording of another because it occurs in its company or context (*dhiḵr al-shay' bi-lafz ghayrihi li-wuqū'ihī fi ṣuḥbatihī*).^{[4][5][6][7]}

Source Example

وَجَزَاءُ سَيِّئَةٍ سَيِّئَةٌ مِّثْلُهَا

The requital of an evil is an evil like it.
— Qur'ān 42:40

Explanation

The first *sayyi'a* denotes the evil deed. The second denotes its corresponding punishment, but is expressed using the same wording because of its contextual association with the first.^[12]

Constructed Example

طَبَخَ لِي طَعَامًا، فَطَبَخْتُ لَهُ عُذْرًا

He cooked me a meal, so I cooked him an excuse.

Explanation

The first use of "cooked" refers to preparing food. The second use adopts the same wording because of its contextual association with the first occurrence.

Type 4: Alliteration (*al-mujānasa al-istihlāliyya*)

Encyclopedia Interpretation

Alliteration is treated in this encyclopedia as a type of Repetition because its defining linguistic operation consists of recurrence of the same sound in word-initial position across nearby lexical items. Abdul-Raof attests the phenomenon and the Arabic term *al-mujānasa al-istihlāliyya*, but does not classify it as a subtype of *al-tikrār* or *al-tardīd*.^[8]

From the sources

Alliteration occurs where a number of nearby words have identical initial letters.^[8]

Source Example

وَمَكْرُؤًا مَكْرًا وَمَكْرَئًا مَكْرًا وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ

Qur'an 27:50

They planned a plan, and We planned a plan.

Explanation

The initial sound represented by *mīm* recurs across the nearby lexical items, producing Alliteration.^[8]

Source Example

وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا

Qur'an 33:71

Whoever obeys God and His messenger will achieve a splendid triumph.

Explanation

The initial sound represented by *fā'* recurs in *faqad fāza fawzan*.^[8]

Source Example

وَقَدْ جَلَسَ مَعَهَا فِي خُلُوةٍ خَلَقَهَا خَالُهُ لَهَا

He sat with her in an isolated place arranged by his uncle for both of them.

Explanation

The initial sound represented by *khā'* recurs in *khalwa khalaqahā khāluhu*.^[8]

Encyclopedia Interpretation

The recurrence can produce phonetic cohesion or harmony by linking otherwise different lexical items through a shared initial sound.

سَافِرٌ سَامِرٌ سَرِيعًا إِلَى سَمَرْقَنْدٍ

Sāmīr travelled quickly to Samarkand.

Explanation

Alliteration is represented by the initial letter *sīn* across the successive lexical items *sāfara sāmīrun sarīʿan samarqand* (travelled, Sāmīr, quickly, Samarkand).

Different From

- **Paronomasia** — Both Varied Repetition (*al-tardīd*) and Paronomasia may involve formally identical lexical items associated with different meanings. Different lexical meanings are not, however, required for *al-tardīd*: its defining feature is repetition of the same lexical item with a different application. Nābulṣī observes that when the repeated item is additionally used with different meanings, the distinction between *al-tardīd* and *al-jinās* may disappear.^[2]
- Alliteration differs from **Paronomasia** in that it requires only recurrence of the same initial sound across nearby lexical items. Paronomasia instead requires a stronger formal relationship between lexical components that are similar or identical in wording while differing in meaning. A passage may independently instantiate both devices where both operations are present.

See also

- [Disambiguation page for Repetition Devices](#)

Technical

Encyclopedia Interpretation

Contextual Matching overlaps structurally with Varied Repetition (*al-tardīd*). In both, related lexical material may recur with a changed application. The distinction used in this encyclopedia is that *al-tardīd* is defined by repetition with changed application, whereas Contextual Matching is independently defined by the later wording being used because of its contextual association with another expression. The reviewed sources do not explicitly compare or distinguish the two devices.

Encyclopedia Interpretation

Alliteration differs from the other types on this page in the linguistic unit that recurs. Same-Application Repetition and Varied Repetition operate primarily through lexical recurrence, whereas Alliteration operates through recurrence of a word-initial sound across different lexical items. It is nevertheless treated as a subtype because removal of the positional constraint leaves the more general operation of repetition recoverable.

Encyclopedia Interpretation

The Arabic term *al-mujānasa al-istihlāliyya* is attested in Abdul-Raof's treatment of Alliteration. Its placement under Repetition is the taxonomy adopted by this encyclopedia and should not be taken to imply that the reviewed classical sources themselves classify it under *al-tikrār*.

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- ↑ ^[a b c d e f g h i] Pierre Cachia, *The Arch Rhetorician: Or The Schemer's Skimmer: A Handbook of Late Arabic Badī' Drawn from 'Abd al-Ghanī an-Nābulṣī's Nafahāt al-Azhār 'ala Nasamāt al-Ashār* ↗, Studies in Arabic Language and Literature 3 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998), pp. 33-34; §54, ISBN 9783447040327.
- ↑ ^[a b c d e f g] In'ām Fawwāl 'Akkāwī, *Al-Mu'jam al-Mufaṣṣal fi 'Ulūm al-Balāgha: Al-Badī' wa-al-Bayān wa-al-Ma'ānī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1996), 303-305.
- ↑ ^[a b c d e] Aḥmad al-Hāshimī, *Jawāhir al-Balāgha fi al-Ma'ānī wa-al-Bayān wa-al-Badī'* ↗ (Windsor: Hindāwī Foundation, 2019), 371-372, ISBN 9781527316386.
- ↑ ^[a b c d e] Pierre Cachia, *The Arch Rhetorician: Or The Schemer's Skimmer: A Handbook of Late Arabic Badī' Drawn from 'Abd al-Ghanī an-Nābulṣī's Nafahāt al-Azhār 'ala Nasamāt al-Ashār* ↗, Studies in Arabic Language and Literature 3 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998); §97, ISBN 9783447040327.
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- ↑ ^[a b c d e] Pierre Cachia, *The Arch Rhetorician: Or The Schemer's Skimmer: A Handbook of Late Arabic Badī' Drawn from 'Abd al-Ghanī an-Nābulṣī's Nafahāt al-Azhār 'ala Nasamāt al-Ashār* ↗, Studies in Arabic Language and Literature 3 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998), p. 63-64, ISBN 9783447040327.

8. ↑ ^{a b c d e f g} Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Arabic Rhetoric: A Pragmatic Analysis*  (Oxford: Routledge, 2006), 259-260, ISBN 9780415386098. DOI: [10.4324/9780203965399](https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203965399) 

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10. ↑ ^{a b c} Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Arabic Rhetoric: A Pragmatic Analysis*  (Oxford: Routledge, 2006), 250-251, ISBN 9780415386098. DOI: [10.4324/9780203965399](https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203965399) 

11. ↑ Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Arabic Rhetoric: A Pragmatic Analysis*  (Oxford: Routledge, 2006), 249-250, ISBN 9780415386098. DOI: [10.4324/9780203965399](https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203965399) 

12. ↑ Pierre Cachia, *The Arch Rhetorician: Or The Schemer's Skimmer: A Handbook of Late Arabic Badī' Drawn from 'Abd al-Ghanī an-Nābulī's Nafahāt al-Azhār 'ala Nasamāt al-Ashār* , Studies in Arabic Language and Literature 3 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998), p. 63, ISBN 9783447040327.

Page History

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- 2024-05-28 - Page created: [Repetition](#).

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