Udul (Stylistic Deviation) and Terminological Instability in Modern Arabic Literary Criticism: Between Rhetoric and Stylistics

العدول (الانحراف الأسلوبي) وعدم استقرار المصطلحات في النقد الأدبي العربي الحديث: بين البلاغة والأسلوبية

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Abstract

This research investigates the concept of **udul (stylistic deviation)** in modern Arabic literary criticism by tracing its development between the classical Arabic rhetorical tradition and modern stylistic approaches, while examining the terminological issues that have accompanied this concept as a result of the plurality of critical references and the overlap of methodological frameworks.

The study is based on the central hypothesis that the term **udul** has not attained a single, stable meaning in modern Arabic literary criticism. Rather, it has been associated with a range of concepts, including *tailtif* (rhetorical shift), metaphor, and other rhetorical devices in the Arabic rhetorical tradition, as well as *inziyah* (stylistic deviation) and linguistic norm-breaking in modern stylistics. This multiplicity has contributed to what may be described as **terminological instability**.

The research adopts a descriptive-analytical approach that combines theoretical investigation with the analysis of selected examples from the Qur'an, classical Arabic poetry, and modern poetry. The aim is to demonstrate how the same stylistic phenomenon may receive different interpretations according to the critical framework employed.

The study concludes that **udul** in modern Arabic literary criticism is not a fixed concept but a flexible analytical construct shaped by its theoretical and methodological context. It further argues that terminological instability is not accidental, but rather a natural consequence of the interaction between the Arabic rhetorical heritage and modern linguistic and stylistic theories.

Finally, the study emphasizes the importance of re-examining the Arabic critical terminological system and

promoting greater conceptual precision and consistency in order to achieve clearer and more coherent literary analysis.
Keywords: udul (stylistic deviation), Critical Terminology, Rhetoric, Stylistics.

المستخلص

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة مفهوم العدول في النقد العربي الحديث، من خلال تتبع تحولاته بين المرجعية البلاغية العربية والأسلوبية الحديثة، والكشف عن الإشكالات الاصطلاحية التي رافقت هذا المفهوم نتيجة تعدد المرجعيات وتداخل المناهج النقدية. وينطلق البحث من فرضية أساسية مفادها أن مصطلح العدول لم يستقر على دلالة واحدة في النقد الأدبي الحديث، بل ظل متأرجحًا بين مفاهيم متعددة مثل الالتفات، والمجاز، والاستعارة في البلاغة العربية، ومفاهيم الانزياح وكسر المعيار اللغوي في الأسلوبية الحديثة، مما أدى إلى بروز ما يمكن تسميته بالاضطراب الاصطلاحي.

وقد اعتمد البحث على منهج وصفي تحليلي، يجمع بين التأصيل النظري للمصطلح وتحليل نماذج تطبيقية من القرآن الكريم، والشعر العربي القديم، والشعر الحديث، بهدف إبراز كيفية اختلاف قراءة الظاهرة الأسلوبية نفسها باختلاف المرجعية النقدية المعتمدة، وقد توصل البحث إلى أن العدول في النقد العربي الحديث لا يُعد مفهوماً ثابتاً، بل هو مفهوم إجرائي متعدد التمثلات، يتغير وفق الإطار النظري الذي يُستخدم فيه. كما تبين أن الاضطراب الاصطلاحي ليس خللاً عارضاً، بل نتيجة طبيعية لتداخل البلاغة العربية بالمناهج اللسانية والأسلوبية الحديثة. وخلص البحث إلى ضرورة إعادة النظر في الجهاز الاصطلاحي النقدي العربي، والعمل على ضبط المفاهيم وتحديدها بدقة أكبر، بما يضمن وضوح التحليل النقدي وتماسكه.

الكلمات المفتاحية: العدول، المصطلح النقدي، البلاغة، الأسلوبية

Introduction

Critical terminology constitutes one of the fundamental epistemological tools upon which modern Arabic literary criticism is built, as it provides the framework within which concepts, methodologies, and mechanisms for literary text analysis are developed. With the evolution of critical studies and their increasing engagement with modern linguistic and stylistic approaches, several issues concerning the stability and procedural precision of critical terminology have emerged, particularly in light of the plurality of intellectual references and the interaction between the Arabic critical heritage and modern Western theories.

Among the concepts that have experienced considerable diversity and instability is **udul (stylistic deviation)**. Originally, it functioned as an implicit notion within the Arabic rhetorical tradition, manifesting itself through such phenomena as *tailtif* (rhetorical shift), metaphor, and other figurative devices. In modern literary criticism, however, it has evolved into a critical concept closely associated with *inziyah* (stylistic deviation), linguistic norm-breaking, and the production of poeticity. This conceptual transformation has generated multiple interpretations and diverse critical applications, giving rise to a terminological issue that merits scholarly investigation.

The central research question of this study is:

To what extent has the concept of **udul** preserved its conceptual identity in modern Arabic literary criticism in light of

the interaction between classical Arabic rhetoric and modern stylistics?

Significance of Study

- To explore the transformations that have shaped the concept of **udul** in modern Arabic literary criticism.
- To highlight the relationship between classical Arabic rhetoric and modern stylistics in the interpretation of linguistic and literary phenomena.
- To contribute to the clarification of one of the problematic concepts in contemporary Arabic critical discourse.
- To demonstrate the impact of multiple critical references on the stability of critical terminology.

Objectives of the Study

- To trace the development of the concept of **udul** from the Arabic rhetorical tradition to modern literary criticism.
- To analyze the ways in which **udul** has been employed in modern stylistic studies.
- To examine the relationship between **udul** and *inziyah* within contemporary critical discourse.
- To identify the factors that have contributed to the terminological instability surrounding the concept.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach by combining the theoretical investigation of the concept of **udul** with the analysis of selected examples drawn from the Qur'an, classical Arabic poetry, and modern poetry. The objective is to reveal how the same stylistic phenomenon may be interpreted differently according to the critical framework employed.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this research is confined to the study of **udul** as its principal subject. Reference is made to related critical concepts such as *inziyah*, *tailtif*, metaphor, and figurative expression only insofar as they serve the comparative analysis between classical Arabic rhetoric and modern stylistics, without treating these concepts as independent subjects of investigation.

Critical Terminology and Its Significance in Modern Literary Studies

Critical terminology is regarded as one of the most fundamental epistemological tools upon which modern critical discourse is founded, as it provides the framework within which concepts, methodologies, and mechanisms for literary text analysis are constructed. Literary criticism, as a scholarly practice, cannot be effectively pursued without a precise terminological system capable of regulating concepts, unifying meanings, and preventing overlap among closely related or intersecting notions.

From an operational perspective, a critical term may be understood as an implicit agreement among a group of scholars within a specific field of knowledge to employ a particular expression to designate a specific concept, thereby ensuring clarity in scholarly communication and precision in analysis.[1] From this standpoint, terminology is not merely a linguistic instrument but rather a cognitive structure that reflects the nature of critical thought at each stage of the development of literary criticism.

Modern Arabic literary criticism has undergone significant transformations in its terminological structure as a result of its engagement with modern Western approaches such as linguistics,

[1] **Ahmed Matlub, Mu'jam al-Mustalahat al-Bala ghiyyah, Beirut: Arab Encyclopedia House, 1st ed., 2006, p. 114.**

stylistics, semiotics, and deconstruction. This intellectual openness has shifted critical terminology from a relatively stable traditional environment to a multifaceted epistemological space characterized by diverse theoretical references. While this development has enriched the field of literary criticism, it has also generated a number of issues related to the multiplicity of terminological equivalents and the instability of critical concepts.

A number of scholars argue that the crisis of critical terminology in modern Arab culture is not caused by a lack of terms, but rather by their abundance and the diversity of their intellectual sources, which often result in conceptual overlap and the instability of a single term's meaning. In this context, Sa'id 'Allush maintains that the crisis of contemporary Arabic criticism is essentially a crisis of terminology, stemming from divergent theoretical references, multiple translations, and the absence of unified terminological equivalents.(1)

Moreover, the process of translation has played a pivotal role in the formation of this terminological instability. The transfer of critical concepts from Western languages into Arabic has not always been accurate or standardized; rather, it has often been shaped by individual scholarly efforts and diverse critical schools. This situation has resulted in the emergence of multiple equivalents for the same term, depending on the critical context in which it is employed. Consequently, modern Arabic critical terminology has come to embody a complex interaction between original concepts and their translated counterparts.

Furthermore, critical terminology cannot be separated from the theoretical framework to which it belongs, for every term

(1) **Sa'id 'Allush, Mu'jam al-Mustalahat al-Adabiyyah al-Mu'a sirah, Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Lubnani, 1st ed., 1985, p. 8**

reflects a particular intellectual and methodological background. Differences in terminology, therefore, often mirror differences in critical perspectives themselves. In this regard, 'Abd al-Salam al-Masaddi points out that critical terminology is not merely a descriptive instrument, but rather a carrier of an entire conceptual structure, and that instability in terminology inevitably leads to instability in the very process of critical interpretation. (1)

Accordingly, the study of any critical concept within modern Arabic literary criticism cannot be isolated from its historical and epistemological context. Rather, it should be understood within the network of relationships that governs its function within the broader critical field. This consideration justifies the particular focus of the present study on **udul (stylistic deviation)**, as it is one of the concepts that has undergone significant semantic transformations, diversified applications, and close associations with related notions such as *inziyah* (stylistic deviation), deviation from the norm, and stylistic departure.

Hence, the significance of critical terminology in the present study lies not merely in its explanatory function, but also in its role as a fundamental gateway to understanding the transformations that have shaped modern Arabic literary criticism, particularly with regard to the problem of conceptual stability and the plurality of critical references.

udul (Stylistic Deviation) in Modern Literary Criticism and the Problem of Terminological Instability

(1) 'Abd al-Salam al-Masaddi, al-Uslub wa al-Uslubiyyah, Dar Su'ad al- sabah, 4th ed., 1993, p. 56.

Modern Arabic critical discourse has undergone profound transformations in its conceptual structure because of its engagement with modern Western critical approaches. This intellectual openness has given rise to several terminological issues associated with the translation and assimilation of critical concepts within the Arab cultural context. Among the concepts most significantly affected by this development is **udul (stylistic deviation)**, which has moved beyond its traditional rhetorical framework into a new critical domain where linguistics, stylistics, and poetics intersect. Therefore, the concept has acquired multiple meanings and diverse fields of application.

In the Arabic rhetorical tradition, **udul** was not established as an independent theoretical term; rather, it functioned as an underlying principle governing a variety of rhetorical phenomena based on departure from the conventional linguistic pattern, such as *tailtif* (rhetorical shift), inversion, ellipsis, metaphor, and deviation from the apparent syntactic or semantic norm. In modern literary criticism, however, the concept has expanded considerably and has become associated with imported notions such as *inziyah* (stylistic deviation), deviation from the norm, and linguistic norm breaking. This development has rendered its terminological boundaries less distinct and more susceptible to conceptual overlaps.

Several scholars attribute this terminological instability to the nature of the translation movement that accompanied the emergence of modern Arabic literary criticism. The transfer of critical concepts from European languages into Arabic was neither uniform nor fully standardized; rather, it was shaped by diverse scholarly efforts and competing critical schools. Consequently, a single foreign concept often acquired several Arabic equivalents, while one Arabic term was sometimes

employed to denote multiple Western concepts. In this context, Sa'id 'Allush argues that the crisis of contemporary Arabic criticism is fundamentally a crisis of terminology, resulting from divergent intellectual references, multiple translations, and the absence of unified conceptual equivalents. (1)

This problem became even more pronounced with the spread of stylistic studies in Arabic literary criticism, where **udul (stylistic deviation)** came to be associated with the concept of *inziyah*, one of the fundamental notions underlying modern poetics. Salaḥ Fadl argues that literary language is essentially based on transcending conventional linguistic usage and establishing new relationships within the text, thereby endowing literary discourse with its distinctive aesthetic character.(2) Consequently, some critics have regarded **udul** and *inziyah* as referring to the same phenomenon, whereas others maintain that **udul** is a concept rooted in the Arabic rhetorical tradition, while *inziyah* is a modern stylistic concept grounded in its own linguistic framework.

Similarly, 'Abd al-Salam al-Masaddi maintains that critical terminology is not merely a linguistic container but rather an intellectual and methodological structure that reflects the nature of the critical vision to which it belongs. Accordingly, instability in terminology inevitably results in instability in the processes of critical reading and interpretation.(3) From this perspective, differences in the understanding of **udul** are not attributable

(1) Sa'id 'Allush, Mu'jam al-Mustalahat al-Adabiyyah al-Mu'a Sirah, Dar al-Kitab al-Lubnani, Beirut, 1st ed., 1985, p. 8.

(2) Salah Fadl, 'Ilm al-Uslub: Mabadi' uhu wa Ijra' atuhu, Dar al-Shuruq, Cairo, 1st ed., 1998, p. 137.

(3) 'Abd al-Salam al-Masaddi, al-Uslub wa al-Uslubiyyah, Dar Su 'ad al-Sabah, 4th d., 1993, p. 56.

solely to the term itself, but also to the critical methodology adopted by the researcher.

Furthermore, modern Arabic critical studies have not reached a consensus regarding the boundaries separating the concepts of **udul**, *inziyah*, deviation, and departure from the norm. These notions have frequently been employed as interchangeable terms despite their differing theoretical backgrounds. Studies grounded in the Arabic rhetorical tradition often treat **udul** as a comprehensive framework encompassing all these phenomena, whereas stylistic approaches tend to relate them more specifically to the linguistic structure of the text and the mechanisms through which poeticity is generated.

This terminological plurality reveals that the problem does not stem from any inadequacy in the Arabic language or its rhetorical heritage. Rather, it reflects the interaction between two distinct epistemological systems: the first rooted in the classical Arabic rhetorical tradition, and the second derived from modern linguistic and stylistic theories. Consequently, the concept has continued to move between these two frameworks, acquiring new meanings without abandoning its traditional foundations.

Accordingly, it may be argued that **udul** in modern Arabic literary criticism is no longer a fixed and self-contained concept; instead, it has become a flexible analytical construct whose meaning is shaped by the theoretical context in which it is employed. Hence, the importance of re-examining this concept in light of the relationship between rhetoric and stylistics lies in uncovering the causes of its terminological instability and assessing its implications for critical practice.

This theoretical perspective constitutes an essential introduction to the applied section of the study, as it facilitates an understanding of how the same textual phenomenon may be

interpreted differently according to rhetorical and stylistic approaches. It is precisely this issue that the present study seeks to demonstrate through the analysis of selected examples drawn from the Qur'an, classical Arabic poetry, and modern poetry.

Applied Study
Representations of Deviation between Rhetoric and Stylistics

After examining the theoretical aspects of the concept of *deviation* (**udul**) and its terminological transformations in modern Arabic literary criticism, the nature of this research necessitates a shift to the applied dimension. The significance of any critical term and the scope of its analytical function can only be fully understood through its examination within actual literary texts. Accordingly, this section aims to explore how deviation is manifested in selected examples drawn from the Qur'an, classical Arabic poetry, and modern Arabic poetry, while highlighting the differences in the interpretation of the same stylistic phenomenon from the perspectives of Arabic rhetoric and modern stylistics.

This applied study does not merely seek to demonstrate the presence of deviation in literary texts, since Arabic rhetorical scholarship has long acknowledged such phenomena. Rather, it aims to reveal how the critical description of a single stylistic feature changes according to the critical methodology employed. Classical rhetoricians may interpret a phenomenon as *iltifat* (rhetorical shift), metaphor, or a departure from the apparent norm, whereas modern stylisticians may regard it as deviation, foregrounding, or a violation of linguistic norms. In this sense, the applied study serves as a practical examination of the problem of terminological instability that constitutes the central concern of this research.

First: Representations of Deviation in the Qur'anic Text

1. Deviation through *iltifat* (Rhetorical Shift)

iltifat (rhetorical shift) is one of the most prominent rhetorical devices found in the Qur'anic text. Classical rhetoricians devoted considerable attention to it because of its ability to diversify discourse and capture the recipient's attention, to the extent that some regarded it as one of the finest features of Arabic eloquence. A notable example appears in the following Qur'anic verse:

"Until, when you are in ships and they sail with them by a favorable wind, and they rejoice therein, there comes upon them a storm wind…" (Yunus: 22).

Deviation in this verse is manifested through the shift from the second-person pronoun in the expression *"you are"* (*kuntum*) to the third-person pronoun in *"with them"* (*bihim*). Classical rhetoricians identified this phenomenon as *iltifat*, defining it as a transition from one mode of expression to another for rhetorical purposes that go beyond mere linguistic variation. Al-Zamakhshari noted that such a shift serves to renew the listener's attention and to present the scene in a more vivid and effective manner. (1)

Likewise, al-Sakkaki regarded *iltifat* as one of the rhetorical techniques that involve departing from the apparent or expected mode of expression in order to achieve specific semantic and aesthetic functions.(2)

(1) Al-Zamakhshari, Al-Kashaaf, Vol. 2, Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, 3rd ed., 2009, p. 91.

(2) Al-Sakkaki, Miftahal-'Ulum, p. 54.

From the perspective of modern stylistics, however, this shift in pronouns may be viewed as a form of syntactic deviation that disrupts the expected pattern of discourse. Such deviation reshapes the relationship between speaker and audience, opening the text to multiple layers of meaning and enriching the interpretive process.

This example demonstrates that the same textual phenomenon may be labeled differently according to the critical framework employed. Within Arabic rhetoric, it is classified as *iltifat*; within modern stylistics, it may be described as syntactic deviation or stylistic deviation. This confirms that differences in terminology do not necessarily indicate differences in the phenomenon itself, but rather differences in the methodological perspective through which it is analyzed.

2. Deviation through Fronting and Delaying (Taqdim wa Ta'khir)

Among the stylistic devices employed in the Qur'an to achieve rhetorical purposes is the technique of taqdim wa ta'khir (fronting and delaying), which represents a form of deviation from the conventional syntactic order.

A clear example appears in the following Qur'anic verse:

"You are alone we worship, and You alone we ask for help." **(Al-Fatihah: 5).**

In standard Arabic sentence structure, the verb is normally followed by the subject and then the object. In this verse, however, the object pronoun *iyyaka* ("You alone") is placed before the verb, thereby conveying the meanings of exclusiveness and restriction.

Classical rhetoricians viewed this construction as a departure from the expected mode of expression in order to

achieve a deeper semantic effect, namely the exclusive dedication of worship and supplication to Allah alone. (1)

From the perspective of modern stylistics, this structure may be interpreted as a form of syntactic deviation or a violation of the conventional grammatical norm. By foregrounding the object, the text assigns it a privileged semantic status and highlights its significance within the discourse.

This example once again demonstrates how the same linguistic phenomenon may receive different descriptions depending on the critical framework employed. While classical rhetoric explains it through the concept of taqdim wa ta'khir, modern stylistics interprets it as syntactic deviation. Such variation in terminology reflects one of the manifestations of the terminological instability addressed in this study.

3. Deviation through Metaphor and Ellipsis

Metaphor and ellipsis are among the most prominent rhetorical phenomena that reveal the ability of the Arabic language to move beyond direct expression toward suggestive and figurative discourse. For this reason, classical rhetoricians regarded them as essential instruments of artistic creativity, whereas modern stylistic studies have viewed them as forms of deviation and semantic foregrounding.

A notable Qur'anic example is found in the following verse:

***"And ask the town in which we were, and the caravan in which we returned."* (Yusuf: 82).**

In this verse, the word *town* refers to its inhabitants, while *caravan* refers to its people. Classical rhetoricians classified this

(1) **Al-Sakkaki, Miftahal-'Ulum, p. 68.**

usage as a case of metonymy (*majaz mursal*) based on the relation of locality, whereby the place is mentioned while its inhabitants are intended. Al-Zamakhshari pointed out that this expression reflects a well-established feature of Arabic usage, valued for its brevity and rhetorical effectiveness. (1)

Similarly, 'Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani argued that the transition from literal meaning to figurative meaning constitutes one of the fundamental secrets of eloquence, since the beauty of expression lies not in isolated words themselves but in their arrangement and interrelations within the context. (2)

From the perspective of modern stylistics, however, this expression represents a form of semantic deviation, since the text does not present meaning directly. Rather, it encourages the reader to fill in the semantic gap and infer the omitted element, thereby granting the discourse a broader interpretive dimension and making the reader an active participant in the production of meaning.

This example demonstrates that what classical rhetoricians identified as *majaz mursal* (metonymy) or ellipsis may be interpreted in modern stylistics as semantic deviation or a departure from conventional modes of expression. This confirms that a single textual phenomenon may acquire different labels depending on the critical framework through which it is examined.

Accordingly, this example clearly illustrates one of the manifestations of terminological instability in modern literary criticism, where traditional rhetorical concepts intersect with contemporary stylistic notions in explaining the same linguistic structure.

(1)Al-Zamakhshari, Al-Kashaaf, Vol. 2, p. 115.
(2) Al-Jurjani, Asrar al-Balaghah, p. 76.

Second: Representations of Deviation in Classical Arabic Poetry

Classical Arabic poetry provides a fertile field for examining the phenomenon of deviation, as poets frequently departed from conventional linguistic usage in order to construct poetic images rich in aesthetic and suggestive dimensions. Consequently, classical rhetoricians analyzed such phenomena under categories such as metaphor, simile, and personification, whereas modern stylistics has reinterpreted them within the frameworks of deviation and foregrounding.

1. Deviation in al-Mutanabbi's Poetic Imagery

Al-Mutanabbi states:

The horses, the night, and the desert know me well;
So do the sword, the spear, the paper, and the pen.

The poetic structure of this verse is based on attributing the verb *"know"* to inanimate and non-rational entities, which constitutes a departure from the conventional logical relationship between a verb and its subject.

Classical rhetoricians viewed this construction as a form of metaphor or personification, through which the poet endows inanimate objects with human qualities in order to magnify his own status and emphasize his distinguished position.[1]

From the perspective of modern stylistics, however, this structure represents a form of semantic deviation that liberates poetic language from the constraints of ordinary usage and reconstructs the relationships among objects within the text. In

[1] **Al-Jurjani, Asrar al-Balaghah, p. 98.**

doing so, it generates poeticity and enhances the suggestive power of the discourse.

This example demonstrates that Arabic rhetoric and modern stylistics begin from the same textual phenomenon but employ different terminological frameworks. While rhetoric explains it through metaphor and personification, stylistics interprets it in terms of deviation and foregrounding. This difference exemplifies one aspect of the research problem concerning terminological instability.

2. Deviation through Metaphor and Semantic Expansion

Another example illustrating the presence of deviation in classical Arabic poetry is found in the following verse by Abu Tammam:

Do not offer me the water of reproach, for I am
A passionate lover who has found sweetness in the water of his tears.

The verse is based on a departure from the literal meanings of words. Reproach does not possess actual water; rather, the expression constitutes a figurative image built upon the personification and concretization of abstract meanings.

Classical rhetoricians classified this construction as a form of metaphor, since it transfers meaning from its original sense to another on the basis of resemblance. (1)

Modern stylistics, by contrast, interprets this structure as semantic deviation that breaks conventional linguistic norms and establishes a new network of relationships within the text, thereby enhancing the aesthetic density of the poetic image.

(1) **Al-Jurjani, Dala' il al-I'jaz, p. 114.**

This example confirms that deviation in classical Arabic poetry was not merely an ornamental device; rather, it functioned as a fundamental mechanism for producing poeticity. This explains the convergence between the traditional rhetorical concept and the modern stylistic concept, despite the continuing differences in terminology and theoretical orientation.

Third: Representations of Deviation in Modern Arabic Poetry

Modern Arabic poetry has undergone significant transformations in its artistic and linguistic structures as a result of its engagement with modern literary and intellectual movements. Consequently, poetic language has become increasingly inclined to transcend conventional usage, and deviation has emerged as a fundamental element in the construction of poetic imagery and the production of meaning. Stylistic studies have further expanded the scope of this concept by associating it with notions such as foregrounding and the violation of linguistic norms, making it one of the principal foundations of modern poeticity.

1. Deviation in the Poetry of Adonis

Adonis writes: ***"The wind wears its stony face."*** (1)

This expression is based on attributing the action *"wears"* to the wind and assigning to it a *"stony face."* Such a construction departs from ordinary logical and linguistic relations, since the wind neither wears anything nor possesses a face in the literal sense.

(1) **Adonis, Diwan Awraq fi al-rih (Leaves in the Wind), 1st ed., 1958, p. 13.**

Classical Arabic rhetoric would interpret this expression within the framework of implicit metaphor (*isti'arah makniyyah*) and personification, whereby human characteristics are attributed to natural phenomena in order to intensify the artistic effect and emphasize the emotional dimension of the poetic image. (1)

From the perspective of modern stylistics, however, this expression represents a form of semantic deviation and a departure from the conventional linguistic pattern. The poet reconstructs the relationships between words and endows them with new suggestive possibilities that transcend their direct lexical meanings. Jean Cohen argues that poeticity is fundamentally based on deviation from ordinary language and that the aesthetic value of a literary text arises precisely from this departure from the norm. (2)

This example demonstrates that the same stylistic phenomenon may be interpreted from two different perspectives. In rhetoric, it is understood as metaphor and personification; in modern stylistics, it is regarded as semantic deviation or foregrounding. This confirms the continuing terminological overlap between the two critical frameworks.

2. Deviation in the Poetry of Mahmoud Darwish

Mahmoud Darwish writes:

"On this earth, there is what deserves life." **(3)**

This expression is characterized by a high degree of brevity and semantic density. The text leaves a wide space for

(1) Al-Jurjani, Asrar al-Balaghah, p. 88.

(2) Jean Cohen, Structure du Langage Poétique, trans. Muḥammad al-Wali and Muḥammad al-'Umari, p. 86.

(3) Darwish, Mahmoud. Athar al-Farā shah (The Butterfly's Burden). Beirut: Riad El-Rayyes Books, 1st ed., 2008.

interpretation, without specifying precisely all that makes life worth living. As a result, the statement acquires both its humanistic and poetic dimensions.

Classical rhetoricians would approach this expression through the concepts of ellipsis and conciseness, since part of its meaning is intentionally left for the reader to infer, making the reconstruction of the omitted meaning an integral aspect of the rhetorical process. (1)

Modern stylistics, on the other hand, interprets this construction as a form of semantic deviation based on linguistic economy and the opening of multiple interpretive possibilities. The text thus becomes an interpretive space that cannot be reduced to a single meaning.

This example highlights that rhetoric and stylistics agree on the existence of an artistic phenomenon within the text, yet differ in their explanation and terminology. While rhetoric explains it through ellipsis and conciseness, stylistics interprets it in terms of deviation and foregrounding. This observation is consistent with the central hypothesis of the present study.

Comparative Reading in Light of Terminological Instability

The preceding applied examples reveal that deviation (**udul**) is no longer a concept with a single, fixed meaning in modern literary criticism. Rather, it has become a term whose definition is largely determined by the critical framework adopted by the researcher. Arabic rhetoric interprets stylistic phenomena through its own terminological system, which includes concepts such as *iltifat* (rhetorical shift), metaphor,

(1) **Ibn Jinni, Al-Khasa'is, p. 201.**

simile, fronting and delaying (of taqdim wa ta'khir), ellipsis, and departure from the apparent mode of expression. Modern stylistics, by contrast, reinterprets these same phenomena through concepts such as foregrounding, norm violation, syntactic deviation, and semantic deviation.

This observation demonstrates that a single linguistic phenomenon may be assigned multiple labels without implying any difference in its actual existence within the text. Rather, the variation stems from the theoretical perspectives through which the phenomenon is examined. Terminological instability, therefore, can be understood as a natural consequence of the interaction between Arabic rhetorical tradition and modern critical theories.

It also becomes evident that the concept of deviation constitutes a point of convergence between rhetoric and stylistics. Arabic rhetoric provided theoretical foundations for many of the phenomena that stylistics investigates today. However, the differences between their conceptual and terminological systems have resulted in a multiplicity of terms and variations in their semantic boundaries.

Accordingly, deviation should not be regarded as a fixed and closed term, but rather as a dynamic concept whose meaning is shaped by the critical framework within which it is employed. This explains the continuing debate surrounding its terminological boundaries in modern Arabic literary studies.

The applied study has shown that deviation represents a stylistic phenomenon shared by both Arabic rhetoric and modern stylistics, although each approach it through its own terminological framework. Arabic rhetoric explains it through concepts such as *iltifat*, metaphor, personification, fronting and delaying, and ellipsis, whereas modern stylistics interprets it

through concepts such as foregrounding, norm violation, syntactic deviation, and semantic deviation.

The selected examples have further demonstrated that a single textual phenomenon may be subject to multiple designations depending on the critical reference frame from which it is analyzed. This confirms that terminological instability in the concept of deviation is not an accidental phenomenon but rather a natural outcome of the interaction between Arabic rhetoric and modern stylistics.

The applied study therefore supports the central hypothesis of this research: namely, that deviation in modern literary criticism has not settled into a single, stable meaning. Instead, it remains a flexible concept whose contours are determined by the theoretical and methodological context in which it is employed. Consequently, reconsidering the terminological system of contemporary Arabic criticism remains a scholarly necessity, one that may contribute to greater precision and clarity in literary studies.

Conclusion

This study has examined the concept of **udul** (deviation) as one of the most problematic terms in modern Arabic literary criticism by tracing its linguistic and rhetorical roots and exploring the transformations of its meaning in the light of modern stylistic approaches. It has also sought to identify the manifestations of terminological instability that have accompanied its usage as a result of the plurality and overlap of critical reference frameworks.

The study was based on the hypothesis that **udul** has not remained a fixed and clearly defined concept in modern Arabic

criticism. Rather, it has become a flexible term whose meanings vary according to the theoretical contexts in which it is employed. At times, it is interpreted within the framework of Arabic rhetoric through concepts such as *iltifat* (rhetorical shift), metaphor, figurative expression, and departure from the apparent mode of expression; at other times, it is examined within the framework of modern stylistics as foregrounding, norm violation, or a mechanism for generating poeticity.

The theoretical and applied analyses have demonstrated that this multiplicity does not reflect any deficiency either in the Arabic rhetorical tradition or in modern critical methodologies. Instead, it represents the natural outcome of the intellectual interaction between two distinct critical systems, each possessing its own conceptual apparatus and theoretical foundations. Consequently, the study of any critical term cannot be separated from the study of its cultural and methodological context, since its meaning is shaped within the epistemological framework to which it belongs.

The applied study further revealed that a single textual phenomenon may receive different designations depending on the critical perspective from which it is approached. This finding confirms that the issue of **udul** in modern Arabic literary criticism is fundamentally a terminological and methodological problem, one that calls for greater attention to the regulation of critical terminology and the clarification of its conceptual boundaries.

Findings

The study has led to several key findings, the most important of which are the following:

1. The term **udul** (deviation) has deep linguistic and rhetorical roots within the Arabic intellectual tradition, although it did not originally emerge as an independent critical term in the form in which it is employed in modern literary criticism.
2. Classical Arabic rhetoric recognized many of the phenomena that are currently subsumed under the concept of **udul**, including *iltifat* (rhetorical shift), metaphor, figurative expression, fronting and delaying (of taqdim wa ta'khir), ellipsis, and departure from the apparent mode of expression.
3. The engagement of modern Arabic criticism with Western linguistic and stylistic approaches contributed to the expansion of the concept of **udul** and its association with notions such as foregrounding, deviation, and the violation of linguistic norms.
4. The terminological instability surrounding the concept of **udul** is largely attributable to the plurality of intellectual reference frameworks, the diversity of translations, and the differences among critical methodologies.
5. The applied study demonstrated that a single stylistic phenomenon may be subject to multiple interpretations and terminological designations depending on the theoretical framework through which it is analyzed.
6. In modern literary criticism, **udul** does not constitute a closed or fixed concept; rather, it functions as a flexible analytical tool whose meaning is determined by the critical and methodological context in which it is employed.

Recommendations

In light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Greater efforts should be devoted to the standardization of Arabic critical terminology and to reducing the multiplicity of terminological equivalents assigned to the same concept, thereby promoting greater precision and consistency in scholarly research.
2. Researchers should continue to draw upon the Arabic rhetorical heritage when examining modern critical concepts, linking them to their intellectual roots while remaining attentive to developments in contemporary linguistic and stylistic theories.
3. Comparative studies between Arabic rhetoric and modern stylistics should be encouraged in order to identify areas of convergence and divergence and to contribute to the development of a more stable and coherent critical terminological system.
4. More attention should be given to applied studies that connect theoretical discussions with critical practice, since testing concepts within literary texts remains one of the most effective means of clarifying their meanings and defining their operational boundaries.

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