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A Systemic Functional and Pragmatic Analysis of Linguistic Deviation in Uzbek and English Media Discourse

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ABSTRACT

Linguistic deviation in media discourse serves as a stylistic and pragmatic tool to enhance engagement, emphasize key information, and shape public perception. This study explores grammatical, lexical, and pragmatic deviations in Uzbek and English media discourse, employing Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and pragmatics as analytical frameworks. Using a mixed-method approach, the research examines a representative corpus of news articles and headlines from leading English and Uzbek media outlets. The findings indicate that while both languages utilize deviation for rhetorical and functional purposes, English media exhibits a higher frequency and variety of deviations, particularly in idioms, irony, neologisms, and register mixing, reflecting a culture of journalistic creativity and audience engagement. In contrast, Uzbek media favors subtle and formal deviations, often leveraging loanwords, indirect critique, and rhetorical questions to navigate linguistic norms and socio-political constraints. From an SFL perspective, deviations serve ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions, while pragmatic deviations contribute to implied meanings, audience alignment, and persuasive communication. The study underscores the role of linguistic deviation as a strategic tool in shaping media narratives and public discourse, offering insights for media studies, cross-linguistic analysis, and translation strategies. Future research may explore historical shifts in deviation patterns, computational analyses of larger corpora, and audience reception studies to further contextualize these linguistic phenomena.

Keywords: Linguistic deviation, media discourse, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), pragmatics, Uzbek media, English media, journalistic style, lexical deviation, grammatical deviation, pragmatic deviation, news language, linguistic creativity, media linguistics, discourse analysis, stylistics

INTRODUCTION

Linguistic deviation refers to the intentional departure from standard language norms in order to produce a particular effect or meaning. In stylistics, deviation is seen as a creative strategy: writers or speakers violate conventional rules of grammar or word usage to foreground certain ideas or to attract attention. (Leech 2016) In other words, "linguistic deviation occurs when a writer chooses not to abide by the rules of a standard language" in order to achieve some communicative impact. While this concept has been widely discussed in literary contexts, it is highly significant in media discourse as well. News writers and media professionals often employ subtle (and not-so-subtle) deviations from linguistic norms – such as creative vocabulary, unorthodox syntax, or pragmatic twists – to make headlines catchy, convey implicit meanings, or engage their audience.

Media discourse is a powerful shaper of public opinion and culture. As Bell (1991) noted, the language of news media is carefully crafted ("styled") to target audiences, influencing how information is perceived. The choices journalists make in wording and structure can affect readers' understanding and even knowledge of events. Thus, studying linguistic deviation in media is not only about stylistic flourish; it reveals how media language persuades, informs, or even manipulates through creative language use. This is relevant for both English and Uzbek media. English-language media (e.g., British or American news outlets) have long traditions of a distinctive journalistic style – for instance, the terse, pun-filled tabloid headline or the playful turn of phrase in feature stories. Uzbek media, particularly in the post-Soviet era, are also evolving their own style and may incorporate linguistic creativity, mixing formal Uzbek with colloquial expressions or even code-switching to

Russian or English terms for effect. Recent studies in Uzbekistan have begun to explore these media language features. For example, Salimova (2023) conducted a comparative analysis of English and Uzbek newspaper texts, examining their lexical choices, syntactic structures, and pragmatic strategies. Her study highlights both similarities and differences in how news is constructed across the two languages, indicating a growing scholarly interest in Uzbek media linguistics.

Given this context, the present study aims to analyze linguistic deviation in media discourse comparatively in Uzbek and English. We seek to identify what kinds of deviations occur, how they function, and what differences or commonalities exist between the two languages' media practices. We adopt a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative corpus analysis with qualitative discourse analysis, and ground our interpretation in two theoretical frameworks: Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday 1994) and pragmatics (Grice 1975). Through these frameworks, we consider both the functional meaning of language choices in context and the pragmatic implications of deviating from conversational norms.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

From SFL perspective, language is seen as "a network of systems, or interrelated sets of options for making meaning". In SFL, every linguistic choice (whether a word, a grammatical pattern, etc.) serves a function in context, contributing to one or more metafunctions of language: the ideational (expressing content or experience), the interpersonal (enacting social relations or stance), and the textual (organizing discourse effectively) (Halliday 1994). We used SFL to ask: what function might a deviation serve in the media text? For example, if a headline omits a subject and verb (grammatical deviation), does this serve the textual metafunction by creating a terser, attention-grabbing message? Or if an unusual adjective is used (lexical deviation), does it carry an interpersonal connotation, injecting attitude or emotion into the report? Using SFL tools, we conducted a qualitative functional analysis of notable deviations.

We examined transitivity patterns (who does what to whom in clauses), mood and modality (how statements, questions, or commands are formed, indicating stance), and *thematic structure* (how information is ordered) in sentences that showed deviation. This allowed us to interpret whether, for instance, a non-standard syntax was highlighting a particular participant as Theme (topic) for emphasis, or whether a shift in mood (e.g., using a question form) was inviting reader interaction.

In parallel, the pragmatic framework helped us analyze meaning beyond the literal text – particularly relevant for deviations that create implicatures or indirect cues. We drew on Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle and its maxims of conversation as a lens for pragmatic analysis. Grice's Cooperative Principle (CP) states that participants in a conversation (or by extension, writer-reader interaction) normally operate under the assumption of cooperation: "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (Grice 1975: 45) This principle is elaborated by four maxims: Quality (be truthful and have evidence), Quantity (be as informative as needed, no more or less), Relevance (be relevant), and Manner (be clear and orderly). Pragmatic deviation, in our study, refers to instances where these conversational norms are flouted or played with in media texts for effect. Using Gricean pragmatics, we identified cases where a media text violates or exploits a maxim to generate an implicature (an implied meaning). For example, a sarcastic or ironic headline might violate the Maxim of Quality (saying something obviously untrue or exaggerated) to imply criticism or humor. A very terse, ambiguous headline might violate the Maxim of Manner (lacking clarity) deliberately to intrigue the reader. We also considered speech act theory (Searle 1975) and other pragmatic concepts (Leech's politeness principle, etc.) where relevant, to classify the communicative acts performed by deviant language. For instance, turning a headline into a question ("Who is to blame?") performs the speech act of questioning, but in context it's not genuinely asking the reader – rather it's a rhetorical device. We would classify that as a pragmatic

deviation from the typical assertive act of headlines, and analyze its intended illocution (perhaps inviting the reader to ponder an issue, or subtly accusing someone without stating it outright).

RESULTS

It has been found that both English and Uzbek media use a range of deviations to create certain effects, though the specific patterns and frequency differ. English media texts, especially headlines and feature stories, showed a high incidence of lexical creativity (puns, blends, slang) and ellipsis (omitting words), whereas Uzbek media texts showed relatively more code-switching and register shifts (mixing formal and colloquial language) as forms of deviation. Pragmatic deviations (like rhetorical questions or hyperbolic statements) were present in both, but their usage reflected cultural communication styles (e.g., English headlines were more openly ironic at times, while Uzbek articles tended to use indirect or euphemistic language – a different kind of deviation from direct speech).

Grammatical deviation refers to syntax or morphology that breaks the expected rules or patterns. In news media, a classic form of grammatical deviation is the headlines style in English – famously, headlines drop articles ("a", "the"), copula verbs ("is/are"), and often use simplified verb forms. This elliptical syntax is so common in news headlines that one might argue it is a "norm" of its own; however, it is still a deviation from standard grammar as used in full sentences like "Economy in Free Fall, Says Expert" – here the verb "is" is omitted (it would be "is in free fall" in normal syntax), and the phrase order is inverted for effect. Despite violating usual sentence structure, this deviation creates a punchy, urgent tone.

In the Uzbek media corpus, headlines also sometimes deviated from ordinary Uzbek sentence structure, but in different ways. Uzbek does not use articles and often drops the copula in the present tense anyway, so those types of ellipsis are not marked as deviations (they are just normal Uzbek grammar). However, we observed "non-standard word order" and "omission of expected affixes" in some headlines. For instance, a standard

Uzbek sentence is SOV (Subject-Object-Verb). Yet, a news headline might read: **"**Yoshlarbandligi: yangiloyihaishgatushirildi" (literally "Youth employment: new project launched"), which starts with the topic "Yoshlarbandligi" ("youth employment") followed by a colon, then a passive verb phrase. The structure prior to the colon isn't a complete clause on its own – it's like a title followed by explanation, which deviates from the typical one-clause sentence structure. Additionally, we found cases of omitting the explicit agent in Uzbek headlines even when context expects one. In the example above, "yangiloyihaishgatushirildi" ("a new project was launched") is a passive construction with no agent mentioned, where a more complete version might say ...tomonidanishgatushirildi ("launched by ..."). The choice to drop the agent and compress the sentence is a stylistic deviation to keep the headline short and somewhat suspenseful (the details of who launched the project are in the article). This is analogous to English headlines dropping subjects or agents. It shows a convergence in journalistic style: both languages' media allow a break from fully explicit grammar to achieve brevity and impact.

Another grammatical deviation observed is the use of fragmentary or minor sentences within articles, not just headlines. In English feature articles, for dramatic effect, one sometimes finds a single word or phrase set off as its own sentence (a fragment). Example from our data: "And then – silence. A long, eerie silence that said more than words could." The second "sentence" here is actually not a complete sentence; it lacks a finite verb for the first clause. This deliberate fragment violates grammatical completeness. Its function is to create a dramatic pause and focus the reader's attention (textual effect), as well as to convey an emotional atmosphere (interpersonal effect). In Uzbek, we saw less of this kind of fragment usage, possibly because Uzbek written norms still favor more complete sentences. However, we did note some elliptical clauses in Uzbek opinion pieces, especially when quoting spoken language or emulating a conversational tone. For example: "Xulosanio'zingizchiqaring" followed by "Natijashunday." ("Draw your own conclusion. The result is this.") In context, that

'Natijashunday' stands alone as a conclusion, where a full sentence might have been "atijashunday**bo'ldi**." including the verb "became/happened." Dropping the verb "bo'ldi" ("became") is a deviation, giving the effect of a blunt, confident statement – it feels like "That's the result." The truncated form adds a punchy finality.

LEXICAL DEVIATIONS AND CREATIVE VOCABULARY

Lexical deviation encompasses unusual word choices – neologisms (newly coined words), borrowings, slang, or words used in non-literal ways. English media is known for its puns and wordplay, especially in headlines. Our English corpus provided many instances. For example, a financial news headline read 'Banking on a Miracle?' for a story about banks needing miraculous recovery. The phrase "banking on" is a common idiom meaning "relying on," but here it also literally references the banking sector – a lexical double entendre. Such puns break the expectation of literal language, introducing ambiguity and humor (a deviation from straightforward wording). Another example was a sports headline: 'Lionhearts Tamed: Tigers Roar to Victory.' This uses metaphorical animal team names ("Lionhearts" and "Tigers") and the imagery of taming and roaring. The headline writer deviated from plain language ("Team A defeated Team B") to a creative, almost poetic description. This kind of figurative lexis, while not "incorrect" English, is a deviation from dry reporting language into a colorful register. It serves to engage readers and convey the excitement of the event. According to Bell (1991), journalistic style often involves audience design, adjusting language to appeal to readers' emotions and interests. Using vivid or novel vocabulary is one way to do so. Indeed, deviation at the lexical level often fulfills an interpersonal metafunction (Halliday's term) by injecting evaluation, humor or attitude into the news. In the above example, words like "tamed" and "roar" implicitly celebrate the winning team's prowess and dramatize the outcome, positioning the writer (and reader) as excited fans – which creates a rapport with the audience.

In the Uzbek media sample, we also found lexical creativity, though of a slightly different nature. One prominent feature was code-switching and loanwords. Uzbek media frequently incorporates Russian or English terms, sometimes even when an Uzbek equivalent exists, to achieve a certain effect. For instance, an entertainment news piece about a music event used the phrase "DJ vaprodyuser" to describe an artist, mixing the English term "DJ" and a Russified/English word "producer" (instead of a pure Uzbek phrase like "bastakor" or "ijodkor" for producer). This code-switching is a lexical deviation from using only Uzbek vocabulary; it serves to signal modernity and global connectedness, as well as catering to younger audiences familiar with those loanwords. Another example: "startaplarekosistemi" – a phrase that appeared in an Uzbek tech-business article, which is a direct borrowing of "startups ecosystem" with a Russian plural/possessive ending. While Uzbek could describe the concept with native words, the English borrowings are used to sound more specialized or up-to-date. These deviations reflect how Uzbek media language is evolving under global influences. They have a pragmatic side too: using an English term can sometimes pack specific connotations or be more succinct than an explanatory phrase, implicitly assuming the readers have the knowledge to decode it – thus perhaps targeting a certain educated demographic.

Besides borrowing, Uzbek media also plays with idioms and colloquial expressions in formal contexts. For example, an article on political reforms used the headline: 'Kim o'zgaradi: tizimmiyokirahbar?' which translates to "Who will change: the system or the leader?" Here, "kimo'zgaradi" ("who will change") is a somewhat informal, questioning phrasing, not a usual declarative headline. It hints at a popular saying or at least a conversational tone, deviating from the expected formal register of political news. Such usage of a question and a colloquial tone in Uzbek is a lexical-pragmatic deviation that aims to provoke thought and perhaps subtly challenge authority (a bolder style that has become more common in Uzbek media in recent years as press freedoms expand). This example also shows pragmatic deviation (a rhetorical question) which we discuss below, but lexically it's notable that it uses simple, everyday words (*kim*,

tizim, *rahbar*) in a context where earlier media might have used very bureaucratic language. Departing from bureaucratic jargon to a simpler, idiomatic phrasing is a deliberate deviation to be more relatable to readers. It aligns with a trend noted by local researchers: the Uzbek press is slowly moving away from heavy Soviet-era officialese and allowing more conversational Uzbek for effect (Khujamberdiyevna M. N., Zavqiddinovna N. F.).

In English media, another lexical deviation of note was neologism and blend words – where new words are coined, often portmanteaus, especially in headlines or slogans. For example, one headline about a severe snowstorm used "Snowmageddon" (blending "snow" with "armageddon"). This playful exaggeration deviates from standard vocabulary (no dictionary would have "Snowmageddon" as an official word). Its effect is hyperbolic and humorous, framing the event as an almost apocalyptic scenario but with a wink to the reader. Such creative blends have become common in media (e.g., "Brexit" is another famous example – a blend of "Britain" and "exit"). They highlight how media language can evolve new lexicon that sometimes even enters popular usage. By contrast, we did not see as many coined blends in the Uzbek sample – possibly due to a smaller role of tabloids or because Uzbek word-formation processes might favor compounding or descriptive phrases over blends. One could foresee, however, similar phenomena emerging in Uzbek (for instance, blending two Uzbek words for a catchy effect, or abbreviated slang on social media influencing news).

PRAGMATIC DEVIATIONS AND IMPLICATURES

Pragmatic deviation involves breaking the expected norms of communication or textual conventions in a way that relies on context and shared understanding to convey meaning. A clear example in media is the use of rhetorical questions as headlines or leads. Normally, a news headline is expected to inform (as a statement). A question headline, however, deviates from that expectation – it doesn't directly tell the news, instead it asks the reader something. We found several instances of this in both English and Uzbek. In English, a headline like 'Could This Be

the End of Affordable Housing?' accompanied an article about housing policy. Pragmatically, the headline is not sincerely asking the reader (the article goes on to give information and analysis). This flouts Grice's Maxim of Manner somewhat, by not being straightforward; it also counts on the reader to infer the seriousness of the situation (implicature: things look dire for affordable housing, prompting that question). The question form creates a sense of uncertainty or urgency, enticing the audience to read for answers. It also subtly positions the news outlet as facilitating a conversation or debate, rather than just delivering facts. Similarly, in Uzbek, we observed a headline: 'Kim aybdor?' ("Who is guilty/responsible?"). Standing alone, this question headline deviates from the usual practice of summarizing an event. Its meaning can only be understood in context – typically such a headline would be for an investigative piece or an editorial about some mishap or wrongdoing, inviting readers to consider accountability. The implicature (per Grice) is that there is blame to be assigned but it's unclear or contested, and the article will explore it. This flouts the Maxim of Quantity (since a lone question gives too little information) intentionally, to provoke curiosity.

Another pragmatic strategy is irony or metaphor that requires inference. In English media, ironic tone is not uncommon, especially in opinion columns or satirical pieces. For example, an opinion piece title in our set was: 'Brilliant Plan, Minister – What Could Possibly Go Wrong?.' Taken literally, it sounds like praise, but readers can detect the sarcasm (especially if the context is a controversial policy). The writer here deviates from the expectation of sincerity (violating the Maxim of Quality by saying something they don't truly mean at face value) to convey a critical stance humorously. The success of this deviation relies on shared pragmatic knowledge; the audience is expected to pick up the tone and understand the underlying meaning (it's actually a critique of the plan). Uzbek media, being generally more reserved in tone historically, showed fewer blatant ironies, but there were subtle cases of indirect criticism that function similarly. For instance, an Uzbek article on bureaucracy used a proverb as a kicker line: 'Olmaniolcha deb atasang,

mazasio‘zgarmaydi’ (literally, “Call an apple a cherry, its taste won’t change”). This proverbial phrase was used after describing a rebranding of a government office that hadn’t produced real changes in service. Pragmatically, this is an ironic comment: it implies that just changing names (of institutions) doesn’t change the reality. It’s a deviation because it’s not a direct journalistic statement; it’s an indirect, figurative way to criticize, expecting the reader to catch the implication (which an Uzbek reader likely would, given the familiarity of the proverb). This reflects a culturally tuned form of pragmatic play – using traditional expressions to convey a pointed message in a media text, thereby breaking the norm of detached reporting and engaging in a bit of witty commentary.

We also identified deviations in terms of speech acts. Normally, a news report consists mostly of assertive speech acts (stating facts). However, media texts sometimes include directives or expressives in subtle ways. For example, an English headline: ‘Think you know the whole story? Think again.’ This headline actually issues a sort of challenge or command to the reader (“think again”), which is a directive speech act – quite unconventional for a headline. It breaks the norm to create a dramatic teaser. It’s implicitly telling the audience that the story will reveal surprising new information. In doing so, it breaks from the neutral informative role and takes on a persuasive tone. In our Uzbek data, direct commands in headlines were rarer (aside from imperative slogans in advertisements, which we did not focus on), but we did see the use of inclusive language like *keling, fikrlaylik* (“let’s think”) within an article’s introduction. This kind of inclusive imperative (“let’s [do something]”) is a pragmatic deviation in a news context, as it shifts into a conversational, invitational mode with the audience, rather than maintaining the objective narrator stance. Its effect is to engage readers and perhaps gently lead them to a conclusion by making them feel part of the reasoning process.

One particularly interesting pragmatic deviation in Uzbek media was related to politeness and euphemism. Uzbek culture values polite indirectness in many contexts, and we found that sometimes news articles would deviate from blunt reporting by

using euphemistic language – which, in a sense, "deviates" from the maxim of manner (clarity) to adhere to politeness norms. For example, instead of directly stating that an official was fired for incompetence, a piece might say the official "o'zvazifasidanozodetildi" ("was freed from his duty") and then add a subtle remark like "boshqaishgao'tishikutilmoqda" ("it is expected he will transition to another job"). This is a standard bureaucratic phrasing in Uzbek news (some might argue it's the norm, not a deviation, in political news). However, from a pragmatics viewpoint, it's a deviation from the cooperative principle's directness: the real implication ("he was removed for poor performance") is left for the reader to infer. The media use this formula to soften the impact (a politeness strategy toward the figure or the institution), and the audience, familiar with the convention, understands the subtext. In contrast, English media might be more direct in stating "was fired" or "was sacked" (though even English uses euphemisms like "let go" or "stepped down" at times). This difference indicates how deviations can be culturally bound: what is a pragmatic deviation in one context (indirect speech in news) might be standard practice in another due to different media conventions or cultural communication styles.

Quantitatively, when we tallied instances of these pragmatic strategies, we found that about 30% of English headlines in our sample were non-standard (question form, quote, or idiom), whereas roughly 20% of Uzbek headlines showed such deviations. For in-text discourse, English articles frequently employed at least one or two of these pragmatic deviations (especially in softer news or analysis pieces), while Uzbek articles used them a bit more sparingly or subtly. These numbers suggest both media traditions value clear communication but allow room for creative pragmatic moves especially in attention-getting parts of the text.

DISCUSSION

The findings illustrate that linguistic deviation is a prominent feature of media discourse in both English and Uzbek, utilized to

engage readers, convey nuanced meanings, and fulfill communicative goals. By interpreting these results through the dual lenses of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and pragmatics, we can better understand why journalists deploy such deviations and how these choices resonate with their respective audiences.

From an SFL perspective, many of the deviations we observed can be seen as resources for the textual, interpersonal, or ideational metafunctions. For example, the frequent use of elliptical grammar in English headlines (omitting actors, articles, etc.) serves the textual metafunction by organizing information in a compact, attention-efficient way. The headline 'Economy in Free Fall, Says Expert' foregrounds the topic 'Economy in Free Fall' as the Theme (initial position) and defers the source "says expert" to a secondary position. By deviating from a full sentence, the writer effectively selects what to present as the headline's thematic focus (the economic situation, not the expert). In SFL terms, this reflects a strategic thematic structure: the Theme (problematic economy) is highlighted, which aligns with the news values (the crisis is more newsworthy than the mere fact that an expert commented). In Uzbek, when a headline like "Yangiloyihaishgatushirildi" omits the doer, the ideational metafunction is at play: the representation of reality is adjusted so that the action and goal (project launched) are prominent, while the actor is backgrounded or implicit. This might indicate an intent to emphasize the outcome over the agent, which could be due to socio-political reasons (perhaps deemphasizing government responsibility) or simply stylistic brevity. Either way, the grammar is serving a function in meaning-making: it's not random error, but a choice that reflects what Halliday (1994) would view as using the language system's flexibility to encode a particular perspective on the event.

The interpersonal metafunction is strongly evident in lexical deviations. When English news writers coin a term like "Snowmageddon" or use a metaphor like "Lionhearts tamed", they are not just reporting facts; they are also signaling an attitude or evaluation. Halliday's framework would consider how such word choices position the speaker/writer and how they

potentially align or intrigue the reader. “Snowmageddon” carries a playful hyperbole – the writer adopts a somewhat humorous, dramatic persona, and readers attuned to popular culture (who recognize the “-mageddon” suffix as a joke) are invited to share in that humor. This builds an interpersonal rapport; it’s as if the media outlet says, “we know this term is over-the-top, but we’re using it winkingly – we’re in this pop culture joke together.” In Uzbek media, the choice to use a casual or idiomatic phrase (like “Kim o‘zgaradi: tizimmiyokirahbar?”) similarly serves an interpersonal function: it reduces the distance between the news and the reader by using a down-to-earth tone. Traditionally, Uzbek news had a very formal tone; seeing a question phrased so plainly is relatively novel and suggests an attempt to connect with readers on a conversational level. SFL would interpret that as enacting a closer tenor of discourse (less hierarchical, more peer-to-peer) between the publication and its audience. The **mood** in such a headline is interrogative, which is unusual for giving information, but it functions interpersonally to engage the reader directly, almost as if the newspaper is a person asking the reader to think – thereby enacting a quasi dialogue.

Regarding the ideational metafunction, some deviations allow the media to express complex or evaluative meanings that straightforward language might not easily convey. For instance, the use of proverbs or idioms in Uzbek (like the apple-cherry proverb example) is a way to pack cultural and evaluative meaning into a short phrase. Ideationally, it conveys content about the unchanging nature of something despite superficial changes, but in a much more colorful and resonant way than a literal explanation would. The choice to use that proverb is a deviation from plain exposition; SFL would note that it introduces figurative meaning into the ideational content of the text. This enriches the field (subject matter) being discussed with additional layers of meaning (cultural, moral, etc.). However, it also assumes shared knowledge – which ties back to pragmatics.

From a pragmatic viewpoint, the deviations we found illustrate how media discourse often flouts Gricean maxims to generate implicatures and to engage readers. Using a rhetorical question in a headline, as mentioned, flouts the Maxim of

Quantity (it's not fully informative) and possibly Manner (not straightforward), but the implicature is usually clear: the article will explore that question. Grice's theory helps explain why such flouting isn't just confusing – because the reader assumes the news outlet is still cooperative in a broader sense. The reader thinks: If they are asking this question, they likely know I know it's unusual; they must want me to infer something. That inference is the communicative payoff of the deviation. In many cases, the cooperative principle is upheld at a higher level even if broken at the surface level: the media cooperates by trying to engage or persuade, not by literal adherence to maxims. For example, the ironic headline "Brilliant plan – what could go wrong?" violates Quality (since the speaker likely thinks things will go wrong) but the reader, assuming the author's cooperative intent, realizes it must be sarcasm and deduces the actual criticism intended. Leech's pragmatics (2016) framework, especially the Politeness Principle and the concept of pragmalinguistic strategies, can also be applied here. Some deviations are better understood in terms of politeness or persona rather than raw Gricean maxims. The Uzbek euphemistic phrasing for firing an official can be seen as following a politeness maxim (tact or modesty) – the media is being indirect to save face for the parties involved, which is a pragmatic strategy governed by socio-cultural expectations (Leech 2016). So, while on the surface it deviates from directness, it aligns with another conversational principle, that of politeness or appropriateness in context.

Comparing the two languages, one can interpret differences through these frameworks as well. English media, with its long-established commercial and competitive news environment, often pushes the boundaries of language more overtly – sensational tabloids, satirical magazines, etc., have normalized quite a bit of linguistic play. Uzbek media, emerging from a more state-controlled past, is gradually incorporating deviation as it becomes more open and modern. Our findings suggest that English media discourse exhibits a higher degree of open linguistic playfulness, especially lexically and rhetorically (e.g., open sarcasm, bold puns). Uzbek media discourse shows a more

cautious approach, employing deviation in ways that often still respect certain formalities or cultural norms (e.g., using proverbs instead of blunt sarcasm, or code-switching to appeal to modernity while still being polite). This could reflect differences in audience expectations: English-speaking audiences might expect a bit of entertainment or edge in their news (hence rewarding creative language), whereas Uzbek audiences might have an expectation of decorum or didacticism in media, which is only slowly changing.

Nonetheless, the commonalities are striking. Both English and Uzbek media use linguistic deviation as a tool to make the discourse more effective. In SFL terms, both are exploiting the resources of language beyond the neutral baseline to achieve particular communicative purposes (be it emphasizing key information, aligning with readers' attitudes, or organizing the text engagingly). In pragmatic terms, both are willing to break the literal rules of cooperation as long as it serves a higher-level meaning and the readers can follow along. This shows an underlying principle: media communication is not just about conveying information, but about packaging information in ways that maintain audience interest and convey subtle meanings. Our analysis resonates with Allan Bell's audience design theory here – the language deviations are part of "styling" the news for the intended audience. For instance, an English news magazine targeting a younger, pop-culture-savvy audience will happily use a "Snowmageddon" type of coinage; an Uzbek news site targeting reform-minded youth may sprinkle English tech jargon or a witty Uzbek idiom to signal "we're on the same wavelength as you." These choices are audience-oriented deviations.

Linking back to the literature, our study's results align with previous observations in media linguistics. The patterns of English headline language we saw have been documented by researchers like Reah (2002) and Bell (1991). Reah (2002) discusses how headlines often omit verbs and use wordplay, exactly the grammatical and lexical deviations we catalogued. Bell's insights into news style also complement our findings that journalists modulate formality and creativity to match context. On the Uzbek side, there's less extensive prior literature, but

works like Salimova (2023) and Teshabaeva (2021) indicate growing interest in pragmastylistic features of Uzbek. Our findings extend their work by explicitly framing these features as "deviations" and comparing them to English. The examples we analyzed in Uzbek media (rhetorical questions, idiomatic references, code-switching) all fit into that idea of purposeful creative use rather than error.

One interesting point of discussion is the effectiveness of these deviations. Do they achieve their intended pragmatic effect equally in both languages? This could be a matter for further study (and perhaps audience reception analysis), but from a production standpoint, journalists clearly believe they do, as evidenced by their use. In general, when done skillfully, such deviations likely make articles more memorable and engaging. However, there is a balance to strike: too much deviation can confuse readers or appear unprofessional. For example, an overly punny headline might obscure the actual news (violating communication clarity too much). Similarly, in Uzbek, overuse of foreign terms could alienate readers who prefer pure Uzbek, or too much informality might be seen as disrespectful. In our corpora, we noted that deviations were often single splashes of color in an otherwise conventional piece – a clever headline, a witty closing line, a drop of slang here or there. Journalists modulate the degree of deviation to maintain credibility.

By examining these patterns, our study demonstrates the utility of combining SFL and pragmatics. SFL helped us articulate what functional load these deviations carry in the text's meaning structure (e.g., emphasizing participants, enacting tenor), while pragmatics helped us understand how the reader is expected to interpret them and what implicit communication is happening. This integrative analysis provides a fuller picture of media discourse strategies than either approach alone. For instance, just noting a grammatical oddity (SFL) wouldn't tell us that it's meant to trigger an implicature (pragmatic insight), and vice versa. Together, we see both the internal textual role and the external communicative role of each deviation.

In comparing English and Uzbek media, we should also acknowledge the role of historical and structural factors. English

is a global language with a massive media industry; thus English journalism has experimented with language a great deal and also has many sub-genres (hard news vs. tabloids vs. satirical news, etc.). Uzbek, being a national language that underwent periods of strict state control, has a younger tradition of freewheeling press language. Additionally, English grammar's flexibility (analytic language with fewer inflections) might make certain deviations easier (it's easier to drop words and still be understood), whereas Uzbek's agglutinative nature might constrain some omissions (dropping too much in Uzbek can render a sentence ungrammatical or unintelligible due to its affix chains). These linguistic differences could account for why elliptical structures are omnipresent in English headlines but less so in Uzbek. Conversely, the bilingual environment of Uzbekistan (Uzbek-Russian) gives rise to code-switching deviations which have no parallel in monolingual English media. Such differences highlight that while the concept of linguistic deviation as a media strategy is universal, its manifestations are language-specific.

CONCLUSION

According to the above analysis, we can conclude that both Uzbek and English media employ grammatical deviations (such as elliptical sentences, atypical word order, or sentence fragments) predominantly in headlines and titles to create brevity and impact. These deviations help foreground important information (e.g., the core event or issue) and attract reader attention, fulfilling a textual function in line with Halliday's SFL theory of information structuring.

Lexical deviations, including creative word choices, neologisms, and cross-language borrowings, are used to add color and implied meaning to news. English media tends toward puns, blends, and idiomatic expressions that engage readers and often carry an evaluative or humorous tone. Uzbek media, while also beginning to use wordplay and idioms, frequently shows deviation in the form of code-switching with Russian or English terms, signaling modernity and engaging younger, bilingual audiences. In both cases, these lexical choices serve an

interpersonal function – shaping the tone and the writer-reader relationship – and exemplify Leech's notion that breaking linguistic norms can foreground a message.

Pragmatic deviations are a notable strategy in both media spheres. Journalists sometimes flout conversational maxims (Grice 1975) to generate curiosity or imply meanings indirectly. Rhetorical questions, ironic statements, and conversational asides in articles invite the audience to infer and read between the lines. Such deviations rely on shared cultural context and can enhance the persuasive or affective power of a piece. For example, by deviating from a purely informative mode, a news writer can implicitly comment or guide interpretation (as seen in our examples of sarcasm in English and proverb usage in Uzbek). These findings underscore that news discourse is not only about telling what happened, but also about suggesting how to feel or think about what happened – often achieved through pragmatic nuances beyond the literal text.

When comparing across the two languages, we found that English and Uzbek media share the fundamental communicative purposes behind linguistic deviation: attracting attention, conveying attitude, and packaging information effectively for their audiences. However, they differ in their dominant techniques and extent. English media exhibits a higher frequency of explicit wordplay and grammatical brevity, reflecting its long tradition of stylistic experimentation in journalism (Bell, 1991). Uzbek media, evolving in a different sociolinguistic context, shows a blend of new and traditional forms – mixing contemporary borrowed jargon with culturally familiar idioms – as a way of deviating that resonates with its readership's experiences and expectations. Despite these differences, in both contexts deviation serves as a "foregrounding" device, in the spirit of literary stylistics: it makes certain elements of the discourse stand out (whether a concept, an emotion, or a perspective) by virtue of contrasting with the backdrop of normal language use.

The application of Systemic Functional Linguistics in our analysis provided evidence that these deviations are not random or merely ornamental; they are functional choices embedded in

the social semiotic system of language (Halliday 1994). Each deviation can be linked to a metafunction – for instance, a non-standard headline syntax fulfilling a textual organizational role, or a slang term fulfilling an interpersonal alignment role. Pragmatic theory complemented this by revealing the assumed cooperative interplay between media text and audience: readers are expected to understand the "hint" when a maxim is flouted and glean the intended implicature (Grice 1975). The success of media communication often hinges on this subtle dance of saying and unsaying – giving enough clues through deviation for the audience to stay intrigued and informed without overtly spelling everything out.

The use of Systemic Functional Linguistics and pragmatics as frameworks proved effective in deciphering the textual artistry and contextual signaling involved in media language. Media texts are not just carriers of information but are crafted artifacts of communication — replete with creative deviations that signal meaning on multiple levels. Recognizing and understanding these deviations enriches our comprehension of the news and reminds us that language norms can be flexibly bent in the service of storytelling and persuasion. As media landscapes continue to evolve, such linguistic innovations will likely expand, making continuous study in this area both necessary and fascinating.

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