

DEVIATION AS A COMMUNICATIVE STRATEGY IN *GAMBA LA NYOKA*

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Makala haya yanazungumzia ukengeukaji kwa maana ya '*deviation*' (Massamba 2004: 99) katika riwaya ya *Gamba la Nyoka* (1979) ya Euphrase Kezilahabi. Tunachanganua aina nne za ukengeukaji, yaani wa kisarufi, kimsamiati, kielimusauti, na kielimumaana. Madhumuni ya makala ndiyo kuunganisha uchanganuzi wa kiisimu na uhakiki wa kifasihi ili kuonyesha aina hizi tofauti za ukengeukaji zinavyoendana na ujumbe mkuu wa mwandishi katika riwaya hiyo ambayo ndiyo riwaya ya kisiasa izungumziayo enzi za kujenga *Ujamaa* vijijini Tanzania.

This article deals with deviation in Euphrase Kezilahabi's novel *Gamba la Nyoka* (1979). We analyse four different types of deviation, namely grammatical, lexical, phonological, and semantic deviation. The objective of this study is to combine linguistic analysis with literary criticism, in order to show how these different types of deviation correspond with the overall message the author conveys in this novel, which is a political novel dealing with the era of establishing *Ujamaa* policies in rural Tanzania.

Introduction

This paper investigates an aspect of style in Euphrase Kezilahabi's political novel entitled: *Gamba la Nyoka* ('The Snake's Scale', 1979).¹ Leech & Short (1981: 12) define style as the linguistic characteristics of a particular text. This is the working definition we shall go by.

This investigation adopts the critical approach of stylistics which involves analysis of linguistic features of literary texts. Kezilahabi's work is categorized as a political novel because it focuses on the political transformation of Tanzania following the introduction of *Ujamaa*. This was Mwalimu Nyerere's version of socialism. Moreover, the novel revolves around political events related to political characters including Nyerere himself.

Deviation is the aspect of style that we focus on. Raymond Chapman (1973: 114) defines deviation as "linguistic usage considered to depart from normal expectations of users of the language". This definition suggests that deviation or deviance is negative since it constitutes a breach of the rules of grammar. This can be a hindrance to effective communication. On the other hand, deviation in literature is a positive stylistic feature of literary works. We agree with Julius Nwugu Ogu (2003: 142) that this feature is "purposeful and meaningful". It facilitates communication and enhances the aesthetic effects of literary texts. Deviation manifests itself in the context of norms. Ogu (ibid.: 145) raises the relevant question of the particular norms that deviance violates. For the purposes of this paper, the norms in question are the rules and conventions that govern the variety of Kiswahili that has come to be known as

¹ It was first published in 1979 by Eastern Africa Publications, but the text we shall use is the 2006 edition published by Vide-Muwa Publishers.

Kiswahili Sanifu (Standard Kiswahili). We caution that some of the rules and conventions are in contention and that Kiswahili, like any other language, is still evolving. Thus what is a case of deviance today may be viewed as correct usage in future.

The language of Kezilahabi's novel is, generally, *Kiswahili Sanifu*. However, there are numerous cases of Kiswahili usage which deliberately violate various rules and conventions of the language. This study identifies some of the violations and discusses their use in communicating the political messages of the novel. The underlying argument is that the author deliberately breaks the rules of Kiswahili usage as one of the strategies of forcefully conveying his political ideas. These ideas are related to Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere's political ideology of *Ujamaa* and the implementation of various policies related to it in rural Tanzania.

While discussing the aims of stylistic analysis, Geoffrey Leech (1969: 13) raises the question which such an analysis deals with: "why does the author choose to express himself in this particular way?" By examining specific cases of deviation in *Gamba la Nyoka* and relating them to the political orientation of the author, we shall provide the answer to this question.

Analysis of different types of deviation

There are various categories of deviation but we focus on four major categories as follows:

(a) Grammatical deviation

This includes all cases of ungrammaticality especially at the syntactic level. Examples are incomplete sentences, exaggerated repetition, unusual arrangement of words and unconventional use of punctuation marks.

(b) Lexical deviation

This category of deviation involves the manipulation of language at the level of words. Ordinarily, we form new words or new forms of existing words through morphological processes such as affixation and compounding. The former refers to the addition of affixes to roots. In Kiswahili for instance, *watoto* (children) is derived from adding the prefix 'wa-' to the root '-toto'. The latter, on the other hand, refers to the process of forming compound words by combining existing words. To give another example, *isimujamii*/sociolinguistics is derived from combining two words: *isimu* (linguistics) and *jamii* (society). Lexical deviation is the application of such rules in unconventional ways such as adding a prefix to a root which it is not usually combined with. It also includes neologisms or the invention of new words.

(c) Phonological deviation

This type of deviation is related to the sounds of language and it mainly involves unconventional pronunciation of words. In written texts, this is reflected in spellings that deviate from the norm. Phonological deviation abounds in poetry but it is also used in prose.

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(d) Semantic deviation

Semantics has to do with the meaning of words and other linguistic units. Semantic deviation, therefore, means the transmission of messages by using unconventional combinations of words. Henry Indangasi (1988: 94) rightly argues that this is the category of deviation that stands out most in literary texts. This is mainly because of the extent to which its use violates the norms and rules of language. Under this category we have literary devices such as the following: metaphor, simile, metonymy, synecdoche, paradox, hyperbole, oxymoron and personification. They may not all be found in one text; moreover, a writer may exploit some more than others.

Grammatical deviation

Incomplete sentences is one form of grammatical deviation that we find in *Gamba la Nyoka*. A general grammatical rule is that a complete sentence must have a subject and a predicate.

The subject consists of a noun phrase while the predicate consists of a verb phrase. In the text under discussion, this rule is violated as in the following examples:

Mapambazuko. Dawn. (GN V 29) 2

This one-word incomplete sentence appears at the beginning of the third chapter which deals with the aftermath of the bloody attack on government agents by fighters of Kisole Village who have decided to resist the implementation of the policy of moving people to new villages.

With the forcefulness of a headline, the word points to a critical stage in the struggle between the pro-change and anti-change forces. We categorize it as an incomplete sentence because it breaks the subject/predicate rule of sentence formation in Kiswahili. It is a subject without a predicate. We could complete a sentence like this by providing the predicate as follows:

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Predicate</u>
<i>Mapambazuko</i> Dawn	<i>yalileta mwanga</i> brought light
<i>Ndege</i> The plane	<i>ilitua</i> landed

In contrast with the sentence in question, the ones that follow it are complete sentences:

Mapambazuko. Wana-Kisole walikuwa sasa wanapumzika, na kabla ya mapambazuko wengi wao walikuwa wamekwishaamka. Walikuwa wakielezana jinsi wali-vyoviua vile "vijibwa vya serikali". (GN V 29)

Dawn. Kisole villagers were now resting and even before dawn many of them had woken up. They were describing to one another how they killed "the little dogs of the government".

² 'GN V 29' is used as a convention for *Gamba la Nyoka*, chapter five, page 29. This convention will be used throughout the article. All English translations were done by the author.

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The following example is another case of a sentence which is incomplete for the same reason as discussed above:

Jumamosi. Saturday. (GN XIV 119)

This utterance is in the form of a title that is meant to preface a description of an historic political event in Kisole Village. The event is the launch of piped water which marks the climax of development activities. The Saturday in question has all the hallmarks of a great day including the largest crowd ever seen, dancing, sports activities and feasting. Moreover, the function is attended by high-ranking government officials such as the *Mkuu wa Wilaya* (District Commissioner) and the area member of parliament. This is also the occasion when Kisole Village officially announces, through Ndugu Malima who is the village head that it has decided to transform itself into an *Ujamaa* village. It is quite clear that this event is meant to illustrate the transformation of rural Tanzania as a result of the implementation of *Ujamaa* policies. Ordinary villagers are portrayed as the real agents of change. Government officials and political leaders only come to join the villagers in celebrating their achievements and to give the government's blessing.

As in the first example, the sentences that follow the one in question are complete:

Jumamosi. Palikuwa hapajawahi kutokea hata siku moja ambayo mkusanyiko wa watu wengi namna hiyo ulipata kuonekana katika shule ya msingi ya Kisole. Mkusanyiko wa watu kuanzia asubuhi hadi jioni. (GN XIV 119)

Saturday. It had never happened even for one single day for so many people to be seen gathered at Kisole primary school. The people had gathered from morning to evening.

Another form of grammatical deviation that we find in the text is repetition that is of an unusually high degree. There is repetition of words, phrases and sentences. The following are examples of repetition of words:

Mahali penyewe palikuwa porini – katikati ya pori. Kimya! Kimya hewani, kimya mitini, kimya majanini, kimya kila pahali [...]. (GN II 11)

The place itself was in the bush – in the middle of the bush. Silence! Silence in the air, silence in the trees, silence everywhere [...].

This is a description of the secret meeting that the men of Kisole Village hold to discuss how to deal with the government's decision to relocate them to a new place away from their traditional village. They are bitterly opposed to this plan. The repetition of the word *kimya* (silence) puts emphasis on the secrecy of the meeting and the gravity of the whole situation where the citizens are pitted against their government.

Mnajua siasa ya Tanzania ninyi! Mnajua uhuru maana yake nini! Mnajua TANU ninyi! (GN VIII 67)

Do you know the politics of Tanzania! Do you know the meaning of Uhuru! Do you know TANU!

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These are the questions that the *Mkuu wa Wilaya* puts to Mambosasa and Mamboleo. He has summoned the duo to his office to grill them over allegations of misdemeanour. The repetition of “*mnajua*” (“do you know”; one word in Kiswahili) emphasizes the District Commissioner’s opinion that the two are fake revolutionaries who do not understand their country’s political history. This, in his opinion, is why they are misbehaving.

The extract quoted above is also anaphoric. To paraphrase Baldick’s (1990: 14) definition of anaphora, it is a literary device in which a word or phrase is repeated at the beginning of successive sentences. Apart from enriching the aesthetic effect of literary texts, anaphora enhances emphasis as we see in the example quoted above.

The following are examples of repetition of phrases rather than words:

Hiyo miradi iko wapi! [...] Hayo mapato yako wapi! Hizo hela ziko wapi!

(GN XI 90)

Where are those projects! [...] Where is that income! Where is that money!

This is Tinda talking to her husband, Mambosasa, about her frustrations with the false promises made by the government at the beginning of the implementation of *Ujamaa* policies.

The repetition of the phrase “*-ko wapi?*” (“where is [it, they]?”) emphasizes that the government has failed to deliver the goods. Tinda blames her husband because he was party to the implementation process. He made her believe in it and she now says that since it has collapsed, he is a total failure.

Walikuta barua kadhaa za kirafiki kutoka kwa walimu fulani fulani wa Kitanzania waliopata kusoma Marekani. Walikuta barua nyingi za uhusiano na Marekani wenzake katika mikoa mbalimbali kuhusu kazi yao. Walikuta barua nyingi za uhusiano na wakubwa kadhaa kutoka wizara mbalimbali. [...] Padri Madevu alikuwa CIA. (GN XI 95f)

They found several friendly letters from certain Tanzanian teachers who had been educated in America. They found many letters on his relationship with fellow Americans in various regions concerning their work. They found many letters on his relationship with several senior officers from various ministries. [...] Padri Madevu was a CIA agent.

This extract describes what the police found following investigations into the mysterious death of over twenty people in one night. Among the dead is Padri Madevu – a crooked American priest who was involved with a widow in the village. The widow, Mama Tinda, is also among the dead. The anaphoric repetition of the phrase ‘*walikuta barua*’ (they found letters) underscores the importance of this discovery especially in unmasking Padri Madevu. The letters reveal that he was secretly involved in political activities. In fact he was a counterrevolutionary and a CIA agent.

In the context of the entire text, the extract quoted above has considerable political significance. It reveals the nefarious political activities of an agent of the US American government which was at loggerheads with Mwalimu Nyerere’s *Ujamaa* policies. This is proof that the

American government actively undermined Nyerere's efforts. The message we get here is that the failures of *Ujamaa* were not solely caused by the ineffectiveness of local leadership. Hostile foreign governments, especially the United States of America, had a hand in it.

Lexical deviation

One facet of lexical deviation in *Gamba la Nyoka* is the use of foreign words, especially those of English origin. English words are used to convey various aspects of the political message of the novel. The following examples attest to this:

socialist garbage. (GN VII 58)³

These words are uttered by Padri Madevu – the CIA agent posing as a priest. They are meant to be an insult to Mambosasa and Mamboleo, the two youthful patriots who are opposed to his destructive activities in the village. The three are engaged in a fight during which Padri Madevu knocks down both Mamboleo and Mambosasa. That is when he utters the insult. In their context, the words are not merely an insult that indicates how much the uttering person despises his adversaries. They are a pointer to his political orientation. He is totally opposed to the *Ujamaa* ideology. On the other hand, Mamboleo and Mambosasa are its staunch disciples.

Tunahitaji heavy industry. (GN VI 44)⁴
We need heavy industry.

This phrase is uttered by Mamboleo in his argument on the direction that *Ujamaa* ought to take. His use of English is a sign of the foreign nature of his thoughts in the context of the implementation of *Ujamaa* policies. He seems to think that socialist models of countries like the (former) Soviet Union, which prioritized industrialization, are better than *Ujamaa*. This is contrary to Nyerere's intention to domesticate socialism on the basis of African culture rather than adopt foreign models of socialism.

"Watu tulikuwa hatulali! Kila siku Oo! Marx alisema hivi! Likitokea jambo Oo! hiyo siyo 'Marxism'!" (GN XI 93)

"We were not even able to sleep! Every day we were told Oo! Marx said this! When something happened Oo! that is not Marxism!"

These bitter and disparaging words are uttered by Mambosasa's wife to describe the ideological stance that he usually took to justify his political actions. The foreignness of the last word draws attention to the fact that Mambosasa's ideological orientation is at variance with Mwalimu Nyerere's *Ujamaa*, and, therefore, inappropriate. No wonder, subsequent events prove him wrong.

³ In the original text, the English words are given in italics.

⁴ Cf. above.

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Apart from English, there is also the use of the local language, namely Kikerewe, as opposed to Kiswahili which is the official language. For example, we find the following exclamation:

*Ona Nyerere Unuu! Basi go!**;
**Nyerere huyu! Basi tu (Lau basi bwana!)* (GN IX 71)⁵
This Nyerere! So great!

These words are attributed to one of the old men who attends the adult education classes. The utterer is paying tribute to Mwalimu Nyerere for the great positive changes that are taking place in the country, thanks to *Ujamaa*. These changes include the introduction of literacy classes for adults. We come across a similar exclamation in the context of an actual adult education session:

Obula ti bula! (GN IX 74)⁶

This is how one of the old men in the adult education class describes the letter “f” which is the subject of discussion. The narrator makes it clear that the character in question is speaking in the mother tongue by providing the following explanation before the exclamation: “*Mzee mmoja alijisahau akasema kikabila: [...]*” (One old man got carried away and said in the mother tongue: [...]; *ibid.*).

Phonological deviation

This form of deviation is mainly reflected in the way adult learners mispronounce Kiswahili words. Their teacher makes a great effort to correct them but achieves little progress. This is illustrated in the following example (p. 75):

TANU ni Chama
TANO ni chama
TANU ni chama
TANO ni chama (GN IX 75)
TANU is the Party [says the teacher]
'Five' is a party [the learners respond]
TANU is a party [the teacher repeats]
'Five' is a party [the learners mispronounce TANU once more]

The above illustration of how the adult learners have a problem with pronouncing TANU (the name of the ruling party) which they mispronounce as 'TANO' ('five') also enhances the humour of the narrative and the playfulness of its language.

The adult learners also have a problem in pronouncing the response to the greeting: *Hamjambo* (How are you). Instead of *Hatu**j**ambo* (We are fine), they say: *Hatu**z**ambo*. The significance of these phonological features is to show that apart from being illiterate, the villagers are quite deficient in their knowledge of Kiswahili. The implementation of *Ujamaa*

⁵ This Kiswahili translation is given as a footnote '*' in the original text.

⁶ Here, the text doesn't give a translation; it just mentions that the audience gives this utterance a laugh.

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policies is geared towards eliminating such inadequacies by fighting illiteracy and imparting the necessary communication skills to the villagers. This is meant to enable them to understand the policies of their government and participate in the transformation that is taking place.

Semantic deviation

The following examples of semantic deviation are identifiable in the text:

vijibwa vya serikali (GN V 29)
the government's little dogs [despicable government functionaries]

This is how the people of Kisole Village refer metaphorically to the government's agents within the police and TANU who are involved in forcefully moving people to new villages. The people are brimming with disdain and hatred for the agents because they are corrupt, brutal and arrogant. Instead of popularizing *Ujamaa* policies, they make them unpopular. This is because the people identify those policies with their suffering.

Kwaheri Mambosasa. Ujue unaniacha nanawa mikono. (GN III 22)
Goodbye Mambosasa. Know that you leave me washing my hands.

Mamboleo uses the metaphorical expression of washing his hands to emphasize the point that he is absolving himself of responsibility for the retaliatory attack on Kisole that the government has planned. Mambosasa fully supports the government's plan.

Mara moja palichomoza mikono isiyohesabika." (GN II 16)
At once countless hands shot up.

This hyperbolic description is meant to emphasize the unanimous support that the people of Kisole Village give to the idea of armed resistance to the government's plan to move them to a new village by force. By a show of hands, they demonstrate their readiness to fight the government.

After the bloody confrontation between the fighters of Kisole Village and what they disdainfully refer to as "*Vijibwa vya serikali*", a powerful symbol is used to describe what happens next. We are told:

Lakini mawingu mazito mazito meusi yaliyokuwa yamelifunika anga yalikataa kabisa kuondoka upande huo wa mashariki. (GN V 29)

But thick black clouds which had covered the sky completely refused to move from the eastern side.

This refers to the morning when Kisole fighters are disarmed and arrested by government forces. The dark clouds that have covered the sky symbolize the futility of the villagers' fight against the government. Their armed resistance is easily defeated. The symbol is enriched by the personification of the clouds which are given the human quality of "refusing to move".

Another example of the use of personification for emphasis is in the following description of the mango tree under which the adult education class takes place:

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Mwembe huu ulituna mbele yao tayari kuwapa kivuli bila malipo. (GN IX 71)

The boated mango tree stood in front ready to provide them with a shade free of charge.

The mango tree is given much prominence here because of the significant role it plays in the adult education sessions that are transforming the lives of the villagers.

Conclusion

We have identified four categories of deviation that are dominant in the text in question. Under grammatical deviation we have discussed the use of incomplete sentences and repetition which includes anaphora. The forms of lexical deviation that are identifiable in the text are mainly the use of foreign words, particularly those derived from English and Kikerewe. Phonological deviation is sparse but we have examples of mispronunciation by adult learners who have not mastered Kiswahili. Under semantic deviation we have discussed metaphor, hyperbole, symbols and personification.

This paper did not intend to describe all cases of deviation in *Gamba la Nyoka* but rather to identify samples that exemplify the main categories. Typical examples have been selected and put in their context to reveal the messages that they communicate. On the whole, the messages are of a political nature. It is, therefore, clear that the author uses deviation as a device to transmit the political content of the novel. The skilful use of this device is one of the qualities that makes *Gamba la Nyoka* an exciting novel.

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