

TITLE PAGE

**LEXICO- GRAPHOLOGICAL FOREGROUNDING IN POETRY:
A STYLISTIC STUDY OF NIYI OSUNDARE'S *VILLAGE VOICES***

BY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this work is the product of my Research efforts undertaken under the supervision of Ph.D. Aisha Umar. This Research report has not been presented anywhere for the award of a degree or certificate. All sources have duly been acknowledged.

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CERTIFICATION

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ABSTRACT

This research has attempted a stylistic study of selected poems in Niyi Osundare's collection of poems titled *Village Voices* with a view to discovering the lexical and graphological items foregrounded by the poet in order to convey his message. The aim of the research is to investigate some of the foregrounded lexical and graphological items contained in the poems and examine how they help to arrive at an interpretation and also create an effect. The research, therefore, reveals how language works in Literature. The work employed the use of the theory of foregrounding proposed by Van Peer (1986) as a tool for analysis. The theory assumes that poetic language deviates from norms characterizing the ordinary use of language and that the deviation interferes with cognitive principles and processes that make communication possible. Multimodality theory has also been used to guide and support the research on the interpretation of the use of images in some poems and their influence in meaning construction. Descriptive approach to qualitative research design which involves the identifying, explaining and analysing the lexico-graphological items foregrounded in the poems was used as the method of data analysis. The theory-based operational construct sampling was used to select the poems as samples. The findings of the research revealed that Osundare uses some lexico-graphological items to create meaning in a unique way. He uses his indigenous language, creates new and alters some words, uses punctuation marks strangely, uses images, illustrates with words etc. in foregrounding his message. The meaning or message cannot be decoded without knowing the meaning of the linguistic items used. For example one cannot understand the poem fully without knowing the meaning of the indigenous words used by the poet, thus, they help in interpreting the poems.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Language is a means of human communication. Certainly, the skilful use of language in poetry, one of the genres of literature, is important for interpretation. Poetry is open to limitless interpretations. In fact, the meaning of a poem changes not only from reader to reader but also from reading to reading, i.e. every time one reads the same poem, one perceives its message differently, therefore receives a new effect. Osundare (2008) considers the work of art as communication. Therefore, language is regarded as an essential tool in the world of poetry. It is crucial to know that Osundare's poems are distinctive and exceptional among his contemporaries because of his style. As Osundare (2008) argues, writers do communicate using different styles. He further maintains that "writing by its nature, is knotted by so many factors which Osundare refers to as 'temporo-spatial matrix, a definite and definable occasion', in which case the writer's 'now' become the reader's 'then' etc. which consequently, calls for interpretations. Leech (2013) emphasizes that literary language is difficult to be conceived as a describable language in its own right.

This research, sets out to make a stylistic analysis of some selected poems in Niyi Osundare's collection of poems titled *Village Voices* with a view to finding out how lexis and graphology work together and how both can be used in the stylistic analysis of literary texts in order to reveal how authors use some linguistic devices to encode and disseminate their artistic vision and message, which consequently, helps readers and critics, comprehend and interpret their (the poets) emotional feelings and disposition.

However, when writers write, they do so with certain expectations. This also pre-determines the type of style a writer uses to convey his message. During writing, the use of capital

letters, punctuation marks, and other graphics is important and particular emphasis is put in using them appropriately. Meanwhile, the language of literature is usually marked and recognised by deviations and a stylistic study often reveals the extent to which the language of a poet reveals deviant features. Readers, who are in a remote position and whose role is to read and try to interpret the writers' mind, would arguably be affected by many things. A style is one of the significant mechanisms that aid in meaning encoding and decoding by both the writer and the reader. Stylistics, as a study of style, has been used as a means for studying literature. And since one of the major foci of the field, (stylistics) is the study of the author's style and how meanings and effects are formed by literary texts, it uses many approaches to make the study possible and yield fruitful results. From the linguistic point of view, writers' choice and use of words, use of some elements like punctuation marks, capitalisation in sentences and proper nouns, etc. are investigated in order to discover the writers' style and how in effect, that helps in meaning-making. Sometimes, writers deviate and do certain things as their style to encode meaning. Meanwhile, these deviations can be found in some poems particularly when the poet, knowingly or otherwise, wants to show the uniqueness of his style and as a result, foreground certain features to achieve some effects. Similarly, when anything in a text stands out as unexpected, quantity, quality, manner or relevance is flouted; it becomes foregrounded and requires interpretation. In making the interpretation alive, lexis and graphology as stylistic apparatus, and the main concern of which is studying people's writing and word choice is used and as a result, meaning becomes clearer to the readers with all the deviations. This research, therefore, sets out to investigate lexical and graphological devices foregrounded in Osundare's collection of poems titled *Village Voices*.

Village Voices is the second volume of Osundare's poetry, songs from the market place being the first. The collection was published first in 1984 and reprinted in 2003 and 2004 respectively. The collection consists of thirty-eight poems which are divided into three

categories. The first category is titled Voices of dialogue and banter, the second, voices of coming and going and the third voices of anger and indictment. Therefore, this Research investigates how Osundare creatively deploys lexical and graphological features and foregrounds them, to express his socio-political messages in the poems. The study locates the values of linguistic analysis of poetry and asserts that it cannot be cleared aside or overlooked in current practice.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Literary texts are subject to various interpretations. Meaning making and texts interpretations depend largely on the style used by the writer. Many times, one's own style can be of deviating from the norms to convey an important message which will be difficult to decode by the readers. Such a style becomes unusual to the readers thereby making it somehow difficult for them to decode the message. This study pays attention to the lexical and graphological foregrounded features that can be found in the poems and how they help the writer convey meaning with emphasis on how the poet uses foregrounding as a means, to achieve his aim of creating special effects.

1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this research is to stylistically study selected poems in Osundare's Village Voices so that the following objectives would be achieved:

1. To investigate some of the foregrounded lexical and graphological features in the selected poems.
2. To examine how lexico-graphological items foregrounded in the text can lead to interpretation.
3. To explain how the poet uses foregrounding to achieve certain effects.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To achieve the stated objectives, this research intends to answer the following questions:

1. What are the foregrounded lexical and graphological features used by Osundare in the selected poems?
2. To what extent can the lexico-graphological items foregrounded in the text lead to interpretation?
3. To which level does the poet use foregrounding as a means to achieve certain effects?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

As every research is expected to significantly play an important role in the academic, this research contributes to the growing literature on the interface between literature and language. The research aims at sharpening our awareness of how language works in literary texts. It also serves as reference material for students and researchers who are interested in conducting further research on foregrounding in poetry

1.6 SCOPE AND LIMITATION

This research is an attempt at a stylistic analysis of selected poems of Osundare's *Village Voices*. The research focuses on lexical and graphological foregrounding in the poems. The research explains some lexical and graphological devices foregrounded by the author to extend meaning. The research limits itself to only the poems selected as a sample of the poems in the collection. It also focuses on lexical items and graphological devices which in the course of analysis the research shows, the author uses to express his feelings and convey his message.

Out of the thirty-eight poems in *Village Voices*, thirty-six poems have been selected and used as samples for analysis. This is due to the time constraint and the resources available at the researcher's disposal. The collection starts with; *A Dialogue of the Drums in the voices in*

dialogue and banter, under which there are fourteen poems, Alarinka in Voices about coming and going which covers nine poems and the Land of unease in Voices of anger and indictment for which the poet lines up thirteen poems.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews some related works done and related literature that discusses some key areas and concepts which this research deals with, throughout this dissertation. The chapter explores Language and literature, style and stylistics, style as deviation and concept of foregrounding. It focuses also on graphological foregrounding, lexical foregrounding as well as poetry and interpretation. A review is made on Osundare's work in poetry and lastly, the theoretical framework of this research.

2.2 LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Brumfit and Carter (1986) argue that there is nothing like literary language, as one cannot separate or pinpoint what may be termed as "literary register" as we have in other disciplines like medicine, engineering, business and commerce. Language and literature are closely interconnected. It is argued that, if there is such a thing as literature, there must be literary language, for literature is something that is expressed and recorded in language (Philip 1987). Language has always been central to the way we generate the meaning of a text. It is argued that language is involved in a wide variety of human situations, perhaps every situation (Salzmann 2012). In this regard, literature is involved.

According to Delahunty (2010), language is a system that connects thought, which cannot be heard, seen or touched, with sounds, letters, manual signs or tactile symbols. Delahunty further maintains that through language, one can be provided with clues that he/she can have access to what others are thinking and or read each other's' mind. To show how language and literature are interrelated, Delahunty (2010) asserts that "when people communicate, they produce texts". Halliday (2004) emphasises that the term "text" refers to any instance of

language, in any medium that makes sense to someone who knows the language. In this regard, literature is a reflection of language and it has been observed that research on how language operates in literature would always reveal. In the first place, the great influence of language over literature and the wide gaps most researches leave for others to fill.

2.3 STYLE AND STYLISTICS

Stylistics has been defined by Turner (1973) as a “report of linguistics which concentrates on variation in the use of language, often, but not exclusively, with special attention to the most conscious and complex use of language in literature. This definition, therefore, displays literature as the subject of study in stylistics with particular attention to the use of language or how language operates in literature.

Michael Toolan (1996) emphasises that stylistics is the study of the language in literature. Toolan (1996) observes that stylistics can be used in the attempt to understand the technique, or the craft of writing. It is further argued that, by bringing to the close examination of the linguistic particularities of a text, one can understand the functions of the language. Person (2001) believes that the aim of stylistics is not only to describe the formal features of texts for their own sake, Stylistics is also defined as a study of the different styles that are present in either a given utterance or a written text or document. The consistent appearance of certain structures, items and elements in a speech, an utterance or in a given text is one of the major concerns of Stylistics. Stylistics requires the use of traditional levels of linguistic description such as sounds, form, structure and meaning. It then follows that the consistent appearance of certain features, items and elements in speech utterances or in a given text is one of the major concerns of stylistics. Linguistics in Stylistic studies is concerned with the varieties of language and the investigation of some of the formal linguistic features which characterise them. The essence and the usefulness of stylistics are that it enables the immediate understanding of utterances and texts, thereby maximizing our pleasure of the texts or rather

to reveal their functional significance for the interpretation of the text; or to relate literary effects to linguistic ‘causes’ where these are felt to be relevant. Stylistics approaches literary texts in order to identify the choices and ways a writer uses in weaving a text. Crystal (1998) opines that most stylistic analysis deals with the complex and “valued” language within literature. He further states that one of the major objectives of stylistics is to enable readers to make a meaningful interpretation of the text itself. That is why stylistics study of literature is made for the purpose of making comments on quality and meaning in a text. Verdonk (2002) shows that stylistics is the study of language in literature and it seeks to account for interpretation effects of a text through close study of its linguistic detail, such as syntactic structuring, semantic deviation, deixis, modality etc. (Khattak, et al. 2012). Widowson (2014) defines stylistics as the study of literary language from stylistics coordination.

On the other hand, Osundare (2008) opines that style is a function of communicative purpose. According to Leech (2014), “style is a way in which something is spoken, written or performed. Writers use different styles according to their own perception to be looked at differently from the others.” Lawal (2004) has the consideration that “style is an expression which covers different aspects of language.” Wales (2014) has opined that stylistic does not only focus on the formal features of the text but also highlights the interpretation of the text whether it is literary or not.” Moreover, the major aim of Stylistics study of any literary text is to examine the language used in texts with the aim of relating the discovered linguistic features to its artistic functions (Leech & Short, 1981). Then the language use is always informed, nurtured and surfaced by different and interacting mappings, which Lawal (2003) sees as involving the linguistic, situational, psychological, social, sociological and cosmological contexts. Ayodabo (2003) emphasises this view when he suggests that the style is really only definable in terms of the operations carried out by the producers and receivers of texts.

2.4 STYLES AS DEVIATION

Style refers to the usage of language in a manner that varies from person to person. Style can be considered as a distinctive use of language which differs from one to another. Turner (1973) states that style is the way in which a person expresses himself by speaking or writing (i. e. style is 'what grammar leaves out'). Wales in 1990 (as cited in Missikova, 2003) states that style is a language variation used for the literary or non-literary purpose. It is the sum total of those linguistic features which prove to be the characteristics of authors. It also refers to the selection of items, the way they are distributed and arranged into patterns. Crystal (2003) defines a style in broad as 'situational distinctive uses (varieties) of language' whereas, in the narrow sense, style is the relation of formality among the people in communication. The study of style is termed as stylistics. Stylistics approaches the study of style in a scientific and systematic manner.

The concept of style as the deviation is based on the notion that there are rules, conventions and regulations that guide the different activities that must be completed. So, when these conventions are not complied with, there is a deviation. Deviation in stylistics is concerned with the use of different styles from the expected norm of language use in a given genre of writing. It is a departure from what is taken as the common practice. Language deviation refers to use outside of the range of normal language. Language is a system organized in an organic structure by rules and it provides all the rules for its use such as phonetic, grammatical, lexical, etc. Thus, any piece of writing or material that has deliberately abandoned the rules of language in some ways is said to have deviated. Stylistics helps to identify how and why a text has deviated.

However, the above studies reviewed have attempted to highlight how stylistics is used to study literature. It is against this background therefore that, this study intends to examine how stylistics as language is at the core of understanding and interpreting literature, especially poetry. What make the poetic language stand out are the systematic violations of the norms of the standard language without which there will be no artistic representation of language. In doing so, they produce aesthetic effects by forcing the attention on the linguistic sign itself. The language of poetry is better understood with the help of useful terms and devices in poetry. This also shows that Stylistics itself can be approached from different perspectives. And since the fundamental objective of stylistics is to reveal how language is used to express what it expresses in a given text, graphological and lexical items can be investigated in a given text in order to find out how language functions in literature.

2.5 THE CONCEPT OF FOREGROUNDING

Foregrounding as a stylistic strategy is closely related to a specific kind of aesthetic exploitation of language that takes the form of surprising a reader into a fresh awareness of the linguistic medium. Foregrounding can be seen as an outcome of deviation from linguistic (and non-linguistic) norms of various kinds (Leech and Short 2007). Literature must de-automatize or foreground language use (Leech and Short 2007). The notion of foregrounding is helpfully described by M.A.K Halliday (1971) as “prominence that motivated” is not only produced by “departure from a norm” but also by attainment of a norm. Raymond Mackey (1994) maintains that in the stylistic analysis of literary texts, the concept of foregrounding is frequently cited. The concept holds that literary artistry is to be measured by the extent and complexity of the language patterning perceived in the literary work in question. This implies that foregrounded language is language that the literary artist has made prominent so that it stands out from the rest of the text, which consequently makes it become significant. This also is being supported by Felix N. Ogoanah and Ray N. Chikogu (2010) who argue that

foregrounding is a literary device by which linguistic features- and which in the case of this research could be lexical and graphological- are intentionally brought into prominence. Foregrounding can occur on all levels of language such as phonology, graphology, morphology, lexis, syntax and pragmatics (Simpson, 2004). It is generally used to highlight important parts of a text, to aid memorability and to invite interpretation.

2.6 GRAPHOLOGICAL FOREGROUNDING

The word “graphology” is a combination of the Greek word *grapheirt*, which means “to write,” and the suffix “ology,” a branch of scientific study. Graphology, then, is the study of writing based on a growing body of knowledge which is constantly being tested in practical use. It has been observed that every written sample exhibits the same wonderful variety as the Faces, fingerprints, voices and bodies of us all. People recognize their friends’ voices on the phone and by the tone alone know their state of happiness or sadness, anger or warmth. Handwriting is a reflection of mood changes, characterizing the writer’s state of mind at that moment. Leech (2014) believes that “graphology goes beyond orthography”. It refers to the whole system of writing: Punctuation, spacing as well as paragraphing. Alibi (2007) has the opinion that among all other features, graphology also entails the foregrounding of quotation marks, full stop, colon, semicolon, comma, hyphens, ellipses, capitalization, spacing, question marks etc.

Initially, graphology is used to study people’s handwriting in order to discover what sort of personality they may have. Wales (2001) has made clarifications as to what graphology seems to include. According to Wales (2001), graphology should go beyond the letters of the alphabet. It should include punctuation marks and spacing. This shows the subsequent perception of graphology from other points of view by many researchers. While some researchers have directly ignored its linguistic meaning and just concentrated on its psychological aspects, others have reflected on its linguistic nature. Oxford English

Dictionary (2013) has defined graphology in relation to linguistic as “the study of written and printed symbols and of the writing system. It is believed that M. C Itosh (1961) was the first scholar who used the term graphology in relation to linguistics. Encyclopaedia Britannica (2011) has tried to associate graphology with what is called “the inference of character from a person’s handwriting”. Wales (2011) suggests that graphology is the study of graphemes and other features associated with the written medium, such as punctuation, paragraphing or spacing. It can also be considered as “the writing system of a language, manifested in handwriting and typography.

However, research trying to use graphological features to study poetry would have support in Leech (2004) who states that graphology is the characteristic line-by-line arrangement of poetry on the printed page. Hence it is a graphic representation of language on paper. In this research, therefore, insights, concepts and discoveries from graphology and lexis are drawn to analyse some selected poems mentioned earlier.

2.7 LEXICAL FOREGROUNDING

Lexis is the linguistic counterpart of what is traditionally known as diction or the language especially associated with a literary work, author or era. Diction has been an important element of poetry engaging the attention of literary critics. An orthodox critical view of poetry emphasized that poetry should have a vocabulary peculiar to itself. Poetry is open to endless interpretations. In fact, the meaning of a poem changes not only from reader to reader but also from reading to reading, i.e. every time one reads the same poem, he/she perceives its message differently, consequently receives a new effect. Poets were expected to have a mastery over ‘poetic diction’ which heightened the language of poetry thus distinguished it from the ordinary use of language. Both poets and critics have long relinquished this conformist and essentialist view of the language of poetry. Poetry, like other forms of literature, has come to be recognized as ‘discourse’ and a functionalist view of its language

and adopted by the modern linguistic critics, which stresses the communicative and ‘interpersonal’ function of the language of poetry (Fowler, 1981). Accordingly, a poet is free to draw his vocabulary from all the possible resources provided which enables him to conceptualize his perception of life and communicate them effectively to his readers. Readers on their own part occasionally approve a poet’s word choice as being just what they had expected but they most importantly, appreciate a word choice which they had never expected at all.

In stylistics, lexical deviation refers to a new word or expression or a new meaning for an old word used on only a particular occasion. Sometimes a writer intends to reach a certain kind of rhetorical effect, so he will invent some new words based on the rules of word-formation. But these new words are seldom or hardly used on other occasions. That means in literature, writers can form new words and use them for a particular purpose. Surely these nonce-words (words invented for a special purpose) bring about the certain stylistic effect and greatly improve the power of newness and expression of the language. Lexis is one of the levels of analysis in stylistics, it pays attention to the choice of words made by an author and how that results in different types of meaning. Toolan (2010), states that Lexis is central to whatever is distinctive about a particular literary text. Lexical foregrounding is an attempt by an author to use words in a way that they appear unfamiliar to the reader, as a result of which the author is seen as deviating from the conventional way of using the words. According to Leech (1969), what makes poetry is the linguistic deviation a poet manipulates in his poetry and therefore linguistic deviation is regarded by him a means of creating artistic beauty. A poem is considered to have lexical deviation if its words deviate from their actual and standard form in order to have a deeper value in meaning and in aesthetics (Words are created by the writer). Leech (1976) claims that there are nine kinds of deviation usually found in poetry and lexical deviation is one of them. A poem is considered to have lexical deviation if its words

deviate from their actual and standard form in order to have deeper value in meaning and aesthetic. It is important, therefore, to observe that in lexical analysis of a text, the main focus is usually on content words.

Jahnese D. and Marlina L. (2017) recognize that lexical features play a noticeably important role in contributing to the soundness of a poetic text, which as they argue, leads to the easy derivation of its theme. They further insist that every lexical item contributes to producing images in poetry, directly or indirectly. Once an image has been established in a poem, all lexical items in the poem may be applied to it by extending their meaning metaphorically. For example, a poem may have lexical collocation which refers to the ordinary use and association of words in the language with others in sentences for they are related in terms of meanings. Robins (1989) opines that in poetry ideas and messages are presented by the poet's choice of related words and this constitutes the lexical collocation set which will be indicators of the theme or subject matter.

2.8. POETRY AND INTERPRETATION

Poetry is perceived as fictional. It uses specialised language. In many cases, it lacks a pragmatic function and it is also ambiguous (Lethbridge, S. and Mildorf, J. 2010). Poetry communicates universal human truths. It is an instrument to make us see life and live it more intensely. But all too often poetry is received in a hostile spirit. For poetry, by its very nature, is often difficult to comprehend. But while numerous studies have examined the comprehension of prose, even with the new emphasis on empirical studies of literature there has still been little research on making explicit what readers do when interpreting a poem. There are important elements differentiating prose and poetry. In prose, ideas are connected by putting words in an established order. It tends to be written in an expansive way conforming to the combinative rules. Poetry, on the other hand, tends to compress, and in doing so, it inclines towards the comparisons and the condensation of figurative language. By

emphasizing image formation, it often disregards syntax, the connectives and the linear order of language. It seems, then, that the construction of meaning when reading poetry must make far greater demands on the inferential process. Poetry, with its known power to evoke experiences and associations, is able to express subjective facts about a thing or situation.

However, according to Mark F. Sharlow (2013) Poetry, at its best, can evoke a new realm of subjective facts for its reader. This realm may involve feelings, thoughts, and sensations that are new to the reader, along with others that are more familiar. Sharlow (2013) further asserts this realm of subjective fact is new because it differs from the domain of subjective facts that came with the more routine experiences that the reader was having before reading the poem. Some people regard poetry as a record of experiences or feelings. This belief can be the case if the poem creates for the reader particular facts like those that the poet has experienced, or like those that the poet wanted to remind as in the case of Osundare. Jahnese D. and Marlina L. (2017) argue that poetry is a very special genre in the literature specifically because of the poetic language inherent in it. They, however, submit that:

“The meaning of poems comes from uncovering and expanding the keywords in them. Understanding poems lie on how wide the students’ knowledge of the words is and on how skilful they are in unlocking the meaning of these keywords mainly through context clues and close reading technique” (Jahnese et-al 2017)

This places interpretation in a significant position as what aids meaning decoding in poetry. It also discloses how poets like Osundare use some lexical and other linguistic features to encode meaning whose understanding requires a careful study on them and how they function to help the message conveyed.

2.9 OSUNDARE AS A POET

Niyi Osundare was born in 1947 in Ikere, Ekiti state, Nigeria. He is a prolific poet, dramatist and literary critic. He obtained degrees at the University of Ibadan, the University of Leeds and York University, England. He has been identified as a champion of the right to freedom of expression and is a strong believer in the power of words, saying “to utter is to alter”. Osundare believes that there is no choice for the African poet but to be political. Osundare says:

“You cannot help but be quiet about the situation in the kind of countries we find ourselves, in Africa. When you wake up and there is no running water, when you have a massive power outage for days and nights, no food on the table, no hospital for the sick, no peace of mind...” (Osundare, 2014).”

Osundare’s works include; songs from the Market Place, The Eye of the Earth, Moon songs, Songs of the Season, Waiting Laughters, Mild life, Random Blues, The World is an Egg and Village Voices (which has been divided into three categories). His works vividly convey his concept on the relationship between the oppressed Nigerian/African and the crop of leaders there. Most of the themes of his writing include corruption, poverty and administrative mismanagement etc. (Alu, 2008). According to Abdu (2003), going by the titles of the three categories of poems in Village Voices, “the poems are grouped along thematic and, to some extent, stylistic lines”. For example, readers could understand, as Saleh (2003) argues all the poems in Village Voices “assume the voice and world-view of the villager” and make the judgment that Osundare’s inspiration was drawn from his experience of many years of exploitation and neglect from the powers that govern him with the help of the style the writer employed.

Osundare's interest in innovative style, as argued by Nachafiya (2008), is conveyed in his keen interest in the use of language. For instance, village voices expose the simplistic lifestyle of the village dwellers. The central theme in village voices is the predicaments of the societal underdogs.

Osundare's style appears to be influential by usually making his poetry richly coloured by common expressions of traditional life (like proverbs and songs) which reflects the worldview of his people. His poetry is found to be accessible because in it he assumes the voice of the unlettered peasants and villagers. There are many writings about Osundare's poems most of which are the stylistic study of one or more of the poems. Saleh Abdu (2003) has made a critical study of Osundare's poems in his book titled "Poet of The People of Republic": Reading The Poetry of Niyi Osundare. In more recent time, Anyokwu (2015) writes on "The Essentials of Niyi Osundare's Poetry". Rafiu, Jimoh and Ibitayo (2016) have written on a socio-stylistic analysis of Niyi Osundare's "blues for the new Senate king". This Research is an added Literature with a new look in the stylistic study of poetry. For instance, Osundare (2008) himself discusses on style and literary communication in African prose fiction in English but focuses more on how the question of literary communication raises many issues about the status and function of literature in Africa. Alu (2008) writes on "style and the new poetic Revolution in Niyi Osundare's poetry. Osoba (2008) writes on Alliteration and Assonance in Niyi Osundare's Songs of the market place in which he makes a phonetic analysis. Felix and Ray (2010) have written an article on foregrounding the title of which is syntagmatic foregrounding in Niyi Osundare's poetry. Their piece pays much attention to how the sound pattern relates to the sense of the texts. Ayokwu (2011) writes an article titled Osundare's poetry and the Yoruba world view in which he analyses the use of indigenous Yoruba concept found in Osundare's texts. Olaleye (2015) writes on some selected poems in Osundare's Random Blues in the case of which he undertakes a pragmatic

analysis. These writings, have concluded by depicting Osundare's rejection of the Nigerian (i.e., African) poetic ancient regime which resulted in a poetry of revolution and a revolution in poetry through the instrumental arrangement of poetry, as well as fashioning a social poetry rooted in the principles of participation, performance, and social responsibility or relevance.

2.10 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.10.1 Foregrounding Theory

The study has been guided by the theory of foregrounding and Multimodality theory. The concept of foregrounding was first postulated by Van Peer (1986) where he assumes that poetic language deviates from the norms characterizing the ordinary use of language and that the deviation interferes with cognitive principles and processes that make communication possible. That is to say, when linguistic devices are commonly used in such a way that they do not attract particular attention by the language user, it is referred to as automatization. On the other hand, foregrounding according to Mukarovsky (1970) violates the scheme which automatization schematizes and therefore, deautomatizes. Hence, according to Mukarovsky, rhyme, repetition, archaic and foreign words de-automatize the standard language and mark the language as literary. It is claimed that foregrounding is a basic principle of aesthetic communication. It is defined as a conscious or deliberate deviation from the rules of language code or from the accepted conventions of its use which stands out against a background of normal usage. Simpson asserts that:

“Foregrounding refers to a form of textual patterning which is motivated specifically for literary-aesthetic purposes. Foregrounding typically involves stylistic distortion of some sort, either through an aspect of the text which deviates from a linguistic norm or alternatively, where an aspect of the text is brought to the fore through repetition or parallelism. (50)”

In relation to poetry, foregrounding theory categorically assumes that poetic language deviates from the norms characterizing the ordinary use of language and that the deviation

interferes with cognitive principles and processes that make communication possible. Therefore, the theory mainly focuses on whether any constraints exist and if so, what characterizes them? Among the various stylistic theories, the foregrounding theory is the most common and powerful one in the literature. The term is very general to the extent that it resists definition. However, many statisticians have tried to define it. For example, van Peer and Hakemulder (2006) say that the term refers to specific linguistic devices, i.e., deviation and parallelism, which are used in literary texts in a functional and condensed way. Under their definition, such devices can help to add a specific meaning to the text and provide the reader with aesthetic experience. Van Peer and Hakemulder (2006) also show that foregrounding generally means new information contrasted to old information in the text that forms a background against which the new meaning is to be understood by the reader. Others restrict its definition to the literary side of the theory. Shen (2007) argues that this theory "assumes that poetic language deviates from norms characterized the ordinary use of language and that this deviation interferes with cognitive principles and processes to make communication possible." In the same way, Martindale (2007) points out that there are two types of foregrounding. The first type is parallelism which involves repetition while the second type of foregrounding is deviation which is related to the use of specific devices in unusual ways. Similarly, Van Peer and Hakemulder (2006) show that deviation is a poetic license to the writer, who is exceptionally allowed to deviate from the normal rules and expectations, surprise the reader and give him a beautiful literary experience. The best examples of deviation would be metaphors, ungrammatical rules, paradox, and so on. Examples of parallelism, on the other hand, would be various forms of figures of speech such as rhyme, assonance, alliteration, and so on. Such claims about foregrounding make it the opposite of automatization. While automatization schematizes an event, foregrounding breaks this schematization and creates a special kind of meaning (Miall and Kuiken, 1994).

The origin of this theory goes back to the Greek ancient times, particularly, to the great philosopher Aristotle who emphasized the use of devices and their importance for foregrounding. Peer and Hakemulder, (2006) argue that literary work should be distinguished from other works through the use of strange words, metaphors and unfamiliar terms. Thus, foregrounding started basically as a theory of literature in Greek philosophy. Later on, Russian Formalists and Czech Structuralists emphasized the importance of foregrounding in literature. According to Martindale (2007), foregrounding in that stage was so much related to novelty. The Russian and Czech theorists were in the struggle for the maintenance of change in literature. For instance, the Russian Formalist, Shklovsky, points out that the purpose of art is to present the unfamiliar items in a difficult unfamiliar way so that the perception of such items will be renewed and refreshed in the eyes of the reader (Miall and Kuiken, 1994).

Similarly, foregrounding in English literature and stylistics has been used with different meanings. Van Peer and Hakemulder (2006) show that foregrounding in English can refer to a prominent interest that a reader might assign to something in a text during the process of reading. Such prominence is resultant from a special use of some devices located in the text itself. Foregrounding may also refer to analytical tools used to evaluate texts and show their literary, historical and cultural significance. Therefore, this theory is based on breaking up rules and norms by implementing devices of deviation and parallelism, yielding an aesthetic experience in the mind of the reader.

2.10.1 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Theory

Foregrounding as a style is based on a distinction between something and its background. In other words, it is all about making something prominent by making it different. Therefore, foregrounding is a very useful tool in language to affect the reader's understanding and appreciation of language. In general, this is the clearest strength of foregrounding theory in

language and literature. It is indispensable when we study language as an artistic artefact and how it is perceived by the reader or recipient.

The foregrounding theory has been the most powerful theory in stylistics. Although this theory has such an important position in the stylistics, it is still imperfect. Many critics have mentioned some problems that should be taken into account to render a developed version of the theory. Shen (2007) argues that since the deviation in foregrounding is based on the interface of the literary text with the cognitive and communicative principles, and these two types of principles are unnatural, deviation should be controlled as well. It looks strange that deviation in foregrounding is not constrained while its assumptions and principles are constrained. Therefore, we need to question the claim of the unexpectedness of deviation. In other words, are all types of deviation expected?

Other limitations of the theory are discussed by van Peer and Hakemulder (2006). The first limitation of the theory is related to the existence of enough evidence that supports the main claim of foregrounding theory; the foregrounding theory claims that the use of foregrounding devices increases the reader's value and appreciation of the text. Unfortunately, this claim has not received enough evidence from research conducted in the foregrounding theory.

Another important problem of the theory is the huge vagueness of its terminology. Such a problem is clear when we consider the very often used terms in the theory like 'estrangement', 'deautomatization', 'defamiliarization' and 'foregrounding' as well as the indeterminacy of whether the concepts are synonyms of one another. Therefore, the terminologies and principles of this theory and its relation to the psychological processes should be fully clarified. More importantly, this theory intersects with the principles and assumptions of other theories and constructs such as Surrealism and Absurdism. Therefore, the boundaries

and assumptions should be differentiated from the assumption of other theories (Peer and Hakemulder, 2006).

Another problem related to this theory is the distinction between literary and non-literary texts. The majority of literary devices discussed above are reported in the literature. Also, the majority of studies reported in stylistics were conducted on literary works. On the other side of the theory, some theorists ((Jeffries and McIntyre, 2010) argue that limiting the scope of foregrounding theory to literary works is a hasty decision because the same devices can be applied to literary and non-literary works such as jokes, advertising and politics.

2.10.2 Multimodality theory

Multimodality theory ‘examines how people make meaning through their selection of the most apt semiotic properties from the range of modes that are obtainable to them in a specific place in a specific moment in time’ (Jewitt 2009). The theory also takes into account that each mode ‘realises different communicative work as highlights by Jewitt (2009). According to Hammond (2009), meaning is made inversely depending on the mode. Gibbons (2011) notices that most multimodality studies examine texts that combine verbal and visual modes. The analysis and interpretation of language use is contextualized concurrently with other semiotic properties which are simultaneously used for the construction of meaning. For example, in addition to linguistic selections and their typographical instantiation on the printed page, multimodal analysis takes into account the functions and meaning of the optical images, together with the meaning arising from the integrated use of the two semiotic resources (O’Halloran 2004). However, many other multimodal forms have also been considered, such as architecture, music and film. Multimodality studies is informed by M. A. K. Halliday’s (1978, 1979, 2004) as Systemic Functional Linguistics, which Jay Lemke (2006, i) labels as ‘an alternative to the very abstract and formal theories of syntax that most people still associate with linguistics. According to Halliday, linguistic communication fulfils

three ‘metafunctions’: experiential, interpersonal and textual. The interpersonal function establishes social relations, principally between the reader and the members within the text, as well as the producer of the text. Lastly, the textual function relates to how the elements of a text ‘have been outlined and placed in space and in relation to one another in order to form meaning.

Multimodality theory is applicable to this research because the other theories used are not sufficient enough to account for some aspects which research pays attention to. For example, graphology and foregrounding theories cannot best be used to analyse the pictures that the poet uses in the selected poems and explain their significance in extending meaning. One of the four models provided by Nogaard (2010) is used in the analysis of the poems that contain the images. According to Nogaard (2010), visual images is one of the models used when discussing the analysis of the relevance of images in literary texts, she recounts that multimodality theory has much to offer to stylistic analysis.

On discussing recent influential theories on meaning making, multimodality has become a rapidly growing interdisciplinary field (Jewitt, 2005). This field of study is primarily concerned with a wide range of disciplines of semiotic modes that communicate meaning, “from folk costume to poetry, from traffic signs to classical music, from fashion to theatre” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001: 1). As such, multimodality has been conceived as “the experience of living; we experience everyday life in multimodal terms through sight, sound, movement” (Gibbons, 2012: 8). Notably, multimodality is also engaged with the study of texts that usually “use an increasing variety of materials and to cross boundaries between the various art, design and performance disciplines.

However, when interpreting digital multimodal poetry, several design elements like visual images, animation, sounds, movements, fonts, colours, and printed texts, contribute to the

analysis of the abstract meanings of print-based poems. These elements require reliance on internal and external associations between verbal and visual entities to remake poetic texts.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

The research design is qualitative. The research, therefore, uses the descriptive approach which entails identifying, explaining and analysing each of the identified lexical and graphological devices and other aspects of language discovered during the course of the study.

To conduct the study, first, the selected poems were read by the researcher, while the focus of attention was on lexical and graphological items foregrounded in the text. This study collects data for analysis from the poems selected in the collection *Village Voices* with the intention of reaching out the lexical and graphological items used and how that affects the meaning the poet intends to convey. In *Village Voices*, there are thirty-eight poems out of which thirty-six poems are selected and used as a sample for analysis with particular attention to the poems found with the features under investigation. The technique used by the researcher is based on theory-based operational construct sampling which focuses on finding expressions of a theoretical construct of interest so as to elaborate the construct. The researcher uses Krejcie and Morgan's table for determining sample size which suggests that 36 should be the sample size of 40. The selection is made across the three categories including the two poems he uses as an opening and closing remark.

The poems are studied at the level of lexis and graphology. The poems are; I wake up this morning, Not in my season of Songs, sleeping at five and twenty, Search for a wife, Dying Another's Death and eating tomorrow's yam. Others include Feigning Rebel, A Reunion, The Cocks' Comb of fire; We have Waited So Long, A Dialogue of The Drums and unequal fingers, Chicken Story, An In-law's Message, Search for a Wife. Akintunde, Come Home,

The Prisoner's Song, Month of Falling Leaves, To a Passing Year, The Pillar is Fallen etc. The selected poems contain more graphological and lexical features available than the others. The research identifies the features in each of the selected poems and makes a descriptive analysis of them.

The data for this research has been collected after a close study of all the thirty-six (36) poems. During the study, the researcher identified the items in each poem and how they are used by the poet. Where an item is found used in an unusual way, the research seeks for its interpretation and tries to relate it with what is said by graphologists about such occurrences. But where a poem is not found to have one or all of the items investigated by the research, an explanation is not given as to why there is no occurrence of such features, but still, the poem is included in the analysis because almost all the poems in the collection have thematic relations. In the cause of analysis, on each poem taken, examples are given from the stanzas or even lines in which a feature occurs, as identified by the research and thereafter, explanations follow.

3.2 METHOD OF ANALYSIS

The main task of the methodology is giving a descriptive account of the features examined. The research, on the one hand, analyses the use of italicization, use of images, word illustration, punctuation marks, random ordering of lines, capitalisation and paragraphing as graphological devices found foregrounded in the text. On the other hand, it analyses the use of borrowed words, lexical collocation and use of compound words, the new creation of words, strange use of antonym and other foregrounded lexical items. In each aspect, examples are cited on the occurrence of foregrounding and how that supports the poet in achieving his aim of conveying meaning.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the data obtained on lexical and graphological features found foregrounded in Osundare's poems. Analysis of the data explains how foregrounding of such items enables the poet to achieve success in extending meaning aesthetically. The analysis is an attempt to make a linguistic explanation on how Osundare structured and created an effect in his poems by deciding on which word to choose and use. Therefore, the analysis helps to resolve and make the meaning and idea in the text as clear as in the following.

4.2 USE OF BORROWING FOR DEVIATION

This study has discovered that Osundare has mainly used words from his native language (Yoruba). It could be that the poet borrows the words in an effort to create uniqueness in a work of art or for what Osundare believes as bridging the gap in space and time between the writer and the reader which makes him rely on indigenous language in forecasting his message as in the following:

‘*Bata*’ which speaks with two elegant mouths (6)

‘*omeki*’ which carries a high-pitched face (6)

And ‘*gangan*’ which wasped its waist (6)

With *gbedu*’s majestic accent (6)

and learnt why ‘*egiri*’ turns thick ears (6)

I have put a stick to ‘*ibembe*’

Lest they be like a woman’s ‘*opoo*’ (7)

When last did your hands touch '*reso*' (7)

Where were you when '*adan*' filled the night (7)

With the same of *opeloko* (7)

(A Dialogue of The Drums)

As explained in Village Voices *Bata*, '*Omele*', '*Gangan*', '*gbedu*', '*ibembe*', '*reso*', '*ogbele*' and *adan* are types of drums. Also the names of dances associated with them. '*Egiri*', is the animals whose thick skin is used for '*gbedu*'. *Opoo* is a money belt made of cloth which is worn by women.

Another example appears in the poem 'Not in my season of songs' in which the poet writes;

'sigidi' thirsty for a dance of shame

The word '*sigidi*' is a Yoruba word meaning an earthen effigy. In 'killing without a sword' he writes:

With '*egusi*' soup whose taste (13)

he spreads out in '*sanyan*' (13)

'alabangada' adorns his head (13)

While *alabangada* means a kind of cap, *sanyan* and *egusi* refer to expensive hand-woven cloth and melon. In addition, in the poem "the Land of Unease" the poet uses some borrowed words as follows:

Oh an *Esimuda*'s sword (46)

and the many other's *omodindinrin* (46)

Esimuda is a legendary Ikere warrior with a sword, extraordinarily large and sharp
Omodindinrin refers to the smallest finger.

In “A Villager’s Protest”, there is a word ‘Esuru’ which refers to a kind of yam which is tasty, soft, and loose but impossible to pound. There is a similar occurrence in the second to the last stanza in the poem ‘Search for a Wife’ where the poet uses words like *Soponna* and *Sango*. In this stanza, the reader will be privileged to complete the last line predictably as it is left unfinished. The poet writes:

“Whoever says I am a curser,
may he see his own ears
without a mirror, may *Soponna*
turn his house into a furnace,
may Sango...”.

4.3 USE OF COLLOCATION AS A DEVIANT FEATURE

In village voices, there are some instances of lexical collocation as can be seen in “the poem ‘I wake up this morning’”. The Poet writes:

I wake up this morning
with a song in my throat
a youthful breeze harps the leaves
rising feet drum the road
to meet the upland sun...”

In the above lines, though, the word ‘youthful’ cannot collocate with ‘breeze’ because they do not have similar semantic meaning; the poet uses it for a stylistic effect to make the message clearer to the readers.

This has shown that in poetry words occur in close proximity to each other (based on logical and meaningful relationships between them, patterns of association and usage, etc.) and make meaning in a strange way. This further means that poets can draw on collocations to create special effects and meaning.

4.4 OTHER LEXICAL FEATURES

Word invention, compounding and antonyms are seen as an instance of linguistic devices which are foregrounded by slightly deviating from general norms. The lexical patterns or semantic fields evident in a poem were identified as antonyms, collocation, word invention, compounding and synonymy.

4.3.1 Antonym as Deviation

in the poem, “ An In-law’s message” the poet uses antonym to indicate controversy in which case the word ‘erasers’ is used in a different line with the word pencil but in the same stanza.

The poet says:

In-law,

you are like whiteman

who made the pencil one day

and the next flooded the

world with erasers

Using the two opposing words, 'In-law' here, is referred to as someone controversial who does one thing and contradicts by doing another thing.

4.3.2 Word Creation as a deviation

There are -some instances where the poet invents words either by twisting the structure of a word or by adding some elements to the word. For example, the poet has altered the structure of the words 'harmattan' as 'harmattain' and 'collateral' as 'kolatera'. In the poem 'The Pillar is Fallen', Osundare writes:

The pillar of which I stand has fallen

Snapped like a twig in the harmattain

Termites have eaten up

A house of many years

In "The new Farmer's Bank" the poet writes:

Then go till your land

With closed fists

How can you borrow government money without 'kolateral?'

The word 'kolateral' here is used in place of the word collateral which is a bank term referring to the pledge of possessions before bank loan in Nigeria. The poet also becomes so extreme in enriching his poems with words which flavour all conversation in such a way that he prefixes or suffixes some words in his effort to make meaning. For example, the word sandal which stands as a type of footwear turns to 'sandalless' by adding -less:

... with your sandalless feet

bathe their soles
in the supple camwood of my soul
while your toes rustle
the velvet veins of my yearning

(Month of Fallen Leaves)

Furthermore, the word ‘remembrance’ turns to ‘unremembrance’ as the opposite by adding the prefix un-:

...in my rags of unremembrance
the year which once was
the king of the wardrobe
and now a wrapper
for an upstart garment

(To a passing Year)

A similar instance can be seen in the poem ‘Chicken Story’ where the word ‘toothlessness’ has been created from toothless by adding –ness to describe the lack of any teeth.

4.3.3 Compounding as a deviation

Osundare proves himself a poet who works with words when in many instances; he strangely compounds words as a result of which they give fresh meaning to the reader. In the poem “Alarinka” for example, there are words like river-plucked, toy-thing and to-the. In the poem “To a passing year”, there is the use of the compound word time-teller. A similar instance occurs in the poem “The Bride’s song” when he uses a compound word full-throated. In “A

farmer on seeing cocoa house, Ibadan”, the poet uses words like neck-twisting heeled-shoes. Similarly in “The stars Did it”, he uses words like long-awaited and palm-kernels etc. the poet does all this to show his capability of making words to move in his ways which consequently, affect the meaning and give way to the attainment of aesthetic effect

4.4 GRAPHOLOGICAL ITEMS FOREGROUNDED

This study has also discovered some of the foregrounded graphological items which can help reader’s interpretation and decode meaning. In village voices, it is evident that some graphological rules are broken intentionally by the prôt in his effort to achieve stylistic effects and convey meaning. More specifically, this research pays attention to the typical uses of capital letters, words in italics (italicization), punctuation marks, line spacing, random ordering of lines, graphic onomatopoeia and use images.

4.4.1 Using capital letters for deviation

To start with, one of the graphological devices the poet uses to diverge from the convention is capital letters. The general practice is to begin each line of a poem with a capital letter, irrespective of whether a line starts with a new sentence, proper noun or not. There are some instances where the poet uses capital letters on an occasional basis, not like the norm demands.

I wake up this morning

with a song in My thought

A youthful breeze harps the leaves

rising feet drum the road

to meet upland sun

my sole trends the dew rousing my body
to the virgin cool of the earth.

(I wake up this morning)

The stanzas continue, with the poet capitalizing the pronouns 'I', 'he' and 'my' which open the first lines of each stanza. This is a style used by the poet to portray negatively what people in authority do badly and make all efforts to cover their shameful deeds. He uses a capital 'I' to win the minds of his readers to reason with his opinion of going against the negative issues such as social and political corruption and oppression suffered by the masses etc.

This style of foregrounding use of capital letters becomes quite clear in his poem "unequal fingers", where just like ee cumming's; he uses small letters almost throughout the poem except in some few places, like in the first line of the fourth stanza. This is a distinctive deviation that one can find in poetry as follows:

When the time is ripe

the sick will tell all ears

the silent secret of the drum

...we are not bats

Blind to the glaring happenings

Of a tricky day...

(Unequal fingers)

Evidence has shown however that, Osundare uses capitalization in some cases to make emphasis on the message he conveys so that it becomes very clear. In the poem “A Reunion”, the poet says:

We started school the same day
and together bore the flying fury
of the teacher’s ceaseless cane
together we parroted the ABC
till we scribbled our first broken letters
in the white man’s tongue.

The ‘ABC’ in line 4 of the first stanza is used not for the sake of abbreviation as the case may be, but for the poet to emphasize on how the western education acquired by some elites make them move on a parallel line which creates a border between the educated elites who are obviously in a ruling class and the ‘semi-literate’ villagers who are the ones being addressed to by the poet and who could have not attended university, where, like Osundare said, there are strange factories manufactured rulers of tomorrow.

There is, however, a similar example in the poem “the stars did it” where the poet says:

In GRA, children quarrel
Over the choices of cars
Strutting out in the costliest velvet...

Another example is in the poem “not in my season of songs:

...Your father, the D.O.s shit carrier,

who hounded kinsmen as tax debtors

and drafted people into forced labour.

It has been observed that, in poetry, letters become capitalized if they are important, shouted or need to pop out, just like Osundare does in his poems. This means a poet can manipulate the style of capitalization to fit the situation.

The lack of capitalization in poems like “unequal finger” is an indication of abstract expression of the lack of modesty or ordinariness.

In another dimension, among the words Osundare capitalizes in his poems is the personal pronoun I as can be seen in the poem “A Dialogue of the Drums. The “I” capitalized by the poet is not the usual “I” that everybody is familiar with. The pronoun is written vertically which as graphologists believed, signifies independence value. It also shows how the writer wishes to find his own way of life, respond to life and protect his innermost feeling. This has been observed in the following stanza:

I will not only give legs to my coiling words

I will also give them the fang of facts

The pronoun I printed in cursive writing shows clear constructive thinking and independence.

In some poems, the poet uses specific punctuation marks. In ‘Akintunde, come home’ for example, the poet uses a question mark and in some few instances, he uses a coma. He refuses to use punctuation marks like the full-stop because he wants to show the need for the message to flow continuously. The same thing happens in the poem ‘Month of Falling Leaves’, ‘To a Passing year’ and ‘The stars sob’.

4.4.2 Italicisation as Deviation

Italic is a style of typeface in which letters slant to the right are used customarily to give emphasis to the keywords and phrases in a sentence. On the contrary, in poetry, readers generally read italics as a whisper or very breathy voice and bold as a shout or clear ringing voice. Osundare italicises some specific words in his poems for two or more reasons. In the first place, the fact that most of the words he puts in italics are of Yoruba language, reveals his central experience and his closeness to African linguistic and ventral roots. It also indicates the category of people whom he addresses to (the villagers). The examples of italicization appear in the following poem.

In “A Dialogue of the Drums” the poet says: in stanza three lines 12, 13 and 15 significantly.

... I have thrilled royal steps

With *gbedu*'s majestic accent

And learnt why *egiri* turns thick ears

To the hunters feeble arrows

I have part a still to *ibembe*...

The italicized words are the types of drums used by Yoruba people and the names of dances associated with them.

In “Killing Without a Swords,” the poet writes in the first and second stanzas:

. . . with *egusi* soup whose taste

stank the tongue to the palate

. . . he spreads out in *sanyan*

alabanada adorns in head

In the poet’s effort to describe the greedy self-serving politicians, he writes by italicizing the name of a warrior whose Sword has two edges and which kills both ways. In “the politician’s Two Mouths”, the poet says:

The politician’s mouth has two edges

like *Esimuda*’s sword

it is murder both ways.

Moreover, in the second instances, Osundare italicizes some words in some poems for emphasis and allow reasoning with him in his attempt to depict how the common man is abused, robbed, oppressed and dispossessed.

This has been observed in the poem: “A Reunion” where the poet writes:

...I visited your house

and saw your little brother

fashioning kites with

your Pictorial English Grammar

and I knew how far, how very far you had gone.

In the poem, “The Cock’s Comb of Fire”, the poet italicizes the last line of every stanza except the first and the last stanzas.

4.4.3 Using punctuation marks as a deviation

Punctuation marks are symbols that are used to organize and clarify the meaning of writing, e.g. a comma, period or question mark. Punctuation in poetry is similar to punctuation in prose and serves almost the same purpose as bar lines in the music without which words and notes will not flow altogether.

However, the deviation in the use of punctuation marks helps poets to add a special flavour to their poems and to achieve specific poetic purposes. Punctuation marks exhibit emotions of the poet.

In Village Voices, this Research has observed that Osundare minimises the use of punctuation marks to the extent that in some poems, only a few or none of the punctuation marks are used. In the poem “Sleeping at Five and Twenty”, which has seven stanzas with thirty-seven lines, the poet uses only two apostrophes, one quotation mark and one question mark. In “Feigning Revel” he uses no punctuation mark other than question mark and parenthesis. The first and the last stanzas ended with a question mark which indicates a state of confusion about how things were going as can be seen below:

Tell us

are you real revolutionaries

or feigning kings

waiting for crowns?

...hence we ask
are you real revolutionaries
or feigning kings
waiting for crowns?

Sometimes, Osundare uses question marks to ask important questions, the answers of which he does not know or not because he needs answers but to show a state of confusion. The poet says in “Eating with all the fingers” :

You jerry up sleep and find us eating
you immediately want a scoop, just wait if we
started this way.
Would you wake up?
To a single morsel?

Here, style is used by the poet to make questions in which case, the former question stresses the latter. In the poem ‘Chicken Story’ there is a similar occurrence where the poet argues why should dog and goat that are well equipped with teeth, complain of being toothless when a chicken eats pebbles. The poet says:

Who does the chicken think
it is deceiving?
it eats pebbles
and swallows sands

yet complains of toothlessness

the goat which has teeth

the dog which fortifies its mouth

with the strongest of ivory

dare the eat pebbles in the morning

and still walk about noon?

(Chicken Story)

The absence of punctuation marks in some poems signals the chaotic nature of the society, the absence of stability and the competitive nature of life. The reader is made to feel the situation by reading through lines without a pause. This is an internal deviation one can find in poetry. An instance of that is in the poem “The Land of Unease” where the poet says:

That land never knows peace

where a few have too much

and many none at all

The yam of this world

Is enough for all mouths

which pay daily homage

to the god of the throat

enough for the aged

awaiting days dusk

and the young peeping

at tomorrow

from mothers back...

Similarly, in some poems, the poet limits himself in using some specific punctuation marks. In “Akintunde, come Home”, the poet uses a question mark and in some few places a comma. He refuses to use other punctuation marks like a full-stop because he wants to show the non-stop flow nature of the message. The same incidence occurs in the poem “Month of Falling Leaves “, “To a Passing year” and “The stars sob” respectively.

4.4.4 Paragraphing (indentation) as a deviation

What appears to be most strange is the use of indentation in poetry. This is because, in the written form of many languages, an indentation is an empty space in the new paragraph. Meanwhile, paragraphs are used to organize longer prose.

As his own style, Osundare deviates from the normal ways of indenting lines to achieve his effects. In the poem “Dying Another’s Death”, he indents some lines within a stanza to show the unfairly created borders between the ruling class and the masses and how the former use the later for attaining the political position. Osundare says:

Call back those in Eton and Oxford

extract them from the labyrinths of Harvard

and let them serve now

the state they have always served

Let this war be fought by

President's children

Governor's children

Senator's children

Banker's children

Bishop's children

and others who cut up the country

like an unending cake.

In the above extract, readers are taken to the right edge of the stanza to observe how the ruling class who always are in a different position from the common people gang up themselves to benefit from the divide and rule policy which gives them the chance of enjoying the state's resources.

A similar instance occurs in another poem titled "we have waited so long". In this poem, unlike in the former, the ruling class have been personified by "the moon" whose smile is waited to be seen, "a youth sun" who unrolls the mat of a spreading day, by the so long waiters who happen to be villagers, now protesting against waiting and still would eat their food raw. The poet says:

We have waited this long

to see the moon put a smile

on the crescent lip of the sky...

we have watched a youth sun
unroll the mat of a spreading day
our morning is born
on the bed of a breezy dawn
we have waited so long
around the hearth
we cannot eat our food raw.

This style of indentation has been used as an opener by Osundare in one of the poems which stands as a dedication to his father in one of the preliminary pages. The poet states:

To My father

Oguntasolo Ariyoosu Osundare

a farmer

who knows the rhythm of the seasons

a conventionalist

who saviours the flavour of words

a singer

whose throat is honey to the ear

a drummer

whose hands disseminate delight from the talkative face of the drum?
and
other African peasants
for long victims of exploitative neglect rising struggling
to live
rather than
merely subsist.

From the onset, this non-titled poem displays the mind map of the poet and his will of being considerate with the rural agrarian tradition that also suggests the title of his collection Village Voices. The poem, however, serves as dedication and can be reconstructed as follows:

Dedication:

“to my father; a farmer, a conversationalist, a singer, a drummer and to other African peasants who are being exploited but still struggling to remain alive.”

4.4.5 Random ordering of lines

One thing that is very unique is the inconsistent ordering of lines in many poems. Osundare has taken it a style not to bother about the number of lines each stanza, in each poem would take. The attitude of becoming too much insensitive in the order and arrangement of lines depicts the poet’s familiarity and affinity with the nature of African literature. It also reveals

how ambitious the poet is, to push up the promotion of literature in the African indigenous languages. This view has been supported by Osundare himself when he writes:

“...the way out of these problems lies in the development, Cultivation and promotion of literature in the indigenous Languages, a desirable objective that can only materialize when the present socio-political system in Africa has been changed (Osundare 2008).

There is also the portrayal of the oratory capacity of the (typical African) poet in disseminating ideas. In the second stanza of the poem “A reunion; the poet composes 23 lines in which no rhyming pattern has been observed. The poet says:

We shared the same meatless meals

and took turns in your first khaki trousers

we took the same entrance examinations

to institutions of higher learning...

In the same poem, however, the poet often uses one word to stand independently as a line forming a stanza. He, for instance, uses adverbial words ‘later’ to form the third stanza, ‘then’ to mean the fifth stanza. These two stanzas in the poem are at least out of the eleven stanzas in the poem, the second stanza is the highest.

Deviant placement of letters, words and lines on a page is indicating unconscious over control on the part of a writer who is afraid of losing control of him or of his surroundings. Osundare becomes bold in using unarranged lines and spaces.

4.4.6 Word illustrations for deviation

This refers to a kind of symbolism evident in poems as a deviation. It demonstrates unrestricted creativity in poetry. In words, it, however, refers to the organization of utterances to form symbolic visual shapes. Osundare has employed this technique aesthetically in his

poems to create a visual relationship by using written symbols. The poet writes in “Dying Another’s Death”:

Let this war be fought by

Presidents’ children

Governors’ children

Senators’ children

Bishops’ children

Others who cut the country like an unending cake.

The above lines reveal Osundare as a poetic architect who skilfully enough, tries to match his moods by using deviational techniques in order to voice out such moods. The lines describe the poet’s anger and frustration to those who cut and share the resources of the country “like an unending cake” insisting that instead of them to use youths as their political weapons, they should rather, use their children to fight for them. This creates a visual awareness in the readers’ minds.

4.4.7 Using images as deviant features

The poet uses imagery to draw the reader’s attention to a sensory experience. Using images often provides us with mental pictures that appeal to our senses of sight, sound, taste, touch and smell. In essence, images show us meaning. Therefore, the purpose of imagery in poetry is to help get the poet’s message across in a language that is clear and very usual. Poets use words to create images in the readers’ mind thereby interpreting the poem in the way they see it.

What appears to be strange is the use of pictures in Osundare's poem. Apart from using words to create images, Osundare uses real pictures to convey his message as in the following illustrations:

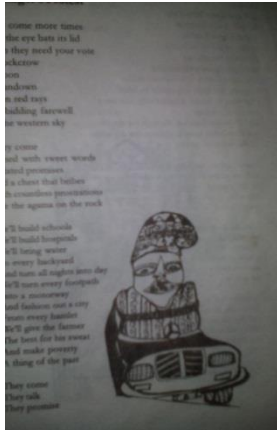


Fig 1 (A Villager's Protest)

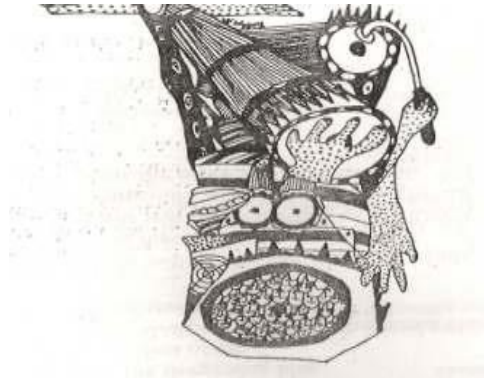


Fig2 (A Dialogue of the Drum)



Fig3 (Chicken Story)

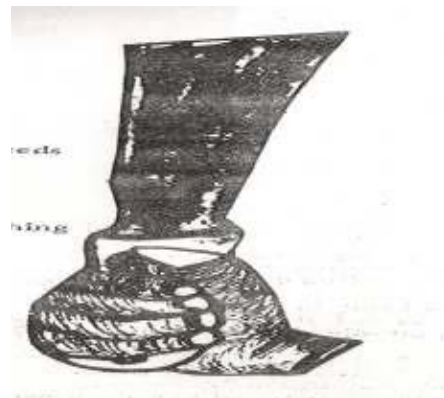


Fig4 (Cradling Hands)

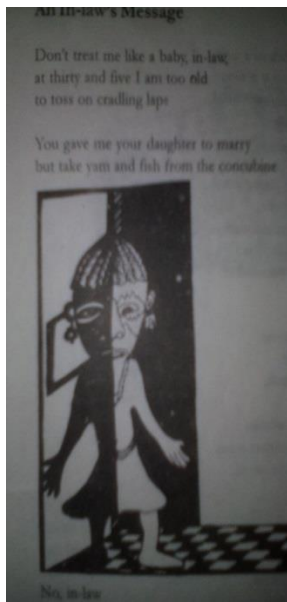


Fig 4 (An In-laws Message)

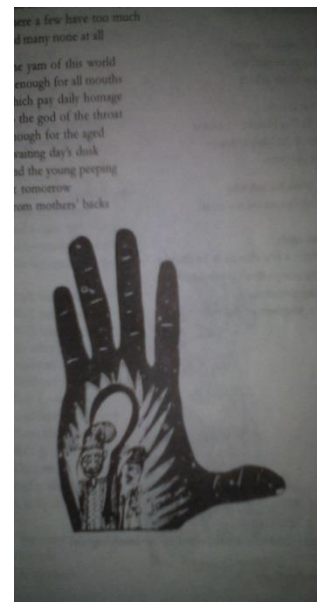


Fig 5 (The Land of Unease)

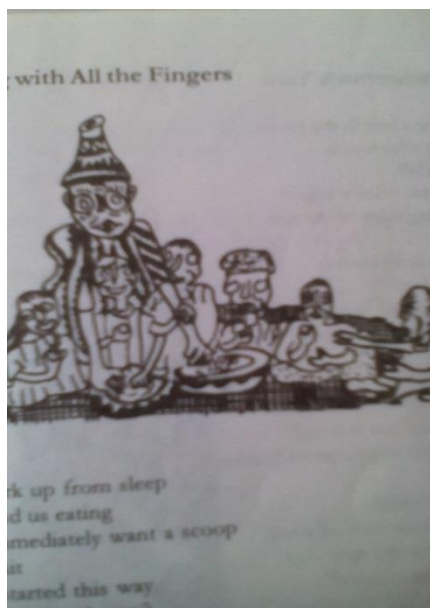


Fig.6 (Eating with All Fingers)

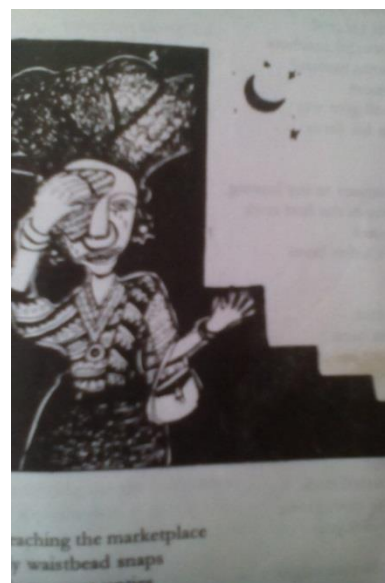


Fig. 7 (The Bride's Song)

Village life becomes easier and understandable with so many descriptions. The fact that Osundare addresses village dwellers make him use pictures extraordinarily in his poems, to illustrate the ideas he wants to convey. The above pictures are used by the poet in different poems, with each, either explicating on an idea or complementing it.

In figure one (1) a picture of the drum is used ordinarily to symbolize the title of the poem (A Dialogue of The Drum). In the poem, various types of drums are mentioned which serve different purposes. This also discloses the importance of Drum in Yoruba culture where it is used for the dissemination of information and for conveying different messages. To Osundare, drum speaks and has relevance in many places. It speaks in the palace and marketplace as well. In this regard, the poet says:

I, owner of the throat for pleasing songs,

And hands sculptured

For the talkative face of the drum...

(A Dialogue of the Drum)

In stanza 4 the poet also stresses:

You singer of the royal songs

your drum, dumb in the market place.

only talks in the palace of gold...

The picture in figure two (2) is mocking politicians who make all promises of turning villagers' life to the best by building schools, hospitals, bringing water giving farmers the best of their sweat and make poverty a thing of history. The politicians, like the picture, suggests, when they get to the position, they change after-ward and forget the promises. The

poet goes further to describe the politicians by comparing them with *Esuru* (a kind of yam, soft, loose, tasty but impossible to pound) in that, they use a soft tongue, interact with them (the villagers) to win their votes after which, they become complicated. The poet writes:

Esuru grows swollen-headed

and outgrows the prestigious belly...

Osundare moves further to describe them as:

Men of deep unwisdom

knowing not that

Power is the bird of the forest

which nests on one tree today

and tomorrow pitches its tent

on another.

(A Villager's Protest)

One could also learn from figure three (3) and seven (7) that the content of the poems reflected in the picture which may, of course, share different but somewhat ambiguous message. In figure six (6) for example, there is a portrayal of greediness which is discussed through the lines of the poem "Eating with all the Fingers":

The affairs of this life

are like peoples eating

Some dip ten fingers
and clogs their throats
Their greed chokes the land
with sprawling dirt.

(Eating with all Fingers)

Osundare, however, uses the picture of five fingers as can be seen in picture five (5) in the poem “The Land of Unease”. The message conveyed there, correlates with the one in “Eating with all fingers”. The poet criticizes the attitude of being greedy, selfish and unjust. Few are taking advantage by dominating many, accumulating wealth illegally and excessively, and pushing many others to hungry and dying. Osundare displays the pictures of palm which by its nature, carries five unequal fingers, with the thumb isolating from the other four.

Meanwhile, by its nature, the thumb has always been thicker than the other fingers. It has also been in isolation. The wise saying that fingers are not equal is often used by the few narrow-minded people who would want to always over-take many others and make life most joyful to themselves. In the first stanza of the poem, the poet says:

That land knows peace
where few have too much
and many have none at all

This is illustrated in the “Palm Picture” in which each of the four fingers is not as thick as the thumb. The poet goes further:

The yam of this world

is enough for all mouths.

The message becomes much clearer in the last three stanzas where the poet writes:

The big knives

pushes bellies bloated by excess

the small die hungry deaths

in the village streets

and when we ask why

they say fingers are not equal

we ask again

why have a few chosen to be thumbs

and the many others an *amadindinrin*

clinging precariously

to the periphery of the palm?

The above lines describe the attitude of showing social inequality and exclusion. These graphological foregrounded items help the reader not to only have full comprehension of the message, but to also be able to make as many interpretations as possible in order to access more meanings.

4.5 FINDINGS

The following are the research findings from the data analysis which shows that the questions raised by the research were answered as follows:

1. What are the foregrounded lexical and graphological features used by Osundare in the selected poems?

From the research, it reveals that the poet uses lexical and graphological features such as borrowing of words to deviate from the normal use of them. This could be seen in “A Dialogue of the Drums” where he borrows words from his native language (Yoruba), (p23). More examples are found in ‘Not in my season of songs’ (p23), ‘Killing without a sword’ (p23), ‘The Land of unease’ (p23), ‘A Villager’s protest’ (p24). Other lexical items used are ‘collocation’, new word creation and compounding, antonym and word illustration. This can be seen in the poem ‘I wake up this morning’ (p25) and ‘Dying Another’s Death’ (p41) in which the poet tries to create visual awareness in the readers’ mind as the case may be.

The graphological items used by the poet include, the use of capital letters in ‘I wake up this Morning’ (p30), where he uses capital letters in the middle of the line (2nd); more examples are in ‘Unequal fingers’ (p30), ‘A Reunion’ (p31), ‘The stars did it’, ‘Not in my season of songs’ (p31). Italicization is also used by the poet, in ‘A dialogue of the Drums’ (p33), ‘Killing without a sword (p33), ‘The politician’s two mouths (p33), ‘A Reunion (p34); use of punctuation marks, in ‘Eating with all the fingers’ (p35), ‘The land of unease (p35) etc.

2. To what extent the lexico-graphological items foregrounded in the text lead to interpretation?

Osundare uses the above lexico-graphological items to create meaning in a unique way. He uses his indigenous language in forecasting his message as in ‘A dialogue of the drums’ (p23). The meaning or message cannot be decoded without knowing the meaning of the

lexical items used. For example, in the above illustration, one cannot understand the poem fully without knowing the meaning of the indigenous words used by the poet, thus, they help in interpreting the poem. More examples are in 'Not in my season of songs' (p24), 'Killing without a sword' (p24) etc. use of capital letters as in 'I wake up this morning' (p30) where the poet uses 'I' to create emphasis in the reader's mind to reflect in himself/herself etc.

3. To which level does the poet use foregrounding as a means to achieve his aim of creating effects?

Osundare uses words from his indigenous language in order to make his message close to the masses' voice and uses capital letters for the readers to be close to the poet's voice as they reflect on themselves. Thus, Saleh (2003) argues that all the poems in *Village Voices* assume the voice and world view of the villager. Also, by using borrowed words to depict the life of villagers, Natcafiya (2008) has concluded that *Village Voices* exposes the lifestyle of the village dwellers and the general theme in *Village Voices* is the predicaments of the societal underdogs.

4.6 DISCUSSION

Writers normally find it easy to convey what is in their mind mostly when they use their mother tongue (indigenous language). Osundare seems to use his indigenous language in order to convey what is in his mind as other writers do. This is because what the writers write or address is likely as a result of something that is happening in their immediate environment and being agents of change and members of the society address the issue easily when they write and inform other people what they can do to make the change possible especially when such issues arise. In the poems like 'I wake up this morning', it has evidently shown how Osundare resolves to use his indigenous voice by employing so many Yoruba words and capitalising first person pronoun 'I' in his vision and mission to make his readers closer and

become familiar to the content of his message. This will at the same time make them reflect on themselves and learn from the experiences the poet has about the nation's political commotion. The meaning of the poems can only be accessible when words like ' *bata, omele, gangan, gbedu, ibembe, reso* ' etc. become intelligible.

Masses are the majority in every society. So, addressing them in issues concerning them or their environment can make them understand themselves in relation to the role they need to play. Osundare also uses symbolism strangely in poems like 'Eating tomorrow's yam', 'Feigning Rebel', 'A Reunion', etc. which, when looking at the thematic line of the poems, the poet addresses the masses' dilemma by making them composed and feel good as equal members of the society. This is done when he explains their merriments through entertaining themselves with drums and other things that is why he might have called a poem 'A Dialogue of the Drums'- in which he addresses and expresses his feelings in his own way. Therefore, by the title of such poems, the poet created an atmosphere that makes the masses understand the language of the drums and paves way for interpretations. Thus, creating feelings through the use of some lexical and graphological devices is almost achieved.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 SUMMARY

The stylistic analysis reveals that poets employ a number of techniques to bring about linguistic deviation, thereby resulting in foregrounding of the key elements. Analysis of the data obtained has shown that Osundare has a special ability in employing a lot of linguistic devices to foreground his poems so that the language used will suit his purpose of making meaning, convey his message and achieve aesthetic effect, which by implication assists the readers to make several interpretations of the poem and have access to their meaning. The poet has in many situations used lexical items such as borrowing words from Yoruba language and inserts them in so many relevant places. This is a style which a critical study of it will show the poet's skills of foregrounding words to convey the message. Apart from words borrowing the poet uses collection and figures of speech in a deviant way which enables him to convey his socio-political messages to readers. This describes Osundare to be a kind of poet whose use of language is proved to be creative and artistic in nature.

The other linguistic features foregrounded by Osundare in the selected poems are that of geographical devices. Graphological deviation represents the violations of regular lineation. Typographical lines and stanza in poetry are independent of standard units of punctuation. This arrangement has a special communicative force. Poets like Osundare, fully exploit orthographic deviations like discarding of capital letters, punctuation, and unusual use of images etc. This skilful use of linguistic devices in the poems renders the visual identification of the theme. For example, it is conventionally accepted that each line in a poem will have the initials of the first words written in capital letters. Contrary to the convention, Osundare, as has been observed, use small letters in some poems to begin each line.

The poet does all these to ensure that his emotion has been reflected in the poem so that readers will reason with him and comprehend the message. This tells us that language can be used in an unusual way and contribute to the making of the intended meaning. The absence of capital letters or unusual use of them is a geographical foregrounding that this study is as able to find out in village voices. Other geographical items found by this research foregrounded in the poems are punctuation marks. These linguistic items contribute to the effectiveness of communication. For example, they indicate to the reader, whether a sentence has ended or not, is asking questions or just is a short pause by the speaker. In poetry, punctuation marks function in the same way they do in prose. But Osundare resolves not to use oral presentation in some poems. In other words, in *Village Voices* there is occasional use of punctuation marks and in such instances, readers are left to continue reading between the lines without knowing when and where to stop or where to make a short pause and where sentences meet and where they are apart.

Italicization has also been used in the poems in such a way that readers could understand that either the poet uses the style to sympathize or to emphasize. Instances have shown from the analysis where Osundare has drawn the readers' attention to some key important messages.

This Research has discovered the foregrounded use of indentation and lexical illustrations as a ladder for extending message. The psychological dissatisfaction of the political system and the poor leadership of the society have been depicted by the poet using these graphological devices.

Pictures on their own are subjects to interpretations. On the contrary, words are used architecturally in literary texts, especially poems to create mental images in the readers' mind. But yet the poet decides to accompany his poems with vivid pictures for more meaning

creation. This gives the readers more chances of comparing the pictures with what happens in reality and consequently become much clearer about the messages contained in the poem.

5.2 CONCLUSION

This research has observed that through unusual use of some linguistic features like punctuation marks, capital letters, or by making random ordering of lines, italicising so many words etc., readers can interpret the message in their own way and be able to deduct several meanings out of it and that could be one of the targets of Osundare. This, by implication, reveals how one's own style influences readers' understanding of literary texts and by extension discloses how language works in literature.

On the other hand, the availability and utilization of such linguistic features in Osundare's poems show how versatile the poet is in foregrounding some linguistic elements so as to achieve effects and obtain aesthetic quality in his literary works. This has shown also that language is always at the peak of any attempt to meaning-making. From the foregoing this study has discussed the foregrounded lexical and graphological devices used by Osundare, in his poems, to make meaning and achieve aesthetic ends, using Mukarousky's theory of foregrounding as its models for analysis. It is therefore clear from the discussions and analysis that lexical and graphological devices play a vital role in conveying the message of a literary text particularly poetry. This helps writers in a strategic way to emphasise on some important areas for the readers to fully access the cumulative meaning of their texts. This study has therefore affirmed that foregrounding can be used as a technique through which some key linguistic devices are made to look more important than the others. Such devices become important because they are lexically and graphologically deviants which are used to enhance aesthetic sense and express certain emotions.

This study has been conducted through poetic analysis in a qualitative mode of inquiry. The study ends up by discovering the types of linguistic devices foregrounded and the reasons for their use in Osundare's collection of poems *Village Voices*.

5.3 SUGGESTION ON AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

This research analyses some selected poems in Niyi Osundare's *Village Voices*, arguing on the lexical and graphological features evidently used in the poems which further help in meaning-making. Though the research intends to bring something new to the field, still, more studies can be conducted in a wider scope on other African poets in order to find out how, by foregrounding some lexical and graphological items, they become successful in conveying their messages and gain aesthetic value in their poems. Another area of study could be of comparative analysis between either some selected poems of one of the Osundare's contemporaries or of the poet from the preceding generation. This may reveal how lexical and graphological foregrounding have been functioning in the literary text to enable writers to encode meanings and pave ways for interpretations significantly.

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APPENDIX

SOME OF THE SELECTED POEMS STUDIED

Examples of some areas extracted by this research for analysis have been highlighted by making them bold

(1) Dialogue of the Drums

When I raise my voice
The world will be my chorus
I, owner of the throat for pleasing songs,
And hands sculptured
For the talkative face of the drum
But there are some people I know
People whose names I will not mention
Whose hippo hands slap the drum
Like a slab of flabby flesh
Flogging mere noise from
Its tuneful belly
• • • •

When the target of a proverb
Feigns the ignorance of an alien
Tell him to chide the cowardice
Of his hands.

I understand all your words
And even those you haven't spoken.
But hear this if your fledgling ears
Have not been blocked
By the excess of juvenile praise
Hear this, and listen well:
I hail from a line of drummers
And understand perfectly
The language of the leather:
Bata which speaks with two elegant mouths

Omele which carries a **high-pitched** face
Round like a moon caught
In the wakeful ambush of the second cock
And *gangan* which wasped its waist
For the embrace of prodding arms
Let me save you now
Before you drown in the torrent of **selfpraise**
Excessive feasting on the jungle hunt
And the village never sees the killing fierceness
Of the cat's claws
I will sing my own song the way that pleases
The ear of my heart
Listen first to the leather of my mouth
I was born with a song in my throat
And my hands on the face of the drum
I have thrilled royal steps
With *gbedu's* majestic accent
And learnt why *egiri* turns thick ears
To the hunter's feeble arrows
I have put a stick to *ibembe*
Urging virgin brides to dance to
The virtue between their legs
When I raise my voice
The world joins the chorus
whatever song you raise
Is what the world sings after you
You singer of royal songs
Your drum, dumb in the marketplace,
Only talks in the palace of gold

Your song extols those whose words

Behead the world

• • • •

Let runners of accusing songs

Put legs in their words

Lest they be like a woman's *opoo*

Sprawling like a beheaded snake

• • • •

I will not only give legs to my coiling words

I will also give them the fang of facts.

When last did your hands touch *reso*

Which celebrates the coming of a newborn,

Ogbele which warms the grave of the dead one

Where were you when *adan* filled the night

With the shame of *Apeloko*

Who proved too sharp with the neighbour's yams?

I know where you were

For I will not be like the cunning one

Who asks questions whose answers

He already knows

You were in the palace, running endless errands

Like a shuttle in the loom

Your eunuch drum a dumb stool

For harem buttocks

Your drum is sounding too loud

It may soon reach the tearing point

You have reached the neck of the palm

You may soon find the earth

Cradling your broken head

Must we all extract paltry pennies
From squalid lanes
Frequenting miserable ceremonies
Like vultures bald as

The drum we beat?

• • • •

Your *reso* is not wide enough
for my hands And let him die of thirst
Who thinks my fish should not find a river
Broad enough to suit its fins

• • • •

Listen, palace singer, listen royally
Your fish will come belly up someday
Its underside beamed at the laughing sun
Those whose relatives thrive on leftovers
Should not mourn when crushed

By the falling table
The day is coming, coming fast
I can almost see its sun behind the moon
When your solo will find no chorus
The day is coming
When your drum will be mute
Like a royal statue
For if you listen properly
To the dying echoes of your drum
You will hear this resounding fact:
The people always outlast the place

Note: Bata, *omele*, *gangan*, *gbedu*, *ibembe*, *reso*, *ogbele* and *adanare* types

of drums; also the names of dances associated with them. *Gbedu* is a royal drum; *adana* satirical drum (in Ikere-Ekiti). Others are mostly for entertainment. *Egiri*: the animal whose thick skin is used for *gbedu*; *Opoo*: a money belt made of cloth, worn by women.

(2) Not in My Season of Songs

Sigidi *thirsty for a dance of shame
Craves a festival in the rain
Bees hum peacefully in a fallowing farm
A restless boy punctures their hive
With a crooked stick

You have poked your crooked finger
In the hive of my mouth
A chorus of bees would have stung
Were this my season of song

Yes, **I** would have told you
About your swollen testicles
Which crook your legs
Like miserable bows,
And your lips thick like hippo skin;
About the elephant legs of your mother
And your father whose head
Rivals a buffalo's own

Had you met me in my season of songs
I would have told you what torrents
Swept your father to this land
Your father, the **D.O.'s*** shit-carrier,
Who hounded kinsmen as tax debtors
And drafted people into forced labour
For the crumbs of the white man's bread

You have really touched me
On my **songless** day
Or I would have counted all the rats

**Sigidi* is an earthen effigy; the D.O. is a District Officer

In your hidden shrub
Your uncle the Produce Buyer so fattened
On ugly money he looks like
A bag of cocoa with a small ball for a head
Or his brother the Sanitary Inspector
Who can extract bribes from a corpse

He whose forehead is twins
With a hanging cliff
Let him not peer into other people's faults
The squirrel has lived down its fame for excess
It has put the penis below the scrotum.

(3) Sleeping at Five and Twenty

**If you have decided not to move
take your wooden body out of the way
At five and twenty
there you are
still sleeping and snoring
snoring and sleeping
while the sun burns your youth away
at five and twenty
there you are
no farms no barns
no wives
no children visiting relatives only
when the pestle is fighting the mortar
At five and twenty
there you are
your palms thick like hippo skin
your mates wrestle in the village square
you grapple massive morsels
in your neighbor's kitchen
where a bowl of *iyán*
puts you flat on your slothful back
Heavy gourd lets swing between your legs
maidens tease your limp stump
taking a dip in the village stream
at five and twenty
there you are**

**At five and twenty
there you are
living each day
till the sun goes down
behind the trees
you will never hear the whizzzzzz
when the world races past your sleeping ears**

We say a child is foolish
his mother says 'As long as he doesn't die'
what death kills a child faster
than arrant folly?

(4) Eating With all the Fingers

You jerk up from sleep

and find us eating
you immediately want a scoop
just wait
if we started this way
Would you wake up?
to a single morsel?

The affairs of this life
are like people eating
some dip ten fingers
and clog their throats
their greed chokes the land
with sprawling dirt

We will raise our voices
and tell the world
we will not be watchers
of others eating

(5) Eating Tomorrow's Yam

When cutting a tree in the forest
it is the wise who watch
where it will fall;
the **not-so-wise** merely enjoy
the conquering edge of the axe

There is only one yam left
in the village barn
the prodigal calls for a knife
`what shall we eat tomorrow?
the people ask,
if we finish all the yam today
just how shall we feel
when the dunghill has relieved
stomachs of their improvident burden?

And says the prodigal:
tomorrow will take care of itself,
how can we know the next day
if we die of hunger today?
The people reply:
how can we see tomorrow
if we eat its yam today?'
They then cut the yam into seedlings
and plant tomorrow's harvest
it is meet to live on herbs and grains today
if that ensures tomorrow's yam.

(6) Feigning Rebel

Tell us
You are real revolutionaries
or feigning kings
waiting for crowns?

We have been roused
countless times
by masked rebels of the night
telling us the system is bad
and the only way it should go is
down

The fire in their mouth
lighted the darkness of our doubts
the timbre of their voices
seemed thick enough
to hang a million hopes
We thought
here at last the friends of the poor
who know the price of food
in the markets
what it means to wake up
without a penny
to live without a roof
in a family of disease and misery
we thought
they had arrived
who know the agonies
of soles without shoes

By day break
those fires are gone
quenched by the seductive dew
of a dawn ambition

By noon
the timbre is scorched
by the sun of cant
our hopes dash down
like melons on a harmattan twig
Our memory is a track of
throwers of dumb bombs
promise peddlers
and prostrating apostates
tiptoeing back to murmur
'good evening'
where once they shouted
'good night'

Hence we ask
are you real revolutionaries
or feigning kings
waiting for crowns?

(7) Akintunde, Come Home

If a man's mouth is small
must he borrow a bigger one
to talk to his child?

Akintunde, I have told you to come,
come home from the land
where life is a race in which
the strong trample the weak, dashing
for the fluttering fragments
of stolen trophies
Come away from bubbles
which melt like wax
before a raging blaze

Come home, son, from a land
where money is god
appeased with a daily toll of skulls
come home before the sword you wield
turns round to claim your neck

Come home, son,
for we cannot be all *iroko*
slapping the sky's face
with imperious boughs
while the lower forest
dies a sunless death at our unfeeling feet
come away from the fold
of sun stealers

Come back here
where the walls are mud
and meatless meals quiet
the howling stomach

come back here
where dreams spun on campaign promises
snap in the noisy bellies
of belching parliaments

Come home, son
through our thatched roofs
we can see the devouring deluge

of looming clouds

Akintunde, come home
for though a man's penis is small
he will not borrow a bigger one
to fill up his wife's nagging mouth.

(8) A Reunion

We started school the same day
and together bore the flaying fury
of the teacher's ceaseless cane
together we parroted the **ABC**
till we scribbled our first broken letters
in the whiteman's tongue

We shared the same meatless meals
and took turns in your first khaki trousers
We took the same entrance examinations
to 'institutions of higher learning'
and saw enthusiastic hands
beckoning us to come
But poverty pinned you down
as those beckoning hands grew
dimmer in your waterlogged eyes
you vanished to the backwoods,
saved the agony of welcoming us
in our white-upon-blue uniforms
and smart canvass shoes
on our first proud holiday;
saved the agony
of losing out in the vocabulary war
spiced with Latin phrases you never knew
I visited your house
and saw your little brother
fashioning kits with
your *Pictorial English Grammar*
and I knew how far, how very far
you had gone

Later

I went to the university
where I wore three-piece suits
and ate sumptuous dinner in a **mortar-board** the university
where strange factories manufactured
'rulers of tomorrow'
the university
where Europe's books smashed
the **gourdlets** of my manhood
and splashed the juice in desert caves

Then

To Europe and America
coming back home with a bagful of papers
gold-lettered and **silver-sealed**
a piece of which attracts royal posts
and princely mansions
on Victoria Island
After so many years
here you are, scorched like a sponge
granite hands and a back bent
by toil and want
after so many years
stooping to 'sir' me
who once shared your tattered mat

So many things have stood between us
so many I cannot count all
on the trembling fingers of time;
the Atlantic which swallows
a million dreams still feigning
a smooth face
the Atlantic lined with numberless skeletons
of betrayed hopes

So many things
including this gleaming Volvo
through whose tinted windows
your **dirty-white danfiki**
looks like an **indigoed** robe
whose sonorous hum shuts out
the screams of children
pestering parents for food
unreachable in the market
So many things
including innumerable treacheries
of my new class
who do nothing but
swallow everything:
their broken promises
and your shattered dreams
their city palaces
and your village shacks

We must smash this wall
built of the inequities
of class and crime
then shake new hands
over the ashes of severance

(9) Alarinka*

passed from palm to palm
like a jubilee penny
my crown rubbed clean
of its copper glint
rolled from bank to bank
like a boulder, **river-plucked**
from by upland base
jostled of my edges
I egg toward the sea

I am a **toy-thing**
thrown in to tease the waves
by beach brats
I have touched the threshold
Of the sea
Riding **beachwards** on the saddle
of undulating waves

I the roof
beamed on the secret
of the bedchamber
the earth
beholding the open mystery of underskirts.

**Alarinka is a wanderer.*

(10) The Stars Sob

The stars sob

in their drooping orb
the moon's face is
a well of tears

You creep in like a night guest
Snubbing our gift of kola
our cowries and choicest beads
you pour ashes on the mat we spread
for your calling feet
and cold water on our humming hearth
another painful absence
announces your presence
in this house of few heads

The stars sob

We whimper,
deer caught in sorrow's trap
but tears only water your farm your barns a **seasonless** array
of unripe dreams
wrinkles bead your hunter's brow
The stars sob
You who kill kings
as if they had no crowns
you who snatch the rich
from vaults of gold
like beggars hauled from
a heap of backstreet garbage
you who kill a physician
as if his art were a moonlight trick

You shoot the shooter
his gun a moribund hollow
of fireless wood

The stars sob

You kill an only child
and put the raging mother
in the madding house
you who go up a tree
coming down with the juiciest fruit
Ahl the stars are sobbing

Forests droop their tuft of green
vegetables go pale
on the market stall

The stars sob

in their drooping orb
the moon's face
is a well of tears

(11) The Cock's Comb of Fire

Don't look with watery eyes
at the head of the cock
those who really touch it know
it carries a comb of fire.

True, this back has stretched
one season to meet another
these venturing feet have trod

the stubborn clay of upland regions
to the soft, soft sands of the **streamside**
but there is something
beneath powdery ashes
that still burns the tempting finger

Do not look with watery eyes

These loins have worn clothes
wide like the sky's face
sprung seeds
healthy like a rain forest
Believe me, when I strip
by the riverside
maidens still tickle
between their groins

Do not look with watery eyes

These eyes, these practiced eyes
have seen buttocks bouncing
to the rhythm of the road
and virgin breasts throbbing,
throbbing with pounding pestles
in a house of many yams

Do not look with watery eyes

I have climbed mountains
descended valleys
and knelt before moistening caves
suppliant, like a priest
before the grove

Do not look with watery eyes

Let no-one at a masquerade
with yesterday's eye
Ah! let no one dare
for though a youth may have
a house of robes
Can he have as many rags
As his father?

Do not look with watery eyes
at the head of the cock
those who really touch it know
It carries a comb of fire.

(12) The Bride's Song

Reaching the market place
My **waistbead** snaps
My wrapper unties

Take the beads to my husband's mother
This wrapper I must tie again
For life's jewel must be hidden
Not left to the wishful stare
Of a watchful world

Baba, thank you today
For the kindnesses of many years

Going am I now to my husband
The son of *Efuru** whose yams
Wrestle heaps to the ground
Owners of the powerful machete
Whose maize drills the molars?
Like seasoned warriors
My calabash tray will give way
Coming back from his farm.

I go now

And the moon is witness to my leaving
Before this moon hears the first cock
My belly will be round
Like grandmother's laden bowl

I go

To the house of a man
Who has yams in his barn
And children between his groins
A solid man who pins you down
With a penis stronger than an iron bar
Fresh from the fertile forge

Tell husband's mother
I will take a full-throated cock
When the first night's sheet glows
With the virtue of many years

Children playing in the moonlight
Are the dream of a maiden's womb
Child is honour, child is gold
The bouncing seed of tomorrow's harvest

May my back never know
The pains of the mat.

**Efuru* is the king yam among the Ekiti people.

(13) A Villager's Protest

They come more times
than the eye bats its lid
when they need your vote
at cockcrow
at noon
at sundown
when red rays
are bidding farewell
to the western sky

They come
armed with sweet words
inflated promises
and a chest that bribes
with countless prostrations
like the agama on the rock

We'll build schools
We'll build hospitals
We'll bring water
To every backyard
And turn all nights into day
We'll turn every footpath
Into a motorway
And fashion out a city
From every hamlet
We'll give the farmer
The best for his sweat
And make poverty
A thing of the past

They come
They talk
They promise
Now in
and promises forgotten
fat cars, juicy damsels
and the best there is
in the world of softness
consume fat salaries
and constituency allowances
The mouth now is too honourable

to greet, the belly too obese to bend
Our man becomes a locust seen but once
in several seasons
his Mercedes thunders through the streets
our **dust-laden** mats announce the departure
of the man of power

*Esurte** grows **swollen-headed**
and outgrows the prestigious belly
of the mortar
the wasp power-stung
enters a race of waists

Men of deep **unwisdom**
knowing not that
power is the bird of the forest
which nests on one tree today
and tomorrow pitches its tent
on another.

Another rain will fall
(**its clouds already gathering**)
and the distant wayfarer
will come seeking shelter
in huts long neglected.

*A kind of yam, soft, loose, tasty, but impossible to pound.

(14) Dying Another's Death

We will not go
On another's day
We will not die
Another's death

Power men (**and women**)
with maggoty trails
manufacture wars to turn eyes away
from dunghills in the streets
It is the ruse of tyrants
that wars be fought on other fronts
I can hear loyalties howling
like wolves of the jungle
the flag furling into a blindfold

Ask emergency patriots
who now summon you to instant death
where they were

when

worms colonized your children's
bellies and your tin roof was sieved
for the year's rains
How was it spent
that million million billion
Which sweetened the budget song?
that roads are still dust
and polluted water distributes dysentery
in every home

Countless times
we have murdered our dreams
chasing the nightmares
of power monsters
crushed in fiery columns
we have forged gold
for those who coin profit
from fallen skulls

Call back those in Eton and Oxford
extract them from the labyrinths of Harvard
and let them serve now
the state they have always serfed
Let this war be fought by,

Presidents' children
Governors' children
Senators' children
Bankers' children
Bishops' children

and others who cut up the country
like an unending cake

For this we say:
We will not go
On another's day
We will not die
Another's death.

(15) Unequal Fingers

when the time is ripe
the stick will tell all ears
the silent secret of the drum

we have known famished months
and years of unnatural famine
when two grains didn't jingle
in our bowl

and yam was gold from distant farms
cocoa buyers withheld our pay
and money monopolized the pockets
of a few
now wrinkles rack the brows
of crawling babies
the young age at thirty
our ragged roofs leak cold fears
of the coming rain

while

somewhere, not more than
a hungry shout away
chicken legs dance
at the bottom of simmering pots
blazing the **torturesome** smell
of festive kitchens
Senior Service children
pamper corpulent cats
with corned beef
laughing heartily at our yawning ribs
Let no one tell us again
that fingers are not equal
for we know
how the thumb grew fatter
than all the others

the funds for our community centre
built your palace
the funds for our rugged roads
bought your car
the funds for our water scheme
irrigate your banks in Europe

we are not bats
blind to the glaring happenings
of a tricky day
Soon
we shall know
how your farm stays so lush
in our season of drought
we shall know
while showing you
the gate of the town
for
when the time is ripe
the stick will tell all ears
the silent secret of the drum.

(16) We Have Waited So Long

We have waited this long
to see the moon put a smile
on the crescent lip of the sky
we have waited so long
around the hearth
we cannot eat our food raw

We have watched a youth sun
unroll the mat of a spreading day
our morning is born
on the bed of a breezy dawn

**we have waited so long
around the hearth
we cannot eat our food raw**

We have watched the tendril
sprout its first leaves
small like a rat's ears
then bloom into a grove
on the conquered pinnacle of stakes
below, water yams hood heap brows
with the compound carpet of mangrove leaves

**we have waited so long
around the hearth
we cannot eat our food raw**

We have seen the green moon of dusk
pale into the amber disc
of the protracted night
the unsure showers of the first rain
thicken into the thudding throng of
the month of the ripening maize

**we have waited so long
around the hearth
we cannot eat our food raw**

we have smelt passing months
seasoning our **dreamson** hope's branches
sappy like a pawpaw in the rains
tiptoe, we stand on the edge
of a hungry dawn
our outstretched hands
plucking the fruits of mellowing morrow

we have waited so long

**around the hearth
we cannot eat our food raw**