

Arabic rhetoric

Contents [\[hide\]](#)

Beginning

[References](#)

Page

Discussion

Read

From The Encyclopedia of Arabic Rhetoric

(Redirected from [Arabic Rhetoric](#))

Arabic rhetoric, conventionally used in English to refer to the Arabic science of *al-balāgha*, is concerned broadly with the effective and appropriate use of language in communication. It has been characterised as the study of "aesthetic effectiveness" and of the "conveying of meaning in the best of verbal forms."^[1]

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Arabic rhetoric overlaps with, but is not equivalent to, the Greco-Western traditions conventionally described by the English term *rhetoric*. Persuasion may be one purpose of Arabic rhetorical action, but the domain also encompasses linguistic operations whose contribution to communication may involve clarity, emphasis, concision, vividness, aesthetic effect, memorability, rhythmic organisation, or other forms of communicative enhancement.

Arabic rhetoric is closely associated with eloquence and linguistic clarity (*faṣāḥa*) and exists alongside fields including grammar, morphology, logic, and poetics. It has been described as the "flesh and blood of the Arabic language."^[2]

In the [Encyclopedia of Arabic Rhetoric](#), Arabic rhetoric is operationalised through [rhetorical devices](#): identifiable linguistic operations which may establish or activate shared understandings between a [communicator](#) and an [addressee](#) and thereby enhance one or more [communicative effects](#).

The Arabic rhetorical tradition has existed since the era of pre-Islamic poetry (prior to approximately 650 AD) up to the present day. The oral sciences of this field underwent a process of classification, consolidation and written documentation between 750 AD and 1400 AD. This resulted in a broad division of Arabic Rhetoric into three categories that remains to the present day:

- A) [Word Order & Sentence Construction](#) (*‘ilm al-ma’ānī*),
- B) [Figurative Speech](#) (*‘ilm al-bayān*), and
- C) [Linguistic Embellishments](#) (*‘ilm al-baḍ’*).

References

- ↑ Kate Zebiri, ‘Towards a Rhetorical Criticism of the Qur’an’, *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 5, no. 2 (2003): 95–120, <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2003.5.2.95>.
- ↑ Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Arabic Rhetoric: A Pragmatic Analysis*  (Oxford: Routledge, 2006), i, ISBN 9780415386098. DOI: 10.4324/9780203965399

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Category: [ARDT v0.1.1](#)

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