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EXPLORING ABDUL KARIM KHAN'S *THE FLOWERS THAT DON'T SMELL* THROUGH SEMANTIC DEVIATION

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Abstract
This study explores semantic deviation in Abdul Karim Khan's poem The Flowers That Don't Smell. Semantic deviation occurs when a poet uses language in an unusual way that differs from normal meaning or expectation. Such unusual expressions attract the reader's attention and create deeper meanings. The study uses the theory of foregrounding, particularly semantic deviation, to examine the language of the poem. A qualitative textual analysis is used to identify and interpret unusual expressions in the poem. The analysis focuses on expressions such as "the flowers that don't smell," "the bed that has no rest," "the time that has no mercy," and "the people with no souls." These expressions create unusual meanings and encourage the reader to look beyond their literal meanings. The findings show that semantic deviation helps the poet express ideas about emotional emptiness, artificial beauty, human suffering, and the loss of moral values. The study concludes that semantic deviation is an important stylistic technique through which the poet makes ordinary language more expressive and meaningful.

Keywords*: Semantic Deviation, Foregrounding, Stylistics, Poetry, Abdul Karim Khan, Figurative Language, Pakistani English Poetry*

Background of the Study

Poetry is an important form of literary expression. Poets use language in creative ways to express feelings, ideas, experiences, and views about society. In poetry, language may differ from ordinary everyday language. Such unusual use of language can attract the reader's attention and create additional meanings.

In stylistics, foregrounding is an important concept for studying unusual language in literary texts. Foregrounding occurs when particular linguistic features become more noticeable than ordinary language. One major way of creating foregrounding is deviation. Deviation occurs when a writer moves away from normal linguistic patterns or expected meanings.

Semantic deviation is particularly important in poetry because it involves unusual or unexpected relationships between words and meanings. A poet may give human qualities to an abstract idea, combine normally unrelated concepts, or present an object in an unexpected way. Such expressions make readers look beyond the literal meaning of the words.

This study focuses on Abdul Karim Khan's poem "The Flowers That Don't Smell." The poem contains several unusual expressions that challenge normal expectations. The image of flowers without smell, for example, creates an unexpected relationship between the flower and its

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conventional association with fragrance. Similar expressions throughout the poem create unusual meanings and invite deeper interpretation.

Therefore, this study examines semantic deviation as a foregrounding technique in the poem. It focuses on how unusual expressions attract attention and contribute to the poem's meanings and themes. The study particularly considers how semantic deviation represents ideas related to human experience, emotional emptiness, and social conditions.

Introduction to the Poet: Abdul Karim Khan

Dr. Abdul Karim Khan is an Assistant Professor of English at the Department of English & Modern Languages, University of Science and Technology, Bannu. With a PhD in Stylistics focused on Pakistani Literature in English, he has over two decades of teaching and academic experience. His research interests include Critical Discourse Analysis, Stylistics, ELT, and Feminist Literary Criticism. Dr. Khan has published over fifty peer-reviewed research papers in HEC-recognized national and international journals and has served as a reviewer for several reputed journals. He has also organized and led academic workshops, supervised MPhil theses, and contributed to various academic boards and selection committees. Dedicated to promoting excellence in language and literary studies, he continues to engage in scholarly and pedagogical initiatives across Pakistan's higher education landscape.

Previous Studies

Previous studies in stylistics have shown that unusual language is an important feature of literary texts. Mukarovsky (1964) explains that poetic language becomes noticeable when it moves away from ordinary language. Leech (1969) further develops this idea through the concept of foregrounding, particularly deviation and parallelism. Leech (2008) also emphasizes that foregrounded linguistic features can create additional meanings and effects in literary texts. Jakobson (1960) highlights the importance of the linguistic form of a literary text and explains how patterns and unusual language contribute to poetic meaning.

Studies of semantic deviation have mainly focused on how unusual combinations of words and meanings create figurative and symbolic effects. However, limited attention has been given to semantic deviation in the poetry of Abdul Karim Khan. In particular, "The Flowers That Don't Smell" has not been examined in detail from the perspective of semantic deviation. Therefore, the present study addresses this gap by examining how unusual meanings are created in the poem and how they contribute to its overall interpretation.

Statement of the Problem

Abdul Karim Khan's poem *The Flowers That Don't Smell* contains several unusual expressions that move beyond ordinary meanings. These expressions create semantic deviation and make certain ideas more noticeable to the reader. However, the poem has received limited stylistic attention from the perspective of semantic deviation. Therefore, this study examines how semantic deviation is used as a foregrounding technique in the poem. It also explores how these unusual meanings contribute to the interpretation of the poem's ideas, emotions, and themes.

Summary of the Poem

Abdul Karim Khan's *The Flowers That Don't Smell* reflects a view of human life and society. The poem uses ordinary objects, people, and situations to express deeper ideas. The poet creates unusual relationships between words and meanings to draw the reader's attention.

The title itself presents an unexpected image. Flowers are commonly associated with beauty and fragrance, but the expression "the flowers that don't smell" challenges this expectation. Similar

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expressions appear throughout the poem. They include “the bed that has no rest,” “the time that has no mercy,” and “the people with no souls.” These expressions move beyond their literal meanings and suggest deeper emotional and social conditions.

The poem also presents ideas related to emptiness, suffering, artificiality, human behaviour, and the loss of moral values. Through unusual expressions, the poet encourages the reader to look beyond surface meanings. Thus, the poem provides suitable textual material for examining semantic deviation as a foregrounding technique.

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the theory of foregrounding, particularly semantic deviation. Foregrounding refers to the use of language that becomes more noticeable because it differs from ordinary linguistic patterns. Mukarovsky (1964) considers deviation from the standard use of language an important feature of poetic language. Leech (1969) further explains foregrounding through linguistic deviation and parallelism.

Semantic deviation occurs when words are combined or used in ways that create unusual or unexpected meanings. Such expressions may be understood beyond their literal meanings and may produce metaphorical, symbolic, or contextual interpretations. In “The Flowers That Don’t Smell,” expressions such as “the time that has no mercy” and “the people with no souls” create unusual relationships between concepts. These expressions therefore attract attention and encourage deeper interpretation.

The present study uses semantic deviation to examine how Abdul Karim Khan makes certain ideas prominent through unusual meanings. The framework focuses on identifying these expressions and explaining their contribution to the poem’s meaning and themes.

Methodology

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative research design. It focuses on the close textual analysis of Abdul Karim Khan’s poem “The Flowers That Don’t Smell.” The study examines unusual expressions and their meanings through the framework of semantic deviation.

Research Method

The study uses qualitative textual analysis. Selected expressions from the poem are identified and examined. Their literal and contextual meanings are compared to explain how semantic deviation creates foregrounding.

Data Collection Method

The data are collected directly from the text of the poem. The researcher carefully reads the poem and selects expressions that show unusual or unexpected meanings. No questionnaire, interview, or survey is used.

Data Source

The primary source of data is Abdul Karim Khan’s poem “The Flowers That Don’t Smell.” The poem provides the textual data for the analysis.

Data Analysis Method

The selected expressions are analysed through the theory of foregrounding, with particular focus on semantic deviation. Each expression is examined in its textual context. Its literal meaning is compared with its contextual meaning to explain how the deviation creates emphasis and contributes to the poem’s themes.

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Data Analysis and Discussion

Semantic Deviation in *The Flowers That Don't Smell*

The expression "the flowers that don't smell" presents an unusual relationship between flowers and fragrance. Flowers are commonly associated with beauty and pleasant smell. The absence of smell therefore creates an unexpected image. In the context of the poem, the expression can suggest beauty without emotional or moral value. The poet uses this unusual expression to move the reader beyond the ordinary meaning of flowers and create a deeper interpretation.

The Bed That Has No Rest

The expression "the bed that has no rest" creates an unusual relationship between the bed and rest. A bed is normally associated with sleep, comfort, and relaxation. However, the expression presents a bed that cannot provide rest. This creates a semantic contrast between the expected function of a bed and its meaning in the poem.

The expression can suggest emotional disturbance, anxiety, or continuous suffering. The bed therefore becomes more than a physical object. It represents a condition in which a person cannot find peace or comfort. Through this semantic deviation, the poet gives an ordinary object a deeper contextual meaning.

The Time That Has No Mercy

The expression "the time that has no mercy" gives a human quality to time. Time cannot literally show mercy, but the poet presents it as an active force that affects human life. This creates semantic deviation because an abstract concept is described through a human quality.

The expression suggests that time continues to pass without considering human feelings or suffering. It may represent the unavoidable nature of change, loss, and human mortality. Through this unusual expression, the poet makes the idea of time more powerful and emotionally meaningful.

The People with No Souls

The expression "the people with no souls" creates an unusual semantic association between people and the absence of a soul. Literally, people are normally understood as living human beings with souls or inner feelings. In the poem, however, the expression is used in a figurative sense.

It may suggest people who have lost compassion, morality, or emotional sensitivity. The poet therefore uses semantic deviation to describe a social condition through an unusual expression. The phrase draws attention to the difference between being physically human and possessing humane qualities.

The Pen That Sits Like a King

The expression "the pen that sits like a king" creates an unusual comparison between a pen and a king. A pen cannot literally sit like a person. The poet gives the pen a human position and status. This creates a semantic shift from an ordinary object to a symbol of authority.

The pen may represent writing, knowledge, power, or intellectual authority. By comparing it with a king, the poet suggests that the written word can possess influence and power. Thus, the unusual expression makes the role of writing more prominent and meaningful in the poem.

The Door That Locks Itself

The expression "the door that locks itself" presents an unusual situation because a door cannot normally decide to lock itself. The poet gives the door an action that is normally performed by a person. This creates a semantic shift and makes the expression more noticeable.

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The door may symbolize barriers, isolation, or the loss of opportunities. Its ability to lock itself can suggest a situation in which separation or closure occurs without direct human action. Through this unusual expression, the poet presents a deeper meaning beyond the literal function of a door.

The Silence That Bespeaks Aloud

The expression "the silence that bespeaks aloud" presents an apparent contradiction. Silence normally means the absence of speech, while "bespeaks aloud" suggests clear and audible expression. The combination therefore creates an unusual semantic relationship.

The expression suggests that silence can communicate powerful feelings and meanings without spoken words. It may represent pain, fear, oppression, or unspoken emotions. Through this semantic deviation, the poet shows that silence itself can become a form of communication. The unusual expression makes the hidden meaning of silence more noticeable to the reader.

The Knowledge That Rises Like Sunset

The expression "the knowledge that rises like sunset" presents knowledge through an unusual image. Knowledge is an abstract concept, but the poet describes it as something that can rise like the sunset. This creates a semantic association between knowledge and a natural phenomenon. The expression may suggest the gradual emergence of awareness, understanding, or realization. The image of sunset can also indicate a transition from one state to another. Through this unusual expression, the poet gives an abstract idea a more concrete and visual form.

The Bride That Laughs

The expression "the bride that laughs" appears simple, but its meaning becomes significant in the context of the poem. Laughter is normally associated with happiness and celebration, especially in relation to a bride. However, when considered alongside the poem's other unusual expressions, the laughter may carry a deeper meaning. It can suggest the contrast between outward happiness and hidden emotions. The expression therefore allows the reader to consider whether the apparent happiness represents genuine joy or merely an external appearance.

The Man That Tears Out Tears

The expression "the man that tears out tears" creates an unusual semantic relationship between the man and tears. Tears are normally produced as a result of emotional pain, sadness, or suffering. The verb "tears out" gives the expression a forceful meaning and suggests that tears are being brought out through intense emotional experience. The expression can therefore represent deep suffering and emotional struggle. Through this unusual combination of words, the poet makes the experience of pain more vivid.

The Simplicity That Touches Lips

The expression "the simplicity that touches lips" presents simplicity as something that can physically touch. Since simplicity is an abstract quality, its association with the physical action of touching creates an unusual semantic relationship. The expression may suggest simple speech, honest expression, or words that are natural and sincere. The poet transforms an abstract quality into a concrete image. This makes the idea of simplicity more noticeable and meaningful.

Everything That Moulds the Future

The expression "everything that moulds the future" presents the future as something that can be shaped or formed. The verb "moulds" is normally associated with giving physical form to a material. Its use with "the future" creates a figurative semantic relationship. The expression suggests that present actions, experiences, decisions, and circumstances influence what comes later. Thus, the poet gives the abstract concept of the future a more concrete form.

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And Salutes the Past, Neglects the Present

The expression "salutes the past, neglects the present" creates a strong semantic contrast between the past and the present. The verb "salutes" suggests respect, recognition, or admiration, while "neglects" suggests disregard or lack of attention. The contrast presents a situation in which the past receives attention while the present is ignored. This may reflect the human tendency to idealize the past while failing to recognize current realities. The semantic contrast strengthens the poem's critical and reflective tone.

Findings

The study finds that semantic deviation is an important foregrounding technique in Abdul Karim Khan's "The Flowers That Don't Smell." The analysis shows that the poet uses unusual semantic relationships to make particular ideas prominent.

The main findings are:

1) The poem contains several expressions that move beyond their ordinary or literal meanings.
2) Semantic deviation makes abstract ideas such as time, silence, knowledge, and simplicity more concrete and expressive.
3) The unusual expressions create deeper meanings related to suffering, emotional emptiness, isolation, morality, and human experience.
4) The poem frequently uses figurative and unexpected associations to encourage readers to interpret meanings beyond the surface level.
5) Semantic deviation strengthens the poem's reflective and critical tone.
6) The interaction between unusual linguistic expressions and their contexts contributes to the development of the poem's major themes.

The findings reveals that linguistic choices are central to the interpretation of the poem and that foregrounding through semantic deviation enhances its expressive effect.

Conclusion

This study examined semantic deviation as a foregrounding technique in Abdul Karim Khan's poem "The Flowers That Don't Smell." The analysis showed that the poet uses unusual combinations of words and meanings to make important ideas more noticeable. These expressions often move beyond their literal meanings and create deeper contextual interpretations.

The study concludes that semantic deviation contributes significantly to the meaning and interpretation of the poem. It helps the poet express ideas related to human suffering, emotional emptiness, social conditions, moral values, and the contrast between appearance and reality. The unusual expressions also encourage readers to look beyond surface meanings and engage with the deeper meanings of the poem.

Thus, semantic deviation is not simply a stylistic feature in the poem. It is an important linguistic resource through which the poet creates emphasis, develops themes, and communicates complex human experiences.

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Appendix

The Flowers That Don't Smell

By Abdul Karim Khan

The bed that has no rest
The time that has no mercy
The people without souls
The pen that sits like a king
The door that locks itself
The silence that bespeaks aloud
The knowledge that rise like sunset
The bride that laughs
The man that tears out tears.
The simplicity that touches lips
The everything that moulds the future
and salutes the past, neglect the present.