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**Linguistic Deviation and the Tendency
Towards Colloquial Arabic in Nağīb Maḥfūz's Novel
*Al-Liṣṣ wa-al-kilāb (The Thief and the Dogs)***

Abstract

Nağīb Maḥfūz's novel *Al-Liṣṣ wa-al-kilāb* might be the best example in reflecting the distinctiveness of Maḥfūz' natural language, which comes closer to the common colloquial, and sometimes deviates from the traditionally familiar language. However, it has continued to be a standard language and sometimes it embodies rhetorical usages including similes, metaphors, and metonymies. This linguistic deviation can be seen as a motivation for language renovation and interconnected with the actual daily life to the extent that it is perceived as an acceptable and natural language and not as an archaic one. Maḥfūz digresses from familiar Arabic language usage by employing linguistic nuances such as stylistic foregrounding, backgrounding, the repetition of words, and the arrangement of a sentence's internal structure; all which in some way or another deviate from familiar usage. Linguistic deviation has also affected prepositions in Maḥfūz' texts. This kind of deviation may be due to erroneous usage in colloquial dialects. Sometimes, the author removes the preposition of the prepositional phrase constituent and changes the noun attached to it into an adverb. It is worthwhile stating that Maḥfūz' trend of deviation is an imitation of modern styles in an attempt to add new expressions and structures to the standard language. In spite of the fact that Maḥfūz occasionally made common mistakes and was guilty of sentence structure disorder and weakness, his profound work is full with connotations and metaphors expressing the actual lived reality while still employing the standard Arabic language as much as he could.

Keywords: Nağīb Maḥfūz, Arabic language, Egyptian dialect, Arabic literature, Arabs

Nağīb Maḥfūz (1911–2006), the Egyptian author who won the 1988 Nobel Prize for literature, was distinguished for his texts written in prose in a descriptive and rich discourse operating at various structural levels, and loaded with various semantic, stylistic and structural variations. In this discourse we find that standard local dialects and collocations have been coherently and accurately embedded in the text by the author. However, it is not surprising to find Maḥfūz deviating from familiar standard Arabic styles purposefully in order to reflect the social setting which has given birth to the protagonists of his novels, reflecting their social and stylistic behaviors in their daily lives. Despite the fact that in some of his novels, like in *Riḥlat Ibn Faṭṭūma* (The Journey of Ibn Fattouma), Maḥfūz intentionally uses a dialect rooted in the traditions of daily real-life phenomena, making use of expressions and nomenclatures that belong to the Old World presented in exceptionally standard linguistic expressive structures¹. He maintains an invariable correlation between the local environment and its people's dialect in most of his narrative works. Nağīb Maḥfūz's most celebrated novel *Al-Liṣṣ wa-al-kilāb* (*The Thief and the Dogs*) might be the best example in reflecting the distinctiveness of Maḥfūz' natural language, which comes closer to the common colloquial language, and sometimes deviates from the traditionally familiar language. However, it has continued to be a standard dialect and sometimes it embodies rhetorical usages including similes, metaphors, and metonymies. This linguistic deviation can be seen as a motivation for language renovation and correlated with authentic daily life to the extent that it is perceived as an acceptable and natural dialect rather than an archaic one.

The first thing that attracts attention in *The Thief and the Dogs* is its language, where the author uses expressions that deviate from the norm of literature. This is evident in the author's use of colloquial idioms and expressions knowingly and intentionally, although Maḥfūz sees the inherited colloquial dialect as an 'epidemic that we should get rid of'². Therefore, one should reflect the protagonists' situations and their social environments. In other times the author diverges from the familiar dialect inadvertently in part due to the influence of colloquial variations. This results in him committing common linguistic errors which make it difficult for him to exploit the correct and standard usage. This occurs because Maḥfūz language was open to its surroundings and social lives, although the distinction remains clear between the spoken and written language. This is confirmed by Mikha'il Bakhtin, who claims that "literary language is especially far from being whole. There is a vast dissimilarity between the social literary language and the standard literary language. This shows a higher level of clarity"³. One can claim that the use of idioms in the work of Maḥfūz emphasizes a new social existence.

The tendency for using colloquial spoken language is evident in the dialogue, which is sometimes spiced up with common expression prevalent in the Egyptian social setting.

¹ See: Muḥammad Riyāḍ Wattār, *Tawẓīf at-turāt fī ar-riwāya al-'arabiyya al-mu'aşira*, Manşūrāt Ittiḥād al-Kuttāb al-'Arab, Dimaşq 2002, p. 208.

² See: Sa'īd Şawqī Muḥammad Yāsīn, *Tawẓīf at-turāt aš-ša'bī fī riwāyāt Nağīb Maḥfūz*, İtrāk li-an-Naşr wa-at-Tawzī', Al-Qāhira 2001.

³ M. Bakhtin, *Al-Kalima fī ar-riwāya*, transl. Y. Ḥallāq, Manşūrāt Wizārat at-Taqafa, Dimaşq 1988, p. 53.

It is noticeable that these linguistic expressions in most cases belong to the standard spoken language, but they are not used correctly according to the recognizable precise usage, but rather are utilized to convey the communicative purposes of the protagonist's colloquial dialect. This is not surprising because the novel is expected to articulate the intentions of its characters utilizing their language and spoken dialect. For example, one of the protagonists uses the expression *alf nahār abyad* (on a thousand white days)⁴ when he sees another protagonist, Sa'īd Mahrān, to express an affectionate salutation. The meaning of this expression and its connotation is common in the Egyptian dialect, which is already known to any Arab speaker belonging to the current era. In spite of the usage of correct standard expressions, however many are not used accurately and depart from the familiar traditional linguistic usage.

There are colloquial expressions that are used in all Arabic dialects. These expressions belong to Standard Arabic, but are used in the sentence structure in a way that results in flawed grammatical constructions, which in turn negatively affect the standard word order arrangements of the sentence constituents. The expression *fi al-ḥifẓ wa aṣ-ṣawn* (well protected and well looked after) in the following example illustrates this: *Bintuk fī al-ḥifẓ wa-aṣ-ṣawn ma'a ummihā, wa-ṣar'an yağib an tabqā ma'a ummihā bint sittat a'wām* (Your daughter is in safe hands with her mother's care and moreover legally, a six-year-old girl should stay with her mother)⁵. We can see that the sentence starts with the standard expression 'in safe and caring hands', but attaching it to the prepositional phrase 'with' results in a deviation from the standard practice. The structural defect it causes to the standard sentence structure and as it develops closer into the colloquial dialect, because of the mere reason that the origin of the sentence is actually a traditionally common saying. This utterance might be appropriate for the dialogue, and can be used without reservation because it makes the reader think of the addresser as a convincing realistic protagonist and not one whom is fictitious. The protagonist has been nurtured in this environment and speaks the local dialect. However, the second part of the sentence increases the linguistic inconsistency, which creates a quandary. This could be avoided if the sentence is restructured in a different way, which would make it much clearer and linguistically well-structured. The author could have avoided this repetition and weakness of some words if he, instead, had said: 'Law mandates that a six-year-old girl stays under her mother's supervision'. We also find the colloquial expression *Ṣiḥḥatuka 'āl* (Health with you is great)⁶, which deviates from Arabic syntactic structure in terms of gender modification reflected by the adjective used to modify the noun. To illustrate, the noun, health, is feminine; therefore it should be paralleled by a feminine adjective, and not by a masculine one, as it is stated in the above mentioned example. At the same time, the word connotation of 'āl (great), as it is commonly used, deviates from the normal usage and does not conform to the well-known syntactic rules.

⁴ N. Maḥfūz, *Al-Liṣṣ wa-al-kilāb*, Dār aṣ-Ṣurūq, Al-Qāhira 2006, p. 7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

Another common colloquial expression used by Maḥfūz is *fī 'irdik* (I plead to your honor), is utilized for pleading and appealing as is shown in the following dialogic utterance: *Fī 'irdik itrunknī* (I plead to your honor, Leave me!)⁷. This sentence cannot be understood without reference to its colloquial context which deviates from the standard literature.

There are many expressions that may be standard, but are employed colloquially which denote that their meanings do not conform to those listed in linguistic dictionaries. These colloquial expressions are difficult to understand by native Arabic speakers from countries other than Egypt. Thus we find variation from the originally intended meaning. Another example is the word *šīš*, used in the novel *The Thief and the Dogs* to mean a window made of glass or wood: *wa-la'allaka tanzur min aš-šīš mustahfiyan ka-an-nisā' yā 'Alīš* (Yea 'Alīš! You might be hiding like women peeping through the hole in the wall)⁸. The original meaning of *šīš* is 'dates' whose kernels germinate fully or those that produce weak kernels. However, the divergence from this meaning to other meanings has become common during this age, such as: the delicate swords that are used in competition games. Also, *lu'bat aš-šīš* (the *sheesh* game) is the swords game itself. One of its meanings of *šīš* is 'glass', which etymologically means 'glass window'. This has also been used later to mean 'the window made of wood'.

Maḥfūz uses the word *laqta* (excellent catch) for his protagonists when talking about one of the characters in the following two places; It is said: *qīla innahu laqta* (they said that he is a catch)⁹, and *bal anta tufakkir bi-al-laqta* (In fact, you mean the catch)¹⁰. This usage confuses the reader. Does the author intend the word 'catch' in its colloquial meaning, i.e. 'who or what is worthy of being won'? Or does he intend one of the standard meanings encountered in language dictionaries? According to *Lisān al-'Arab* (The Arab Tongue) and *Tāğ al-'Arūs* (The Crown of the Bride) dictionaries, "Al-Layṭ says that *laqta* (catch) with a pause on the [q] consonant means the name of something you find somewhere and then it's picked up; this meaning also applies to a foundling (i.e. an abandoned child), whereas *laqata* with a short open upper diacritical mark on [q] means *ar-rağul al-laqqāt* (a professional who looks for something to catch). Al-Azharī says: "The standard Arabic language is unlike what Al-Layṭ states about *al-laqta* and *al-laqata*. Abū 'Ubayd narrates on the authority of Al-Ašma'ī and Al-Aḥmar as saying: It means the catch, or a plate, all of which are stressed. He says: 'And this is the argument of intellectual grammarians, as I have never heard of *laqta* from anyone other than Al-Layṭ. For this is how the traditionalists narrate on the authority of Abū 'Ubayd as saying: In addition, Al-Farrā' narrates it as *al-laqta* (the catch) with a pause on [q]. However, the opinion of Al-Aḥmar and Al-Ašma'ī is much more accurate"¹¹.

⁷ Ibid., p. 55.

⁸ Ibid., p. 7.

⁹ Ibid., p. 50.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 51.

¹¹ See: *Tāğ al-'Arūs*, under *laqta* entry.

Some of the expressions that are widespread in Egypt and that are maybe not understood by native Arab speakers is the word *qarāfa* which Nağīb Maḥfūz uses in numerous places in his novel to mean 'cemetery'. Originally, this word is the name of a Yamani tribe that used to live in Egypt near cemeteries. The cemetery is named after the tribe's *qarāfa*¹². As for the word *šarrā'a*, it might be difficult to understand despite the fact that it is derived from the standard Arabic verb *šara'a* (open), and the author uses it to mean *mišrā'*, which is a hole above the door or window of a house for lighting and ventilation purposes. It seems that this is one of the new expressions used in Egypt and thus in turn helps in developing language and creating new contemporary expressions.

Many widespread words have been recently introduced in the 20th century. They are used to describe either a verb or a particular expression; one of these is the verb *farmala* (break) which is a loanword borrowed from English. Although Arab linguists use the synonymous equivalent *kabaḥa* (break) in Arabic for the word *farmala*, we find others opt for introducing new borrowed words into Arabic and deriving new words from those that match standard usage and their derivatives and inflectional word formations. Maḥfūz is not an exception when using the verb *farmala* to mean *kabaḥa* in the following sentence: "And she held [*farmala*] her feet firmly to the carpet and tilting her body backwards"¹³.

One of the recently borrowed words adopted in Arabic that has been commonly used is *narfaza* (nervousness); the author uses it in a narration as follows: "She acts nervously [*fī narfaza*]; then she staffed the wound with yogurt and wrapped it tightly with a piece of cloth from the remains of her dress"¹⁴.

We can also find strange expressions in other Arabic dialects, one of which is the word *firānda*¹⁵ (veranda) which has the synonymous equivalent, *šurfā* (veranda) in standard Arabic, and also the word *bidūrm* (bedroom)¹⁶, which is defined in the *Mu'ğam al-luğa al-'arabiyya al-mu'ašira* as an underground floor used for living or storage purposes. It seems that the prevalent common usage of this word by Egyptians motivates the author to employ it in his novel despite the fact that, as it is expected; he knows that there are other synonymous equivalent words in Arabic dialects giving the same meaning. *al-qabw*, which is commonly used in other Arabic dialects, and the word *as-sarab*, which we find in Arabic dictionaries are a few such examples.

There are also other foreign expressions utilized by Maḥfūz such as: *ğākitta* (jacket) which has the Arabic equivalence *sutra*, and *nārğila*, having the Arabic synonym *šīša*; also *dūš* (shower), and *salāmlık* (sitting room). Maḥfūz uses these words in his novel although there are other Arabic equivalents for these foreign words.

As for the use of the word *sikritāriya* (secretariat) in the following sentence: "And he will remain as such, despite his incredible greatness and the strange articles, and his superior

¹² See: A.M. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd 'Umar, *Mu'ğam al-luğa al-'arabiyya al-mu'ašira*, 'Ālam al-Kutub, Al-Qāhira 2008, under *qarafa* entry.

¹³ N. Maḥfūz, *Al-Liṣṣ...*, op. cit., p. 14.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 115.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 33.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 30.

sikritāriya (secretariat)¹⁷; this word deviates from the norm in terms of pronunciation because it is difficult to articulate in Arabic. Therefore the author should have used another easily pronounced equivalent, which does not deviate from the familiar usage, such as *al-ḡihāz al-idārī* (administrative staff) fulfilling the same function and meaning.

Linguistic deviation from the standard towards the common colloquial Arabic is proliferous in Maḥfūz' works; we encounter such a phenomenon in Egyptian colloquial expressions. For example, the expression *māsiḥ al-ḡūḥ* (broadcloth polisher), metaphorically speaking, means praising the rich or somebody who has high status and power, is used by the needy for the purpose of getting personal benefits from them. The sentence that reads "one of the *māsiḥ al-ḡūḥ* (broadcloth polishers) said"¹⁸ is a metaphor for 'lip service' in this context and refers to flatterers and hypocrites. Therefore, Maḥfūz employs this expression to have a connotative rather than denotative meaning. It is worth noting that the word *al-ḡūḥ* (broadcloth) is a foreign loanword and might be etymologically Turkish, which means 'cohesive wool texture'. This kind of wool texture feels delicate and is cleaned manually by moving one's hand over it because cleaning it using other traditional ways would ruin it. The clothes of the well-off and affluent people during Ottoman era were made of wool texture and if one had wanted something, he would come closer to one of them and move his hand over their wool clothes. Therefore it is said 'You are like the *massāḥ al-ḡūḥ* (broadcloth polisher) if you praise somebody for the purpose of getting something from him.

As for the colloquial expression *qadd ad-dunyā* (as big as the world), Maḥfūz uses it to contest the dialogue which is loaded with common colloquial expressions: "And my wealth, money and jewelry, he usurped, and by means of which he became *mu'aliman qadd ad-dunyā* (a well-known professional)"¹⁹.

Likewise, the expression *ḥuluww riḡl* (lease) diverges from its literal standard meaning and is usually fixed to be commonly used to mean a lump sum of money requested by a tenant from a new tenant in order to evacuate the rented property. It is sometimes called *badal ḥuluww* (lease) in legal terminology. Maḥfūz uses this expression colloquially as follows: "A new family occupied the flat; it may have paid *badal ḥuluww* (a lease)"²⁰.

There is a commonly used expression in Arabic dialects which is employed either to distinguish the modified noun or to give it a higher rank with reference to its equivalents; like the expression *walā kull* (not like), which is encountered in *The Thief and the Dogs*: "You are a woman *walā kull* (not like) the other women"²¹. The familiar linguistic usage is to say: "You are a woman *laysat ka-kull* (unlike) all women", or *laysa ka-mitliki imra'ah* (No woman is like you as a woman).

Sometimes, some expressions digress from familiar usage as a consequence of replacing a verb by another because of the influence of the colloquial dialect. For example, the

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 31.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 27.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 69.

²¹ Ibid., p. 85.

following common expression *ya'mal lahu alf ḥisāb* (thousand calculations should be made for it) meaning (one should take all precautions) which diverges from the familiar expression *yaḥsub lahu alf ḥisāb* (one should count a thousand times for it). We notice that although the author of *The Thief and Dogs* employs the common colloquial style, he maintains the syntactic structure of the standard language: *antumā ta'malān li-hādā al-yawm alf ḥisāb* (You have been making a thousand calculations for this day)²².

Naǧīb Maḥfūz uses complete sentences uttered by his protagonists that cannot be interpreted and understood except in their Egyptian colloquial dialect and its connotations that digress from the familiar standard language. The following sentence exemplifies this: *aḥuṭṭak fī 'aynayya wa-akahḥil 'alayk* (I will wrap you with my eyelids and seal them with kohl)²³.

It is worth pointing out to indicate how accurate the researcher, 'Abd al-Maǧīd 'Īsānī, is as he noticed the high frequency of colloquial expressions and parables that are used in the novels produced in popular social settings, which Maḥfūz himself was constrained by. Some of these novels are: *Al-Ḥarāfiš* (*The Harafish*), *Qaṣr aš-Šawq* (*Palace of Desire*), *Zuqāq al-Midaqq* (*Midaq Alley*), *Awlād ḥāratinā* (*Children of Gebelawi* or *Children of our Alley*), etc.²⁴ We can assure that the novel *The Thief and The Dogs* belongs to the aforementioned collection. It includes many colloquial expressions uttered by the characters of the novel. These expressions are derived from the heart of the popular social context; they have been used by Egyptians and reflect the colloquial dialect and style. The following expressions exemplify this: *yā ḥabar abyad*²⁵ which literally means 'what a white news!' (i.e. What a surprise!), *ṭūl 'umrihā wa-ḥiya maqlūba*²⁶ which literally means 'it is always turned over' (i.e. he or she has always been unlucky) and *layla bayḍā bi-ṣ-ṣalāt 'alā an-nabī*²⁷ which literally means 'a white night blessed with a prayer upon the Prophet' (i.e. everything is okay).

Naǧīb Maḥfūz' protagonists use daily expressions that are specific to the Egyptian context and indivisible of the reality there, like *šarbāt* (drinks): "Come to the shop to have *šarbāt* (drinks)!"²⁸. Undoubtedly, this word is derived from the standard root *šariba* (drink) from which is derived *šarba* (one drink). Egyptians utilize the plural form *šarbāt* (drinks) to indicate the meaning of 'much drink'. However, it cannot convey this meaning exactly because the colloquial Egyptian meaning of the expression *šarbāt* is a drink made from a light and sweet fruit juice. This word, which is only commonly used in Egypt, diverges from what is expressed by the following familiar expression:

²² Ibid., p. 5.

²³ Ibid., p. 75.

²⁴ See: 'A.M. 'Īsānī, *At-Ta'addud al-luǧawī fī al-ibda' as-sardi (namūdaǧ al-fuṣṣā wa-al-'āmmiyya)*, "Al-Āṭār – Maǧallat al-Ādāb wa-al-Luǧāt", University of Ouargla, Algeria, Issue 4, May, 2005, p. 269.

²⁵ Naǧīb Maḥfūz, *Al-Liṣṣ...*, op. cit., p. 124.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 45.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 8.

‘a drink made from the fruit juice’. In addition the word *ğid‘ān*²⁹ the plural of *ğada‘* which means *ar-rağul aš-šahm* (the generous man), does not have an etymological root in standard Arabic. Furthermore, the verb *ğada‘a* meaning (cut), does not indicate any denotation of courage and generosity; The one who is *ğada‘* is the person who has been taken by part of his/her body or nose.

In the following sentence: *miṭluk yantaẓir wa-law ḥukima ‘alayhi bi-at-ta‘abīda* (The one who is like you should wait even if he is given a life sentence)³⁰, you find divergence from the infinitive *ta‘abīd* (to sentence for life) derived from the verb *abbada* having the meaning of *ḥallada* (to mortalize). This is a new legal term, commonly used in the form of a participle *mu‘abbad* (life sentenced), which means ‘the verdict of a life sentence in prison’; while in actuality the verdict is reduced to 20 years.

Nağīb Maḥfūz sometimes uses standard words in the singular but when used in the plural form, he again diverges from the familiar linguistic usage found in the dictionary. In doing so, he most likely wants to cope with the colloquial usage. A representative expression of such plurals is the word *ḥāra* (alley), which is given the plural of *ḥawārin* [*al-ḥawārī*], as is used in the following instance: *Al-Ḥammārat uğliqat abwābuhā wa-lam yabqā illā al-ḥawārī al-latī tuḥāku fīhā al-mu‘āmarāt* (The bars were closed and nothing remained except the *al-ḥawārī* (alleys) in which conspiracies are made)³¹. The plural form of *ḥāra* (alley) is the feminine plural *ḥārāt* (alleys) and there is no equivalent broken plural form (an irregular plural form) for this word. The broken plural form is called *ḥawārin* [*al-ḥawārī*]. The author may have resorted to the unusual broken form because he noticed that the regular plural of *ḥārah* (i.e. *ḥārāt*), creates a heavy ‘assonance’ by the repetition of the final sound /at/ of the words, *al-ḥammārat*, *al-ḥārāt*, and *al-mu‘āmarāt*, as illustrated in the example: *Al-Ḥammārat uğliqat abwābuhā wa-lam yabqā illā al-ḥārāt al-latī tuḥāku fīhā al-mu‘āmarāt*. (The bars were closed and nothing remained except the *al-ḥārāt* (alleys) in which conspiracies are made). The question then arises: Does Maḥfūz intentionally avoid assonance (which he rarely employs in his texts), or whether he erroneously uses the colloquial plural form of this word?

Maḥfūz digresses from familiar Arabic language usage by employing linguistic nuances such as stylistic foregrounding, backgrounding, the repetition of words, and the arrangement of a sentence’s internal structure; all which in some way or another deviate from familiar usage. It seems that the author of the novel *The Thief and The Dogs* realizes the importance of the linguistic coherence in creating the intended meanings, which in turn agrees with De Saussure’s view that language ‘is not a heap of words that gradually accumulated to have the primary function of referring to entities in the world’³².

Words and expressions are woven in Maḥfūz’s text to reflect functional relations. However, the author’s deviation from the familiar standard language in this context is

²⁹ Ibid., p. 45.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 75.

³¹ Ibid., p. 6.

³² R. Selden, *An-Naẓariyya al-adabiyya al-mu‘āšira*, transl. Ğ. ‘Aşfür, Āfāq li-at-Tarğama and Al-Hay‘a al-‘Āmma li-quşūr at-Taqāfa, Al-Qāhira 1996, (2nd ed.), p. 19.

generally purposive. However, it sometimes violates the internal structure of a sentence and confuses the reader, as illustrated in the following: *wa nawāfīd al-buyūt al-muğriyah ḥattā hiya ḥāliya* (and the tempting windows of the houses are even uninhabited)³³. Would it not be more appropriate to say: *Ḥattā nawāfīd al-buyūt al-muğriya [kānat, ẓallat, badat] ḥāliya* (Even the tempting windows of the houses [were, remained, looked] uninhabited)?

One such example of a sentence that suffers from structural defects is the following: *wağada nafsahu fī huğra kabīra mustaṭīla zuğāğīyyat al-ğidār al-muṭilli 'alā aṭ-ṭarīq wa-laysa bi-hā mawḍi' li-ğālis* (He found himself in big rectangular chamber with a glass wall overlooking the road, which does not have a place to sit)³⁴. Does the author mean that the chamber was *kabīra mustaṭīla dāt ġidār zuğāğī muṭill 'alā aṭ-ṭarīq* (big and rectangular with a glass wall overlooking the road)? Or does he mean another one which remained ambiguous because of deviation from the familiar internal structure of the sentence?

His saying: *wa-lākinnaḥu qāla lī malāyīn hum al-laṭīna yuqṭalūn ḥaṭa'an wa bi-lā sabab* (But he said to me, thousands are those who are killed erroneously and without any reason)³⁵ defies normal sentence internal structure because it includes foregrounding. It might have been better if the sentence had been structured as follows: *wa-lākinnaḥu qāla lī [inna] al-laṭīna yuqṭalūn ḥaṭa'an wa bilā sabab hum malāyīn* (But he said to me, verily those who are killed erroneously and without any reason are millions).

Maḥfūz not only deviates from the familiar standard usage of the Arabic sentence by foregrounding, and extrapositioning devices, but also uses incomplete sentences; he initiates his speech with dependent clauses that are not coupled either to the preceding sentences or to the following ones. The following exemplifies this tendency: *Ṭawāla arba'at a'wām lam tağib 'an bālihi wa tadarrağat fī an-numuw wa hiya şūra ġāmiḍa, fa-hal yasmaḥ al-ḥaẓẓ bi-makān ṭayyib yaşluḥ li-tabādul al-ḥubb. Yan'am fī ẓillih bi-surūr al-muẓaffar, wa-al-ḥiyāna dīkrā karīḥa bā'ida?* (During the past four years, he has not forgotten her, and she has gradually grown up, and she became a vague picture. Does luck let off to have a nice place, good for mutual love? Where accessible pleasure can be enjoyed, and betrayal is a bad disgusting memory?)³⁶.

At the beginning of the sentence, the author postpositions the adverb of time 'During the past four years', a case which is common in Arabic discourse, the purpose of which is to place emphasis on the postpositional constituent in order to draw the addressee's attention to it. The normal structure of this sentence should be as follows: 'He has not forgotten her for four years, and she has gradually grown up and she became a vague picture...'. However, the extract, 'Where accessible pleasure can be enjoyed, and betrayal is a bad disgusting remembrance?' following the preceding sentences has been separated by a full stop despite the fact they are related in terms of meaning, context and co-text indicated by the incomplete interrogative sentence. Therefore the extract 'and betrayal

³³ N. Maḥfūz, *Al-Liṣṣ...*, op. cit., p. 6.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 30.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 120.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 6.

is a bad disgusting remembrance?’ seems to be ambiguous and unrelated to the context of the text. We also notice that the author jumps from the verb ‘be’ which must precede the verb ‘betrayal’. In doing so, it is left to the addressee to understand the meaning as follows: ‘Betrayal becomes a dead disgusting remembrance’.

If we consider the following sentence: *wa satakūn muḡāmarat al-lyla ibtidā’an aftatiḥ bihi al-‘amal, wa satakūn muḡāmara dasima* (Tonight’s adventure will be a commencement with which work is opened; it will be a robust adventure)³⁷, we notice the repetition of the constituent *satakūn muḡāmara* (It will be an adventure). It seems that the author has structured this sentence in such a way in order to achieve two functions: Firstly, he wants to indicate that the adventure will be a commencement of his work. Secondly, he wants to describe this adventure and emphasize its importance and enormity, which is realized here by the employment of the unfamiliar adjective *dasima* (robust) to modify the noun. It is worth pointing out that this repetition is beneficial as it echoes the protagonist’s monologue and his stream of consciousness, where the constituents of speech spontaneously overflow, oblivious of its organization. Consequently, in such cases, most of the structure of the text deviates from the familiar norms of literature.

It is noticed in *Mahfūz*’ texts that he resorts to elaborations in particular places. This tendency results in very long sentences, each of which is extended over many pages without paying attention to punctuation marks. Although this tendency is considered a violation of the modern standard styles in writing, it brings to memory classical Arabic prose (e.g., *Arabian Nights*) where discourse overflows spontaneously without pauses or full stops. You can notice that the narrator of the novel *The Thief and The Dogs* arouses the character’s remembrances running over many pages (e.g., from page 78–83) in one sentence embodying many embedded sentences. The author might have intended to illustrate that this very long sentence is a spontaneous overflow of the character’s stream of consciousness, which is always absent in another period of time. And it ends with the character’s return to the current state during the time of the story imagined; then, re-emerges a new textual structure embodying shorter sentences constrained by punctuation marks.

Deviating from the punctuation marks for the sake of coping with the stream of consciousness and its complicated narrative styles may confuse the reader; it is created because of moving from one sentence to another employing an intricate and complicated structure. The text becomes too difficult to understand as is shown in the following sentence: *wa lan yansā fī an-nihāya annahā imra’a kamā anna Nabawiyya imra’a al-ḥā’ina al-ḡabāna sayaqtuluhā al-ḥawf ‘alā ḡayātihā* (He will not forget at the end that she is a woman and that Nabawiyya is a woman a traitorous and a coward the dreadful care for her life will kill her)³⁸. After a careful reading of the aforementioned sentence, the reader finds that he should stop before the word ‘coward’ and then continue to a following sentence. Therefore, in the absence of punctuation marks, it becomes difficult

³⁷ Ibid., p. 43.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 83.

to understand the sentence structure, as one may think that the word 'woman' and the word immediately following (traitorous) are related to each other by means of *al-iḍāfa* (genitive construction) *muḍāf* and *muḍāf ilayh*, where the first word, woman, is the head noun, *muḍāf*, and the latter is *muḍāf ilayh*, the post-modifying adjective. This affects the functional meaning intended. Undoubtedly, the author may have embedded this sentence in the context of the monologue in a way that reflects the character's expressions of his responses, so that the reader will assimilate and understand the internal structure of these responses and their punctuation.

Sometimes, we find recurrent verbless sentences in Maḥfūz's texts introducing a general description of a particular thing. These sentences remain incomplete unless the reader recovers the implicit missing meanings in these sentences. In the following extract, we find a stretch of language about a city. The reader can only assume whether the author is addressing the city by a deleted vocative article or by intentionally informing the reader about the city by a deleted *mubtada'* (subject of a logical proposition) and the verb, as follows:

"He dressed the officer's suit to try it Nūr stared at him raising her hands surrendering although he was not threatening her. The city of silence and truth. The gathering of success and failure, the murderer and the murdered. The gathering place of the thieves and the policemen where they sleep next to each other in peace and for the first time. And it seems that Nūr's snore does not stop unless she wakes up at the twilight"³⁹.

It is clear that the aforementioned sentences lack logical cohesion because the author jumps from one process to another. The narrator starts talking about the protagonist dressing an officer's suit while Nūr is looking at him; then, he abruptly talks about the city and after that returns to Nūr's snoring. Surprisingly, Nūr is simultaneously sleeping and staring at the man!

Maḥfūz usually deviates from writing styles by violating the pronoun system. We find that some sentences start with the third person pronoun, then the author moves to the second person pronoun, then to the first person pronoun. All of this occurs in one long sentence while talking about one protagonist (Sa'īd):

"[Sa'īd] used to stand near the door of the students' house after he finishes work, looking towards the end of the road that [Nabawiyya] used to come along until he realizes her beautiful figure and lovely walk approaching arousing in him the best feeling (...) And your eyes follow her enjoying wine (...) She sometimes disappears and other times appears as your love continually increases more and more and wishing to do anything (...) She said: 'turn back my grandmother is sitting next to the window. She will see you if you move a step further'. I said 'I am stubborn and if you want me to return let us return together' (...) but she slows down and bends her neck like a cat's, but she slows down then I do not doubt anymore that I have reached and that Nabawiyya has some feelings towards me..."⁴⁰.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 77.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 78–81.

The pronouns are sometimes confusing in the way they are interlinked to the extent that the reader does not know to whom the implicit pronoun refers to and who exactly the subject is. We realize this confusing overlap in the following extract:

“The young man set out in the dark night like a meteor. And he threw himself inside the car very quickly and suddenly started the engine and ran quickly. She finished dressing her clothes while she was saying...”⁴¹.

In the first sentence of the aforementioned text, the author mentions the actor, ‘the young man’ but in the second he mentions the third person pronoun ‘he’ (which is the subject/agent) referring to (Sa‘īd) as it is understood from the context; then we find an implicit the subject/agent ‘he’ (i.e. Sa‘īd), the subject of the verb ‘start’. After that we find the implicit third person pronoun ‘it’ referring to ‘the car’. Until now the texts seems to be comprehensible; however, the following sentence deviates from the norm because the subject/agent is not mentioned explicitly but must be implicitly understood (i.e. ‘she’ of the verb ‘completed’). What comes to our minds at the beginning is that the pronoun refers to ‘the car’, but it is illogical to say that ‘[the car] completed dressing its clothes...’. Therefore, we anticipate that the subject/actor is the protagonist, Nūr. It seems that the author intends to be short and quick in order to leaves it to the reader to understand the text correctly.

In the sentences “He found his blue suit and rubber shoes waiting for him. Except for them, none was waiting for him”⁴², we realize a witty repetitive style in Maḥfūz’s novel. Using the expression ‘waiting for him’ twice attracts the reader’s attention. At first glance, one may think that this sentence is weak in its structure, but suddenly it’s realized that the repetition is utilized purposively to emphasize the idea that ‘none was waiting for him’. We can rewrite this sentence in a normal way so that it fulfills the intended communicative function. For example, we can say: ‘He did not find anybody waiting for him but his blue suit and rubber shoes’. The word ‘anybody’ is used only to refer to animates; therefore, we cannot exclude inanimate things from it. This might be the reason why the author intentionally deviates from this familiar contextual usage. However, the following wording for the aforementioned sentence may resolve the ambiguity: ‘He found his blue suit and his rubber shoes waiting for him, but nobody was waiting for him’. If we consider the main constituents in Maḥfūz’ sentence from a literary point of view, we notice that he presents the ‘suit’ and the ‘shoes’ as if they were animate entities waiting; as the semantic features of ‘waiting’ are related to animates. The linguistic metaphor has become commonly used even in colloquial speech in a variety of situations, some of which are can be seen in the following examples: ‘Earth is waiting for its proprietors’, ‘A hard day is waiting for us’, and ‘The car waited for him’.

As for the following sentence, “Sleep stole him, but he did not know how it had stolen him, and he did not remember that he had slept, indeed...”⁴³, it seems to be a weak

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 55.

⁴² Ibid., p. 5.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 121.

sentence because of the repetition of the word 'stole', which could have been replaced by another verb, as follows: 'Sleep stole him and he did not know how this happened...'.

Sometimes we find strange language structures that violate sentence internal construction. To illustrate, we encounter stretches of language, each consisting of two separate sentences that are interrelated, but the author separates them. This tendency results in sentences that look as if they are incomplete having awkward structures. The following two sentences exemplify this tendency: *Li-ta'ti li-yarā māḍā fa'al az-zamān bi-hā. Al-latī 'abaṭan arādat imtilāk qalbahu* (She can come so that he can see what a lifetime has done to her. Who irrationally tried to possess his heart)⁴⁴. As can be noticed in the aforementioned structure, the author initiates the second sentence with the relative pronoun 'who'. However, the second dependent clause should be tied to the preceding sentence in order to understand the meaning of the relative pronoun 'who', which cannot be realized unless it is joined to the immediate preceding sentence. If the two clauses were tied by adding an entity to indicate the referent intended, the sentence would be understood as follows: 'She can come so that he can see what a lifetime has done to her, who nonsensically tried to possess his heart'. The two sentences could have been left separated by repeating the verb 'come' so that we could have the following two grammatical sentences: 'She can come so that he can see what a lifetime has done to her. She, who nonsensically tried to possess his heart, can come'. However, it seems that the author avoids making use of repetition, and intends to emphasize the idea that the narrator's speech seems to be incoherently overflowing from the protagonist's stream of consciousness.

More often than not, linguistic deviation is achieved by violating the familiar sentence syntactic structure. We find constituents that are syntactically and textually irrelevant and incoherent which, in turn, results in nonspecific ambiguous expressions. This odd sentence is an example: "These roads loaded by sun, and these crazy cars, and the pedestrians and those who are sitting, the houses and the shops, and there is no lip give up smiling..."⁴⁵. We notice that all of the expressions are verbless apart from the final one. The reader can only assume what the author intends to mean by such expressions. Although the final sentence includes a verb, one finds that it does not relate to the preceding co-text. This in turn, leaves likelihood for various possible interpretations that may not include the intended meaning.

Some changes can be made to the internal structure of a sentence; one of which is 'deletion' which the author makes use of in multiple places. He tends to delete important constituents of the sentence. He may delete the 'subject', the 'verb' or the 'object', so that the reader is required to configure the element deleted from the general context of the sentences. In some cases, ellipses are utilized to cope with the colloquial styles of expression, as shown in this example: *laḥaqa bi-himā kaṭīrūn min ad-dakākīn 'alā*

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 49.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 5.

al-ġānibayn (Many followed them from the shops on both sides)⁴⁶. Following the colloquial speech of the masses, the author deletes some constituents of the sentence, which should have been included as follows: ‘Many [clients, workers...] followed them [coming out] from of the shops on both sides’. The sentence included in Maḥfūz’ text seems to be weak and inaccurate in meaning. If read carefully, various possible interpretations can be conceived. The sentence can be read in different ways such as:

- (a) ‘Many of those who were coming out of the shops on both sides of the road followed them’,
- (b) ‘Many of those who were in the shops on both sides of the road followed them’, or
- (c) ‘Many of the owners of the shops who were walking on the sides of the road followed them’.

No doubt, the sentence utilized in the novel remains ambiguous because of its deviation from the standard linguist structure due to the employment of ellipsis devices. The author’s usage of the colloquial style may be acceptable in dialogues since the stylist preferences ought to reflect the character’s intellectual and cultural level. However, when employed in the written text, the use of colloquial dialect style results in weakening the text’s syntactic structure and affecting its literary standard level.

If considering this sentence: *Wa-taḥarrakat li-tatasallal raġi‘a lawlā ar-raġul warā’ahā* (She moved to sneak out backwards slowly if the man were not behind her)⁴⁷, we realize that some constituents are deleted in order to diverge from normal usage. The interpretation of this sentence might have been left to the reader who may understand it as follows: ‘She moved turning backwards slowly if the man were not [standing] behind her’.

We may be surprised to encounter in Maḥfūz’ text sentences like: *Al-Arḍ atfāl wa-rimāl wa-dawābb wa-huwa min at-ta‘ab wa-al-infi‘āl yalhat* (The earth is children, sand, and creatures and he was out of breath because of tiredness)⁴⁸, and ponder how can the earth itself become children and creatures, and why did the author resort to such a witty metaphor?’ However, the deletion of any part of speech results in a sentence diverging from the norms of speech. Therefore, the aforementioned sentence can be interpreted as follows: ‘The earth is [full of...] children, sand and creatures...’.

There are numerous instances of weak dialogues in the text due to ellipses, which are prevalent in Arabic dialects and styles of speech. One example is: – *Man qāl innī ġi‘tu li-ġayr at-tafāhum?* (Who said that I came except for mutual understanding?)⁴⁹. This sentence is should be structured differently in order to conform to the standard, as follows: ‘Who said that I came [for anything else] except for mutual understanding?’ The deletion encountered in this sentence is to emphasize the influence of the colloquial spoken styles.

What is prevalent in the dialogue is the use of common colloquial expressions, the purpose of which is to remind the addressee of genuine verbal communication and its

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 7.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 15.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 19.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 9.

colloquial styles. The following example illustrates this phenomenon: *ihz aš-šaytān* (damn devils)⁵⁰. What is noticeable is that the author adds declensions to show the grammatical case in this expression; he deleted the final letter /i/ of the word *ihz* (damn) to conform to grammatical rules though it is written with the final /i/ in some dialects.

The present participle (*ism al-fā'il*) frequently replaces the verb of the sentence in order to deviate from the norms. Although this style can be used in standard Arabic to fulfill certain purposes, it is prevalent in colloquial language to the extent that it has become the norm. Maḥfūz uses the following two expressions that are commonly used in colloquial speech: “Anā ‘ārifuk wa-fāhimuk, anā ḥayr man yaqra’ dāḥil ra’sik... (I know and understand you, I am the best one who can read your mind...)”⁵¹. This expression suits the dialogue because it places the reader in the setting of the fictitious story, up close and personal with its characters. An example of this is the colloquial word *šayda* (trapped) which is encountered in the following dialogue:

– Every now and then, she will be pleased to see you.

– Šayda (Trapped)?

– Of course, the boy of the owner’s son of the sweets factory...”⁵²

Maḥfūz uses some words in their inappropriate places in the sentence. The author uses the word *šattā* (diverse) incorrectly in the following below: *šar’an hiya ḥaqq lī li-šattā al-mulābasāt wa-aḏ-ḏurūf* (Legally, it is mine for diverse circumstances)⁵³. The word *šattā* is encountered in the Qur’an in various places. For example: *wa-anzala min as-smā’i mā’an fa-aḥraḡnā bi-hi azwāḡan min nabātin šattā* ([He] has sent down water from the sky. With it, have We produced diverse pairs of plants)⁵⁴. Based on this usage, Maḥfūz’ sentence cannot be used to indicate the following meaning: ‘Legally, it is mine [in all] circumstances’.

We find the word *kāffat* (all) in the genitive construction to function as *mudāf* followed by a post-modifying *mudāf ilayh*, as follows: *wa-al-qawl bi-annanī maḡnūn yanbaḡī an yašmul kāffat al-‘atīfīn...* (The saying that I am mad should include all sympathetic)⁵⁵. The word *kāffat* is commonly used as an indefinite in the accusative case, and should not be preceded by *li* (to) and encountered in a genitive construction. It usually occurs when a final sentence is in the accusative case, as it is used in the Qur’an: *wa qātilū al-mušrikīna kāffatan kamā yuqātilūnakum kāffatan* (And fight the Pagans *all together*, as they fight you *all together*)⁵⁶. The word *kāffat*, may have another meaning, like that encountered in the Quran: *wa mā arsalnāka illā kāffatan li-an-nās...* (We have not sent thee, but as a [Messenger] to *all* mankind...)⁵⁷. The meaning of *kāffat* (all) is *kāff*

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 13.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., p. 49.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 12.

⁵⁴ *The Holy Qur’an*, 20: 53 (Engl. transl. by A. Yusuf Ali, Beirut, n.d.).

⁵⁵ N. Maḥfūz, *Al-Liṣṣ...*, op. cit., p. 120.

⁵⁶ *The Holy Qur’an*, 9: 36.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 34: 28.

(preverter) who prevents other of doing bad deeds. Based on classical usages of this word, *Mağma' al-Luğa al-'Arabiyya* (The Center of Arabic Language), states that *kāffat* (all) can be used in definite and indefinite cases, and with inanimate nouns⁵⁸.

Another common mistake is the word *dāt* or *nafs* (same), which is used inappropriately for emphasis, before the noun to be emphasized, as shown in the following examples: *wa-šaraha bilā kibriyā' wa-bilā muqāwama fī dāt al-waqt* (He cried out without dignity and without resistance at the same time)⁵⁹, and *Laqad taraka 'Alīš Sidra wa Nabawiyya baytahumā fī nafs al-yawm al-laḍī zārahumā fīh bi-ḥuḍūr al-muḥbir wa-al-a'wān* ('Alīš Sidra and Nabawiyya left their house the same day, when he visited them in the presence of the detective and associates)⁶⁰. If *dāt* (self) and *nafs* (self) are used for emphasizing purposes in these two sentences; these reflexive emphasizees should be preceded by the nouns they emphasized. These emphasizees should agree with the nouns emphasized in case markers. Each of these words should also be attached to an explicit pronoun that agrees with the emphasized noun in terms of gender, and number (singular, dual and plural)⁶¹. If the author intends to make emphasis in the aforementioned sentences; he should have said *fī al-waqt dātihi* (in the time itself), and should have said *fī al-yawm nafsihi* (on the day itself). However, the expressions *dāt aš-šay'* or *nafs aš-šay'* (the same thing) can also be used to indicate other functions. Consider the following sentences from Sībawayhi's book: *nazaltu bi-nafs al-ğabal, wa-nafs al-ğabal muqābilt* (I sit in the same mountain, and the same mountain in front of me)⁶². Al-Ġāhiz also said: *wa-lā-budda li-at-turğumān min an yakūna bayānuhu bi-nafs at-tarğama...* (The translator's illustration should be evident in the same translation...)⁶³. When you say 'I read the same book' this means that you read the essence or essentials of the book, but when you say 'I read the book itself', this emphasizes the book and negates the idea that the reading was about the book⁶⁴.

Maḥfūz sometimes deviates from normal Arabic usage of expressions. For example, He uses the word *ḥamās* (enthusiasm) instead of *ḥamāsa* as shown in the following example: *fa-irtāha ilā dālik dūna ḥamās* (He accepted that without enthusiasm)⁶⁵. The word *ḥamās* according to *Tāğ al-'Arūs* means strength, prohibition and fighting. However, both words *ḥamās* and *ḥamāsa* have been commonly used synonymously in contemporary dictionaries⁶⁶.

Maḥfūz sometimes uses words inappropriately in regards to his usage not reflecting the meanings included in the classical Arabic dictionaries. For example, he uses the word

⁵⁸ See: Y. Abū al-Hayğā', *Qir'a'a fī kitāb Al-Aḥṭā' aš-ša'i'a fī istiḥdāmāt ḥurūf al-ğarr li-ad-duktūr Maḥmūd Ismā'il 'Anmār*, „Mağallat Mağma' al-Luğa al-'Arabiyya al-Urdunnī" 2006, 70.

⁵⁹ N. Maḥfūz, *Al-Liṣṣ...*, op. cit., p. 64.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 69.

⁶¹ See: M. al-'Adnānī, *Mu'ğam al-Aḥṭā' aš-Šā'i'a*, Maktabat Lubnān, Bayrūt, 1985, p. 252.

⁶² Sībawayhi, *Al-Kitāb*, Dār al-Ğil, Bayrūt, n.d., vol. 1, p. 266.

⁶³ Al-Ġāhiz, *Kitāb al-Haywān*, Dār al-Ğil, Bayrūt 1955, vol. 1, p. 76.

⁶⁴ See: 'A.S.M. Hārūn, *Kunnāšat an-nawādir*, Dār at-Ṭalā'i', Al-Qāhira, (2nd ed.), pp. 114–115.

⁶⁵ N. Maḥfūz, *Al-Liṣṣ...*, op. cit., p. 85.

⁶⁶ See: *Mu'ğam al-luğa al-'arabiyya al-mu'āšira*, under *ḥamasa* entry.

darağāt (steps) instead of *darakāt* (low levels) to indicate the descending of the protagonist from the third floor to the ground floor, as shown in the following: *wa maḍā yaṭīb fawqa ad-darağāt bi-lā ḥirṣ ḥattā balāga bi'r as-sullam fī tawānin* (He continued leaping down the steps until he reaches down the stairs in seconds)⁶⁷. It is well-known that the word, *ad-darağā* (the step) has a positive meaning (i.e. a high rank), whereas *ad-daraka* has a negative meaning (i.e. low rank). Accordingly, *darakāt* means descending levels one after another, whereas *darağāt* means ascending levels one above the other. In classical Islam, it is said that *Al-Ġanna darağāt wa-an-nār darakāt* (Paradise is ascending levels and Hell is descending levels).

Although Maḥfūz deviates from the standard usage, his expressions remain within the range of acceptability. One such expression is *awwal ams* 'the first of yesterday'⁶⁸ (meaning the day before yesterday). In standard Arabic, it is said: *awwal min ams* (the day before yesterday) but the Egyptian Centre of Arabic Language approved both expressions: *ams al-awwal* 'yesterday the first' (meaning the day before yesterday), and *awwal ams* 'the first of yesterday' (also meaning the day before yesterday).

In his texts, Maḥfūz utilizes some contemporary linguistic structures that have not been encountered in such a usage. For example, when the word *muğarrad* (only) is preceded by the Arabic preposition *bā'*, this structure indicates a different meaning from those occurring with this preposition; therefore, it gives a meaning synonymous to that of *ḥālamā* (as soon as), as shown in the following sentence: *wa-kunta tazunnu annaka satamūt nawman bi-muğarrad an yamass ġilduka al-arḍ* (You thought that you would have been fast asleep because you would sleep as soon as you lied down)⁶⁹. What is expected to be used here is either *ḥālamā* (as soon as) or *lahzata mā* (the moment when) instead of *bi-muğarrad*.

Most of the times, the author makes use of expressions that are considered common errors. For example, he uses the word *şudfa* (by chance) instead of *muşādafa* (coincidence), as shown in the following sentence: *anta lam tuqābilnī illā şudfa, wa-la'allaka kunta nasītanī tamāman* (You met me by chance. You might have forgotten me completely)⁷⁰. Unlike what is common in colloquial language (e.g. *ra'aytuhu şudfa*), using the word *muşādafa* is obligatory in such a context.

Nağīb Maḥfūz is well-known for his ability to adjust language to serve the narrative in his novels. It is often noticed that the author makes use of the rhetorical devices and linguistic metaphorical styles to create metaphorical alternatives that diverge from the normal usage. These strange metaphorical alternatives are used to articulate the linguistic functional purposes and artistic implications in his discourses and narrative texts. Like other prominent authors, Maḥfūz does not deal with language as automatic and static, but he de-automizes it in order to create unfamiliar expressions having implications and

⁶⁷ N. Maḥfūz, *Al-Liṣṣ...*, op. cit., p. 61.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 45.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 63.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 76.

interpretations that have not been encountered in common usage. The following quotation, about the creators of art, by Aḥmad ‘Alī Muḥammad is applicable to Maḥfūz’ style:

“The creators of art (...) intentionally violate language systems; they choose some lexical items that can have a wide range of influential implications and load them with various implications, a tendency that results in violating the well-established linguistic relations. This is intentionally done in order to increase the number of lexical connotations of the expressions used and enlarge their semantic fields. This, in turn, can accommodate the meticulous experiences to be articulated. For these reasons, the metaphorical use of language, which enable the author to deviate from linguistic norms, avails the opportunity for the author to employ stylistic options that reflect his peculiar stylistic choices”⁷¹.

Allegorical statements are prevalent in *The Thief and the Dogs*, one of which is: *wa-ṣāḥa aḥad ar-riḡāl muwaḡḡihan ḥanḡaratahu ilā ad-dawr at-tāni min al-bayt* (One of the men shouted directing his larynx toward the second floor of the house...)⁷². It is strange for the larynx to be directed toward a particular place, because it is a fixed organ of speech; however, its vocal cords vibrate in the process of articulation. Therefore, making the immobile entity mobile is a kind of exaggeration; the function of which is to attract the reader’s attention to the narrative text and to the dynamic mobile words used. This usage adds unconventional meanings to a strange world which has become unfamiliar to its characters. Maḥfūz is employing physical things to represent concepts here⁷³. This sort of rhetoric is mentioned by Ar-Rummānī, who states: “explain what is unseen by using what can be seen and explain what we do not know by something we do know”⁷⁴.

Likewise, in the following sentence: *wa-taṭalla‘at bi-waḡḡ asmar wa-ša‘r aswad musabsab fawqa al-ḡabīn fa-iltahamathā rūḡuhu* (She appeared with a brown face and straight black hair on her forehead so that his spirit swallowed her)⁷⁵. This sentence is a deviation from the familiar usage. It is used for a metaphorical and allegorical purpose. The expression *iltahamathā rūḡuhu* (his spirit swallowed her) is an imaginary poetic image which is not that easily encountered in Arabic prose. *Badā al-qaṣr musdal al-ḡufūn taḡrusuhu al-aṣḡār min kull ḡānib ka-al-aṣbāḡ* (The palace looks as if its eyelids were sealed and guarded by the trees from everywhere like ghosts)⁷⁶. The above sentence can be perceived as one full of connotative metaphorical images, which animate the inanimate by bringing life to ‘the palace’ and humanize it by giving the palace ‘sealed eyelids’. Such a divergence is made in order to portray a dramatic scene for the palace tonight while the lights are off.

⁷¹ A. ‘A. Muḥammad, *Al-Inḡirāf al-uslūbī fī ṣi‘r Abī Muslim al-Bahlānī (1860–1920)*, “Maḡallat ḡāmi‘at Dimaṣq”, Vol. 19, Issue (3+4) 2003, pp. 70–79.

⁷² N. Maḥfūz, *Al-Liṣṣ...*, op. cit., p. 8.

⁷³ H.Ş. ar-Rubay‘ī, *Maḡayīs al-balaḡa bayn al-udabā‘ wa al-‘ulamā‘*, ḡāmi‘at Umm al-Qurā, Makka 1996, p. 314.

⁷⁴ A. al-Ḥ. ‘A. ar-Rummānī, *An-Nakt fī i-ḡāz al-Qur‘ān*, Dār al-Ma‘ārif bi-Miṣr, Al-Qāhira 1387 H, p. 81.

⁷⁵ N. Maḥfūz, *Al-Liṣṣ...*, op. cit., p. 44.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

The author violates familiar usage in the following sentence as well: *Marratan uhrā yatanaffas nasmat al-ḥurriyya, wa-lākinna al-ḡaww ḡubār ḥāniq wa-ḥarr lā yuṭāq* (Once again he breathes the breeze of freedom, but it is a suffocating dust and an unbearably high temperature type of weather)⁷⁷. This is the description of the weather. It is common to say that *al-ḡaww muḡubbar* (The weather is dusty), but the author makes use of exaggeration to denote that 'the weather itself is full of dust. It is worth mentioning that this style is commonly utilized for the sake of exaggeration.

Another example of an unusual metaphor that is utilized by Naḡīb Maḥfūz in his novel is when he describes a complicated allegorical image for treachery. The author draws a comparison between treachery and man's expiation for his sins, but instead of doing so, treachery expiates for its ugly look. "It is time for wrath to explode and burn, for treacherous people to despair forever, and for treachery to expiate for her ugly look"⁷⁸. Linguistically, it is familiar to automatically presume that the verb *kaffara* (expiate) indicates the meaning of expiation for a sin or an oath; but expiation for a look, shape, appearance, or color diverges from the linguistic norms and lexical interpretations related to this verb. Another unusual metaphor that has been encountered in Maḥfūz' text is the following description of the door: The deaf door of the prison is going away enfolding the depressed secrets"⁷⁹. It is impossible for a door made of iron or wood to be bent or wrapped, but this is an allegorical connotation indicating that there are many secrets hidden behind this door.

Linguistic deviation may result due to overlooked syntactic errors or due to inattentiveness, a phenomenon which is rarely encountered in the novel of *The Thief and the Dogs*. One example is masculinizing the feminine as indicated by the word 'cup' in the following sentence: *wa-rāḥa mala'a al-ka'sayn tumma qaddama aḥadahumā ilā Sa'īd wa-rafa'a al-uhrā qā'ilan* (He filled the two cups then he introduced one of them to Saīd and raised the other saying...)⁸⁰. Surprisingly, Maḥfūz has mentioned the word 'cup' in the masculine form and then has feminized it in the same text; he masculinized it by using the word *aḥadahumā* (one of them) (i.e. one of the cups), and feminized it when he uses *al-uhrā* (the other) (i.e. the cup). Using the masculine form to represent feminine has been established in Arabic literature for a long time. Ibn Ğinnī is explaining this by saying: "Using the masculine to represent the feminine is widely used because the primary original form is used instead of the secondary branch form. However, using the feminine to represent the masculine is difficult to recognize"⁸¹.

According to Arabic linguistic dictionaries, some Arabic words can be feminized and masculinized at the same time. However, the word 'cup' has only been used as feminine, as it is used in the Qur'anic verses: *bi-ka'sin min ma'in bayḍā'* (A cup from the clear-flowing fountain, crystal-white [+ Feminine]). Maḥmūd Ismā'īl 'Ammār points out that

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 5.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 34.

⁸¹ Ibn Ğinnī, *Al-Ḥaṣā'is*, Maṭba'at Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, Al-Qāhira 1956, p. 415.

if the metaphorical feminine usage is described or referred to by a pronoun, we say: *ka's al-'ālam ad-dahabī* (the world [golden + Masculine] cup), *ka's al-mubārāt al-fiddī* (the competition [silver + Masculine] cup), *šaribtu min bi'r 'amīq* (I drank from a [deep + Masculine] well), and *wa kaffahu šadadtu 'alayhi* (and his hand I [pulled + Masculine]), but they do not say *ka's al-'ālam ad-dahabiyya* (the world [golden + Feminine] cup), or *bi'r 'amīqa* [deep + Feminine] well), etc.⁸² Aḥmad Muḥtār in his study on linguistic deviation in modern Arabic realized such changes are now common in modern Arab media⁸³.

Sometimes, it can be observed that the author employs a plural form instead of a dual form when talking about the parts of human body, like 'arms' and 'legs'. This is a deviation from familiar usage, because humans, in general, have two legs and two hands. Consider the following example: *Wa naṭaqa bi-al-iğrā' fustān abyad inṭalaqat minhu al-aḍru' wa-as-sīqān bilā harağ...* (A white dress expressed seduction when the legs [-dual] and the arms [-dual] set out carelessly)⁸⁴. It seems that the author intentionally utilizes the plural instead of the dual to describe the scantily dressed woman, who was wearing a provocative dress. He resorts to the plural instead of the dual denoting that the woman's revealing body parts were too exposed to be expressed by the dual form.

One of the parsing errors encountered is utilizing the nominative case instead of the accusative, as indicated in the following sentence: *tafā'alnā ḥayr bi-ahbār al-'īd* (We were optimistic about the good news of the feast)⁸⁵. Using the word *ḥayr* in the nominative case violates the parsing system because it should be written in the accusative case. This kind of error might have occurred due to the influence of the colloquial dialect in which declension markers are not paid attention to and also the fact that such a sentence is uttered by one of the protagonists in a conversational dialogue. Another error encountered in the narration and not in the dialogue is the following sentence: *muṭārad wa sayazall muṭāradun ilā ākhir laḥzatin fī ḥayātih* (He is chased and will be chased to the last moment in his life)⁸⁶. The word *muṭāradun* is written in the nominative, whereas it should be written in the accusative (i.e. *muṭāradan*). This might be an unintentional typo.

Linguistic deviation has also affected prepositions in Maḥfūz' texts. This kind of deviation may be due to erroneous usage in colloquial dialects. One of the most common inaccurately used preposition is *bā'* which is utilized instead of the preposition *fī* (in) or vice versa. This is usually encountered in the Egyptian dialect. For example, the author employs the intransitive verb *tamassaḥa* (clean) attached to the preposition *fī* (in), as follows: *a-nasīta yā 'Alīš kayfa kunta tatamassaḥ fī sāqī miṭl al-kalb?* ('Alīš!

⁸² See: M.I. 'Ammār, *At-Tadkīr wa-at-ta'nīl fī al-'arabiyya wa-al-isti'mālāt al-mu'aşira*, "Mağallat Mağma' al-Luğa al-'Arabiyya al-Urdunnī" 2013, issue 61, pp. 105–133.

⁸³ A. Muḥtār, *Al-Inḥirāf al-luğawī fī al-'ilām al-mişrī al-masmū' maḍāhiruh wa-subul taqwīmih*, "Mağallat Mağma' al-Luğa al-'Arabiyya", Al-Qāhira 2001, issue 62, p. 48–49.

⁸⁴ N. Maḥfūz, *Al-Lişş...*, op. cit., p. 49.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 45.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 70.

Did you forget how you use to wipe my leg like the dog?)⁸⁷. According to Arabic linguistic dictionaries, the verb *tamassaḥa* 'wipe' is a transitive verb that takes either of the following prepositions: *al-bā'*, *al-lām*, or *min* depending on the function of the utterance. An illustrative example is the following prophetic saying: *tamassaḥū bi-l-ard...* (Make dry ablution with earth...).

The author uses the common error *ta'arrafa 'alā* (recognized) as indicated in the following example: *wa-rubbamā ta'arrafa 'alayhi ba'duhum mimman ra'ū šūratahu fī al-ğarīda* (Maybe some of those who saw his photo in the newspaper recognized him)⁸⁸. According to linguistic dictionaries, this deviates from the standard usage, because the verb *ta'arrafa* (recognize) is transitive in itself and does not need a preposition. As documented in *Muḥtār aš-Şihāḥ* under the lexical entry '*arafa* (recognize or know)', the verb *ta'arrafa* is used as follows: *wa-ta'arrafa mā 'inda fulān ayy talabahu ḥattā 'arafah, wa ta'ārafa al-qawm 'arafa ba'dahum ba'dan* (He recognized what someone has and asked about it until he understood it. When people introduce each other means 'they come to recognize each other')⁸⁹. It has become prevalent nowadays that the transitivity of this verb can be achieved when it is followed by either of the prepositions: '*alā* (on), or *al-bā'*'. However, others see that *ilā* (to) is the most suitable preposition to follow this verb.

Transitivity is also violated when using a verb or a present participle followed by a preposition though it is unnecessary as illustrated in the following sentence: *zaharat Nūr 'inda al-bāb ġayra mutawaqqi'a li-al-mufaġa'a al-latī tantaziruhā* (Noor appeared near the door but she was not expecting the surprise which was waiting for her)⁹⁰. It is better to say: *ġayra mutawaqqi'a al-mufaġa'a* (...she was not expecting the surprise), because the verb *tawaqqa'a* (expect) is a transitive verb and does not need a preposition to follow it as is said in, *tawaqqa'a aš-šay'* (he expected something), and *tawaqqa'a qudūmahu* (He expected his/its coming).

The sentence: *wa-rāḥat tamla' al-akwāb mubtasima ṭawāla al-waqt li-qawlihi, mubdiya 'an lawnihā al-asmar* (She went filling the cups, smiling all the time for his speech, revealing about her brown complexion)⁹¹ includes a mistake related to the transitivity of the verb *abdā* (reveal) which is followed by the preposition '*an* (about). This verb is mono-transitive as it takes one object followed by the preposition *al-bā'* or *al-lām* as is used in Arabic dictionaries and cited in the Qur'an *wa in tubdū ḥayran aw tuḥfūhu* (Whether ye show what is in your minds or conceal it)⁹². It seems that the author uses the verb *abdā* to have the meaning of 'reveal about', which causes a type of confusion to him.

Sometimes, the author removes the preposition of the prepositional phrase constituent and changes the noun attached to it into an adverb. The word *atnā'* (during) in the following

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 6.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 70.

⁸⁹ See: *Muḥtār aš-Şihāḥ*, under the lexical entry '*arafa*'.

⁹⁰ N. Maḥfūz, *Al-Liṣṣ...*, op. cit., p. 49.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 85.

⁹² *The Holy Qur'an*, 2:284.

sentence exemplifies this phenomenon: *dārat afkāruhu atnā' dālik ḥawla ḥiyānat Ra'ūf* (His ideas during that time were about Raouf's treachery)⁹³. This sentence deviates from language norms because we should insert the preposition *fi* (in) before the noun *atnā'* to have *fi atnā'*. The expression *atnā' aš-šay'* (during the thing) means in its middle, and *atnā'* is not an adverb here nor is it a part of genitive construction; thus, it should be connected with the preposition *fi*⁹⁴. However, according to The Center of Arabic Language in Cairo, it is possible to use *atnā'* (during) without being accompanied by a preposition⁹⁵. Despite the approval of the usage aforementioned *atnā'*, the linguist, Abū al-Hayḡā' recommends the use of *atnā'* in this context and asserts the use of a preposition with it. He argues correctly: 'In spite of what is stated in *Lisān Al-'Arab: wa ṭinyu: wāḥid atnā' aš-šayi' ayy tadā'īfuhu* (and fold is the singular form of the folds of something (i.e. its doublings). For instance: *anfadtu kadā ṭinya kitābī ayy fi ṭayyihī* (I penetrated something in the fold of my book, i.e. in its fold). The word *ṭiny* (fold) has not been used either by traditional grammarians or by modern ones. It seems that those who use *atnā'* (during) without being attached to a preposition have been influenced by English language or by equating it to other Arabic words. This is what Abū al-Hayḡā' concludes when saying: "There remain two issues: Firstly, it is likely that translation has played a significant role, specifically for the word 'during'. Secondly, the synonymous equivalent word *ḥilāl* (during) was used in the genitive case or non-genitive by the traditional grammarians. The following Qur'anic verse exemplifies this tendency: *fa-ḡāsū ḥilāla ad-diyār* (They entered the very inner-most parts of your homes)⁹⁶.

It can be concluded that in order to write his masterpiece, *The Thief and the Dogs*, Maḥfūz opted for an ambitious balance of language, not only based on the standard but also akin to rhetoric. He utilized metaphorical and allegorical language. However, he remained attracted to the colloquial dialect, from which he chose many common expressions and structures that deviate from those in dictionaries and the books of literature, which diverge from standard styles in order to present a faithful portrait of his realistic fiction genre. It is worthwhile stating that Maḥfūz' trend of deviation is an imitation of modern styles in an attempt to add new expressions and structures to the standard language. In spite of the fact that Naḡīb Maḥfūz occasionally made common mistakes and was guilty of sentence structure disorder and weakness, his profound work is full with connotations and metaphors expressing the actual lived reality while still employing the standard Arabic language as much as he could.

⁹³ N. Maḥfūz, *Al-Liṣṣ...*, op. cit., p. 111.

⁹⁴ See: M.I. 'Ammār, *Al-Aḥṭā' aš-šā'i'a fi isti'mālāt ḥurūf al-ḡarr*, Dār 'Ālam al-Kutub, Ar-Riyād, 1998.

⁹⁵ Abū al-Hayḡā', *Qirā'a fi...*, op. cit.

⁹⁶ Ibid.