



Article

The Treatment of the Concept of Iltifāt in Yusuf Sakkākī's Miftāḥ al-'Ulūm

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Abstract: This article examines the rhetorical device of iltifāt, which occupies an important place in Arabic and Uzbek literary studies. Drawing upon the teachings of Yusuf Sakkākī and other scholars of balāgha (rhetoric), the study analyzes its theoretical foundations, forms, and stylistic significance. The article defines iltifāt as a shift in the direction of discourse among the speaker, the addressee, and the absent third person. One of the main conclusions of the study is that iltifāt enriches literary style by introducing a new tone and semantic emphasis into the discourse, enhancing the listener's attention and increasing the expressive power of the text.

Keywords: Yusuf Sakkākī, Miftāḥ al-'Ulūm, balāgha (rhetoric), 'Ilm al-Ma'ānī (the science of meanings), iltifāt, Talkhīṣ al-Miftāḥ.

1. Introduction

One of the most significant branches of the science of balāgha (rhetoric) is the stylistic device known as iltifāt, which represents one of the finest manifestations of verbal artistry in the Arabic language [1, 2]. This rhetorical technique imparts aesthetic power and attracts the reader's or listener's attention through a shift in the direction of discourse from one grammatical person to another. Yusuf Sakkākī examined this phenomenon extensively within the framework of 'Ilm al-Ma'ānī (the science of meanings) and regarded it as a unique feature of Arabic rhetorical expression [3, 4]. The stylistic transitions found in the verses of the Holy Qur'an constitute some of the most refined examples of iltifāt. The shift of address among the speaker, the addressee, and the absent third person influences not only the semantic content of the discourse but also the psychological state of the audience [5, 6]. Widely employed in Arabic, iltifāt occupies a distinguished place in the development of rhetorical studies. In Uzbek literary scholarship, this device is examined as one of the components of artistic and rhetorical expression [7].

2. Materials and Method

Numerous scholars have discussed the rhetorical device of iltifāt, with Sakkākī devoting particular attention to it within the framework of 'Ilm al-Ma'ānī. He characterizes iltifāt as a stylistic beauty peculiar to the Arabic language and identifies changes in grammatical person, tense, and verbal forms as its principal criteria. In Badā'ī' al-Ṣanā'ī', this device is interpreted as a manifestation of the expressive boldness of the Arabic language. The authors of Talkhīṣ al-Miftāḥ and Tibyān evaluate iltifāt from the perspective of either inherent or incidental rhetorical beauty. Additional forms of iltifāt are also described in al-Muṭawwal and other rhetorical works, where they are presented as devices that enhance attention and engagement in literary discourse.

Citation: Xudoyarovich, I. B. The Treatment of the Concept of Iltifāt in Yusuf Sakkākī's Miftāḥ al-'Ulūm. Central Asian Journal of Literature, Philosophy, and Culture 2026, 7(3), 421-424

Received: 10th Mar 2026
Revised: 21st Apr 2026
Accepted: 08th May 2026
Published: 02nd June 2026



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3. Result and Discussion

Sakkākī addresses this topic in his discussion of the use of explicit nouns in place of pronouns within 'Ilm al-Ma'ānī. According to his analysis, discourse may shift among the three grammatical persons: the speaker (first person), the addressee (second person), and the absent third person. Such transitions are termed *iltifāt* by scholars of rhetoric [8].

An illustrative example can be found in the opening verses of *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*: "All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful, Master of the Day of Judgment." These verses employ the third-person mode of reference. The discourse then shifts in the subsequent verse: "You alone we worship, and You alone we ask for help." Here, the mode of address changes to the second person. Through this form of *iltifāt*, the believer first glorifies and praises Allah and then turns directly to Him in supplication. This transition creates a profound rhetorical effect upon both the speaker and the listener [9].

In *Badā'ī' al-Ṣanā'ī'*, the following explanation of *iltifāt* is provided:

"The eminent scholar Sakkākī states that this device is also called *shajā'at al-'Arabiyyah* (the boldness of the Arabic language). The Arabs demonstrated rhetorical courage by employing stylistic forms that others would not dare to use. Likewise, the Arabic language possesses this unique art of *iltifāt*, which is not found in other languages [10]. According to the well-known view, *iltifāt* occurs in three forms, involving shifts among the speaker, the addressee, and the absent third person. In other words, speech initially directed toward one person subsequently changes its orientation toward another. Some scholars further refine this definition by arguing that *iltifāt* occurs when the subsequent expression deviates from the expected grammatical or contextual form [11]. For example, in the statement, 'I am the one whom you have lost,' the direction of discourse changes abruptly. However, such a shift does not necessarily constitute *iltifāt*, since in some cases it may be explained through ordinary logical progression."

According to Sakkākī, *iltifāt* consists of six distinct types:

1. The first type involves a shift from the speaker to the addressee. For example, in the quatrain: "For forty years I spent my life among people; alas, my life was wasted. Now avoid the company of people, for this is the path to salvation," the author initially recounts his own experience and subsequently turns directly to address the listener.
2. The second type is the reverse of the first, involving a transition from the addressee back to the speaker.
3. The third type consists of a shift from the speaker to reference to a third person.
4. The fourth type is the opposite of the third, involving a transition from the third person back to the speaker.
5. The fifth type involves a shift from the speaker to the third person in a different rhetorical direction or context.
6. The sixth type is the reverse of the fifth type, involving a return from the third person to the speaker.

According to Sakkākī, *iltifāt* is the transition of discourse from one stylistic mode to another, whether such a transition is explicit or implicit. In his view, the essence of *iltifāt* lies in the change of expression itself, regardless of whether the shift is overtly apparent or subtly embedded within the discourse [12].

Other scholars, however, maintain that *iltifāt* occurs only when there is a clear and recognizable shift in the structure of speech. The Arabs frequently employed *iltifāt* and regarded it as one of the most elegant rhetorical devices. Its aesthetic value lies in its ability to capture the listener's attention; when the audience notices a shift in the mode of expression, they become more attentive to the discourse. The introduction of a new stylistic pattern revitalizes the listener's engagement, which explains why this device has

long been admired in Arabic rhetoric. Whether the transition is explicit or implicit, it serves to heighten the audience's awareness and concentration [13].

Abd al-Rahmān al-Qazwīnī, the author of *Talkhīṣ al-Miftāḥ*, considered *iltifāt* to be a form of intrinsic rhetorical beauty (*ḥusn dhātī*). In contrast, the author of *al-Tibyān* regarded it as a form of incidental or contextual beauty (*ḥusn ʿarīḍī*). The author of *Miftāḥ al-ʿUlūm* acknowledged both perspectives: if the circumstances of the discourse necessitate the shift, it constitutes intrinsic beauty; if the shift merely enhances the elegance and attractiveness of expression, it is considered incidental beauty [14, 15].

Consequently, some scholars classify the aesthetic value of *iltifāt* as an essential and inherent feature of discourse, whereas others regard it as a supplementary rhetorical ornament. These differing evaluations stem from the particular aspects of rhetorical effectiveness upon which each scholar places greater emphasis.

4. Conclusion

The rhetorical device of *iltifāt* represents one of the most significant forms of stylistic expression that demonstrates the richness and sophistication of the Arabic language. Sakkākī and other prominent scholars of rhetoric developed its theoretical foundations and regarded it as an effective means of conveying deeper meanings while simultaneously attracting and sustaining the listener's attention. The shifts in grammatical person frequently encountered in the Holy Qur'an constitute some of the finest and most compelling examples of *iltifāt* in practice. The aesthetic value of this device lies in its ability to intensify emotional and rhetorical impact through deliberate changes in the direction of discourse. The interpretation of *iltifāt* as either an intrinsic (*ḥusn dhātī*) or incidental (*ḥusn ʿarīḍī*) form of rhetorical beauty further highlights its importance and distinguished status within the science of *balāgha*. Undoubtedly, *iltifāt* remains an integral component of Arabic literary tradition and Islamic rhetorical discourse, reflecting both the artistic elegance and communicative effectiveness of classical Arabic expression.

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