

EXPLORING LINGUISTIC DEVIATION IN TARIQ RAHMAN'S *THE MISTAKE*: A STYLISTIC STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the short story "The Mistake" by Tariq Rahman (2004) through the lens of Geoffrey Leech's framework of linguistic deviation. The aim is to examine how the writer uses unusual language to express deep emotions, psychological tension, and inner conflict. The research is qualitative in nature, and the documentation method was used for data collection. The story was read multiple times to identify deviant language features. The analysis focused on different types of deviation, including lexical, syntactic, graphological, and semantic, as defined by Leech (1969). The findings show that the writer's use of deviant language helps to reflect the emotional and mental state of the main character. The study concludes that stylistic deviation is a powerful literary tool that adds depth and meaning to a text.

Keywords: stylistics, linguistic deviation, Geoffrey Leech, The Mistake, Tariq Rahman, psychological tension, stylistic analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Writers use language in special ways to make their stories more emotional, powerful, and meaningful. Unlike ordinary language used in everyday life, literary language often includes unusual words, sentence structures, or spellings. These unusual uses are called linguistic deviations. Such deviations are not mistakes, they are creative choices made by writers to express deep emotions or ideas in a powerful way (Leech, 1969).

Stylistics is a branch of linguistics that studies these special language choices in literature. It

helps us understand how language creates meaning, mood, and beauty in poems, stories, and novels (Verdonk, 2002). By using stylistics, readers and researchers can explore the techniques that writers use to achieve artistic effects.

Geoffrey Leech (1969), a famous scholar in stylistics, introduced eight types of deviation, such as lexical, grammatical, and phonological deviation. These types help us analyze how writers play with language to create something unique. His framework is especially useful for

understanding how emotional and psychological effects are created in a text.

In Pakistan, Tariq Rahman is a well-known writer and academic who often writes about social and psychological issues. His short story "The Mistake" is rich in emotional expression and has deep psychological themes. However, it has not yet been studied through the lens of Leech's stylistic model. This study fills that gap by examining how Rahman uses linguistic deviation to show the main character's mental and emotional condition. Therefore, this research focuses on the stylistic analysis of "The Mistake" using Leech's framework to explore how language reflects emotion, obsession, and confusion in the story.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study is to analyze the short story "The Mistake" by Tariq Rahman using Geoffrey Leech's framework of linguistic deviation. The study aims to find out how the writer uses unusual language to express deep emotions, confusion, and psychological tension in the story. It also aims to show how these language choices affect the reader's understanding of the main character's mental and emotional state. By doing this, the study hopes to explain how stylistic tools can help us better understand the hidden meanings and emotional depth in literary texts.

Literature Review

This section presents past studies and theories related to stylistics, linguistic deviation, and the use of language in literature. It also explains why these concepts are important for analyzing Tariq Rahman's short story *The Mistake*.

Stylistics is the study of how language is used in literature to create specific effects. It looks at how writers use words, grammar, sounds, and structures to make their work more powerful, emotional, or meaningful

(Verdonk, 2002). Stylistics helps us understand what makes a literary text special or different from everyday language.

Additionally, writers sometimes break the normal rules of language to draw attention, create beauty, or express strong emotions. This is called linguistic deviation. Geoffrey Leech (1969) introduced eight types of deviation that authors use in creative writing: Lexical, Grammatical, Semantic, Phonological, Graphological, Dialectal, Register, Historical. These deviations are used not by mistake, but on purpose to produce stylistic effects and express deeper meanings in a text.

Many scholars agree that deviation from the norms of language is a key feature of literary writing. According to Short and Leech (2007), such deviations make the reader pause and think, which creates more impact. They help to express characters' feelings, highlight important ideas, or add beauty to the text.

Furthermore, Tariq Rahman is a well-known Pakistani writer and scholar who is known for using emotional depth and social issues in his stories. His writing style often includes poetic language and stylistic techniques that show his characters' inner struggles. In "The Mistake", Rahman uses linguistic deviation to reveal the main character's confusion, obsession, and emotional breakdown. However, there has been little to no academic research focusing on "The Mistake" using Leech's stylistic model. This study fills that gap by applying Leech's theory to analyze the story's language. In short, stylistics and linguistic deviation are useful tools for understanding how writers create meaning in literary texts. Geoffrey Leech's framework provides a strong foundation for analyzing how non-standard uses of language add to the emotional and stylistic power of "The Mistake".

Methodology

This section outlines the research type, data collection method, data analysis procedure, and the theoretical framework used in this study.

Research Type

This study is qualitative in nature because it focuses on understanding the use and function of language in a literary text rather than dealing with numbers or statistical data. Qualitative research is used to explore meanings, patterns, and themes in texts (Creswell, 2014). The aim of this study is to interpret the linguistic deviations in the short story "The Mistake" and how they contribute to the story's style and meaning.

Data Collection Method

The data for this study was collected through the documentation method. This involves gathering information from written texts. The short story "The Mistake" by Tariq Rahman was carefully read and re-read multiple times. During each reading, examples of deviant language were identified and noted down. These deviations were selected and categorized using Geoffrey Leech's framework of linguistic deviation. This method allowed the researcher to observe patterns in language that deviate from the norm and to collect textual evidence in a natural, unobtrusive way.

Data Analysis Method

After collecting the examples of linguistic deviation, the data was analyzed using textual analysis. Each example was examined in the light of Leech's eight categories of deviation: lexical, grammatical, semantic, phonological, graphological, dialectal, register, and historical. The analysis focused on how these deviations contribute to the style, character development, emotional impact, and thematic depth of the story.

Theoretical Framework

This research is based on Geoffrey Leech's theory of linguistic deviation, which is discussed in his book *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry* (1969). According to Leech, writers often break standard language rules intentionally to create stylistic effects. He outlines eight types of deviation that can be used to analyze literary texts:

1. Lexical
2. Grammatical
3. Semantic
4. Phonological
5. Graphological
6. Dialectal
7. Register
8. Historical

This framework was chosen because it provides a clear and organized way to study creative uses of language in literature.

Analysis & Discussion

Tariq Rahman's short story *The Mistake* uses various linguistic deviations, which means the writer intentionally breaks the normal rules of language to create style, emotion, or meaning. These deviations, explained by Geoffrey Leech, help the writer express Nadeem's emotional confusion and the story's surprise twist. Below are the types of deviations found in the story.

1. Lexical Deviation (Unusual Word Use)

The writer uses new words or puts familiar words together in strange ways. This adds creativity and shows strong emotions such as: *a spell-binding climax* (Rahman, 2004)

This describes the girl's smile in a dramatic way, like a magical or theatrical moment.

love-hungry, man inside him (Rahman, 2004)

"Love-hungry" is not a common phrase. It shows Nadeem's deep desire and loneliness.

2. Grammatical Deviation (Breaking Grammar Rules)

In this type of deviation, sentences do not follow normal grammar or word order.

a tap of water (Rahman, 2004)

Usually it is called as a “water tap.” This unusual order draws attention.

Full well he knew... (Rahman, 2004)

An old-fashioned way of saying “He knew full well.” The inversion sounds dramatic. It shows the character’s disturbed mind or poetic style.

3. Semantic Deviation (Strange or Contradictory Meaning)

The writer uses contradictions or impossible ideas on purpose.

it tortured him beyond measure; yet how he enjoyed being on the rack. (Rahman, 2004)

A paradox: torture and enjoyment together show Nadeem’s emotional confusion. It shows strong inner conflict or fantasy.

the very trees danced in the breeze. (Rahman, 2004)

Personification: trees cannot dance, but this shows a romantic or dream-like mood.

4. Phonological Deviation (Play with Sounds)

The writer uses repetition, alliteration, or musical sounds.

Raheel, Raheel, Raheel (Rahman, 2004)

Repeating the name shows how Nadeem is obsessed. This shows obsession, rhythm, or mood.

chiming of an enchanting magic bell (Rahman, 2004)

The soft sounds like “ch” and “m” make the sentence sound musical.

5. Graphological Deviation (Unusual Visual Format)

Strange layout, capital letters, italics, or repeated non-story texts. It disrupts the

reading and mirrors the story’s emotional disturbance.

The repeated phrase *Enjoy 80+ WPS Pro Benefits for Free! (Rahman, 2004)*

Every page distracts the reader and breaks the mood, just like Nadeem’s thoughts are distracted and confused.

6. Dialectal Deviation (Use of Non-Standard Language)

It is the use of local, regional, or non-standard grammar. It can show a character’s background or mental state.

ran away for escape his company. (Rahman, 2004)

This is not correct grammar in standard English. It might reflect how the child speaks, or how deeply disturbed Nadeem is.

7. Register Deviation (Mixing Formal and Informal Style)

Mixing language levels, very formal with casual, or serious with emotional. It can show irony, contrast, or a mismatch in understanding.

Glad to have met you, Miss Raheel (Rahman, 2004)

Nadeem uses formal, polite words, but it is discovered later that Raheel is not a girl. The formal tone increases the shock of the truth.

8. Historical Deviation (Old or Archaic Language)

Using words or phrases from older English that are not common today. It adds a literary or poetic tone.

Thus, the night passed. (Rahman, 2004)

“Thus” is an old-fashioned word, giving the story a dramatic or classical touch.

These unusual uses of language are not mistakes. Instead, they help the reader feel what Nadeem feels: His emotional pain and confusion are shown through paradoxes and poetic sounds. His obsession is shown through repetition and strange sentence

forms. His misunderstanding of reality is reflected in how the language sometimes does not follow rules.

Moreover, in *The Mistake*, Tariq Rahman uses different types of language deviations to express deep emotion, psychological confusion, and the shock of discovering the truth. These deviations are a powerful way to show style, meaning, and the inner world of the character. Just as Nadeem misreads Raheel's identity, the scholar is made to see how language too can mislead, surprise, and reveal hidden truths.

Findings

After analyzing the short story "The Mistake" by Tariq Rahman, the study found several types of linguistic deviations as defined by Geoffrey Leech (1969). These include:

Lexical deviation: Unusual or rare word choices were used to reflect the mental disturbance of the main character.

Graphological deviation: Punctuation and sentence structure were sometimes broken or irregular, reflecting emotional instability and confusion.

Syntactic deviation: Some sentences did not follow normal grammatical rules, which showed the inner conflict and disturbed thoughts of the character.

Semantic deviation: Words and phrases were used in strange or unexpected ways, giving deeper meanings to simple expressions.

Phonological and morphological deviations: Though less frequent, these also appeared to add rhythm and emotional emphasis in some parts of the story.

These stylistic choices helped portray the psychological trauma, guilt, and emotional confusion of the main character.

Conclusions

The analysis shows that the writer used different kinds of deviant language as powerful stylistic tools. These deviations were not mistakes, but deliberate choices that made the story more emotional, expressive, and meaningful.

Using Leech's framework helped in identifying how language can be stretched and shaped to reflect complex human experiences. The study concludes that stylistic analysis, especially through deviation, is a helpful method to explore the hidden meanings in literature.

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