

# THE ONTOLOGY OF SPEECH: EXISTENTIAL DIMENSIONS OF THE SPEAKER- ADDRESSEE DIALECTIC FROM ARABIC ELOQUENCE TO MODERN PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

## A ONTOLOGIA DA FALA: DIMENSÕES EXISTENTES DA DIALÉTICA FALAR- DESTINATÁRIO DA ELOQUÊNCIA ÁRABE À FILOSOFIA MODERNA DA LINGUAGEM

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**Received:** 29 Jan 2025

**Accepted:** 25 May 2025

**Published:** 16 Jul 2025

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**Abstract:** This study examines, through a philosophical lens, the two fundamental poles shaping the existential dialogue underlying language: "I" (the speaker) and "You" (the addressee). Firstly, it interrogates the position of the "I" as the constitutive subject of language; it addresses how the static conception of traditional grammar, which situates this subject as the immutable center of grammatical structure, has undergone transformation in modern linguistic inquiry through the discovery of its contextual, variable, and performative nature. Secondly, it traces the trajectory of the "You" within linguistic thought; the evolution of the "You" from a passive receiver into an indispensable agent of dialogue, where meaning is negotiated, and into the ontological condition of linguistic action, is elucidated both

in structural analyses and within the depths of the communicative context. The study aims to evaluate the transformation in our understanding of language's structure and usage brought about by these two elements, signifying the philosophical insight that language is not merely a system of forms, but rather an intersubjective practice of existence and meaning-making.

**Keywords:** Arabic. Philosophy. Rhetoric. Syntax. Speaker (al-mutakallim). Addressee (al-mukhāṭab).

**Resumo:** Este estudo examina, através de uma lente filosófica, os dois polos fundamentais que moldam o diálogo existencial subjacente à linguagem: "Eu" (o falante) e "Você" (o destinatário). Primeiramente, questiona-se a posição do "Eu" como sujeito constitutivo da linguagem; aborda-se como a concepção estática da gramática tradicional, que situa esse sujeito como o centro imutável da estrutura gramatical, sofreu transformações na investigação linguística moderna por meio da descoberta de sua natureza contextual, variável e performática. Em segundo lugar, traça-se a trajetória do "Você" no pensamento linguístico; a evolução do "Você" de receptor passivo para agente indispensável do diálogo, onde o significado é negociado, e para a condição ontológica da ação linguística, é elucidada tanto em análises estruturais quanto nas profundezas do contexto comunicativo. O estudo visa avaliar a transformação em nossa compreensão da estrutura e do uso da linguagem, provocada por esses dois elementos, significando

a percepção filosófica de que a linguagem não é meramente um sistema de formas, mas sim uma prática intersubjetiva de existência e construção de significado.

**Palavras-chave:** Árabe. Filosofia. Retórica. Sintaxe. Orador (al-mutakallim). Destinatário (al-mukhāṭab).

## 1. Introduction

The epistemological foundation of the discipline of grammar (nahw) is predicated upon four cardinal principles that determine the subject's fundamental ontological positioning within the act of linguistic utterance. Firstly, the recognition of the dialogical nature of speech, thereby centering—with phenomenological attentiveness—the existence and cognitive state of the interlocutor. Secondly, the explication of the semantic structure of discourse through a hermeneutic approach, situated within the contextual framework of the interlocutor's phenomenal reality. Thirdly, the grounding of rhetorical modes and discursive strategies via rational justification (ta'ḥl), commensurate with the interlocutor's epistemic capacity and horizon of comprehension. Finally, the positioning of the utterance's signification as an interpretive act within the dynamic and mutually constitutive realm of intersubjective relations between speaker (mutakallim) and interlocutor. These principles reflect the ontological postulate that language is not merely formal, but is inherently a relational and contextual human praxis.

Within the dialectical process of discourse, when the speaker's intention transcends the mere transmission of knowledge and aims to exert influence upon the other, the formation of a mental representation becomes inevitable. The speaker reconstructs the interlocutor within their own consciousness, akin to charting an epistemological map; apprehending the other's phenomenological position, strata of social existence, and ontological traces of their dispositions, they then construct their utterance upon this representation. This mental projection manifests the speaker's instrumentalization of rhetoric in an endeavor to penetrate the interlocutor's rational and affective spheres. The ultimate objective is to direct the other's volition through the performative force of discourse, secure their epistemic assent, and by instilling that which is conveyed, advance the dialogic process toward a consensual telos. Here, speech ceases to function as a mere communicative instrument and instead transforms into a hermeneutic and persuasion-oriented strategy of existence, deployed by the subject upon the other.

The nature of linguistic forms is inherently rooted in the dynamics of communicative phenomena that inevitably emerge through the dialectical reciprocity between the conscious existence of the speaker and the addressee. The primary objective of early linguistic theorists was

to uncover the structural truths of language through its concrete existential context—namely, the speech act itself. For discourse comes into being not in a void, but through its orientation toward a specific Other; the speaker's intention and rhetorical style are shaped upon the ontological ground of this encounter. In light of the addressee's epistemic state and existential need, the speaker actively transforms the texture of discourse: at times signifying meaning through ellipsis (*ḥazf*), at others bending temporality via repetition to emphasize truth's gravity, elsewhere adding layers of meaning to illuminate the mind's dark labyrinths, or reordering the cosmos of words (*taqdīm*) to demonstrate thought's ontic priority. These acts substantiate that language is not merely a system of signs but a dialogical manifestation of human being-in-the-world (*Dasein*) (al-Sakkāki, 1987).

The primary purpose of this article is to elucidate the significance of the relationship between the speaker (*mukallim*) and the listener (*muḥatab*) as critical elements of the extralinguistic context, and to address this topic in a manner devoid of confusion and error.

## 2. Methodology

This study employs an integrated inductive and analytical methodology, systematically progressing through three core stages. Data collection primarily draws upon classical linguistic sources, utilizing an interdisciplinary approach that encompasses Linguistic Sciences (Philology, Linguistics) and Islamic Sciences (*Nahw*, *Tafsir*, *Fiqh*, *Ulm al-Qur'an*). Subsequently, data processing involves inductively gathering and classifying (taxonomizing) the scientific data, followed by the meticulous construction of a representative sample. This sample selection focused on identifying examples with high demonstrative power that best support the study's core thesis. Finally, the analysis and evaluation phase subjects the selected evidence to rigorous and detailed scrutiny. This analytical process aims to elucidate the diversity and quality of the evidence, scientifically demonstrate its validity and appropriateness in application, and deepen the investigation by testing the coherence of the inductively derived findings against the research subject. In summary, following the inductive classification of interdisciplinary classical data and purpose-driven sample selection, the study conducts an in-depth analytical examination to systematically evaluate the evidence's diversity, validity, and relevance to the research topic.

## 3. Results And Discussion

### 3.1. The Speaker (*Mütekelim*)

The journey of speech begins with the speaker. Meaning emerges through the speaker's intention. According to this view, the text is an element that manifests an idea or an essence originating within the speaker's inner world. The speaker expresses these through words that reflect either their social conditions or their subjective realm. Therefore, since the speaker is the establisher and founder of communication, they occupy the primary central position.

When the speaker first articulates a statement composed of sequentially arranged words, they express an intention inherent within them. Consequently, language can be defined as the process of disclosing and explaining something residing within the individual. As some have stated, "Allah the Exalted created speech solely so that servants might express what arises within them" (al-Zajjāī, 1979).

### **3.2. The Speaker and Their Position in Early Linguistic Studies**

The speaker (mütেকellim) holds a significant position in linguistic studies, both in the early and modern periods. In the early periods, the speaker was referred to as the "agent/originator of speech" (sözün faili), signifying the one who initially produces the utterance. According to Arab linguists, the speaker is considered the primary level in understanding a text (Ibn Jinnī, n.d.).

According to scholars of rhetoric (belagat), the speaker is one who possesses knowledge of the addressee's situation. Consequently, the act of speaking occurs within the framework of their own knowledge repertoire. The speaker processes information in their mind through various cognitive functions and produces their speech orally, ensuring its coherence with the context (Vehdan, 2018).

Grammarians (nahiv alimleri) did not analyze texts in isolation. On the contrary, they derived rulings on numerous linguistic styles by taking the speaker's intention into account. Often, they formulated theoretical rules or explained them through hypothetical examples, assigning a specific context to these examples. A speaker with defined aims and a specific position assigns the addressee a particular status within the framework of the discourse. A rhetorically competent speaker does not elevate the addressee to a status higher than their actual position nor lower them to a status beneath it during their address (Vehdan, 2018).

For instance, Sībawayh examines the topic of the speaker (al-mutakallim) in exhaustive detail, penetrating to the very core of their intention. Proceeding from this, he explains speech by taking into account the speaker's intention and purpose, thereby arriving at a sound and accurate grammatical analysis. In his work al-Kitāb, he provides the following example related to this matter: An Arabic proverb states, **اللَّهُمَّ ضَبْعًا وَذَنْبًا** (My God, may hyenas and wolves devour his/her sheep). In this, the Arabs are invoking a curse upon someone's flocks of sheep. Sībawayh states

that in this proverb, a verb has been elided, and this omitted verb is to be understood as expressing a curse. His evidence is the speaker's intention to curse the destruction of the sheep flocks. The reconstructed elided verb is *اللَّهُمَّ اجْمَعْ وَاجْعَلْ فِيهَا ضَبْعًا وَذَنْبًا* "O God, gather these sheep and set hyenas and wolves upon them!" The circumstance prompting this verbal reconstruction is the speaker's purpose at the moment of uttering this statement (Sībawayh, 1988).

The mention or omission of the speaker's objectives, their advancement or postponement, or the preference for a specific method is not arbitrary. On the contrary, the chosen method serves as an introductory framework for the intended purpose to be conveyed to the addressee (Fethi, 2007).

The speaker's gestures and signs are also regarded as elements constituting a complete, fully-formed language system. In addition to aiding in the discernment of meanings implied by utterances, these elements influence the structure or form of the composition. This is because the speaker's gestures during discourse can convey meanings not explicitly signified by their words. On this matter, al-Jāhīz states: "Words and gestures are complementary; gestures are the speaker's greatest aid and act as their interpreters! They often substitute for words, rendering verbal expression unnecessary." In other words, the speaker's signs and gestures are integral components that contribute to understanding the intended meaning of discourse (al-Jāhīz, 1998).

Sībawayhi explains the role of the speaker's gestures, movements, and facial expressions as follows: 'When you see a person's form, this serves as contextual evidence (dalīl) for you to recognize that person, leading you to say, "By God, 'Abd Allāh!" This statement implies, "This (هذا hādhā) is 'Abd Allāh" or "That (ذلك dhālika) is 'Abd Allāh." In this utterance, 'Abd Allāh is elided (mahdhūf). The reconstructed form (taqdīr) of the sentence is *هذا عبد الله* (Hādhā 'Abd Allāh - This is 'Abd Allāh) or *ذلك عبد الله* (Dhālika 'Abd Allāh - That is 'Abd Allāh). Similarly, when you hear a voice and recognize its owner, this recognition serves as evidence for you, causing you to state with certainty, "This person is Zayd [sic]." Here too, ellipsis occurs; its reconstructed form is *هذا زيد* (Hādhā Zayd - This is Zayd)' (Sībawayhi, 1988). The factor enabling this ellipsis is the speaker's facial expressions, gestures, and the signs or indications the addressee infers from observing the speaker during the utterance.

The speaker's mental state is one of the factors that leads to the omission (ellipsis) of certain elements constituting the utterance and its structure, or to the addition of elements. This is because the speaker constructs the utterance according to their mental state and arranges and

assembles the building blocks of the utterance accordingly. Language serves as an expression of the feelings that envelop humans in specific situations and forms (Alsalih, 2022).

Early scholars of Arabic rhetoric (*balāghah*) and grammar (*naḥw*) have asserted that the speaker has a significant influence on the comprehension of meaning. Furthermore, they emphasized that knowledge of the speaker's personality, psychological state, and position (social/contextual standing) assists the addressee in accurately understanding the intended meaning of the utterance and in distinguishing between different styles.

### **3.3. The Position of the Speaker from a Contemporary Linguistic Perspective**

Speech remains concealed within the speaker's inner world until it is articulated. Consequently, language carries all the feelings and intentions that the speaker wishes to convey to the listener. For this reason, Edward Sapir (d. 1939) defines language as "a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires" (Avech, 2000).

Modern language researchers recognize that the speaker holds a significant share of agency in linguistic inquiry. Some scholars even attribute a central linguistic position to the speaker. An example of this is the emotive position (*infial konum*). That is, the emotive position refers to the intentions expressing the speaker's stance at the moment of utterance. These represent a presentation of impressions arising from a specific reaction, such as affirmation or denial (Jacobson, 1988; Chiro, 1994).

According to Bloomfield, meaning resides in the speaker's situational context during speech and the reaction deemed necessary by the addressee. Speech results from a situation that prompts the individual to express what exists within their mind and inner world (Şenuka, 2008; Malberch, 2010).

Firth posits that accessing true meaning is only possible by understanding the speaker's position, culture, religious affiliations, social status, and life circumstances. For all these elements will find their echo in the speech emanating from the speaker (al-Sa'ran, n.d.).

The speaker is also one of the fundamental focal points of pragmatic language theory, a major subfield of linguistics. Pragmatic language theory examines the speaker's intention (*kast*) and the underlying factors motivating their speech. Research concerning intention inevitably leads to understanding the speaker (al-Shahri, 2004).

In communication theory, the speaker's intention (*mütekellimin maksadı*) is regarded as the essence of the communicative act. Research in this context focuses on examining the sender's presuppositions, the tools for generating discourse, the speaker's objectives, their impact on

speech, the influence of personal and social contexts on these objectives, and the perception of these principles (al-Shahri, 2004).

Within text linguistics, the concept of "intentionality" introduced by modern linguists holds significant importance. Contemporary linguists use this term to denote the goal a speaker aims to achieve through their utterance. This purpose is considered one of the most crucial clues for interpreting the meaning of verbal expression. Furthermore, this concept has gained widespread prominence in current linguistic studies. Researchers argue that any text must inherently contain three fundamental elements (Debochrand-Daresler, 1992; Shibl, 2009):

1. The Speaker/Addresser (mütekellim): As the originator or producer of the text, the speaker is an intentional agent who delivers a coherent text with specific aims or purposes.
2. The Addressee/Recipient (muhatap): The receiver bears the responsibility of discerning the speaker's explicit and implicit intentions and decoding the textual cues.
3. The Text: Serves as a channel connecting the speaker's intent with the addressee's comprehension.

In most modern linguistic theories and schools, the speaker occupies a central position. Indeed, some theories are fundamentally constructed around the speaker's intention. These theories emphasize that understanding the speaker's situation and position aids in comprehending their purpose. Thus, the speaker emerges as a pivotal element in linguistic analysis.

### **3.4. Intentionality in Light of Early Linguistic Studies**

Intentionality (kasıt), as a conscious instinct, compels the speaking subject (mütekellim) to speak. Since the focal point for accessing meaning is knowing the contextual requirements of the situation (muktezayı hâl), grasping the true intended meaning necessitates comprehending the purposes of the speaking subject. This can only be achieved through an integration of language and its usages; the starting point for this is knowing the speaker, for knowing the speaker enables access to their purpose. Intentionality, being the hidden meaning within the speaker's innermost being, may remain implicit even when the speaking subject expresses it through specific linguistic patterns or compositional forms. The objective of the speaking subject here is, in some way, to make their intention comprehensible to the addressee.

According to some scholars, the speaking subject (mütekellim) is the person who speaks or the originator of the utterance. Meaning is often what the speaker intends or what constitutes their focal point. On the other hand, meaning emerges through the manifestation of the intentions accompanying the utterance and through the signification of impulses within the individual's inner world (Afifi, 2001; Vavrzenyak, 2003). Others define the speaking subject as the one who



articulates their utterance through the reflection – whether real or hypothetical – of elements from their inner world, such as their state, intention, will, and belief, upon themselves (al-Ḥafājī, 1932). The state (ḥāl) in which the speaking subject finds themselves while directing their address to the addressee has a significant impact on the formation of meaning and the understanding of what is intended by the utterance; this intention (kasit) constitutes the foundation of communication and message delivery. On this matter, Ibn Khaldūn states: "Language, as an expression of the speaker's intention, is generally accepted to be a linguistic act deriving from what is intended by the expression of the utterance" (Ibn Khaldūn, 1988).

All of this demonstrates that the meaning carried by a text, particularly its hidden significance beyond the words themselves, cannot be grasped through superficial reading alone. To access this deeper meaning, it is essential to account for the various elements that play a role in the process of meaning formation. These include: the identity of the speaker, the place and time of utterance, the circumstances surrounding the discourse, the addressee, and finally, the reasoning methods employed by the addressee when analyzing the text.

The ancient scholars, despite differences in their approaches and priorities, unanimously agreed that a text or utterance must carry intention (qasd) in order to possess meaning; for without intention, words are merely vain noise devoid of any benefit or significance.

Consequently, linguists have emphasized the importance of comprehending the meaning behind speech. Abu Hilal al-Askari highlighted the connection between speech and the speaker's underlying purpose or objective (ghāyah). According to him, the superficial meaning (maʿnā) is what the words denote, while the true purpose (ghāyah) is the ultimate goal sought through the utterance. Indeed, the term ghāyah (purpose) is used because it resembles an archer's target aimed at by the arrow. Just as the arrow is directed towards its target, speech is directed towards this ultimate purpose intended for the addressee (al-Askari, n.d.).

Al-Jahiz states on this matter: "The fundamental task and purpose towards which both the speaker and the listener direct themselves is understanding and being understood. Making an intent comprehensible is achieved by presenting it clearly. This clear exposition is al-bayān (lucidity of expression)" (al-Jahiz, 1998). It is crucial to underscore the significance of this point. True communication between speaker and listener is only achieved when the listener fully understands what the speaker means. This is why, when a speaker can clearly articulate their objective and convey their thought effectively, they are considered highly successful in both effective speech (balāghah - rhetorical eloquence) and lucid expression (bayān).



Intentionality is one of the foundational principles upon which Arabic rhetoric (*balāghah*) is built. Indeed, the science of rhetoric classifies styles according to the speaker's (*mutakallim*) intentions and purposes. Rhetoricians have stressed that every stylistic deviation or transcendence of the apparent meaning of the word (*lafz*) only gains significance as an expression of a specific purpose (*maqsūd*) in the speaker's mind. For this reason, it has been said, "The science of rhetoric (*ilm al-balāghah*) is the knowledge of purposes (*maqāsid*)"; for a person speaks in order to convey an objective within their inner world. The more clearly and effectively the speaker can present this objective, the greater their *fasāhah* (linguistic mastery) becomes, and the more they are described by people as *baligh* (eloquent and proficient speaker) (Ibn Jinnī, 1994).

Understanding the speaker's (*mutakallim*) intent depends on three things (al-Najjar, 2013):

1. Words and Their Meanings: If a word (*lafz*) carries the potential for multiple meanings, comprehending the intended meaning naturally becomes difficult.
2. The Speaker Themselves: For all the elements pertaining to the speaker – such as their knowledge, the objective they intend with their speech, the degree of truthfulness in their statement, and their expressive styles – directly influence the understanding of the utterance's purpose.
3. The Addressee: As the identity of the addressee (*mukhāṭab*) changes, so too does the meaning. This variation is shaped by the individual's intelligence, comprehension capacity, culture, and the extent of their mastery over the tools that enable them to analyze speech to achieve their own objectives.

One of the fundamental goals of Arabic linguistic research is to investigate methodologies that ensure meaning (*ma'nā*) is obtained accurately, completely, and free from ambiguity or confusion.

### **3.5. The Principle of Purposeful Design and Composition through Selection**

Ibn al-Athīr states that a master of the art of eloquence (*bayān*) who wishes to produce effective speech or writing requires three fundamental elements. First, individual words must be selected and arranged. Prior to their combination, these words are evaluated individually, much like scattered tools; each one is either preferred for use or rejected. The second element is the harmonious integration of the selected words; each word must be juxtaposed with others commensurate with its semantic value. The third and most crucial element is the essential intended meaning and purpose of the utterance, which may manifest in different forms. This meaning functions like the thread that holds the stones of a well-crafted necklace together and shapes them. This thread (i.e., the core idea) sometimes takes the form of a crown worn on the head, sometimes

a necklace hung around the neck, and sometimes an earring worn on the ear. Although the mode of expression varies, its fundamental function remains to hold the text together and give it its final form (Ibn al-Athīr, 2004). Words gain value only when combined with other words similar to them. Similarly, related words can only display their beauty within a harmonious lexical structure. This structure, in turn, demonstrates its worth and perfection only when it manifests in the place and form required by the utterance.

Ibn Jinnī's approach on this matter aligns with this perspective. He explains: "The fundamental framework and root elements of words are like an exhibition space where they are presented for use. Words await the selection of language users within this space. This situation resembles placing and presenting a commodity before its owner" (Ibn Jinnī, n.d.). This statement indicates that the speaker possesses unrestricted freedom of choice within the linguistic domain. Speakers producing an utterance for the first time investigate words within their language that fit the given context and ultimately select the most suitable for themselves, namely the one that best serves their purpose. When they wish to form these words into sentences, they arrange them in an order that maximizes the value added to the intended meaning. At every stage of this process, they adhere to the structural rules of the language and the established conventions of the speech community. Consequently, they adopt the linguistic elements that most accurately reflect the meaning and express it most effectively. This work has two stages: selection (*tercih*) and compositional organization (*te'lif*).

### **3.5.1. Choice**

Utterance emerges as a result of the speaker's linguistic choices. This is because the speaker selects at will from among the linguistic units capable of conveying the meanings circulating in their mind. Subsequently, they cast these units into pre-existing grammatical patterns within their mind to formulate their unique style. As a result of this entire process, the utterance—a purposeful composite of selections made from mutually intelligible linguistic elements—is formed (Fadl, 1998). This process of choice is further subdivided into two categories:

#### **3.5.1.1. Lexical Selection**

The speaker (*mukallim*) first selects the words from the language that are most appropriate for the meaning they intend to express. Subsequently, they combine these words and integrate their conceptual meanings in accordance with the logical requirements of the intellect. That is, they choose a word from the general repository of the language for the utterance they wish to make. They then arrange these selected words such that they fully align with the intended thought and

are correctly positioned within the structural elements of the sentence (e.g., subject, predicate, object, etc.) (al-Musiddi, n.d.).

### 3.5.1.2. Grammatical Choice

While the selection of the words of a language is made according to the requirements of reason, the arrangement of these words and their harmonious combination require not only adherence to rational requirements but also consideration of grammatical meanings.

When formulating an utterance, the speaker seeks to cast their thoughts into the linguistic patterns of the language. To achieve this, they select a specific word arrangement (pattern) that is appropriate to and fulfills the requirement of the intended meaning. However, the ability to do so is only possible to the extent of their knowledge and comprehension of the patterns and usage conventions of their own language (Alsalih, 2022).

### 3.5.2. Composition (Ta'lif)

Speech does not consist of randomly arranged, disconnected words. For words to fulfill their intended function, they must be purposefully assembled within a specific grammatical relational framework. Words used in isolation, in their bare forms, carry only their fundamental (lexical) meanings and convey no further significance. However, when combined with other words to form syntactic compounds—such as the subject (fā'il), object (maf'ul), genitive construct (idāfa), circumstantial qualifier (hāl), or adjective (ṣifa)—and arranged in a manner that enables the listener to comprehend the intended meaning and respond appropriately (by remaining silent), these words acquire new meanings (functional/syntactic meanings) due to their positions and relationships. These meanings—subject, object, adjective, etc.—emerge from the grammatical connections between words within the syntactic structure. Such meanings are not inherent in individual words; isolated words possess only potential, latent meanings. The syntactic meanings of words are actualized solely through their relational association with other words and the establishment of a cause-effect nexus between them (al-Dāmīn, 197).

Grammarians (naḥw scholars) employ the term "ta'lif" (composition) in a highly specific sense. To them, ta'lif denotes the integration of a sentence's constituents or words to manifest a specific syntactic function. This is achieved through the congruent and appropriate use of two elements relative to one another (al-Khaṭīb, n.d.).

The speaker expresses the hidden dimensions of their thoughts, inner emotional fluctuations, and true intentions through speech. Consequently, speech in this process is governed

by communicative intent (*maqṣad*), as intentions may vary, and the structure of speech adapts accordingly. As previously noted, speech formation relies on two fundamental stages:

1. The Selection Stage: Here, the speaker selects the words most suitable for conveying their intended meaning.

2. The Composition/Structuration Stage (*Tarkīb/Taʿlīf*): Here, the speaker combines these selected words to construct sentences, forming meaningful arrangements that communicate their intent to the recipient.

### **3.6. Intention and Departure from the Norm (*Udûl*)**

Derived from the Arabic verb meaning "to turn away from something" (*Lisān al-ʿArab*), the term "*udûl*" (deviation, departure), when employed as a literary and rhetorical term, signifies the poet or writer's divergence from the standard structures and rules established by the linguistic system. It represents a departure from the routine usages of ordinary speech (Ibn Manẓūr, 1993).

When formulating an utterance, the speaker (*mukallim*) analyzes both internal (personal) and external (environmental) conditions. This analysis aims to determine the situation in which the utterance will be made and to select the appropriate style. The outcome of this process is the speaker's use of language deemed most suitable to the prevailing conditions; at times, this may even involve creating novel and original usages from existing linguistic units, which the speaker believes perfectly convey the intended meaning.

Language serves as a resource for the speaker. Words and the logical relationships between them constitute the shared mental wealth of the speech community. However, each individual utilizes this resource in a unique manner. This personal style (*uslūb*) is shaped by factors such as the individual's: beliefs, knowledge acquired from their social environment, and intellectual accumulation gained through personal effort.

In constructing an utterance and selecting contextually appropriate expressions, the speaker synthesizes all these internal and external factors (i.e., the situational analysis, the resource nature of language, and their own personal linguistic habits) (Orekyiony, 2007).

The foundation of rhetorical studies (*ʿilm al-balāghah*) lies in examining the phenomenon of the speaker (*mukallim*) opting for an alternative usage instead of adhering to the fundamental linguistic rule (*aṣl*) prescribed by grammarians (*nuḥāh*), an act termed "*udûl*". This choice is made to evoke subtle nuances and shades of meaning. Indeed, the motivation behind using a word in a way that differs from its apparent, dictionary meaning (*ẓāhir*) is either the speaker's concern for

rhetorical effectiveness (*balāghah*) or the desire to express a specific underlying rationale (*‘illah*) (Ibn al-Sarrāj, n.d.).

While investigating the reasons why Arab speakers might abandon conventional rhetorical figures, scholars of eloquence (*‘ulamā’ al-balāghah*) concluded that the Qur'an is miraculous (*mu‘jiz*) in terms of its structural composition (*naẓm*). For although the Qur'an is composed of Arabic words and adheres to Arabic grammatical rules, it is unparalleled in the manner (*tabīr*) it achieves its communicative purpose and in its masterful diversity of styles. Similarly, in terms of its expressive methods (*usūl*), it surpasses all other forms of expression. Moreover, its profound structural density (*inshā’i yoğunluk*) evokes admiration in the reader and compels them to strive for deep comprehension, contemplation, and understanding (al-Jurjānī, 2004).

‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī locates the value of an utterance in: the apt selection of words for the context (*al-muwāfaqah*), their harmonious arrangement (*naẓm*), and ultimately, their perfect integration with the intended meaning (*ma’nā*). For him, the primary objective is not merely the grammatical sequencing (*naḥw*) of words, but rather the logical interrelation and harmonious integration (*ittisāl*) of their meanings. Al-Jurjānī emphasizes that this perfect harmony can only be achieved through "naẓm" – the conscious and deliberate ordering of words. He further contends that the foundation of *naẓm* lies in grammatical rules (*qawā’id al-naḥw*), adherence to which is paramount and whose boundaries must not be transgressed (al-Jurjānī, 2004).

A true master of speech (*mukallim*) possesses the discernment to recognize the style required by each subject matter, distinguishes its various aspects, and selects the most appropriate style for each situation. The criterion for judging and preferring one type of structural composition (*naẓm*) over another is the speaker's ability to place meanings precisely in their rightful position. The preference for one type over another depends on the relationships between these types and the manner of their combined usage. This competence relates to the speaker's mastery in the following areas:

1. Discovery of Subtle Styles: The capacity to uncover subtle stylistic nuances that are latent (*makhfiyah*), unambiguous (*lā tūqif*), and boundless (*lā ḥadd lahā*).

2. Skill in Style Management: The proficiency to expertly employ these styles.

Synthesis for Novel Meaning: The ability to generate new meanings by synthesizing different styles, while remaining within the boundaries of the fundamental meanings established by grammatical (*naḥw*) rules (al-Jurjānī, 2004).

### 3.7. The Addressee (*Muhatap*)

The speaker (*mütekellim*) delivers their message purposefully, directly targeting both the mind and the heart of the addressee. In this dynamic, the speaker is the source and sender of the message, while the addressee is the individual to whom the speech is directed, for whom it is uttered, and whose very presence necessitates the emergence of the utterance. The speaker's core competency hinges on the objective of conveying the message. This competency is measured by their ability to direct the addressee towards the message and to elicit the desired effect within them. For without an addressee, the speaker would neither transform their speech into sound nor feel the need to articulate it into expressions (al-Suhayli, 1992). It is through this structured relationship between speaker and addressee that meanings are comprehended and intentions are revealed (Ismail, 2011).

The primary reason for the speaking subject (*mütekellim*) to produce speech is the aim of conveying it to an addressee. Consequently, even if a specific individual is not physically present, the speaker imagines a recipient for their utterance. From this perspective, the addressee is considered an active participant within the linguistic domain. Indeed, although speech originates from the speaker's mind and thoughts, it undergoes a dual shaping: the first is the speaker's communicative objective, and the second is the addressee's circumstances, social position, and status (al-Suhayli, 1992).

The encounter between speaker and listener occurs at the point where speech is actualized within the text. Speech, on the one hand, expresses the speaker's method of organizing thoughts (their compositional approach in discourse) and their manner of interconnecting these ideas. On the other hand, it reveals the speaker's competence in correctly apprehending the context and appropriately situating the listeners (addressees). Furthermore, it demonstrates the quality of the style's suitability both to the immediate context and to the addressee (Ismail, 2011).

Although the full resources of the language are available to the speaker, lexical choices and style are constrained by context and the characteristics of the target audience. Therefore, an effective speaker must meticulously analyze the listener's situation when structuring their speech; they must account for all variables, including linguistic variations among individuals and groups. These elements manifest as multi-layered meanings in speech patterns, word choices, and terminology usage. It is through these layers of meaning that speech succeeds in conveying its message most effectively and leaving a lasting impact on the listener (al-Kassab, 2016).

These variables to which the speaker must adhere indicate not only that style is intrinsically linked to its producer but also that style is a social phenomenon. For style takes the addressee into

account, observes their position, and consequently, the utterance is shaped with words appropriate to them (Ghazaleh, 2003; Ayyashi, 2002).

### 3.7.1. The Addressee and Its Position in Early Linguistic Studies

In the Arabic literary tradition, the concept of the addressee (*muhatap*) permeates all foundational fields—including syntax (*nahw*), rhetoric (*balāgha*), and literary criticism—elevating it to a central role that supersedes even the speaker (*mukallim*). Scholars placed paramount importance on deeply understanding the addressee's objectives in this dialectical relationship, meticulously accounting for their immediate state (*ḥāl*) and social standing (*maqām*) (al-Sakkākī, 1987).

Certain thinkers argue that one who wishes to speak eloquently (*zarīf*, refined) must be thoroughly acquainted with the condition and nature of their audience. For the manner required when addressing an intelligent person differs from that needed when speaking to a fool (*ahmaq*); each scenario demands its own distinct approach (al-Sakkākī, 1987).

For effective communication, the addressee must be considered not only in stylistic techniques like explicit mention vs. omission (*dhikr-ḥadhf*) and foregrounding vs. backgrounding (*taqdīm-ta'khīr*), but also in all expressive features—such as definiteness vs. indefiniteness (*ta'rif-tankīr*), concision vs. prolixity (*ījāz-iṭnāb*), literary patterns, and clarity vs. ambiguity—that ensure the message is conveyed harmoniously and powerfully (Alṣāliḥ, 2022).

Ibn Rashīq (d. 463/1071), in his work *al-ʿUmda*, defines the purpose of poetry as follows:

"The core objective of poetry is to grasp the expectations and intentions of the audience/target recipients, enabling it to attain the status it deserves within the cosmic order. This is the secret and ultimate aim of the art of poetry. Poets diverge and excel over one another in achieving this goal" (Ibn Rashīq, 1981; Gezer, 2024).

The essence of poetry lies in understanding its reader. Thus, poetry is composed to suit its addressees and their contextual circumstances.

Al-Jāḥiẓ (1998) states: "When a person values every situation appropriately, acts according to its demands, and satisfies others as one who understands the worth of speech, then the dissatisfaction of envious or hostile individuals regarding flaws unnoticed by you cannot tarnish you. For nothing can satisfy them."

One who comprehends people's states and tailors speech accordingly possesses true refinement.



It is evident that early scholars (mutaqaddimīn ‘ulamā’) encouraged the speaker to consider the intellectual and cultural levels of their audience. The speaker must understand the values of meanings and how they relate to the addressee’s position and states. Unique discourse is designated for each stratum of addressees, and an appropriate rhetorical stance (maqām) is determined for each state (ḥāl). Thus, the value of speech is apportioned according to the value of meanings, meanings according to the value of contexts, and the addressee’s value according to the value of states (al-Jāḥiẓ, 1998).

This approach asserts that the speaker (mukallim) must maintain balance among the positions of their audience (muḥatap) and address each according to their situation. For instance, ordinary people should not be addressed as elites would be; each social stratum has its distinct mode of address.

Al-Jāḥiẓ (1965) explains how speech should be measured against the addressee’s values and how diction should adapt to their identity:

"As I contemplated the art of discourse, I considered using specialized terminology when conversing with masters of this craft and theologians (mutakallimūn). For they grasp these concepts better than I, and such a style is less burdensome to them. Remember: every profession and art has its own terminology, established over time among practitioners after other words were tested and discarded. These terms become integral only after harmony and mutual understanding emerge within the group. Hence, it is never appropriate for a speaker or writer to employ the dense, technical language of theologians in a formal address, letter, conversation with common folk or merchants, or daily dialogue with family and servants. For every context (maqām, environment, addressee) requires its own discourse, and every art has its distinct style."

Thus, speaking uniformly in all situations is impossible. The speaker must calibrate their discourse to the audience’s environment, cultural background, and cognitive capacity. Failure to achieve this alignment inevitably creates a disconnect between speaker and addressee (Mabrūk, n.d.).

For effective communication, speakers must account for their interlocutor’s knowledge and social status. This awareness enables apt word choice for timely speech and appropriate style. The same principle applies to writing: authors should adjust vocabulary and expressions to both their own position and the recipient’s status. For example, addressing ordinary people with obscure, complex language or cultured individuals with simplistic, mundane language is incorrect. One’s address must be grounded in the audience’s standing (Ibn Qutayba, 1988).

Islamic scholars adopted as core principles that speech must be comprehensible (through addressee awareness), clear, meaningful, and free of ambiguity or confusion. Some scholars reinforced this by defining speech (*kalām*) explicitly as "that which is heard and understood" (Ibn Fāris, 1910).

Due to their emphasis on the addressee, Muslim scholars adapted rhetorical style to the audience's condition, categorizing them into three primary groups:

1. Those lacking prior knowledge (*lā 'indahū 'ilm*),
2. The doubtful (*mutashakkik*),
3. The rejecter (*munkir*) (*al-Sakkākī*, 1987).

This demonstrates the speaker's attention to the addressee's psychological state. Thus, an eloquent speaker anticipates the impact (positive or negative) of their words; a person may be receptive in one state but not in another. Speech must therefore be shaped by the addressee's condition. A skilled speaker "chooses what the moment demands," heeds the audience's psychology, and seeks their affection—aligning with their preferences (even against their own views) while meticulously avoiding displeasing or jarring expressions (Ibn Rashīq, 1981; *al-Qalqashandī*, n.d.).

The transmission of meaning to the addressee is a cornerstone of Arabic linguistic sciences, as the ultimate goal of all discourse is to convey the intended meaning (*murād*). Syntacticians (*nahwiyyūn*), for instance, deemed it improper to begin a sentence with an indefinite noun (*nakira*), as such constructions lack clarity. The primary purpose of declarative speech (*khabar*) is to convey new information to the addressee (*Sībawayhi*, 1988; *Ibn al-Sarrāj*, n.d.).

The addressee is central because speech is constructed for and directed to them. Thus, anyone explicating, analyzing, or complicating discourse must position the addressee mentally, account for their state, and accord them their due status. *Sībawayhi* (1988) notes:

"Arabs omit what could be stated explicitly to lighten discourse—because the addressee already knows the intent."

According to *Ibn al-Sarrāj* (n.d.), ellipsis (*ḥadhf*) is pervasive in Arabic. Eloquent Arabs frequently prefer concision (*ijāz*), especially when the addressee's comprehension is certain. Hence, the addressee's discernment and state provide a powerful contextual clue (*qarīna*) enabling omission.

This reflects the addressee-centered nature of Arabic usage. Syntacticians used this knowledge as an analytical clue, and a rhetorician may simplify or omit an element only when

certain the addressee understands the discourse, grasps the intended meaning, and discerns its nuances (al-Shāwīsh, 2001).

Knowing the addressee is a fundamental pillar of speech and a key contextual clue for comprehension. Speakers must consider the addressee's state (e.g., knowledge of a topic) to structure discourse accordingly (Sībawayhi, 1988). Speech is molded to enable meaning extraction or new knowledge transmission. Thus, meaning cannot be fully grasped from text alone; it requires accounting for the speaker, addressee, and all contextual clues.

In rhetoric (*bayān*), declarative speech (*khavar*) is shaped by the addressee's state—doubt, certainty, denial, or acceptance. Accordingly, it is delivered as:

- *Ibtidā'ī* (to one in a state of ignorance),
- *Tālābī* (to one seeking information),
- *Inkāri* (to a denier).

Similarly, when a declarative must be interpreted beyond its apparent meaning (*ẓāhir*), the addressee's psychological and mental state is decisive (al-Qaṣṣāb, 2016).

If a "declarative proposition" (*ḥukm khavarī*) references something presented to the addressee, they may be treated as if they had inquired—even without asking. In this position, the addressee may be viewed as experiencing hesitation (Kazwīnī, 1993). Transcending the apparent meaning relies on contextual indicators arising from the addressee's psychological state.

The rhetoric of restriction (*qasr*) has distinct types: *ifrād*, *ta'yīn*, and *qalb*. Each addresses addressees in specific psychological states, necessitating attention to their features (al-Taftāzānī, n.d.). *Iltifāt* (grammatical shift) is a technique where the speaker shifts pronouns (e.g., I/you/he, we/you/they) while considering the addressee's state. For example, shifting from direct address (2nd person) to third person aims to awaken the addressee's attention, ensuring deeper engagement.

A speaker may foreground (*taqdīm*) what ought to be backgrounded (*ta'khīr*) due to addressee-related reasons—such as encouragement, the addressee's greater inclination toward the foregrounded element, or resolving confusion in their mind (al-Sakkākī, 1987).

### **3.7.2. The Position of the Addressee from a Contemporary Linguistic Perspective**

Modern linguistic research, particularly in communication theory, emphasizes the decisive role of the addressee in speech acts. Contemporary linguists have recognized that the characteristics of both the speaker and the listener influence discourse. Shifts in discourse and

stylistic variations are largely shaped by the addressee's status, knowledge, and context (al-Khālīdī, 2002).

The addressee constitutes a fundamental element of the communication process and a key participant in communicative activity. According to Roman Jakobson (d. 1982), a literary text is a message conveyed by the author (sender) to the receiver through a specific communication channel using a shared linguistic system. In communicative activity, the message's orientation toward the receiver necessitates its comprehensibility (Jakobson, 1988). The speaker aims to make the message intelligible to the receiver (without their input) and to influence them (Repfater, 1993).

The speaker seeks to render the message understandable and impactful for the receiver without involving them as a co-participant. This "intelligibility and influence" function is most concretely embodied in patterns of supplication (dua) and command (emir). These patterns are distinguished by structural features in their composition, stylistic variations in tone, and differences in intonation. Consequently, each pattern possesses a unique syntactic form and stylistic/intonational quality that allows it to be distinctly differentiated from the other (Jakobson, 1988).

Following the decline of structuralist influence, the receiver (reader) assumed a central role in literary and critical studies. Researchers argue that the process of seeking meaning within language continues until the reader fully grasps the text and determines its significance (al-Ruwaylī, 2002; Tilkitaş, 2025).

According to this perspective, style is a phenomenon shaped by the speaker's cultural identity and constructed only through its evocation and evaluation in the addressee's mind; its determinative factor is its impact on the receiver. Some scholars even define the meaning of style through its effects and the reactions it triggers in the addressee. Hence, they describe style as "the ensemble of linguistic colors that discourse adopts to persuade, entertain, capture attention, and stimulate the reader's imagination" (al-Mūsiddī, n.d.).

This approach defines style based on its effect on the receiver. From this viewpoint, the purpose of style is to foreground specific elements in the chain of discourse and direct the reader's attention to them. When the reader fails to notice these elements, they misinterpret the text; when they discern them, they reveal the distinctive features inherent to the text. Thus, the reader concludes that the discourse is expressible and the style is transparent, for style is constructed relative to the addressee to whom the discourse is directed (al-Mūsiddī, n.d.; Ünal, 2020; Tilkitaş, 2023).

Thinkers affiliated with the pragmatic school of linguistics, like several other schools, attribute great importance to the communicative bond between speaker and addressee. This approach emphasizes the necessity of principles ensuring that the message is transmitted clearly from speaker to listener without ambiguity or obscurity. The principle of "expressivity," a cornerstone of pragmatics, is prominent in this context. It aims for the listener to derive meaning or practical utility from discourse and for the message to be conveyed in a way that most strongly reflects the speaker's intent. For the listener to extract meaning from discourse is the most fundamental requirement of language's practical use (Şalih, 2001; Ünal, 2020).

From the latter half of the twentieth century, interest in the reader in literary texts expanded beyond the impact of the author's style. Instead, the reader began to be seen as a co-participant in the art of the text. With the emergence of Reception Theory (Rezeptionästhetik), developed by Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser, this approach gained significant ground in criticism. The theory centers the receiver (reader) in the interpretation of the text, emphasizing their role as a constitutive element—no less than the creator of the text—thereby expanding the receptive space before the text (Howl, 1992).

This theoretical framework regards the existence and meaning of the text as products of an active dialogic process between the text and the reader's cognitive and cultural background (knowledge, experience, beliefs, and thoughts). Consequently, the theory treats the text prior to this active interpretive interaction as a potential yet not fully "living" entity ('Abd al-Nāşir, n.d; Ünal, 2016).

Readers differ in their backgrounds, cognitive frameworks, and inclinations. Thus, their interpretations of a text naturally diverge and may even appear contradictory. Every text is therefore open to multiple meanings and varied readings; each new reading represents a rebirth of the text.

One of the key findings of modern linguistic research is the critical importance of the addressee (receiver/listener/reader). These studies clearly demonstrate that the addressee is not merely a considered element in many approaches but a fundamental component central to certain research paradigms. Indeed, some linguistic analyses are explicitly constructed upon the concept of the addressee.

#### 4. Conclusion

The word always originates from the speaker (*mütekellim*). Meaning takes shape and materializes through their intention and purpose. In light of this fundamental reality, the text serves as an instrument for the external expression of an idea or essence germinating within the speaker's inner world. The speaker articulates these internal elements through words that reflect their social conditions, context, and psychological world. Consequently, as the element that lays the foundation for and establishes communication, the speaker has indisputably occupied the primary and central position in this process.

The early scholars (*mütekaddimîn*) of rhetoric (*belagat*) and grammar (*nahiv*) emphasized the speaker's central role in comprehending speech. They asserted that knowledge of the speaker's personality, psychological state, and position would greatly assist the addressee (*muhatap*) in accurately grasping the intended meaning of the utterance and in distinguishing between different styles.

In many modern linguistic theories, the speaker occupies a central position as the key element of linguistic analysis, particularly within approaches that prioritize their intent (*kasit*) and purpose (*maksud*).

Within the Arabic literary tradition, the addressee (*muhatap*) has risen to the status of a central, active subject supplanting the speaker, permeating all fundamental disciplines such as grammar (*nahiv*), rhetoric (*belagat*), and criticism. Within this dialectical relationship, scholars have adopted as a fundamental principle the deep comprehension of the addressee's objectives and the meticulous consideration of their state (*hal*) and position (*makam*).

Thus, contemporary linguistic studies clearly demonstrate that the addressee is not merely a passive recipient but a fundamental component situated at the heart of communication; indeed, some approaches are directly built upon this concept.

Consequently, due to the differences among readers, every text is inevitably open to a plurality of meanings and even contradictory interpretations; this has rendered each new reading akin to a rebirth of the text.

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