

REFERRING STRUCTURES AND THEIR ROLE IN ACHIEVING  
TEXTUAL MEANING AND COHERENCE:  
A READING OF A 'YŪN AL-BASĀ'IR BY MUḤAMMAD AL-BASHĪR AL-  
IBRĀHĪMĪ

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**Abstract:**

Arabic linguists have referred to cohesion devices such as reference, conjunction, ellipsis, repetition, parallelism, and substitution throughout their studies. These are among the most prominent cohesive devices that contribute to the coherence and interconnectedness of a text.

This article seeks to present reference as one of the most important formal cohesive devices through selected examples from the articles collected in A 'yūn al-Basā'ir (Eyes of Insight), the work under investigation. Reference appears to be a dominant mechanism in the text, affecting the articulation of its various components. The study aims to highlight the role of reference and the way in which it contributes, as a cohesive mechanism, to textual cohesion and organization through its surface structures, thereby revealing the articles in the remarkable form created by the master of eloquence, Shaykh Muḥammad al-Bashīr al-Ibrāhīmī, in his work A 'yūn al-Basā'ir.

The central questions are: What is the concept of reference linguistically and terminologically? What are its types? And how did reference, as a cohesive device, contribute to achieving textual coherence in the articles of A 'yūn al-Basā'ir by Muḥammad al-Bashīr al-Ibrāhīmī?

**Keywords:** reference; A 'yūn al-Basā'ir; textual reference; pronominal reference; context.

**1. Introduction:**

Reference is a textual linguistic phenomenon and one of the most frequently occurring cohesive linking devices in literary texts. It combines such linking resources as third-person pronouns, demonstratives, and relative pronouns. It contributes to linking the different parts of a text. Robert de Beaugrande regarded it as one of the important alternatives for achieving textual competence and for clarifying the essential features of this textual concept.

On the basis of the foregoing, we seek to examine the text selected for study as a creative text in order to determine its coherence and cohesion through a formal mechanism. We identify its elements and devices, analyze them, and demonstrate their effects within the corpus, since reference is one of the most important keys available to the researcher for entering the structure of a text and analyzing it.

**2. Reference in A 'yūn al-Basā'ir and Its Role in Textual Connectedness:**

By extending its analysis beyond the sentence, text linguistics enables multiple possibilities of understanding and interpretation. This is an attempt, insofar as possible, to study A 'yūn al-Basā'ir as

a whole in order to understand its components through the devices that contributed to its coherence and connectedness. The present study addresses reference as one of the important and salient elements that contributed to the formation and construction of the work. In this applied section, we present selected samples from the articles of A'yūn al-Basā'ir. The discussion is necessarily limited to some instances of reference because of their abundance; otherwise, the discussion would become excessively lengthy.

## **2.A. Pronominal Reference in A'yūn al-Basā'ir:**

Text linguists rely particularly on third-person pronouns (huwa, hiya, hum, hā, etc.), which refer to something within the text and consequently prompt the reader to search the text for the antecedent of the pronoun. They generally do not rely on first- and second-person pronouns in the same way when analyzing textual cohesion, because such pronouns may refer outside the text, as in: anā, nahnu, anta, anti, antumā, antum, antunna, and so forth.

Accordingly, the pronouns most frequently occurring in Muḥammad al-Bashīr al-Ibrāhīmī's A'yūn al-Basā'ir were selected.

### **2.A.1. Reference through First-Person Pronouns:**

The writer Muḥammad al-Bashīr al-Ibrāhīmī used first-person pronouns in most of his articles, and most of them referred to the speaking self, namely the writer himself. This constitutes “the reference of a linguistic deictic element to a non-linguistic deictic element existing in the external context; for example, a singular first-person pronoun may refer to the speaker himself. In such a case, a linguistic referring element is linked to a non-linguistic deictic element, namely the speaker, and a linguistic element may refer to the context itself, either in detail or in general, representing an independently existing entity or referent” (Al-Zanad, 1993).

In the article “The Issue of Separating Religion [from Government], and among the Branches of This Issue: The Hajj,” he writes: “The expectation of those who expected was disappointed, and the omen of the optimists proved false. We saw the Algerian Government House remaining in its state, like the House of Ibn Luqmān, and we saw, among the strange practices surrounding this year's Hajj, new and unprecedented things” (Al-Ibrāhīmī, 1997).

In this article, the writer employs the first-person plural pronoun -nā (“we/us”) to refer to himself. This is an external (situational) reference whose interpretation is derived from the context of the utterance.

He also states in the article “Is This the Final Stage in the Issue of Separating Government from Religion?”: “Here we are returning to the discussion of it reluctantly, and we shall not engage again in its ambiguities, which he considers arguments, nor in his shallow water, which he sees as deep waters, since we thereby achieve some of what he desires. What he desires is to become deeply involved with him in a debate that diverts us from what is useful to what is useless and exhausts our effort on what has already been settled. We say once again, frankly and truthfully, that we do not mean by what we say that man called Muḥammad al-‘Āsimī, who grew up in Qaṣr al-Ḥirān, reached maturity as a teacher of boys, and spent his youth serving a judge in a court...” (Al-Ibrāhīmī, 1997). Al-Ibrāhīmī prominently uses the first-person plural pronoun nahnu (“we”) in “here we are,” as well as implicit first-person plural forms such as “we do not engage,” “we achieve,” “diverts us,” “our

effort,” “we say,” and “we mean.” All of these are referring elements pointing to an external referent in order to clarify and interpret it. The writer, as the sender of the discourse, speaks about the personality of Muḥammad al-‘Āṣimī, the Ḥanafī mufti, who stood in the way of the nation’s demand for its rights in religion and education and sought, through his words and actions, to keep the rites of Islam as a plaything in the hands of those who do not venerate the symbols of God. These external references contributed to textual connectedness among his articles and drew the reader’s attention to understanding his intentions. Pronouns are highly significant in “achieving the formal and semantic coherence of the text; they are the basis of linkage” (Khaṭṭābī, 2006).

## 2.B. Reference through Third-Person Pronouns:

Personal pronouns are divided into two categories:

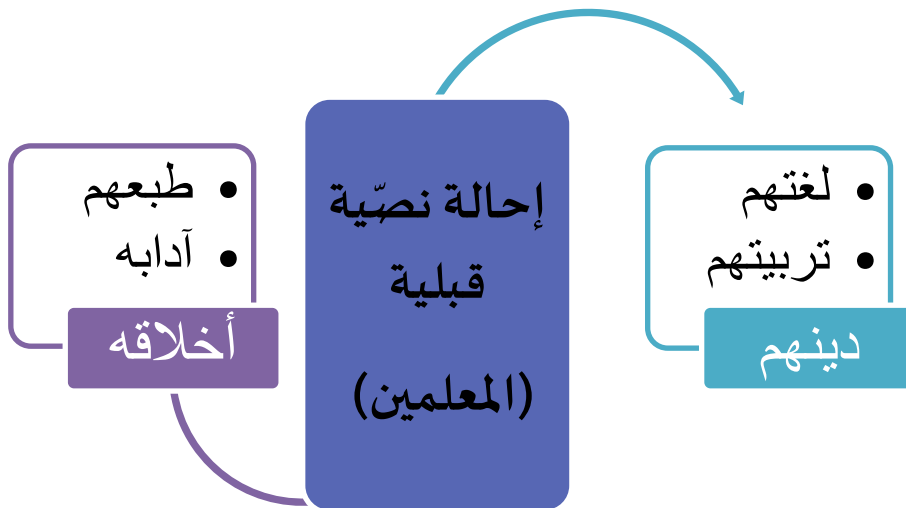
- Existential pronouns: anā, naḥnu, huwa, hiya, hum, etc.
- Possessive pronouns: kitābī (“my book”), kitābuka (“your book”), kitābuhu (“his book”), etc.

Pronouns referring to the speaker and addressee constitute reference outside the text (Al-Baṭāshī, 2009). One of the most prominent grammatical categories that clarifies this phenomenon is the pronoun of concern (ḍamīr al-sha’n) (Al-Faqī, 2000). The following are practical examples in which third-person reference is prominent.

Al-Ibrāhīmī states in the article “The Free Teachers’ Rights vis-à-vis the Nation”: “By teachers we mean this group that struggles to teach the children of the nation their language, to educate them according to the doctrines and principles of their religion, and to shape them according to its manners and ethics... As for the Association of Scholars, its means of communication with the nation are these local associations supervising the schools and directly administering their financial affairs. These associations are the sole authority concerning the material affairs of the schools and bear the heavy burden therein. Since the Association of Scholars bases all its affairs on observed reality, it takes into consideration circumstances, their severity and their prosperity...” (Al-Ibrāhīmī, 1997).

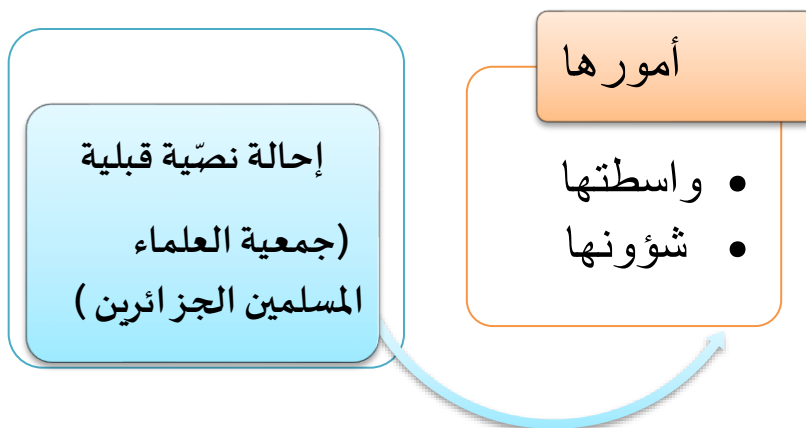
The writer varies his referring devices by using attached third-person pronouns in: lughatuhum (“their language”), tarbiyatuhum (“their education”), dīnuhum (“their religion”), ṭab’uhum (“their shaping”), ādābihi (“its manners”), akhlāquhu (“its ethics”), wāṣiṭatuhā (“its means”), shu’ūnuhā (“its affairs”), umūruhā (“its affairs”), shiddatuhā (“its severity”), and rakhā’uhā (“its prosperity”). He also uses the independent feminine third-person pronoun hiya (“she/it”), which refers to the “local associations” that constitute the link between the Algerian Muslim Scholars Association and the schools.

*Figure 1. Diagram representing anaphoric textual reference to “the teachers” in “The Free Teachers’ Rights vis-à-vis the Nation.”*



The third-person pronouns hum and -hu/-him refer back to the teachers; this constitutes anaphoric textual reference.

Figure 2. Diagram representing anaphoric textual reference to “the Algerian Muslim Scholars Association” in “The Free Teachers’ Rights vis-à-vis the Nation.”



The attached third-person pronoun -hā refers back to the Algerian Muslim Scholars Association and therefore constitutes anaphoric textual reference. The pronoun hā (“it/her”) contributes to linking the sentences of the article.

In the article “The Arabic Language in Algeria: A Free Beloved with No Rival,” he states: “The Arabic language in the Algerian Arab country is neither foreign nor intrusive; rather, it is at home, among its protectors and supporters. Its roots extend into the past, and its bonds with the present are strong... Whoever calls the Islamic conquest colonialism has lied and committed a grave falsehood.

Rather, it was relief from exhausting distress, mercy from enduring torment, and justice for the Berbers after the detestable Roman oppression... The Arab conqueror of this homeland came with Islam and with it justice; he came with Arabic and with it knowledge. Justice was what brought the Berbers under the Arabs, but it was the submission of brotherhood, not the submission of force; the giving of respect, not the surrender of dignity. Knowledge was what made Berber culture receptive to Arabic, but it was the refinement of the superior by the good, not the obedience of the subordinate to the mistress... There is no Kabyle living in the cities except that he understands French. Nor is there, in the villages of Kabylie—which constitute the overwhelming majority—more than a few who know no language but Kabyle. Yet this overwhelming majority does not possess a single radio because they are deprived of electric light just as they are deprived of knowledge, and all of this is a consequence of colonialism. So what is the point of deceiving the Kabyles in their own language?" (Al-Ibrāhīmī, 1997).

Here, reference is made to previously mentioned elements: "the Arabic language," "the Islamic conquest," "justice," "knowledge," "a Kabyle," and "the villages of Kabylie." Al-Ibrāhīmī varies attached and implicit, overt and non-overt third-person pronouns, all of which constitute anaphoric textual references. This demonstrates his mastery of Arabic grammatical rules.

In the statement "The Arab conqueror of this homeland came with Islam and with it justice; he came with Arabic and with it knowledge," the referring elements came and "with him/it" are connected to the referent "the Arab conqueror." (Al-Ibrāhīmī, 1997).

By "the Arab conqueror," he means Ṭāriq ibn Ziyād. These pronouns correspond to the semantic significance of the act of conquest, which requires explicitness and a clear statement of what was brought to Islam, knowledge, and justice.

The widespread presence of these references throughout the article is a clear indication of the evident textual and semantic cohesion. This referential linkage removes ambiguity and clarifies the writer's ideas as he addresses a fundamental issue: the Arabic language. He states: "As for us, we understood the meaning. The truth is that the homeland is Arab, and the Kabyles are Arab Muslims; their Book is the Qur'ān, which they read in Arabic, and they will not accept a substitute for their religion or their language. But the wrongdoers do not understand" (Al-Ibrāhīmī, 1997).

These attached and independent pronouns contributed to linking the sentences of the article through its general context. Reference has "another function in the field of linkage: recalling another element of the sentence, so that connectedness occurs between the two sentences, and consequently the cohesion and texture of the text are achieved" (Ḥassān, 2000).

The same applies to most of his articles, in which pronominal reference is widespread throughout A'yūn al-Basā'ir. In the article "Muḥammad Khaṭṭāb," he writes: "Our brother Muḥammad Khaṭṭāb is a businessman whose success cannot be attributed to inheritance, chance, or adventure; rather, it is attributed to self-reliance, careful construction step by step, keeping pace with the new age, and adopting means of renewal... Muḥammad Khaṭṭāb is among the wealthy who display the effects of God's blessing upon them and enumerate them through acts of benevolence; he is benevolent to his workers, benevolent to his nation and homeland; and he is a prodigy among the prodigies of benevolence" (Al-Ibrāhīmī, 1997).

In this article, Al-Ibrāhīmī alternates between the first-person pronoun *anā* (“I”) and the third-person pronoun *huwa* (“he”). These are situational, cataphoric references to Muḥammad Khaṭṭāb, since Al-Ibrāhīmī wrote an article about him, not primarily for the purpose of praise. He states: “This is the biography of a man, but it is a record of lessons. We did not intend it as praise, for that is not our habit; rather, we presented it as a reminder for anyone who considers himself a man but does not possess such deeds” (Al-Ibrāhīmī, 1997).

## 2.C. Reference through Second-Person Pronouns:

We now move from prose to poetry. The master of eloquence, Muḥammad al-Bashīr al-Ibrāhīmī, excelled not only in prose but also in poetry.

In his article entitled “Islam” (rajaz verse), the poet Muḥammad al-Bashīr al-Ibrāhīmī writes (Al-Ibrāhīmī, 1997).

Poetic passage: [The original Arabic verses are retained in the source article; the present English version translates their referential meaning rather than reproducing the Arabic text.]

“Blessed are your hands... / You are the torrent, and the torrent drowns; who can rival you? / You are the star, and the star is light; who can keep pace with you? / Your emblem is mercy and peace for the worlds, and your name is Islam.”

Here, textual reference returns to the previously mentioned element “Islam,” through the attached second-person pronoun *-ka*. This connects the beginning of the first hemistich with its continuation. The second-person pronoun, represented by the suffix *-ka*, recurs in the second, third, and fourth lines in expressions such as *ḥaqquka* (“your right”), *bataka*, *yujāzīka* (“can rival you”), *yusārika* (“can keep pace with you”), *shi‘āruka* (“your emblem”), and *ismuka* (“your name”). This makes the verses cohesive at the level of the individual line by linking its two hemistichs and connecting the first line to the final line through a semantic thread, thereby producing a coherent and interconnected poem.

It is also noteworthy that the overt independent second-person pronoun *anta* (“you”) occurs when the poet addresses and describes Islam: “You are the torrent” and “You are the star.” This referring element contributes to the cohesion of the first two lines.

We should also note the role of the implicit second-person pronoun *anta* in the form *bārikta/būrīkta* (“you were blessed”) in connecting the beginning of the first line to the title of the poem. It refers back to the previously mentioned title, “Islam.” Islam is the religion of guidance, ease, mercy, and peace, and the issue of Islam is a central and prominent concern in *A‘yūn al-Basā’ir*, in which the poet does everything he can to defend it and champion its cause.

These second-person forms thus establish connectedness and textual texture among the units of the poetic text.

In his article entitled “An Incomplete Lament, for Reasons of Necessity,” written by Al-Ibrāhīmī in mourning his companion and colleague, the eminent scholar ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd ibn Bādīs—may God have mercy on him—he says:

“O inhabitant of the tomb, you have died, and with you died the eloquent tongue, the charging determination, and the wandering mind... Consolation for you to a nation whose guidance you sought, whose corruption you reformed, whose stagnation you revived, whose crooked paths you straightened, whose leadership you rightfully assumed, whom you prepared for goodness and readied,

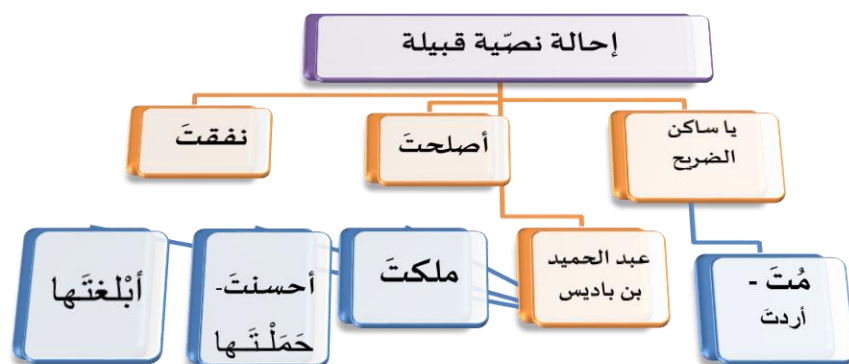
and whom you carried upon the clear path and manifest knowledge until you brought it to soundness...” (Al-Ibrāhīmī, 1997).

This is an internal anaphoric reference in which the implicit second-person pronoun *anta* (“you”) refers to the deictic element represented by Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd ibn Bādīs, founder of the Algerian Muslim Scholars Association. This is evident in the use of interwoven references with the deictic element, which gives the article semantic coherence.

At the conclusion of the article, he adds: “Peace be upon you among the former, peace be upon you among the latter, peace be upon you among the working scholars, peace be upon you among the divinely guided sages, and peace be upon you until the Day of Judgment” (Al-Ibrāhīmī, 1997).

In this conclusion, the second-person suffix *-ka* refers to the deictic element ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd ibn Bādīs. All of these are references to a previously mentioned element, “upon you,” which is repeated four times in this passage.

Figure 3. Diagram representing anaphoric textual reference to “‘Abd al-Ḥamīd ibn Bādīs” in “An Incomplete Lament, for Reasons of Necessity.”



All these textual references contributed to the cohesion of the articles through first-, third-, and second-person pronouns. They linked the parts of the articles on the one hand and contributed, on the other, to the coherence of the overall structure of the articles in A‘yūn al-Basā’ir.

### 3. Conclusion:

The foregoing analysis reveals that Muḥammad al-Bashīr al-Ibrāhīmī employed diverse cohesive links in his articles, with a significant effect on textual coherence. He varied pronominal reference through first-, second-, and third-person pronouns in order to achieve his intended purposes, namely supporting the Islamic religion and defending just causes.

Al-Ibrāhīmī relied heavily on pronominal reference, which was the strongest and most widespread linking device throughout his texts and contributed to their coherence and interconnectedness.

He also combined the two types of textual reference—anaphoric and cataphoric—with situational reference, which connects the text to external contexts and assists the reader in understanding the essence of the text and relating it to its referential frameworks.

Reference therefore contributed to cohesion among the units and parts of the articles—the introduction, body, and conclusion—within each article, and it also contributed to cohesion among the articles themselves, forming an integrated, harmonious, and interconnected textual whole.

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