

**The Relevance of Deviation in the Study of Poetry:
A Critical Analysis**

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Abstract

Deviation is the violation of the rules or norms. In other words, deviation is the tool that is used by the poet to deviate from norm and conventions. There are nine different kinds of deviation found in poetry. The objective of this paper is to look into deviation as a very effective stylistic device in poetry. It studies the manipulation of language in different poetry for the creation of aesthetic value. This paper, therefore, examines deviation in poetry and it is discovered that all these levels of deviation are essential for readers to understand the text and to create emotion. The study finds that deviation helps to increase Igbo vocabularies and some are pleasurable sound. It helps to know the different dialects in Igbo language.

Keywords: Deviation, Boundlessness, Freedom, Poetic License, Poetry, Semantic.

1.0 Introduction:

The whole idea of literary art borders on creativity. Leech (1969) describes creativity as having two parts, one cohesion and the other deviation. According to him, cohesion is when a writer makes use of possibilities in a language to create beauty. On the other hand, deviation is when a writer goes beyond the possibilities of the language to create beauty. "Creativity is the phenomenon whereby something new and valuable is created (such as idea, a joke, an artistic or literary work, etc.). The idea and concept conceived can then manifest themselves in any number of ways but most often, they become something we can see, hear, smell, touch or taste". It is under creativity that one can talk about cohesion and deviation. The use of cohesion and deviation gives rise to the style of an author. The concept of style as deviance is by no means new. One of its chief proponents Jan Mukarowsky speaks of style as foregrounding, bringing to attention, making new. He feels that violation of the norm of the standard, and its systematic deviance from the norm are what makes possible the poetic utilization of language. Without this possible, there will be no poetry. Everyday usage according to Mukarowsky conventionalizes language to the point that its users no longer perceive its expressive or aesthetic potential. The concept of style as deviance posits that poetry must foreground language by being violative of the norms of everyday usage. This concept implies that poets write to ignore rules and conventions generally observed by users of the language. Though they embarrass the common and acceptable use of language, they are acquitted under the concession of poetic license. (Mbah and Mbah, 2007)

Emenanjo (2001, p. 65) defines style as "those components or features of literary composition that have to do with the form of expression rather than the content of the thought

expressed. This definition shows that the writer may decide on an approach with which to present his work in order to provoke emotion.

Stylistic feature is used to make judgment about the nature and the quality of the writing. One pertinent point to note in style is that there is usually variety in uniformity and this where creativity comes in it is the creative ability peculiar to an individual that marks his style.

Ejiofor (2004) carries out a study on the stylistics study of the language of hymns. She investigates the stylistic features of hymns at phonological, syntactic and lexico-semantic levels and concludes that language of hymns possess some phonological features such as alliteration, assonance, metric pattern and melody. It is these stylistic features that make the style of the language of hymns stand out as unique. Also at the various linguistic levels, it is understood that the language of hymns is functional. i.e. it is appropriate to convey intended sense.

Njoku (2010) in his studies on syntactic and semantic deviation in language of advertising said that both syntactic and semantic deviations are employed or used purposely by advertisers to persuade their target audience into buying their products.

Akazeze (2005) studies creativity in Chukwuezi's "Chukwu Ndị Isi Ojii". The poetic elements highlighted in the article are "cohesion and deviation" she concluded that these elements serve as a mirror to the author's ability to handle subject matter artistically.

A layman may think that deviation is a deliberate breaking of the rules and may not consider it as a viable means of creativity. This is not so as deviation lend greater credence to creativity. This is why this paper focuses on deviation as relevant to Poetry.

Poetry is a kind of literary work in which the conciseness of meaning is emphasized in every single word. Every word in poetry can have ambiguity in it. And this often makes people think poetry is hard to understand, mysterious, or even mystical. Where they seem to be boundless and have absolute freedom not only in word choice but in shapes as well. We may agree with Auden that words in poetry arise from a confused mind of a poet Kennedy (1971, p.331) as cited by Doenia Devi in Kanya Puspokusumo's Blog (2009). And it is also said that their works are nothing but a bunch of meaningless words from those who claim themselves poet.

When a writer wants to make his language to be creative or inventive, he uses language different from the conventional and everyday language of his day. Using unconventional or original language, he can give his readers unexpected surprise and make a strong impression on their mind, this kind of the creative use of language is technically called linguistic deviation, by which he creates original language deviated from the norms of literary convention or everyday speech. . Leech, (1976) explains linguistic deviation with a concept of foregrounding.

... anyone who wishes to investigate the significance and value of a work of art must concentrate on the element of interest and surprise, rather than on the automatic pattern. Such deviations from linguistic or other socially accepted norms have been given the special name of foregrounding'...

The foregrounding figure is the linguistic deviation, and the background is the language.

Actually, what these poets have done with their work is not forbidden thing, because poetry has boundlessness and freedom in word choice and shapes which is known as Poetic License. Poetic license is merely a special characteristic of poetry; none of literary works other than poetry has it. And this can be exploited to express poet's emotions, thoughts, and opinions even in an extremely radical way. Apart from that, this boundlessness and freedom in word choice and shapes has given an impact to linguistic field. It has created certain deviations in linguistic convention. Deviation is the act of deviating from an established norm. What makes poetry is the linguistic deviation, a poet manipulates in his poetry and therefore linguistic deviation is regarded by him a means of creating artistic beauty. Therefore, deviation is a determinant factor in a poetic style. There are two types of poetic license. The first one is the routine license. This type of license is the traditional equipment of the versifier e.g. lineation, stanza form, capitalization etc. The second type of poetic license is the creative license. As the name implies, this is whereby a poet transcends the limits of new areas of experience and goes into ungrammatical albeit acceptable. Poetic license, however, does not presuppose freedom to write anyhow any time. The routine license is easier to exploit than creative license. This state of affairs is because creative license if not well handled will lead to eccentricism, obscurantism and nonsensicality. According to Mbah and Mbah, (2007), Chinweizu et al (1981), creative license must be used only when it enriches the devices of literary usage. They write:

Where poetic license enriches the devices of the literary language, it is welcome. But it must not be misused, Where it leads to inconsistencies, between imagery, tone and mood, it is curbed. License is laudable when it leads to felicitous, mellifluous and apt expression.

This position of Chinweizu et al, adversatively, opposes Leech's opinion in *Linguistic Guide to Poetry*. Leech fans the embers of the fact that it is a very general principle of artistic communication that a work of art in some ways deviates from norms, which we as members of society have learned to expect in the medium used. This opinion is debatable because it follows that one of the ways of investigating the significance of a work of art is to concentrate on the elements of interest and surprise. It implies that the writer makes it a sermonal prerogative to be deviant from linguistically or society accepted norms, which perhaps the members of the society are already expecting.

Poetic language in some theorizations differs from the everyday, ordinary language. In ordinary usage, language is mostly automatic; and words are used in a way that does not attract attention, but in poetry the language is used in such a way that the reader makes a distinction between poetic language and the daily or usual one. Language as poetry cannot be imagined outside language. There have been many different definitions of language. Pei (1960, p.141) defines language "as a system of communication by sound operating through the organs of speech and hearing, among members of a given community and using vocal symbols possessing arbitrary conventional meaning". As Hall (1968, p. 18) puts it that "Language is the institution whereby humans communicate and interact with each other by means of habitually used oral arbitrary systems". What is common in these definitions is that language is a means of communicating daily needs. It also speaks about the cultural loads of centuries; beliefs, traditions and thoughts. Language performs different functions. Jakobson

(1981) assumes six basic functions for language: emotive, conative, phatic, metalingual, referential and poetic. Among these functions, poetic function is related to the aesthetic and artistic aspects of language and it is mainly used in literature and poetry. Although Jakobson does not reduce the domain poetic function to poetry, he considers it to be the dominant and determining function of verbal act, whereas in all other verbal activities. "it acts as a subsidiary, accessory constituent". Halliday uses the term 'textual function' and Martinet "aesthetic function" to refer to this function of language Halliday and Hasan (1985). Literary language and poetry as a part of it uses this function to a great extent whereby make the language more beautiful.

In principle, the language of poetry comes into existence when some norms are broken or deviated from. Poetry is nothing but breaking the norms of ordinary and logical language. There is almost no literary work that does not involve a sort of deviation from ordinary language and assumes that the subject of linguistic deviation should not be neglected because in some cases all of the importance and influence of a literary work depends on it.

Russian formalists considered literature as a special use of language which achieves its distinctness by deviating from and distorting practical language. They believed that literary language is different from everyday language. Unlike ordinary speech, literary language foreground itself. Through devices such as imagery, structure, paradox, rhyme scheme etc., literary language identifies itself as deviations from everyday speech patterns and produces the defining feature of literariness, i.e. . . . 'defamiliarization'. Defamiliarization is the process of making strange the familiar. Art exists in order to recover for us the sensation of life which is diminished in the automatized routine of everyday experience. The result of this process of defamiliarization is that it enables us once again to see the world anew, in its all splendor.

2.0 Kinds of Deviation found in Poetry

2.1. **Lexical Deviation-Neologism** : neologism is the fabrication and creation of new words as a result of some sociolinguistic exigencies. Neologism is one of the ways by which a literary artist might exceed the provisions of his language to express his ideas fully. This skill has the advantage of achieving linguistic economy, Journalists, musicians, copyrighters and scientists are patrons of neologism. However, common language users also use this process as the handiest means of communicating their feelings. Thus a poem is considered to have lexical deviation if its word deviate from the actual and standard form in order to have deeper value in meaning and in aesthetic. We can see lexical deviation in Igbo in anthology *U tara Nti* edited by Emenanjo N.E.

In the poem written by Mmadubuike in *U tara Nti* titled 'Asị m', in stanza 5, line 3, he wrote 'Oto' instead of 'Owere'.

'Anyi achụọ ya n'oto nchi' the standard Igbo of this is 'anyi achuo ya owere nchi'.

We can also see deviation in 'Afrika Ndidị', *ujiji* instead of *ijiji* in stanza 3 line 4, '*ujiji machaa nkwe*'. In '*Ugomma*' also written by Mmadubuike, there is deviation in the word '*agu*' instead of '*agụ*' in stanza 4 line 1.

'*Agụ mangoro na-agụ m*'.

In '*Onye ara na Uche ya*', there is also deviation in the word '*O riele*' instead of '*O riela*'. It can

be seen in stanza 4 line 2, 'ma o riele ogwu'.

Another deviation in 'Ugomma', ujiri instead of ugiri in stanza 5 line 2-3.

'ujiri nke na-akwuṣi akpiri ikpo nku'

'ujiri odo na- ato ka mmanu anu'.

We can see example in Akpa Uche p. 39 where "Ogbu n'igwe" is coined to translate bomb. This neologism results from the technologies of the Biafran war.

There is also another lexical deviation in 'Abu' anuru- anuri in stanza 2 line 6. 'O na – emekwa anuru juputa Umaka Obi'.

There are borrowed words like moto 'moto' -anyị banye na moto lawa, stanza 7 line 1, votu – 'anyị jere votu na nke Okeke. This can be seen in 'Onye ara na Uche ya' stanza 3 line 2. 'Bered'- e nye ya bered ntakiri is seen in stanza 6 line 1.

Mangoro: Agụ mangoro na- agụ m

Mangoro na – eju afo

Mangoro anaghi agbaki n'eze

Mangoro nke Udu mmiri.

This can be seen in 'Ugomma' stanza 4 line 1-4.

Other processes of forming neologism include acronym, e.g i.m (a short form of imammadu (favouritism); compounding e.g. mahadum (an abbreviation of mara ha dum (university) etc.

2.2. Syntactic Deviation:

In this kind of deviation, Poets disregard the rules of sentence.. They sometimes put no between sentences; make no space between words, etc. And if we do not pay a very careful attention, it of course will make us difficult to find out which words belong to a sentence and which belong to other, let alone understand the idea. Examples

NakaAda ncha di - wrong syntactic feature

N'akaAda ka ncha di - correct syntactic feature.

This can be seen in Eke Une written by Emmanuel Obike. The same is seen in this sentence below.

N'emeghi nta, n'emeghi imo - wrong syntactic feature

Na-emeghi nta, na-emeghi imo – correct syntactic feature

This can be seen in Onwu ka Onwu stanza 4 line 5 in Uzoma Nwadike's Akonuche.

'O-o- yes' – wrong syntactic feature

This is seen in Anozie's Uche bu Akpa is scattered in the poem.

2.3. Deviation of Register:

Register is a range of vocabulary, grammar, etc. used by speakers in particular circumstances. Register borrowing in poetry is often accompanied by the further incongruity of register mixing, or the use in the same text of features characteristic of different register. For example,

In Auden's letter to Lord Byron

And may a bandit not so gently born

Kills vermin every winter with the Quorn.

Here Quorn is a vegetable substance that can be used instead of meat.

In the poem written by Anozie C.C in 'Uche bu Akpa', we have this deviation of register.

Aha m bu orja Mminwu
Aha m bu ekwenti
Aha mmirichukwu m bu GSM.

2.4. The use of Dialect:

This kind of deviation is often found in the poems written by those who want to express their emotions and feelings thoroughly but think that the standard language cannot represent what they are feeling. They think the dialect of their mother tongue can fit there for example, 'Ngana' Nzeako (2003):

Ngana bu orja aka ya n'uwa
Mgbe chi fosara n'utu nke
Aka erughi nga egbe yiri akwa n'elu oji

This is seen in Miliken Hill stanza 1 line 1 in Obienyem (2003).

2.5. Grammatical Deviation: They occasionally use disjointed syntax and morphology to achieve grammatical effect. In other words, the normal order of words may not be observed. The functions of certain lexical categories may be juxtaposed and what are regarded, as grammatical rules may not be obeyed.

There are two types of grammatical deviation: - Morphological and Syntactic deviations.

Morphological deviation is usually not easy to come by in poetry, however, examples of morphological deviation are museyroom, eggentical, and intellible James Joyce's "Finnegan's Wake".

In syntax, deviations might be (1) bad or incorrect grammar.

(2) **Syntactic rearrangement;** examples

I doesn't like him
I know not
Saw you anything
He me saw
The just man justices in As Kingfishers catch fire.

2.6. Phonological Deviation:

Phonological deviations may be in form of irregularity of pronunciation. For stylistic effect one or more syllables may drop from a word thereby bringing about a change in the pronunciation of that word. This is the deviation in sound which is done deliberately in regard to rhyme. Examples in English; the omission of an initial part of a word or phrase called Aphesis, e.g., tis. The omission of a medial part, Ne'er, o'er, pow'r and the omission of a final part, oft.

In Igbo, you can drop one sound in a word which is called Ellison, for instance,

Ọkụkụ - Ọkụ,
 Osisi – Osi
 Ọ bụ ya - Ọ ya

Phonological deviation can also be seen Akpa Uche p. 30-1 2nd stanza 1,3 (K'I si wee bata n'abọ ya), stanza 9 LL 3 and 4 (K'ọ bu nkata e ji ekpo aja; K'ọ bụ igu e ji aru ulọ.

2.7. Semantic Deviation:

This deviation shows that an ordinary word can have an extraordinary meaning and that a word can have difference in meaning depending on the poet's life and cultural background. The words 'Hujan', for example can mean disaster to poets living in a flood-risk area, but connotes blessing to those living in a desert. Another example is in the first rhyme of tenka 'Kanishiki Gaugu' by Takuboku; the word 'Kogarashi' which refers to the strong freezing wind in late Autumn, and is commonly used by Japanese poets to express a lonely feeling that one has when losing his beloved, does not connote such loneliness to Takuboku. He uses that word to describe his suffering from tuberculosis, which is still a hardly recoverable disease at that time. In Igbo language, the word Ọba means a barn where yams are kept but it connotes a different meaning in Yoruba, where it means the king.

I am not yet born; hear me in Louis MacNeice's Prayer before birth. The child is father of the man in My Heart Leaps Up by Wordsworth She was a phantom of delight by Shakespeare.

2.8. Graphological Deviation: Graphology has to do with the entire system of mechanical accuracy, namely punctuation and paragraphing as well as spelling. To a great extent, the written version of the Igbo language is visual coding of its spoken form. But for the spurious use of some syllabic nasals occurring at word initial position, the graphological system could be said to be a mirror of the phonemic form to the extent that the graphological system of Igbo resembles the written form: the strangeness of pronunciation will be reflected by the strangeness of the written form. However, it is possible to have graphological deviation that does not correlate to the spoken form, in this deviation poets disregard the rules of writing. They write the words in such a way without any boundaries in lines, space, or rhymes. Example from E.E. Cummings

Pity this busy monster, manunkind, Not, Progress is comfortable disease;
 Your victim (death and life safely beyond) Play with the bigness of his
 littleness -electrons deify one razorblade Into a mountainrage; lenses extend.

2.9. Historical Deviation:

Historical deviation is a situation where poets use archaic words which are no longer used in daily language. They do so in order to enhance the aesthetical value of poem. The example includes dead languages such as Latin and Greek and archaism 'the survival of the language of the past into the language of the present. For example: In T.S. Elliot's East Cooker:

The association of man and woman
 In daunsing, signifying matrimonie.

3.0. Summary and Conclusion:

The poets use deviation to make us search beyond the linguistic description of poem to get nearer to the literary meaning. Every poet wants to be famous by using deviation.

It is discovered that all these levels of deviation used are essential for the readers to understand the poem very well and to create emotion. This deviations help to increase Igbo vocabularies. By this, the reader can also appreciate the linguistic devices used to bring out the meaning clearly, which add to the interpretation and pleasure derived by reading the literary text.

In the poems, the various linguistic devices are very effectively used by the authors. They add significance to what they write and communicate their feelings about something they feel very deeply about in a creative manner. Each linguistic device used performs a specific function. These nine deviations discussed above are often found in poetry. But, of course, it doesn't mean that every poem has the nine deviations aspects in full; one or two aspects may occur in them. The deviations in linguistic convention on poetry is very important thing to know and understand by those who are concerned, especially the critics, so that they do not hastily jump into a conclusion to consider one poetry worthless when it contains some deviations in word choice and shapes in it. The relevance is to add more beauty and to make poem colorful so that it could not be understood. That is aesthetic and artistic beauty. On the contrary, this boundlessness and freedom in word choice and shapes should be viewed as the power of poetry which is very valuable.

