

Rejected Rhetorical Devices

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From The Encyclopedia of Arabic Rhetoric

Introduction

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The Arabic rhetorical tradition contains many named phenomena and classificatory labels used in manuals, commentaries, and works on poetry and rhetoric. Not every source-attested label, however, is sufficiently distinct, bounded, or operational to be represented as an independently annotatable rhetorical device in the [Encyclopedia of Arabic Rhetoric](#).

[Principle 1](#) and [Principle 2](#) of the [Encyclopedia's Design Principles](#) govern which rhetorical devices are included. These principles are operationalised through the [Inclusion Criteria](#), which determine whether a source-attested candidate can function as a distinct and reliably annotatable device.

This page records candidate Arabic rhetorical phenomena that have been encountered and considered during development of the [Encyclopedia](#) but are not currently included as independent rhetorical devices. Their presence here does not deny their existence, historical importance, or rhetorical value. Rather, the page records the methodological disposition reached during the Encyclopedia's research and verification process. It reflects a methodological decision aimed at taxonomic stability and reliable annotation.

The status of a candidate is not necessarily permanent. Subsequent source evidence or taxonomic analysis may justify reconsideration. Stable candidate identifiers are therefore retained even if a candidate's status later changes.

List of rejected devices

Astonishment (*al-taʿajjub*)^[1]

Definition

When an expression of astonishment, amazement, surprise, or exclamation is used for a pragmatic effect.

Reason for rejection

- The device is attested in relatively few of the sources examined
- The device does not have a defined linguistic operation.

Rejection category

Insufficient sources ([Criterion 1](#)); No linguistic operation ([Criterion 2](#))

Date

16 August 2026

Affirmation by Negation (*al-ithbāt bi-l-nafy*)^[2]

Definition

The [communicator](#) negates a lexical item as an implicit way of alluding to the antonym of the negated word.^[3]

Reason for rejection

- The device is attested in relatively few of the sources examined

Rejection category

Insufficient sources ([Criterion 1](#));

Date

26 August 2026

Chronogram (*al-ta'rikh*)^[4]

Definition

A word or combination of words the numerical equivalents of which add up to the year one wishes to specify.

Reason for rejection

- The device is attested in relatively few of the sources examined
- The sources do not attest to any rhetorical effects caused by this device.

Rejection category

Insufficient sources ([Criterion 1](#)); No rhetorical effects ([Criterion 4](#))

Date

16 August 2026

Flowing Identification (*al-iṭṭirād*)^[5]

Definition

In a single verse, give the praised person's name, laqab, kunya, descriptive title, father's name, grandfather's name, tribe, etc., in their proper genealogical order, as many as possible, without awkwardness or intrusive wording.

Reason for rejection

- The device is attested in relatively few of the sources examined
- The sources do not attest to any rhetorical effects caused by this device.

Rejection category

Insufficient sources ([Criterion 1](#)); No rhetorical effects ([Criterion 4](#))

Date

16 August 2026

Reciprocal Ellipsis (*al-iḥtibāk*)^{[6][7]}

Definition

Two corresponding or contrasting expressions are presented, with an element omitted from each because its counterpart in the other expression indicates the omitted meaning.^[6]

Reason for rejection

- The device is attested in only two of the sources examined.

Rejection category

Insufficient sources ([Criterion 1](#));

Date

27 August 2026

Lipogram (*al-ḥadhḥ*)^[8]

Definition

Definition

"Denying oneself the use of a letter of the alphabet or more, or of all the dotted or undotted letters, or having alternate words consisting entirely of dotted and undotted letters, and so on."^[9]

Reason for rejection

- The device is attested in relatively few of the sources examined
- The sources do not attest to any rhetorical effects caused by this device.

Rejection category

Insufficient sources ([Criterion 1](#)); No rhetorical effects ([Criterion 4](#))

Date

15 August 2026

Lisping (*al-taṣḥīḥ aw al-muntaḥal*)^[10]

Definition

Compose an utterance whose words remain meaningful if systematically mispronounced by someone with a particular speech defect.

Reason for rejection

- The device is attested in relatively few of the sources examined, and this is confirmed by Cachia
- The sources do not attest to any rhetorical effects caused by this device.

Rejection category

Insufficient sources ([Criterion 1](#)); Does not involve a cognitive relationship ([Criterion 3](#)); No rhetorical effects ([Criterion 4](#))

Date

16 August 2026

Onomatopoeia (*al-muḥākāh al-ṣawtiyyah*)^[11]

Definition

Onomatopoeia (*al-muḥākāh al-ṣawtiyya*) involves the symbolism of sounds and the verbalization of noises. Onomatopoeic lexical items can be semantically oriented, such that the sound is interrelated to the meaning of the word.

Reason for rejection

- The device is attested in relatively few of the sources examined
- Onomatopoeia is a genuine linguistic phenomenon in Arabic, but the evidence reviewed does not establish it as a distinct rhetorical device in the Arabic rhetorical tradition.

Rejection category

Insufficient sources ([Criterion 1](#));

Date

26 August 2026

Al-istihzā' (الاستهزاء)^[12]

Definition

The communicator indirectly rebukes someone by saying something positive while meaning the opposite.

Reason for exclusion

- While well-recognised as a rhetorical effect, Sarcasm operates through evaluative reversal that depends upon other underlying mechanisms such as [Antithesis](#). Since the [Encyclopedia](#) classifies only those phenomena that introduce a distinctive and reproducible structural transformation of linguistic or semantic structure, Sarcasm is treated as an effect arising from shared mechanisms rather than as a standalone rhetorical device.

Alternative annotation to be considered

[Antithesis](#), [Metaphor](#).

[Al-taslīm al-khaṭābī / Epitrope \(التسليم الخطابي\)](#)^[13]

Definition

A rhetorical device in which the speaker appears to concede to an opponent's accusation or argument, only to follow it with a justification, mitigating explanation, or rebuttal. The goal is often to soften opposition or redirect the audience's judgment.

Reason for exclusion

- Rhetorical Concession is an argumentative technique rather than a rhetorical device. It is not found in classical sources of Arabic rhetoric.

[Luzūm Mā Lā Yalzam \(لزوم ما لا يلزم\)](#)^[14]

Definition

A type of embellishment occurring equally in prose and verse, in which the writer or poet voluntarily commits, before the rhyme-letter (*ḥarf al-rawī*) or the prose *fāṣila*, to one or more additional letters that are not technically required. It is also called *al-iltizām*. Al-Qazwīnī defined it as the poet or prose-writer bringing, before the rhyme-letter or *fāṣila*, something that is not obligatory in *sajʿ*. The device is considered among the most difficult of verbal embellishments to produce, yet when it arises spontaneously — with the meaning leading the writer to the form rather than the form leading to the meaning — it counts among the finest qualities of speech.

Reason for exclusion

- The device is found in very few sources.

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