

## (Book Description)



## The New Arabic Rhetoric

### Pathways and Approaches

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## Overview

Arabic studies on Rhetoric have apparently changed over the last two decades. Although Classical Arabic rhetoric has dominance in the Arab Academia, whether in teaching or in research, some other contemporary trends have emerged and developed in an endeavour to create a new face of today’s Arabic rhetoric. *The New Arabic Rhetoric* explores the various contemporary trends in Arabic rhetoric. It investigates the Arab endeavors to establish a new Arabic rhetoric.

The book is divided into three sections. The first explores unconventional approaches in dealing with ancient rhetorical traditions. The second section carries out a comprehensive review of the influential contemporary rhetorical approaches and methods from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until today. The third section introduces *Balāghat al-Jumhūr* (translated as Audience Rhetorical Empowerment), a new rhetorical approach, which emerged in the Arabic context in the last two decades. This approach represents one of the promising innovative approaches in Arabic rhetorical scholarship.

The first section – titled “*renewing the rhetorical tradition and the legacy of the new rhetoric*” – answers two questions. First, how can the rhetorical tradition be a source of renewing Arabic rhetoric? Second, what are the procedures required to achieve the goal of renewing Arabic rhetoric?

Chapter 1, which is titled “*criticizing the history of rhetoric: coloured rhetorics and refuting European rhetoric centrism*”, deals with an insufficiently studied topic in today’s Arabic rhetorical research: the relationship between Arabic rhetoric and the ancient non-Arabic rhetorics. To achieve this, the chapter directs its attention to rhetorical legacies that have been marginalized by the dominant history of rhetoric (including Arabic rhetoric) and refutes the claim that rhetoric is a purely *white* (European) achievement. The study proves that appreciating those marginalized (coloured) rhetoric can change our perception of not only what is the rhetorical quality but also of what is rhetoric itself. The chapter demonstrates the importance of the comparative approach in studying rhetoric and suggests that the knowledge of rhetorics of the far past could be an appropriate procedure for renewing Arabic rhetoric.

Under the title “*refuting the dominance of Aristotle’s rhetoric: Plato in the Arab context*”, Chapter 2 explores the possibilities of benefiting from the marginalized rhetorical legacies in renewing contemporary Arabic rhetoric and considers how this can be achieved. The chapter focuses on Plato’s writings on rhetoric and examines their reception by the ancient Arab scholars. The basic argument in this chapter is that although Plato had minimal impact on Arabic rhetorical tradition, contemporary Arabic rhetoric can significantly benefit from Plato’s rhetorical legacy, especially when it comes to his refutation of the manipulative use of rhetoric.

Chapter 3 conducts a more detailed discussion on the possibilities of benefiting from Plato’s neglected contributions to rhetoric. Under the title “*Towards a critical approach to rhetoric: exploiting the Platonic opposition*”, the chapter defines the identity of rhetoric that Plato rejects, why he opposed it, and the alternatives he suggests. The chapter also considers the impact of the social and political contexts on Plato’s attitude towards rhetoric. Although the chapter does not entirely agree with Plato’s anti-rhetoric stance, it emphasizes its importance to Arabic rhetoric. This rhetoric has never developed a critical approach to public speaking throughout its history. Hence, Plato’s critical legacy is eminently suitable for emerging as a critical trend in Arabic rhetorical research, especially with the urgent need for supporting ethically responsible rhetorics.

Chapter 4 is entitled “*How could we renew rhetorical tradition? The notion of ‘canon of rhetoric’ as an example*”. It develops the classical ‘canons of rhetoric’ to study new aspects of contemporary visual oratory. The chapter redefines the notion of ‘canon of rhetoric’ through conceptualizing its elements and adding new elements. Following that, the adapted concept is deployed in dealing with selected visually- received political speeches in the Arab context. Having discussed some ancient, mostly neglected, rhetorics, the last two chapters of this section address some recognized trends in Arabic rhetorical scholarship. The attention will be confined to the ambitious attempts to renew the Arabic rhetorical tradition until the middle of the twentieth century.

Chapter 5, titled “*the beginnings of the new Arabic rhetoric: contributions of the early twentieth century*”, introduces a number of the essential projects that aimed at renewing the Arabic rhetorical tradition. Investigating those projects has been carried out through three steps: (1) revealing their attitude towards the tradition; (2) identifying their basic premises; (2) understanding the intersections among them.

Under the title of “*a rhetoric that was new*”, chapter 6 provides an examination of Amin Al-Khouli’s project for renewing Arabic rhetoric through the following questions: how it has emerged. What are the influential factors that affected its outcomes?

The second section identifies and examines the most prominent contemporary rhetorical approaches and methodologies. To achieve this, chapter 7 aims to answer two questions: (1) what are the most influential rhetorical approaches in the Western context? (2) how do Arab benefit from these approaches and develop them? The selected approaches are Visual Rhetoric, Digital and Virtual Rhetoric, Cross-cultural rhetoric, Close Reading, and Rhetoric and Ideology. Each one of them is systematically elucidated in the following outline: the basic questions, the areas of interest, the methodical procedures, the essential references, in addition to a list of further readings appended to each approach. The chapter posits that each approach can be productively utilized in the current Arabic rhetorical research.

Among various Western rhetorical approaches, chapter 8 dedicates itself to present Critical Rhetoric. The author justifies choosing Critical Rhetoric by a personal interest in the role of rhetoric in resisting discrimination, racism, manipulation, marginalization, and other sorts of abuse of power. Thus, the chapter provides a comprehensive overview of Critical Rhetoric, explaining its theoretical foundations, rules of practice, and implications. Besides, considerable attention is paid to its methodological

problems, weakness points, and defects. Lastly, the chapter points out what Critical Rhetoric can offer to Arabic rhetoric and proposes radical modifications.

After illustrating some prominent Western rhetorical approaches, chapter 9 presents selected Arabic ones, which have considerable influence within the modern and contemporary Arabic rhetorical scholarship. The chapter conducts a critical assessment of these approaches and justifies the need for *new* rhetoric; the need that is sought to be fulfilled by this book.

Among various contemporary Arabic rhetorical approaches, chapter 10 devotes itself to an approach that is considered one of the most critical projects of renewing Arabic rhetoric, namely *al-Balagha al-'Ammah* (suggested translation: “the inclusive rhetoric”) of the Moroccan rhetorician, professor Mohamed al-Omari. Al-Omari proposes integrating poetics with rhetorics to construct inclusive rhetoric. The chapter looks at al-Omari’s project through the lens of another Moroccan rhetorician, Idris Jabri, who provides an intelligent treatise on al-Omari’s rhetorical approach. Through his book, “*Su’al al-Balaghah*” (the question of rhetoric), Jabri adopts three strategies in dealing with al-Omari’s ideas: description, explanation, and simplification. In spite of appreciating Jabri’s strategies, the chapter recommends adding other four ones to productively deal with al-Omari’s project: (1) comparing it with relevant projects; (2) tracing its impact on immediate or later projects; (3) analyzing its academic style; (4) criticizing its theory and practices. The aim is to emphasize the importance of such a comparative-critical treatment that plays a decisive role in refining any new rhetoric.

“*How to teach new rhetoric?*” is the title of chapter 11, in which the status quo of teaching rhetoric in the Arab academia is carefully investigated. Through adopting field research techniques and examining rhetoric textbooks for university students, the chapter pinpoints twofold problem: (1) the syllabus taught do not reflect the recent developments of the rhetorical research; (2) teaching methods are old-fashioned. Hence, the chapter addresses this problem by suggesting a curriculum for teaching rhetoric throughout two semesters.

After considering the history of rhetorical research (in the first section), and reviewing the influential Western and Arab rhetorical approaches (in the second section), the third section focuses entirely on presenting a new approach, which is hoped to open up new horizons in the contemporary Arabic rhetorical research. The approach is *Balāghat Al-Jumhūr*, which could be roughly translated as “audience rhetoric”, but the author uses “Audience Rhetorical Empowerment” as an English equivalent to the Arabic term because it is more expressive of the content and aim of the approach. The section consists of nine chapters; four of them are dedicated to the theoretical grounding of *Balāghat Al-Jumhūr*, while the other five chapters explore its analytical aspect.

In chapter 12, “*Balāghat al-Mukhāṭab (addressee rhetoric): the foundation*”, *Balāghat al-Jumhūr* is introduced in its old label, “*Balāghat al-Mukhāṭab*” (addressee rhetoric). Under this name, the approach has been proposed in its seminal article, which was published in 2005. The chapter provides the context of the emergence of *Balāghat al-Jumhūr*. It identifies its foundations, significance, goals, research inquiries, and relations with other relevant fields of knowledge and an analytical model.

“*Balāghat al-Jumhūr (Audience Rhetorical Empowerment): Identity and Contribution*” is the title of chapter 13, which is concerned with reviewing the studies that have been conducted within the frame of *Balāghat al-Jumhūr*, after more than a decade of its commencement. These studies can reflect how *Balāghat al-Jumhūr* evolved from an individual endeavour to a collective project that many scholars from different disciplinary and cultural backgrounds work on. Furthermore, the chapter illustrates the approach's identity and discusses the actual or potential criticism that could be directed towards it. Lastly, the chapter explores how the approach can maintain its own identity.

Chapter 14, “*audience studies approaches: the points of convergence and divergence*”, answers questions about the borderlines between *Balāghat al-Jumhūr* (Audience Rhetorical Empowerment)

and other relevant approaches concerned with studying audience. The chapter explores the points of convergence and divergence between *Balāghat al-Jumhūr* and reading theories, reception theory, reader-response criticism, classical and contemporary rhetorical studies, and communication studies. The aim is to define the distinctiveness of *Balāghat al-Jumhūr*, on the one hand, and discover, on the other hand, its connections with different approaches.

Chapter 15, “*Balāghat al-Jumhūr and the critical approaches*”, is concerned with the critical nature of *Balāghat al-Jumhūr*. Abdul-Latif pays attention to the intersections between Audience Rhetorical Empowerment and other critical approaches, especially Critical Discourse Analysis. The chapter argues Audience Rhetorical Empowerment has something to offer to so-called critical studies. Finally, the chapter introduces the concept of *al-Istijabah al-Balaghah*, which views critique as rhetorical virtue.

Chapter 16, “*Balāghat al-Jumhūr in literature: theoretical foundation and a practical example*”, attempts to develop a sub-discipline within *Balāghat al-Jumhūr* is concerned with studying audience response in literature. This sub-discipline aims to examine the responses generated by the imagined characters inside literary texts, especially texts of narrative fiction.

Chapter 17, “*Balāghat al-Jumhūr in political discourse: the Example of the Arab spring*”, examines the peculiarities of the Arab spring rhetoric and the challenges that *Balāghat al-Jumhūr* should face in studying that rhetoric. The chapter also consolidates the position of *Balāghat al-Jumhūr* as an academic practice by refuting the idea that responses of ordinary people are not eligible to be academically studied.

The following three chapters are different practical analyses with the frame of *Balāghat al-Jumhūr*. Chapter 18, “*Balāghat al-Jumhūr and Football: an analysis of a Moroccan football chant*”, analyses one of the most famous football chants on the Moroccan football fields namely “*fi Biladi Zalamouni*” (in my country, they oppressed me). The chapter explores how the audience can produce their resistant discourse in the face of power via various discursive strategies. Given the importance of studying the rhetoric of football fans as a potential research direction, the chapter starts with a pretty long theoretical preface, which can serve as a practical framework for similar studies.

Under the title “YouTube users’ rhetoric: Argumentation and profanity”, chapter 19 examines YouTube users’ profane comments from a pragmatic-rhetorical perspective and discovers the factors affecting the production of offensive speech in cyberspace.

“Facebook users’ rhetoric: from the barter system to the rhetorically-empowered response” is the title of chapter 20, which attempts to understand the phenomenon of sharing research findings with other researchers on Facebook and interacting about these findings through exchanging likes. It is noticed that scholars’ activity on Facebook, in this respect, resembles the process of barter: a scholar clicks like on other’s posts and, in return, receives likes on their post. However, the number of likes here does not necessarily reflect neither the quality of the research nor the novelty of the findings. Hence, the chapter supposes an inverse relationship between the number of likes exchanged among scholars on Facebook and the quality of their research whose results are shared. To reduce the harmful impact of this misleading evaluation, the chapter recommends that exchanging likes should be replaced by more meaningful ways of response, by what could be described as *Istijabah Balighah* (a rhetorically empowered response).

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## Audience

*The New Arabic Rhetoric: Pathways and Approaches* is essential reading for researchers, upper undergraduate and postgraduate students of classical and modern Western rhetoric, modern and contemporary Arabic rhetoric, history of rhetoric, Communication Studies, and Arabic linguistics and Literature.

## Topics

Classical Rhetoric – Modern and Contemporary Rhetoric – Literary Criticism - Comparative Rhetoric

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