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# Linguistic Deviation and The System of Stylistic Devices in The Poetry of Pam Ayres

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**Abstract:** Stylistics is one of the branches of linguistics that demonstrates the expressive potential and artistic capabilities of language. Throughout the history of linguistic studies, scholars from different countries have proposed various definitions and approaches to stylistics. Besides enriching speech and enhancing its expressiveness, stylistics plays a crucial role in creating aesthetic and artistic effects in poetic texts through the use of stylistic devices. This article presents the classification of stylistic devices into four major categories and analyzes their application in the poetry of the British poet Pam Ayres. The study reveals that Ayres's simple, colloquial, and folk-oriented poetic style is remarkably rich in lexical, lexico-syntactic, syntactic, and phonetic stylistic devices. Through illustrative examples selected from her poems, the paper demonstrates how these stylistic devices contribute to the creation of artistic imagery, humorous effects, emotional colouring, and the representation of everyday life within the framework of British linguo-cultural traditions.

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**Keywords:** Stylistics, Stylistic Devices, Lexical Stylistic Devices, Lexico-Syntactic Stylistic Devices, Syntactic Stylistic Devices, Phonetic Stylistic Devices, Linguistic Deviation, Linguacultural Analysis, Poetic Text, Pam Ayres

## 1. Introduction

In Stylistics is one of the broadest and most significant branches of linguistics, studying not only functional styles of language but also lexical, lexico-syntactic, syntactic, and phonetic devices that enrich literary texts and enhance their expressiveness [1]. Stylistic devices function as linguistic ornaments that provide additional semantic shades, emotional colouring, and artistic effect. Consequently, poetic discourse cannot be fully understood without examining the stylistic means employed by the author [2].

Geoffrey Leech, while investigating poetic language, introduced the concept of deviation, arguing that poetry emerges when language departs from its ordinary grammatical, syntactic, phonological, and stylistic norms [3]. According to the scholar, linguistic deviations may occur at lexical, grammatical, phonological, graphological, semantic, and dialectal levels, creating distinctive stylistic effects within literary texts. Leech classifies stylistic deviations into several categories. Phonological deviations give rise to stylistic devices such as alliteration, assonance, consonance, and onomatopoeia. Graphological deviations include graphons and visual poetic forms, while lexical deviations result in neologisms, compounds, and derivative words. Grammatical deviations produce inversion, ellipsis, and subject-verb incongruity, whereas semantic deviations generate metaphor, personification, and oxymoron. Dialectal deviations often

contribute to irony, humour, and satire [4, 5]. However, not every linguistic deviation automatically creates stylistic devices. The present research confirms that phonological and semantic deviations are particularly productive in generating stylistic effects and artistic imagery.

According to I.R. Galperin, stylistic devices can be divided into four major categories: lexical stylistic devices, lexico-syntactic stylistic devices, syntactic stylistic devices, and phonetic stylistic devices [6].

1.	<b>Lexical stylistic devices</b>	Metaphor, metonymy, zeugma, irony, epithet, oxymoron, hyperbole, antonomasia, etc.
2.	<b>Lexico-syntactic stylistic devices:</b>	Antithesis, simile, litotes, pun (wordplay), etc.
3.	<b>Syntactic stylistic devices</b>	Chiasmus, repetition, asyndeton, polysyndeton, rhetorical questions, etc.
4.	<b>Phonetic stylistic devices:</b>	Alliteration, assonance, consonance, onomatopoeia, etc.

Lexical stylistic devices are primarily based on figurative meanings and semantic transformations. Lexico-syntactic devices combine lexical choices with syntactic structures, while syntactic stylistic devices focus on sentence organization, word order, emphasis, and repetition. Phonetic stylistic devices, on the other hand, rely on sound patterns and repetitions to create musicality and emotional resonance.

V. Stepanova classified stylistic devices according to three linguistic levels: phonetic, graphic, and morphological. Uzbek scholars such as D. Ashurova, Q. Musayev, M. Suleymanov, and D. Khadjiyeva similarly distinguish lexical, lexico-syntactic, syntactic, and phonetic stylistic devices, emphasizing their important role in enhancing imagery and artistic expression in literary discourse [7, 8].

Among contemporary British poets, Pam Ayres occupies a special place owing to her simple conversational style, humour, satire, and vivid depiction of everyday life. Born in England in 1947, Pamela Ayres has become one of the most recognizable representatives of modern British poetry. Despite the apparent simplicity of her language, her poems contain a remarkable variety of stylistic devices that contribute to their expressive power and cultural significance [9].

The present study aims to investigate the stylistic devices employed in Pam Ayres's poetry and to identify their linguistic and artistic functions through detailed textual analysis.

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Lexical stylistic devices constitute one of the most productive layers of expressive language in Pam Ayres's poetry. Through metaphor, epithet, metonymy, irony, and antonomasia, the poet successfully transforms ordinary everyday situations into vivid artistic images while preserving her characteristic humorous and conversational style [12].

## 2. Methodology

The present study employs qualitative, descriptive, and comparative research methods to investigate the stylistic devices used in Pam Ayres's poetry. The research material consists of selected poems written by Pam Ayres, with particular attention paid to those depicting everyday life, domestic activities, and British cultural traditions.

The analysis is based on the theoretical approaches proposed by G. Leech regarding linguistic deviation and I.R. Galperin's classification of stylistic devices. Lexical, lexico-syntactic, syntactic, and phonetic stylistic devices are identified and interpreted through contextual and stylistic analysis. In addition, elements of linguo-cultural analysis are applied to reveal how ordinary images and cultural references contribute to the artistic representation of British society and everyday life. Comparative analysis is also employed where necessary to explain the semantic and stylistic functions of particular expressions and poetic structures.

## 3. Result

The analysis of Pam Ayres's selected poems reveals that lexical stylistic devices are the most frequently used expressive means in her poetry. Metaphor, epithet, irony, metonymy, and antonomasia occur extensively and contribute to the vivid representation of everyday life images. Metaphorical expressions such as "burned a flame" and "the kiss of life" demonstrate the poet's ability to convey emotional experiences through figurative language. The study also identifies numerous examples of lexico-syntactic stylistic devices, particularly puns and wordplay, which create humorous effects through lexical ambiguity. Syntactic stylistic devices, including anaphora, epiphora, and repetition, strengthen the rhythmic structure of the poems and emphasize particular emotional states of the lyrical persona. Furthermore, phonetic stylistic devices such as alliteration and onomatopoeia are actively employed to increase musicality and emotional expressiveness. The repetition of consonant sounds and imitation of natural noises successfully reinforces the artistic effect of the poetic texts [13, 14].

## 4. Discussion

The findings indicate that Pam Ayres's stylistic mastery lies in her ability to combine simple conversational language with sophisticated stylistic techniques. Although her poems are based on ordinary situations and everyday experiences, the systematic use of lexical, lexico-syntactic, syntactic, and phonetic stylistic devices transforms these commonplace themes into memorable artistic representations.

The analysis further demonstrates that stylistic devices serve not only aesthetic purposes but also linguo-cultural functions. Images related to traditional British food, family life, domestic activities, and social customs reflect important aspects of British culture and national identity. Consequently, everyday life images become effective instruments for expressing humour, nostalgia, irony, and emotional attachment [15].

The results of the present research support Geoffrey Leech's theory of linguistic deviation and I.R. Galperin's classification of stylistic devices, confirming that deviations at different linguistic levels contribute significantly to the stylistic organization and expressive power of poetic discourse. Moreover, the study shows that Pam Ayres's poetry

represents a valuable source for investigating the interaction between language, culture, and stylistic expression in contemporary English literature.

Pam Ayres's early poem *"In Defence of Hedgehogs"*, written in 1972, demonstrates the poet's affection for nature and sympathy for helpless animals killed on modern roads. The following lines illustrate the use of metaphor:

*"That in a car-and-hedgehog fight  
The hedgehog comes off worse."*

The phrase **"car-and-hedgehog fight"** metaphorically presents an ordinary traffic accident as if it were a battle between two opponents. Likewise, another metaphor appears in the description:

*"His coat of nice brown prickles."*

Instead of referring simply to the hedgehog's spines, the poet calls them a **"nice brown coat"** creating an artistic image that evokes sympathy for the animal while emphasizing its innocence and vulnerability.

Among lexical stylistic devices, **epithet** is probably the most frequently employed in Ayres's poetry. Almost every poem analyzed in this study contains descriptive adjectives that intensify imagery and emotional colouring. For example, in the short poem *"Tiger, Tiger"* the poet writes:

*"The tiger that stalks through the night  
Delivers a hideous bite  
And there on his paws  
Are razor-sharp claws."*

The epithets **"hideous bite"** and **"razor-sharp claws"** successfully emphasize the terrifying appearance and dangerous nature of the tiger. These descriptive elements contribute significantly to the vividness of the poetic image while strengthening the emotional impact on readers. Another example of epithet appears in *"Gloomy churchyard"*:

*"Don't lie me in some gloomy churchyard shaded by a wall,  
Where the dust of ancient bones has spread a dryness over all."*

Here, the adjective **"gloomy"** intensifies the melancholic atmosphere associated with the cemetery and reinforces the emotional tone of the poem by presenting death and memory through expressive description. Pam Ayres also employs **metonymy** in her poem *"After the jubilee"*. The closing lines state:

*"Here's a message for Buckingham Palace,  
Can we do it again? It was fun!"*

The expression **"Buckingham Palace"** functions metonymically by representing the British royal family and governmental authority rather than the physical building itself. Through this substitution, the poet humorously expresses the public's wish to celebrate another royal jubilee while simultaneously reflecting British cultural identity and traditions.

The stylistic richness of Ayres's poetry can further be observed through her use of **antonomasia** in *"Will anyone marry me?"*:

*"He would not have to be a Mr World,  
Built like Fort Knox."*

The expression **"Mr World"** substitutes a descriptive title for an exceptionally handsome man and therefore exemplifies antonomasia. By employing this stylistic device, the poet humorously suggests that physical perfection is not the most important criterion for choosing a future husband.

Perhaps the most characteristic lexical feature of Pam Ayres's poetry is **irony**, which frequently appears alongside gentle humour and satire. A representative example can be

found in *"Eat, drink and be sick"*, where traditional Christmas food is described through amusing exaggeration:

*"Well yes, I'll have a mince pie, please,  
And then I'll have a date,  
And then I'll crack a nut or two,  
And fling them in the grate.  
And then I'll have a fig,  
And then perhaps a glass of wine."*

The poem humorously enumerates various festive dishes while ironically suggesting that excessive eating and drinking during Christmas inevitably lead to illness. Through this playful contradiction between celebration and sickness, Ayres creates a light-hearted satirical commentary on British holiday traditions.

Lexico-syntactic stylistic devices occupy an important position in Pam Ayres's poetic language. Among them, pun (wordplay) is one of the most characteristic features that reflects the poet's humour and linguistic creativity. By assigning two meanings to a single lexical item or expression, Ayres creates comic effects while simultaneously conveying deeper cultural implications [1]. A notable example can be found in the poem *"Goodwill to men: give us your money"*:

*"It was Christmas Eve on a Friday,  
The shops was full of cheer,  
With tinsel in the windows,  
And presents twice as dear"*

At first glance, the expression *"twice as dear"* simply refers to the increased prices of Christmas presents during the holiday season. However, the adjective *"dear"* simultaneously carries the meaning of *precious* or *beloved*. Consequently, the poet constructs a successful pun in which Christmas gifts become not only more expensive but also emotionally more valuable for family members and friends. The coexistence of these two meanings enriches the stylistic effect and demonstrates Ayres's mastery of language. Another example of wordplay appears later in the same poem:

*"Christmas cakes got marzipanned,  
And puddin's they got steamed,  
Mothers they got desperate,  
And tired kiddies screamed."*

The phrase *"they got steamed"* possesses dual semantic interpretation. Literally, it describes puddings prepared by steaming, following traditional British culinary practices. Figuratively, however, the verb *to steam* may imply becoming angry or emotionally agitated. This double interpretation humorously suggests that even the puddings themselves have become exhausted by the stressful Christmas preparations. Through this linguistic ambiguity, Ayres effectively combines domestic reality with comic imagination. Another successful pun is found in *"Eat, drink and be sick"*:

*"And then I'll have a date."*

Within the context of the poem, *"date"* can denote both the fruit traditionally eaten during Christmas celebrations and a romantic appointment with another person. The simultaneous activation of these two meanings creates humorous ambiguity and demonstrates the poet's ability to exploit polysemy for artistic purposes [2].

Among syntactic stylistic devices, repetition represents one of the most frequently employed expressive means in Pam Ayres's poetry. Repeated words and structures intensify emotions, strengthen rhythm, and draw the reader's attention to particular ideas. In *"Goodbye Worn Out Morris 1000"*, Ayres repeatedly employs the expression:

*"Nor the blowing of a tyre,  
Nor the rattling of a tappet,  
And nor did you misfire."*

The repeated use of "Nor" at the beginning of consecutive lines constitutes anaphora. Through this repetitive structure, the speaker nostalgically recalls the reliability of an old automobile that never experienced mechanical failure. The repetition simultaneously reinforces the emotional attachment between the lyrical persona and the vehicle while contributing to the poem's rhythmic organization [3]. Similarly, in the poem "Dump It!" repetition creates a forceful persuasive effect:

*"Oh, dump it, dump it, dump it all,  
Far away from fingers small."*

The repeated imperative "dump it" intensifies the speaker's determination and urgency. Rather than literally encouraging readers to throw medicines away carelessly, the poem ironically advises people to avoid accumulating unnecessary pharmaceuticals and instead return them to pharmacists. The repetition strengthens both the humorous tone and the educational message of the poem. Anaphora is also clearly visible in "Take me back to old Littlehampton":

*"You go and have a lovely time,  
You go out and have a ball,  
You go and have a rave up."*

The continuous repetition of "You go" emphasizes the speaker's insistence that companions should enjoy themselves despite the narrator's illness and inability to participate. The repeated structure effectively communicates resignation, disappointment, and emotional isolation. Another example occurs in "Clamp the mighty limpet":

*"I am Clamp the mighty limpet,  
I am solid, I am stuck,  
I am welded to the rockface."*

Within only a few lines, the phrase "I am" appears repeatedly, while the pronoun "I" dominates the stanza. This repetition foregrounds the mollusc's identity and strength, allowing the creature to present itself with confidence and pride through personification.

Pam Ayres occasionally employs epiphora as well. In *The Sea Shell*, both anaphora and epiphora appear simultaneously:

*"Don't 'ee fret no more, my darlin' Alice,  
Don't 'ee cry and sorrow, my old dear,  
Don't 'ee watch the lane for your son Arnold."*

The repeated expression "Don't 'ee" provides consolation and emotional support to Alice, whose son disappeared at sea fourteen years earlier. Meanwhile, the repeated address "Alice" at strategic points in the poem strengthens the intimacy of the speaker's appeal and intensifies its emotional resonance. Another example of epiphora occurs in "I don't want to go to school, mum":

*"I don't want to go to school, mum,  
I want to stay at home with my duck,  
I'd rather stay at home with you, mum."*

The repeated word "mum" reflects the innocent voice of a small child desperately attempting to persuade his mother not to send him to school. The repeated address conveys affection, dependence, and childish sincerity while reinforcing the conversational character of the poem. Phonetic stylistic devices also occupy a significant position in Pam Ayres's poetry. Through deliberate repetition of sounds and imitation of natural noises, the poet increases the musical quality of her poems while simultaneously reinforcing emotional and semantic effects. Among the most productive phonetic devices observed in the corpus are alliteration and onomatopoeia [2]. Alliteration, defined as the repetition of

identical consonant sounds at the beginning or within neighbouring words, appears frequently throughout Ayres's works. A representative example can be found in the poem "Dolly on the dustcart":

*"I'm the Dolly on the dustcart,  
I can see you're not impressed,  
I'm fixed above the driver's cab,  
With wire across me chest."*

The repeated /d/ sound in the words "Dolly" and "dustcart" creates a clear example of alliteration. According to the observations of Lehtsalu, Liiv and Mutt, the repetition of this consonant may evoke feelings of sadness and melancholy [4]. Such an interpretation perfectly corresponds to the poem itself, in which an abandoned doll narrates her unfortunate destiny after being discarded as rubbish. The poem continues:

*"The dustmen see, he noticed me,  
Going in the grinder,  
And he fixed me on the lorry,  
I dunno if that was kinder."*

Here another alliterative sequence occurs through the repetition of the /g/ sound in "going" and "grinder". The harsh consonantal cluster contributes to the unpleasant atmosphere surrounding the doll's near destruction while emphasizing the emotional conflict experienced by the lyrical narrator. Additional examples of alliteration are scattered throughout the poem in expressions such as "pink and pretty," "wind and weather," "tiny tears," and "unfeminine, untidy". These sound repetitions enrich the poem's rhythm and contribute to its memorable oral quality. Another instance of alliteration appears in "After the jubilee":

*"And the only bonfire that burned brighter  
Was the shock one up Arsonists Lane."*

The repeated /b/ sound in "bonfire," "burned," and "brighter" symbolically intensifies the image of blazing celebration fires prepared during Queen Elizabeth II's Silver Jubilee in 1977. The repetition not only increases phonetic harmony but also reinforces the magnificence and festive atmosphere associated with this national celebration. Among phonetic stylistic devices, onomatopoeia is another prominent feature of Pam Ayres's poetic language. By imitating natural sounds, the poet creates vivid auditory images that immerse readers in the situations being described. One of the clearest examples occurs in "Down the line", written in 2018 to commemorate the centenary of the end of the First World War:

*"Don't let them hear the song of the track,  
The clickety clack, the clackety clack,  
They won't come back."*

The expressions "clickety clack" and "clackety clack" imitate the sound of railway wheels moving along the tracks. Beyond simple sound imitation, however, these repeated noises acquire symbolic significance. Throughout the poem the train becomes an image of separation and irreversible loss, carrying thousands of men away to war, many of whom never returned home. Consequently, the rhythmic onomatopoeia evokes feelings of grief, absence, and irreversible tragedy.

Another example can be observed in Pam Ayres's famous poem "Oh I Wish I'd Looked After Me Teeth":

*"And his drill it do whine  
In these molars of mine."*

The verb "whine" imitates the unpleasant sound produced by a dental drill. Simultaneously, the auditory image reflects the emotional condition of the speaker, who

sits in fear and regret at the dentist's office. The mechanical noise metaphorically echoes the patient's inner anxiety and remorse for neglecting dental care in earlier years.

Besides stylistic richness, Pam Ayres's poetry provides valuable insight into British culture and everyday traditions. One of the most representative examples is the poem "Puddings – a slice of nostalgia" where food functions not merely as nourishment but as a powerful cultural symbol connecting childhood memories, family relationships, and national identity. The poem reads:

*"I'll dream me apple cheeked old mother,  
Her smiling face above a pot of broth,  
She used to cook us every sort of pudding,  
Proper puddings... in a pudding cloth!"*

The speaker nostalgically remembers her mother, whose smiling face and traditional cooking become symbols of warmth, affection, and domestic happiness. The repeated reference to pudding extends beyond its literal culinary meaning and represents continuity between generations as well as the preservation of British family traditions. The nostalgic atmosphere becomes even stronger in the following stanza:

*"When we came home from school all cold and hungry,  
One look along the clothes line was enough,  
And if the pudding cloth was there a-flapping,  
We all knew what it meant – a suet duff!"*

The image of the pudding cloth fluttering in the wind serves as an everyday sign announcing that a beloved family meal is being prepared. Through this simple domestic detail, Ayres reconstructs memories of childhood and portrays food as an essential component of British cultural identity. The poem therefore demonstrates that ordinary household objects may carry profound emotional and cultural meanings when interpreted within their historical and social context.

## 5. Conclusion

The present study demonstrates that Pam Ayres extensively employs lexical, lexico-syntactic, syntactic, and phonetic stylistic devices to create expressive and memorable poetic discourse. Metaphor, epithet, metonymy, irony, antonomasia, pun, repetition, alliteration, and onomatopoeia not only enhance the aesthetic quality of her poems but also contribute to the representation of British everyday life and national culture. The analysis confirms that lexical stylistic devices, particularly metaphor and epithet, occur with remarkable frequency throughout Ayres's poetry. Lexico-syntactic devices such as pun successfully combine humour with semantic complexity, while syntactic repetition strengthens emotional emphasis and rhythmic organization. Phonetic devices, especially alliteration and onomatopoeia, enrich the musicality of the poems and intensify readers' emotional perception. Furthermore, the investigation reveals that everyday objects, domestic activities, traditional food, family relationships, and ordinary life situations become important linguo-cultural symbols in Ayres's artistic world. Consequently, her poetry represents a valuable source for studying the interaction between stylistics and linguo-cultural identity within contemporary British literature.

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