

## FOREGROUNDING: A Stylistic Analysis of Niyi Osundare's Selected Poems

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**Abstract:** The aim of this study is to discover the use of foregrounding as stylistic instrument in Niyi Osundare's (1986) *The Eye of the Earth* where five Poems are extracted for the purpose of this study. Among other findings, the study uncovered the peculiar use of foregrounding and the features embedded in such unique way. It equally brings to the fore, the heavy use of deviation in drumming home the themes of the selected poems. The analysis is done at the graphical, phonological and syntactic level. The study employed Burke's (2014) functional stylistics to analyze the devices identified in the selected poems.

### I. INTRODUCTION

One reason for the importance of foregrounding is that it has to do with the notion of relevance in literary interpretation. It enables us to identify those linguistic and literary patterns which are significant for meaning in the poem and those that are not. Linguistic element can be foregrounded and made prominent for a special effect in a text. Leech (1969: 56) in Dada and Bamiboye (2014) describe foregrounding in this way: It is a very general principle of artistic communication that a work of art in some way deviates from norms which we, as a members of society have learnt to expect ...(p.191)

Halliday (1971) has this to say about foregrounding:

...Prominence that is motivated. It is not difficult to find pattern of prominence in poem or prose text, regularities in the sound or words or structures that stand out in some way, or may be brought out by careful reading and one may often be led in this way towards a new insight, through finding that such prominence contributes to the writers total meaning. ... a feature that is brought into prominence will be 'foregrounded'" (P. 339)

Burke (2014) defines foregrounding as "the property of perceptual prominence that certain things have against the backdrop of other, less noticeable things" (p.87). what this means is that some insignificant things could become a focus of attention and made prominent. Complementing this, Short (1996) describes foregrounding as something that is "more important than the rest" (p.12).

Busra (2014) quoted copiously from Mukorovsky (1932) that a constant usage of something is automatization and this automatization creates a scheme; hence, "foregrounding means the violation of the scheme." (p. 37). In Mukarovsky's (1970, P40-56) view, foregrounding is related to the factor of deviation from linguistic and literary norms. In this sense, foregrounding could therefore take the form of "deviation." Deviation constitutes a de-automatization of familiar linguistic and literary patterns. Therefore, foregrounding is the opposite of automatization- "automatization schematizes an event; foregrounding means the violation of scheme" (Mukarovsky, 1970, P.43). According to Mukarovsky, (1970, P.45), foregrounding is characterized by consistency and systematic nature:

The systematic foregrounding of component in a work of poetry consists in the gradation of interrelationships of these opponents, that is, in the mutual subordination and super-ordination. The component highlights in the hierarchy becomes the dominant. All order components foregrounded or now as well as their interrelationship are evaluated from the start-point of the dominant. The dominant is that component of the work which set in motion, and gives direction to, the relationship of all other components.

To this end, foregrounding is also seen in terms of dominance. That is, when there is a consistence pattern to deviation in a literary text, it manifests dominance. Nevertheless, there is also foregrounding of the non-deviation type, in which a structure acquires significance in the level as a result of the fact that it makes use of a particular aspect of language or literary norms in a consistent way. There are no violations of linguistic rules or literary features in involved here. For instance, it is very common to discover recurring repetitions of syntactic patterns in poetry as seen in Leech (1969, P.69) "syntactic parallelism".

### **Graphological Analysis**

This has to do with the layout of the text, including the font type and size, the punctuation marks. All these are foregrounding. Other devices to be considered in graphological analysis of foregrounding are italicization, underlining, capitalization the use of question marks, interjections, the comma, the colon, the semi-colon, the dash, the question mark, italics, ellipsis and hyphens.

### **Phonological Analysis**

This has to do with the sound pattern of a language. A stylistically phonological analysis will examine devices like alliteration, assonance, consonance, rhyme, pun, onomatopoeia and repetition.

### **Syntactic Level**

At the level of syntax, so many things are considered, but we shall limit our analysis to the sentence level. We shall also examine phrases.

### **Aim and Objectives**

This study is expected to analyze the stylistic features found in some selected poems of Niyi Osundare. Besides, other objectives of this study are:

- i. to investigate the graphological, phonological and syntactic use of words of Osundare's selected poems.
- ii. to examine the style common to Niyi Osundare in the selected poem.
- iii. to discover and analyze the cohesive devices used in Osundare's selected poems.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study adopts Burke's Functional Stylistics and Halliday and Hassan's (1976) model of Cohesion. Burke (2014) asserts that functionalist stylisticians are "concerned with the ways in which the formal properties of language are used pragmatically" (p. 46). Cohesion refers to the relations of meaning that exist within the text and that characterizes or defines it as a text. It includes both the grammatical and lexical links within a text or clause that makes it a unified whole. Cohesion implies text connectivity, continuity and stability. Halliday and Hassan (1976), refer to grammatical cohesion as including reference, substitution and ellipsis while lexical cohesion refers to the different forms of lexical repetitions as we can see it in the data for this study. These elements as pointed out by these scholars are texture of a text. Cohesion is one of the internal cues that writers use to create desired meaning.

Yule, (2006) describes cohesion as the ties and connections that exist within a text. Buttler (1985) agrees with Halliday and Hassan on the meaning of cohesion but stresses that cohesion is a feature of the surface structure which rests upon the recoverability of the meaning of surface items in meaning to the context. Cook (1992) refers to cohesive devices as formal links that create relationship between sentences and clauses. This helps writers to join words together to create unity. Cohesive devices enable the writers to properly organize information in a text. These tools enhance the readers to be able to interpret and comprehend a text. In view of the above, this study aims at examining and analyzing stylistic elements foregrounded by Niyi Osundare in the selected poems.

**Definition of Key Words:** Stylistics, style. Foregrounding, deviation, prominence

*Stylistics:* The study of the use of language in literature.

*Style:* The way writer composes his writing.

*Foregrounding:* It is the deliberate construction of deviated elements in a piece of writing that brings specialty or prominence.

*Deviation:* A deliberate creativity that demonstrates the writer or speaker's competence in using the language the way he or she likes.

*Prominence:* It means to set a particular word apart and making it relevant in a piece of writing.

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

The aim of this study is to examine and analyze the stylistic features of foregrounding in the selected poems of Niyi Osundare. This study is corpus based and descriptive method was, therefore used. The corpus for the study consists of poem randomly selected from Osundare (1986). Five poems were selected from the text. The data were grouped in the categories of A, B, C, D and E, and this was done to achieve easy referencing of the text.

### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

This aspect of the study presents and analyses the data. It analyses the stylistic features of foregrounding in the selected poems of Niyi Osundare.

### **Graphological and Phonological Analysis**

The features are peculiar use of punctuations such as capitalization, comma, quotation marks, the dash, alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia, repetition, etc.

**Punctuation Mark:** In the examination of this texts, it is discovered that no punctuation marks is used in the poem, “*Earth*”. Punctuations are scarce in the poem titled, *First Rain*. This shows scarcity of rain in the land. Being the first rain, only a punctuation mark is used, which is a full stop at the end of the poem. The poem is divided into two stanzas. The first stanza has seven lines while the second stanza is made up of three lines, altogether it has 10 lines.

**Capital Letter:** The whole poem is foregrounded because capital letter is used only once throughout the fifteen-line-poem. This occurs at the beginning of the first word in the first line of the poem as in:

“Temporary basement” (line 1)

The reason for the scarce use of punctuation marks could be as a result of the fact that human beings are pilgrims on the earth, and life itself is brevity and no condition is permanent. However, in Group B, the first letter of the first word normally should be written in the upper case, but it begins with a lower case. This is the case of foregrounding in the poem. The whole poem has only one full stop, which is placed at the end of the poem. The conjunction, “and” in line 7 is used as a deviation, and therefore, becomes very significant in the poem. This is because conjunction cannot be a sentence on its own, but it acts as a sentence by standing alone in the poem. It is therefore, foregrounded as it stands out among other words in the poem.

Foregrounding manifests through many graphological and phonological features in Group C. For example, capital letters are used to begin each sentence, though there is no concrete full stop to signal a pause as in:

“The roofs sizzle at the waking touch” (line 1)

“Streets break into liquid dance” (line 4)

“A stray drop saunters down the thatch” (line 8)

“Barefoot, we tread the throbbing earth.” (line 20)

“Renewed” (line 21)

In addition, the structure of the poem is commentable. It has 6 stanzas. Stanza 1 has 3 lines, stanza 2 has 2 lines, stanza 3 has 4 lines and stanza 5 is made up of 6 lines, stanza 5 contains 3 lines and stanza 6 is only a line, which is a verb, “Renewed.” This is a deviation from the norm, and therefore, foregrounded.

**Comma:** Comma is used to separate elements in the sentence. It is employed for very short pauses in sentence progression. The use of comma is scarce in the poems. It is so for example in “*Raindrum*” show the urgency and importance of the rain. Besides, being a heavy rain, it is compared to “talking” drum in the Yoruba land. The comma appears twice in the 21-line- poem and this is found in line 20: “Barefoot, we tread the throbbing earth,” Punctuation mark is noticeable, even from the title of the poem, “*Ours To Plough, Not To Plunder*”. The earth is presented as an unopened store waiting to be exploited; the poet insistently warns against a mindless plundering of these resources in the interest of generation unborn. The use of comma in the poem creates prominence, especially in line 20 and after the adverb, “far” in line 21. Besides, comma is applied in the last line of the poem after the verb, “plough” and a full stop at the end of the poem to denote foregrounding.

**Colon:** The use of colon denotes a pause longer than the semicolon. It is used exclusively to show that there is something to follow. It is used to introduce a list or enumeration. It is used to introduce a word or phrase or a clause that illustrates, explain, or confirm a statement. It is used to introduce long quotation in a text. This occurs in the poem *Raindrum* as in: *under the dry leaves of time:of caked riverbeds* (line 11-12)

In Group D, *Meet Me at Okeruku*, the poem is divided into two stanzas of unequal lines. The first stanza has six lines while the second stanza is made up of seven lines. There are thirteen lines altogether. The lack of punctuation marks in the poems is a manifestation of deviation which makes the poem foregrounded. The Yoruba word, “Okeruku”, which means a place where dust are significantly plenty, is a loan word and makes the poem very significantly prominent. Capital letters are not frequently used in the poem except in two places, the first line and the eighth line as in: “Meet me at Okeruku”. In fact, the first stanza of the poem contains only one sentence but written in six lines.

The poem *Ours To Plough, Not To Plunder*, is a blank verse of twenty six lines arranged in six irregular stanzas. The range is between three lines in the opening stanza and in stanza 5 and six lines in each of stanza 2 and 3, often without alternating long and short lines for rhythmic effect. The final stanza of four lines contains a significant identification of the two middle parallel lines to highlight the central concern of the poet.

There are few punctuation marks in the poem. The poet deliberately creates this because of the urgency and the crying for the preservation of the earth and its resources through exploitation of the physical environment by man. The poem is a celebration of the earth’s fertility and hidden natural resources which are meant to be ploughed or cultivated for the advantage of mankind rather than being plundered or destroyed.

### Phonological Analysis

This has a lot to do with the sound arrangement in the poem.

**Alliteration:** The device is frequently used in the poem for sound effect. It is the repetition of the initial consonant sounds in a line of poetry: In Group A for example in the poem, *Earth*, the following are noticeable:

“first clays coyness” (line 3)

“breadbasket” (line 5)

“spouse of the roving sky” (line 13)

Also in Group B, alliteration manifests in the following ways

“tingling tang” (line 1)

“the wing of the haughty duck” (line 3)

“searching soles” (line 5)

The poem creates a sound effect and these are foregrounded. In addition, the poet uses this feature to create sound effect in the poem in the poem, *Raindrum*:

“A stray drop saunters (line 8)

“tired tubers” (line 17)

The poet creates a sound effect through the use of alliteration in the poem, “Meet me at Okeruku”

“Meet me at Okeruku” (line 1)

“cloud and clay” (line 8)

“show me your camwood shoes” (line 9)

The poem, *Ours To Plough, Not To Plunder* is rich in alliteration as highlighted below:

“plough and plant” (line 1)

“the hoe is her barber (line 2)- this draws attention to the relationship between the hoe and the earth,

“the dibble her dimple” (line 3)- the use of agricultural tools to work on the land.

“mattocks and matchets” (line 4)- these are agricultural tools used by the farmers in the Ikere community.

“the sweet which swells” (line 6)- the farmers labour and plant through sweat before sweet harvest.

“heavy heaps” (line 7)- the farmers work hard to cultivate heavy heaps on the land.

“let legumes” (line 10)- legumes are types of crops planted by the farmers.

“swell and swing” (line 12)- this shows the picture of the pawpaw standing heavily on the tree.

“bustling barn” (line 21)- this gives impression of a good harvest.

“to work not to waste” (line 24)- this shows the need to work on, and exploit the land and not to waste or misuse it.

“to man not to maim” (line 25)- this further amplifies the theme of the poem, to use the land productively.

“to plough, not to plunder” (line 26)- it further highlights the theme of the poem, the utilization of the natural resources around us and not to destroy them.

**Assonance:** This is the frequent succession of a specific vowel sound, especially in a line of verse as observed in our data, for example in Group A:

“last alluvial joy” (line 4)

“silence of the twilight sea” (line 9)

In Group C, *Raindrum*, there is just one manifestation of assonance “saunters down” (line 8). While in Group, D, the poet uses assonance to create more sound effect in line 9 as in: “camwood shoes”

This device is used in the poem *Ours To Plough, Not To Plunder* to create sound effect and to enhance aural quality of the poem as in:

“mattocks and matchets” (line 4)-

“the sweat which swells” (line 6)

“headward breasts” (line 13)

**Consonance:** It is the repetition of the consonant sounds in the middle or at the end of words in a line of poetry.

This feature is used in *Raindrum* to create sound effect as in:

“talkative like kettledrums” (line 2)

“break into liquid dance” (lines 4 & 6)

“gliding eloquently down the apron of the sky” (line 7)

“my remembrance” (line 9)

**Onomatopoeia:** in *First Rain*, this prominent feature of onomatopoeia made the noun to be phonological foregrounded as in: “a tingling tang awakes the noise”. This emphasizes the importance of rain to the people of Ikere, being the first rain in the year. It rained heavily to the extent of producing noise, “tingling tang” (line 1).

In Group C, “Raindrum” this feature manifests prominently to signal foregrounding in the poem as in:

“The roofs sizzle at the waking touch (line 1)

“talking like kettle drums” (line 2)

“gliding eloquently down the apron of the sky” (line 7)

**Repetition:** This simply refers to the successive repetition of words, phrases and at times lines in poetry. The effect is often pleasing to the ear and may be used for particular purposes by the writer. The poet repeats the “our” two times in the poem, *First Rain* in line five and six to show emphasis and amplify the crucial importance of the rain to the people of Ikere, who are mainly agrarian farmers. Also, in “Raindrum”, the sentence: “Streets break into liquid dance” is repeated in line 4 and 6. The conjunction, “and” is repeated 3 times in lines 13, 15 and 17, to link other words in the poem. The repetition of the preposition, “of” in line 3, 6 and 13 in the poem, *Meet Me at Okeruku* becomes so prominent. The repetition of another preposition, “on” in line 5 and 11 is a feature of phonological foregrounding. The pronoun, “me” is repeated in line 1, 9 and 10. The phrase, “show me” is repeated in line 9 and 10. The pronoun, “ours”, occurs three times in the poem *Ours To Plough, Not To Plunder* to emphasize man’s natural right to the earth for meaningful cultivation. The word, “let” occurs seven times (lines 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 19) to emphasize the writer’s passionate appeal for a productive use of the resources of the earth.

**Syntactic Level:** Since punctuation marks are not used in the poem, “*Earth*”, it is therefore difficult to pick sentences from the poem. Nevertheless, in *First Rain*, the first line of the poem is a manifestation of a complex sentence:

“a tangling tang awakes the nose *when the first rain has just clipped*”.

The first aspect of the sentence is an independent clause: *a tangling tang awakes the nose*, while the second is a beta (dependent clause as in: “*when the first rain has just clipped*”.

Another example of a complex sentence is seen in lines 6 -10: “as the land vapour rises like a bootless infantry and through her liberated pores [,] our earth breathes again”

The only complex sentence in the poem, *Ours To Plough, Not To Plunder* stands out in lines 6-7 thus:

“let the sweet which swells earthroot relieve heavy heaps of their tuberous burdens”.

An example of simple sentence is equally seen the poem, “a cooling warmth embraces our searching soles” (lines 4-5). This is the only simple sentence in the poem. It becomes prominent and therefore, foregrounded because of the scarcity of rain in the land. Simple sentences are used in the poem, *Raindrum* as in:

“The roofs sizzle at the waking touch.” (line 1)

“Streets break into liquid dance.” (line 4 & 6)

“Lightning strikes its match of rain.” (line 19)

“Renewed.” (line 21)

The poet uses a lot of simple sentences in *Ours To Plough, Not To Plunder* than any of his poems considered in this study. This is to show the simplicity of farmers and the importance of the earth to the users of the earth as in:

“the hoe is her barber” (line 2)

“the dibble her dimple” (line 3)

“let the wheatfields raise their breadsome hands to the ripening sun” (lines 8-9)

“let gold rush from her deep unseeable mines” (lines 16-17)

“Our earth is an unopen grainhouse” (line 20)

Some lines of the poem, *Ours To Plough, Not To Plunder* reveal compound sentences as in:

(i) The earth is ours to plough and not to maim (line 1).

(ii) Let the pawpaw swell and swing its headward breasts (lines 12-13).

(iii) This earth is ours to work not to waste (lines 23-24).

(iv) This earth is ours to plough, not to plunder (line 26).

Compound complex sentences are used in the poem *Meet Me at Okeruku*. This is to show the complex nature of the season, especially the harmattan period, with its dusty nature. The first stanza signals a complex sentence, whereby “*meet me at Okeeruku*” is an independent clause and “*where earth is one compact of reddening powder daubed coquettishly on the harmattan brow of trembling houses*”, is a dependent clause.

The second stanza is a compound complex sentence which begins with a dependent clause, “*And when the rains are here*” and another independent clause, “*when this dust is clod and clay*”, followed by two dependent sentences: “*show me your camwood shoes*”, “*show me hurried toemarks*”, with another dependent clause, “*on the ciphered pages of narrow alleys awaiting the liquid eraser of the next shower*”.

**Syntactic Parallelism:**

This feature manifests in the poem, *Meet Me at Okeruku* to create foregrounding as in:

“*show me your camwood shoes*” (line 9)

“*show me hurried toemarks*” (line 10)

Also in *Ours To Plough, Not To Plunder*, this device occurs in lines 24 and 25, to highlight the concern of the poet as in:

“ours to work not to waste”

“ours to man not to maim”

Besides, in the poem “*Earth*,” this feature manifests in the poem in the following ways:

rocks and rivers" (line 7)

"mud and mountains" (line 8)

We can therefore, say that "rocks" is plural noun, "muds" is also a plural noun; "rivers" is a plural noun and "mountains" is a plural noun. Both "rocks" and "muds" are joined by a conjunction, "and", while "rivers" is joined with "mountains" respectively. Other manifestation of syntactic parallelism is observed in lines 9- 14:

"silence of the twilight sea" (line 9)

"echoes of the noonsome tide" (line 10)

"milk of mellowing moon" (line 11)

"fire of the tropical earth" (line 12)

"spouse of the roving sky" (line 13)

"virgin of a thousand offsprings" (line 14)

At the level of phrases, the poems, are laced with clichés and phrases. In fact, the poet uses phrases frequently in all the poems selected. A few examples are:

"Temporary basement" (line 1) (*Earth*)

"lasting roof" (line 2) (*Earth*)

"first clayey coyness" (line 3) (*Earth*)

virgin of a thousand offsprings (line 14) (*Earth*)

"a tangling tang" (line 1) (*First Rain*)

"the first rain" (line 2) (*First Rain*)

"the land vapour" (line 6) (*First Rain*)

"a bootless infantry" (line 7) (*First Rain*)

"at the waking touch" (line 1) (*Raindrum*)

"the iron fingers of drought" (line 3) (*Raindrum*)

"the apron of the sky" (line 7) (*Raindrum*)

"waking memories long dormant" (line 10) (*Raindrum*)

"at Okeruku" (line 1) (*Meet Me at Okeruku*)

"of reddening powder" (line 3) (*Meet Me at Okeruku*)

"on the harmattan brow" (line 5) (*Meet Me at Okeruku*)

"of the next shower" (line 13) (*Meet Me at Okeruku*)

"with mattocks and matches" (line 4) (*Ours To Plough, Not To Plunder*)

"the ripening sun" (line 9) (*Ours To Plough, Not To Plunder*)

"the naked bosom" (line 10) (*Ours To Plough, Not To Plunder*)

"of shivering mounds" (line 11) (*Ours To Plough, Not To Plunder*)

### **Cohesive Devices:**

Reference is made to the title of the poem, "*Earth*," but the poet did not mention "earth" in the poem; the reader is aware that the poem is referring to the "earth". This is what Halliday and Hassan (1976) describe as exophoric reference, as observed by Taiwo (2010).

The pronoun, "*her*" in line 9 of the poem, *First Rain* is used in a personified way to refer to the rain while the pronoun, "*our*" in line 10 is used as a synecdoche to refer to the people of Ikere Ekiti in the poem. The writer uses reference in *Ours To Plough, Not To Plunder* to emphasize the need to preserve the earth. The pronoun, "*her*" in lines 2 and 3 is an endophoric reference which refers back to the earth. This is used to avoid repetition of the word, "earth". The pronoun, "*their*" in lines 7 and 8 is a reference to the "sweat" of farmers and the "earth" respectively. Besides, the pronoun, "*its*" in line 12 is a reference to "pawpaw". While the pronoun, "*her*" in line 17 still refers back the "earth" in line 15.

**Ellipsis:** This is the omission of a lexical item, which is usually easily recoverable from the linguistic context of the text. Halliday and Hassan (1976, p. 89) define ellipsis as "substitution by zero". This device abounds in the poem, *Earth*, as in:

[The earth is a] Temporary basement (line 1)

and [the earth is a] lasting roof (line 2)

[The earth is a] first clayey [and] coyness (line 3)

and [the earth is an] alluvial joy (line )

[It is a] breadbasket (line 5)

[the earth is full of] rocks and rivers (line 7)

[the earth is full of] muds and mountains (line 8)

Also, in *First Rain*, the device is used to avoid unnecessary repetition as in:

[The first rain came like] a tingling tang. (line 1)

[The rain came like] the wing of the haughty dust. (line 3)

[The rain is] a cooling warmth [that] embraces...(line 4)  
 [And when the rain fell] through her liberated pores [,] our earth breathes again (lines 8-10).  
 Ellipsis occurs in line 21 of the poem, *Raindrum* as in:  
 [In view of this, we are ] renewed. Or  
 [Because of the rain, we are] renewed. Or  
 [Therefore, we are] renewed.

Ellipsis is used in the title of the poem *Ours To Plough, Not To Plunder*, as in:  
 [This earth is] ours to plough, not to plunder.

Ellipsis manifests in the following lines to avoid tautology:  
 “let the pawpaw swell and [let it] swing its headward to breasts” (line 12-13)  
 “ours [is] to work [and ours is] not to waste” (line 24)  
 “ours [is] to man [ours is ] not to maim” (line 25)

**Conjunction:** Conjunction is an explicit marker of meaning connection between two clauses, phrases or words. Additive conjunction is commonly used in the poem, “Earth” as it links two words and phrases together:

Temporary basement  
 and lasting roof (line 1-2)  
 first clayey coyness  
 and last alluvial joy (line 3-4)  
 breadbasket  
 and compost bed (line 5-6)  
 rocks and rivers (line 7)  
 muds and mountains (line 8)

Additive conjunction is used by the poet in line 8 of the poem, *First Rain* as in: “and through her liberated pores...” It is used to add to what the poet had earlier said about the crucial benefit of the first rain to the people. Besides, there is the use of **causal conjunction** in the poem, *Raindrum* which manifests as a foregrounding. It signifies result for the erstwhile proposition (lines 18-19):

“**Then**

Lightning strikes its match of rain”

In Group D of the poem, *Meet Me at Okeruku*, this device is discovered in line 7 of the poem as in:

“**And** when the rains are here”

Additive conjunction manifests in the following lines in the poem, *Ours To Plough, Not To Plunder* to create relevance:

“The earth is ours to plough **and** plant” (line 1)  
 “out with mattocks **and** matches” (line 4)  
 “bring calabash trays **and** rocking baskets” (line 5)  
 “let the pawpaw swell **and** rocking baskets” (line 12-13)

**Statistical Table Representing the Frequency and Percentage of Graphological, Phonological and Syntactic Foregrounding of Niyi Osundare's Selected Poems**

S/N	FOREGROUNDING	GROUP A	GROUP B	GROUP C	GROUP D	GROUP E	TOTAL	%
1	Capital Letter	2	0	8	2	7	19	6.27
2	Small Letter	13	10	14	11	19	67	22.11
3	Full Stop	0	1	1	0	2	4	1.32
4	Comma	0	0	1	1	3	4	1.32
5	Colon	0	0	1	0	0	1	0.33
6	Alliteration	7	3	3	3	12	28	9.24
7	Assonance	2	0	1	1	3	7	2.32
8	Onomatopoeia	0	1	2	0	0	3	0.99
9	Repetition	0	2	3	7	9	21	6.93
10	Consonance	0	0	2	0	0	2	0.66
11	Simple Sentence	0	1	7	0	10	18	5.94
12	Compound Sentence	0	0	0	0	4	4	1.32
13	Complex Sentence	0	2	0	2	1	5	1.65
14	Compound-complex Sentence	0	0	2	0	0	2	0.66

15	Phrase	14	7	17	7	13	58	19.14
16	Syntactic Parallelism	8	0	0	2	1	11	3.63
17	Reference Cohesion	1	2	0	0	7	10	3.30
18	Ellipsis	8	6	1	3	5	23	7.59
19	Additive Conjunction	6	1	3	1	4	15	4.95
20	Adversative Conjunction	0	0	1	0	0	1	0.33
TO TA L		61	36	65	41	100	303	100

### III. DISCUSSION OF THE ANALYSIS OF TABLE

The table shows graphical and phonological foregrounding in Group A, titled, “*Earth*”. Capital letters was used two times to begin the lines of the poem. In a normal circumstance, each line should start with the upper case, but the poet deviated from this norm and started each line in the lower case. This makes the poem totally foregrounded. The lack of a single full stop or comma in the entire poem, gives it a prominence. Nevertheless, at the phonological level, alliteration was used seven times to create sound effect to project the concern of the poet: “earth” as the final home of mankind.

The table also reveals that syntactic parallelism was used 8 times and no simple sentence, rather the entire poem was written in phrases as the poet’s instancial use of words is noted here. This feature reveals the earth as a complex nature. Reference cohesion was used by the writer once, but ellipsis was employed eight times and additive conjunction came up six times. This is because life in the rural areas is simple and not as complicated as that of the artificial city life.

The table exposes the poem, titled “*First Rain*” in Group B. The poet failed to use any capital letter to begin the poem in order to highlight the importance of rain to the simple rural people who depend on rain to run their day-to-day activities. The whole poem was written in the lower case and the only full stop in the poem was placed at the end of the poem to signify a permanent purse. This shows the scarcity of rain in the land. Alliteration was used three times but onomatopoeia occurred only once, while a word was repeated twice in the poem.

The table sums up the poem, *First Rain* where a simple sentence was used just once while complex sentence occurred two times and phrases dominated the entire poem. Reference cohesion was used two times, ellipsis was used six times and additive conjunction occurred once in the poem.

From the table, the poem, “*Raindrum*” the poet made use of capital letter eight times and small letter 14 times but full stop occurred once at the end of the poem. Comma and colon occurred once respectively. Alliteration was used 3 times while assonance was used once; onomatopoeia appeared twice and repetition occurred 4 times while consonance occurred two times.

Group C is very significant as the poet used simple sentence seven times and phrase 17 times. Ellipsis came up once while additive conjunction was used three times. Adversative conjunction was used once to signal effect of an earlier statement.

The table reveals Group D’s features of foregrounding in the poem, “*Meet Me at Okeruku*”. “Okeruku” is a foregrounded word because it is a Yoruba word imported into the poem. The poet used capital letter two times to start the lines of the poem and small letter eleven times. There was no full stop, comma and colon in the poem. Alliteration occurred three times while assonance occurred once but repetition was used seven times.

In the poem, *Meet Me at Okeruku*, compound and compound-complex sentences were used two times respectively, while the poet used phrase seven times and syntactic parallelism occurred two times. Ellipsis came up three times and additive conjunction was used once in the poem.

The table analyzed Group E of the poem, *Ours to Plough, Not to Plunder*. The poet used capital letter seven times to start a line and 19 times he used the lower case to start each line of the poem. Full stop was used two times and comma was used three times. Alliteration was used 12 times to create sound effect but assonance occurred twice. Repetition was used 10 times in the poem because of the significance of earth to humanity.

The table analyzed Group E to discover that simple sentence was used ten times and compound sentence four times, but complex sentence was used once in the poem. The number of phrase used in the poem was thirteen while syntactic parallelism was used once. Reference cohesion occurred once, ellipsis occurred five times and additive conjunction was used four times.

### IV. FINDINGS

From our analyses, Niyi Osundare’s style of writing was discovered. His concern on the need to preserve earth was revealed. His descriptive use of clichés and coinages was noticeable. Niyi Osundare’s voice in the selected poems was raised within a universal context, but with a specific rural and agrarian setting. The

poems captured glimpses of his childhood and youthful days spent in his birth place, Ikere Ekiti. Osundare's styles show that he is a simple man. He is not artificial, being a rural man himself. His writing demonstrates the importance of the earth as an aid to the rural community since they are agrarian people. His language is simple and coined from pastoral community.

One prominent feature of foregrounding identified in the selected poem is the importation of some linguistic elements such as "Ogere amokoyeri" from the poem, "Earth", which means "one who shaves the head smoothly with hoe" and "Okeruku" in the poem, "Meet Me at Okeruku"(a place filled with dust and red-earth). These words are Yoruba words imported into the poems to amplify his major concern on the importance of earth to human beings.

## V. CONCLUSION

The study has investigated the use of foregrounding as a stylistic structure from Niyi Osundare's collection of poems, *The Eye of the Earth*". The analysis has been carried out at the graphological, phonological and syntactical level. Discussion has been done at all these levels with tables showing the occurrence of foregrounding in Niyi Osundare's poems.

So far so good, this study has analyzed foregrounding through descriptive method using Burke's Functional Stylistics and Halliday and Hassan's (1976) model of Cohesion to analyze the five selected poems from Niyi Osundare's collection, titled "The Eye of the Earth". From these analyses, it is obvious that a writer deliberately creates certain words in his writings to capture attention of the reader, for prominence or to deviate from the norm.

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## APPENDICES

### GROUP A

#### *Earth*

Temporary basement  
and lasting roof  
flat clayey coyness  
and last alluvial joy  
breadbasket  
and compost bed  
rocks and rivers  
muds and mountains  
silence of the twilight sea  
echoes of the noonsome tide  
milk of mellowing moon

fire of tropical hearth  
spouse of the roving sky  
virgin of a thousand off springs  
Ogeere amokoyeri\*

**GROUP B**

*First Rain*

a tingling tang awakes the nose  
when the first rain has just clipped  
the wing of the haughty dust  
a cooling warmth embraces  
our searching soles  
as the land vapour rises  
like a bootless infantry  
and  
through her liberated pores  
our earth breathes again.

**GROUP C**

*Raindrum*

The roofs sizzle at the waking touch.  
talkative like kettledrums  
tightened by the iron fingers of drought

Streets break into liquid dance  
gathering legs in the orchestra of the road  
Streets break into liquid dance  
gliding eloquently down the apron of the sky

A stray drop saunters down the thatch  
of my remembrance  
waking memories long dormant  
under the dry leaves of time:

of caked riverbeds  
and browned pastures  
of baking noons  
and grilling nights  
of earless cornfields  
and tired tubers

Then  
Lightning strikes its match of rain  
Barefoot, we tread the throbbing earth,  
Renewed

**GROUP D**

*Meet Me at Okeruku*

Meet me at Okeruku\*  
where earth is one compact  
of reddening power  
daubed coquettishly  
on the harmattan brow  
of trembling houses

And when the rains are here  
when this dust is clod and clay  
show me your camwood shoes  
show me hurried toemarks  
on the ciphered pages of narrow alleys  
awaiting the liquid eraser  
of the next shower

**GROUP E**

*Ours To Plough, Not To Plunder*

The earth is ours to plough and plant  
the hoe is her barber  
the dibble her dimple

Out with mattocks and matchets  
bring calabash trays and rocking baskets  
let the sweat which swells earthroot  
relieve heavy heaps of their tuberous burdens

Let wheatfields raise their breadsome hands  
to the ripening sun  
let legumes clothe the naked bosom  
of shivering mounds  
let the pawpaw swell and swing  
its headward breasts  
Let water spring  
from earth's unfathomed fountain  
let gold rush  
from her deep unseeable mines  
hitch up a ladder to the dodging sky  
let's put a sun in every night

Our earth is an unopened grainhouse,  
a bustling barn in some far, uncharted jungle  
a distant gen in a rough unhappy dust  
This earth is  
    ours to work not to waste  
    ours to man not to maim  
This earth is ours to plough, not to plunder.

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