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A PRAGMA-STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF NIYI OSUNDARE'S THE STATE VISIT

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Abstract

Language users often manipulate and violate the norms of language in a bid to reflect their actual thoughts, opinions and feelings in a speech event. This study is an exploration of foregrounding as a linguistic and stylistic device in Niyi Osundare's *The State Visit*. The paper examines how Niyi Osundare, strategically deploys and manipulates language norms by foregrounding some elements of the play to achieve certain pragmatic effect. The study is hinged on Halliday's systemic functional linguistic theory (Halliday, & Mathiessen, 2013) and Grice's cooperative principles (1975) framework. With the use of qualitative descriptive research method, the study identifies some lexical choices and syntactic structures employed by Osundare to insightfully explore some socio-political problems of corruption, autocracy, poverty, insincerity, and immorality of most African leaders. By employing pragma-stylistic tools, the study sheds light on the interplay of style and pragmatics in capturing the socio-political themes of the play. The study concludes that through the use of foregrounding as a stylistic and linguistic device, the author has successfully exposed the tribulations of autocratic leadership and its eventual outcome of poverty, corruption, oppression and immorality that has resulted in social, emotional, and psychological annihilation of the masses in an aesthetic and memorable manner.

Key words: Cooperative Maxims, deviation, foregrounding, repetition, stylistics,

Introduction

It can be said with substantial rationalization that Osundare is a revolutionary creative thinker who reflects the socio-political problems of Africa in his writings – poems, plays and critical essays – with the hope that soonest there would be change and improvement. He assumes the voice of the down-trodden whom the leaders have refused to listen to or better still, have played dumb to the yearning of the masses (Ohaeto, 1985; Okunoye, 2007). *The State Visit* is preoccupied with the socio-political problems such as poverty, corruption, oppression and immorality which resulted in social, emotional, and psychological annihilation of the masses. Through his appropriate choice of words, he represents these themes in a very stunning and imagery manner. He condemns the ruling class for their insensitivity to the plights of the masses, their wastage on frivolity, and the act of ignoring the essential needs of the governed.

The play is written to reflect the socio-political experiences of Nigerians under the military rule. Osundare believes that African writers have special and political roles to play with their writings. According to him, African writers cannot help but be political in their writing because of the socio-degradations and political mal-treatments experienced by the people (Ajakah, 2017). An artist is a product of his society and environment. Hence, Osundare demonstrates that he is Yoruba by origin as he draws copiously from Yoruba oral traditions, language, imagery and settings. Osundare has been described as “one of the most fecund poets writing in Africa today. A Nigerian of Yoruba extraction ... [his writings are] richly coloured by common expressions of traditional life (like proverbs and songs) which reflects the world view of his people” (Doki, 2008, p.67).

Literature Review

This review provides comments on stylistics and pragmatics. Both stylistics and pragmatics deal with the choice of language (or diction) in terms of the structure, organisation and the resultant effect on the decoders.

Stylistic Studies

Stylistics is the scientific study of style in a text. It is a branch of linguistic study that studies style in language. It underscores the fact that language users have various means of encoding messages. Stylistics is concerned with the identification and the explication of the wide range of message encoding (style) and the effects of the choice made. In a layman's view, style simply refers to the ways, manner or method of performing an act; in linguistic context, it refers to the peculiar technique of speaking and writing, which is the method(s) employed by both writers and speakers to pass across their message. Leech, (2018) refers to it

as “the study of linguistic style, including variations in language use due to factors such as genre, audience, and context” (p. 15). According to Giovanelli & Harrison, (2022), it is the study of linguistic choices and patterns of language in text and literary interpretation. It examines how specific choices in language use contribute to meaning making and aesthetics in both written and spoken language (Simpson, 2014). The notion of style refers to: a choice between language variables, a deviation from norm as well as structural manipulations of language. According to Brown & Gilman, (1972) “the identification of style is relative to the identification of some constancy” (p. 271). This is one of the features of the text under review. Thus, for a linguistic act to be regarded as style, it must feature more than once in a text. Olujide (2002) defines it from the angle of an individual as “the particular way language is used by an individual writer in a particular context” (p.344). His definition narrows style to distinctive use of language as well as language choice by an individual. However, Ogbuehi & Agbara, (2021), view it from the perspective of intention and purpose. According to them, the choices people make in the use of language depend on their intentions and purposes of communication which are often shaped by the sociocultural context of the language use. Style, therefore, could depict a linguistic choice which is indicative of deviation, or manipulations of linguistic resources available in the language.

Foregrounding as a Stylistic Device

Foregrounding was first introduced by Garvin in 1964. It was used to translate the Prague School’s “aktualisace” which literally means “actualization” (Wales, 1989, p.182). Foregrounding is a stylistic device used not only as an ‘attention catcher’ but also as a means of persuasion and aesthetics in a text. It helps to adorn the text and create a memorable impression on the audience. Some researchers have approached the concept of foregrounding from the perspective of reported strikingness, importance, surprise, perplexity, difficulty or confusion (Hoorn, 1997; Van Peer, & Hakemulder, 2006.; Castiglione, 2019; Harash, 2020; Utin 2024; Utin 2024). According to Wales (1989), “...foregrounding can occur at both paradigmatic (deviation process) and syntagmatic (repetition process) axis” (p.182). Thus, It is a violation of linguistic norms either as a result of departure from norms or excessive application of language rules.

The use of foregrounding as a device in any discourse presupposes that there is some sort of “motivations on the part of the [user] and some explanations on the part of the [receiver]” (Leech, 1969, 58). Foregrounding is not employed as a means of “art-for-art-sake”; but it is assumed that it is done purposefully. It is any linguistic element that “shocks” the sense of its audience, and attracts a special and a closer examination. Hence, any linguistic abnormalities (departure for the language norms) are regarded as foregrounded elements and not seen as errors. No matter how trivial the foregrounded element may seem, it is believed that it has a role to play in decoding the message of the discourse. It is a stylistic expression of information in an indirect manner and that the audience has to examine carefully in order to understand the essence of the element. Foregrounding is often realized through various figurative language such as pun, metaphor, parallelism, irony, antithesis, simile and personification, to mention a few. In the consideration of figurative expressions as foregrounded device, such expressions are regarded either as deviation (paradigmatic level) or as repetition (syntagmatic level).

A linguistic deviation occurs when the foregrounded element departs from the expected patterns of language; it is an introduction of irregularities into language patterning. Any form of deviation from accepted norms of language usually attracts the attention of the audience. Linguistic deviation is not a negative act but a constructive communicative tool through which implicatures can be established. Deviation can occur along all the layers of language: lexical, phonological, graphological, syntactic and semantic levels. Repetition (including parallelism) is a departure from the expected pattern of language through the excessive use of language norm; it is an introduction of extensive regularities: the refusal to make a choice from language options. It is a case where a writer (or speaker) “consistently limits himself to the same options”(Leech, 1969, 64) for stylistic effect. Thus, repetition is a departure from “normal rules of usage by over-frequency” (Wales, 1989, p. 182). Repetition is usually characterized by an element of identity and/or an element of contrast. Elements of identity are often linguistic codes (lexis) and non-linguistic codes (structures). However, elements of words are always linguistic codes. These elements of identity and/or an element of contrast are

employed in order to make them stand out and thus attract the attention of the audience. Stylistic repetitions are purposeful and function against the background of the audience's two-fold appreciation: some external connection of either similarity or dissimilarity, and then a deep structural explanation.

Pragmatics - Conversational Implicature

Conversational implicature propounded by Grice (1975) in his philosophical linguistic work, is a type of pragmatic inference that allows listener's to infer meaning that are not explicitly stated by the speaker (Levinson, 1983). Grice orates that language users often manipulate language to imply or express more than it explicitly entails. It accounts for how interactants infer an intended meaning that is not directly communicated in what was said. Grice notes that conversational behaviour is governed by presumed rules. These presumed and unwritten rules make it possible for interlocutors to cooperate and respond according to the expectation of parties involved in the interactions (Grice, 1975; Leech.G. (1983); Wilson & Sperber, 1981; Kavetska, 2020) He states that interlocutors in every communicative situation always endeavour to "make ... contribution such as it is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which [they] are engaged" (Grice 1975, p. 45). He tags the conversational rules cooperative principle which consists of four subprinciples or "maxims".

- i. Maxim of quality or truth - the speaker must avoid false utterances especially when there is no adequate evidence.
- ii. Maxim of quantity or information – the speaker's contributions must be 'informative' enough.
- iii. Maxim of relation or relevance – the contribution must be germane to the topic of discourse.
- iv. Maxim of manner or clarity – the utterances must not be obscure, vague, and ambiguous; it must not be loquacious.

Commenting on Grice's conversational Maxims, Warner (2014) observes that there is a link between these maxims and stylistic studies of foregrounding. He states: "Scholars within stylistics have seen a correlation between this aspect of Grice's theories and the concept of foregrounding, linguistic means of shifting interactants' attention to aspects of the speech. In literary works, deviant conversational behaviour can become a salient part of characterisation and plot development' (Burke, 2014, p. 367).

Grice further observes that sometimes interlocutors express their intention in an indirect manner. When this occurs, it seems that interlocutors are not adhering to the conversational maxims. Non-adherence to conversational maxims occurs in various forms such as flouting, violating, infringing, opting out and suspending any of the maxims. Ibilate (2020:26) affirms that "flouting a maxim occurs when individuals deliberately cease to apply the maxims not as a result of their inability to observe the maxims by avoiding a clash or an attempt to opt out or in a bid to mislead their hearers". In addition to this, Kauffeld (2013) notes that there are some human interactions that are "patently non-cooperative". For instance, interactions that involve the use of a degree of coercion, which precludes cooperation. Speaking on this, Ogbuehi, (2021) notes that human interaction that involve bullying are non-cooperative as they involve the use of force to enforce obedience against someone's wish. Non-observant of the maxims may be due to certain communicative situational constraints, shared knowledge of the interlocutors and the intention or goal of the speaker. Consequently, the speaker may decide 'to prompt the addressee to discover a different meaning ... establish conversational implicature..., or mislead the addresser for some personal reasons, or imperfect language performance due to excitement, or unwillingness to cooperate due to ethical/ legal reasons, (Agbara&Omole, 2015, p. 21).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) by Halliday, & Mathiessen, (2013) and Grice's Cooperative Principles (1975) as earlier pointed out. In systemic functional linguistics, foregrounding refers to a prominent portion of a text which adds to the meaning of the text; it is a motivated act. Prominence refers to the phenomenon of linguistic highlight of certain linguistic and non-linguistic codes which are made to stand out in the midst of other items in some ways. Halliday opines that any linguistic feature that is made prominent is foregrounded only if such prominent linguistic and non-linguistic codes relate to the meaning of the entire text or discourse. Thus, foregrounding has a semantic function as well as

aesthetic role. Grice's Conversational principles (1975, 1989) earlier pointed out opines that there are a set of unstated rules – maxims - which governs every conversation and makes it possible for interlocutors to cooperate and respond according to the expectation of parties involved in the interactions.

Synopsis of the Play: *The State Visit*

The State Visit is set in an imaginary country – Yanke. The country is under the rule of an autocratic and cruel leader. The names of both the leader and members of his cabinet are not given; the leader is simply referred to as the Head, and members of the cabinet by their various office titles: Finance, Agriculture, Public Morality and External Affairs Ministers. The play deals with the themes of corruption, immorality, oppression, poverty and insincerity. The Head who is referred to as Lion of Yanke is a brutal and merciless leader; he has no human feelings for his people. He sees the people as ordinary tools to be used to satisfy his ambition and selfish acts. The play begins with **the Head** and members of his cabinet in a meeting deliberating on how to give a befitting welcome to the leader of a neighboring country – Republic of Wilama. The president of Wilama like his host-to-be is also a corrupt and oppressive leader. During the deliberations on the preparation for the state visit of the president of Wilama, the issue of funds diversion and hunger in the land are treated with laxity.

Methodology

This study is an exploratory descriptive qualitative research design in which the researcher identifies certain foregrounded linguistics items and structures stylistically designed for artistic purposes in the play *The State Visit* by Niyi Osundare. In the analysis, the researcher identifies both the linguistic and non-linguistic codes and structures that are deviant in their usage, emphasising and explaining their stylistic and pragmatic relevance, and their strategic importance in projecting the themes of the play.

Data Analysis and discussion

The data for the study are linguistic and non-linguistic codes in *The State Visit*. The analysis of this study is done under two major sections: stylistic analysis and Pragmatic analysis. Stylistic analysis discusses features such as deviation and repetition. Pragmatic analysis examines the elements of cooperative maxims

Deviation as Foregrounding Device

Deviation is a departure from the conventional norms of language usage. It can occur at various language level/systems.

Phonological deviation

In the data for this study, phonological deviations occur as graphological deviations. Osundare makes most of the characters in the play to deviate in their pronunciations of some English words. He does this to draw the attention of the audience to the linguistic incapability of the concerned characters, depicting them as illiterates. As a tool for characterization and as aesthetics device, Osundare employs phonological deviation. The Head is depicted as illiterate and he attests to this when he says 'I didn't pass many of the "bukuru" exams...' (26). Other wrongly pronounced words by the Head are illustrated in the following utterances:

HEAD: ... Take it from America (pronounced "Amorika").

(17); What is keresi about it? (19);

Kumbans ..eh! (23); Yes, and women – Yes kprofeso, ... (47).

In the above samples, the Head pronounces "bukuru" instead of "book", "Amorika" instead of "America", "keresi" instead of "crazy", "Kumbans" instead of "Cubans" and "kprofeso" instead of "professor". The wrongly pronounced words help to create musicality which is a characteristic of Yoruba language (Osundare's first language). Through this stylistic device, the author gives the play a local colouring.

Similarly, the Minister of Agriculture pronounces some words wrongly:

AGRIC: ... See many of these farmers are subfer ... subfasif.... (14)

Ah ah those Kumbans! (23).

Remember what they did to that black citron (pronounced "sitiron") (24); a great pleasure (pronounced pleyo)... (46)

The minister pronounces "subfusc" as "subfer" and "subfasif", "Cubans" as "kumbans", "citron" as "sitiron".

Some of the commoners are presented as illiterates as illustrated in the utterances of the blind beggar and the soldier:

ABEKE: Tell us, Ogapoliisi, ... (38)

SOLDIER: Yes saaa! (54)

The blind beggar pronounces “poliisi” instead of “police” and the soldier pronounces “saaa” instead of “sir”. The above identified irregular pronunciations stand out in the midst of other correctly pronounced words and hence they are regarded as foregrounding. These wrongly pronounced words are given Yoruba phonological structure, reflecting the cultural background of the characters and by extension that of the playwright. Also, the insertion of vowel sounds is a reflection of the characters’ L1 (first language) interference.

Lexical Deviations

Lexically, words attract (collocate) other words within the same language circle for there to be sense in the message being given. However, Osundare deviates from this norm of word collocation by placing side-by-side words from different languages. Such irregularity of Osundare’s lexical combination helps the readers to identify the geographical setting of the play. The following samples illustrate lexical deviations:

AGRIC: ... an accusing finger at me o, *Abi*,*Abi*? (15)

HEAD: ...Aaaah! Agbagaaaa! ... As our people say, *kojumaari bi, eseloogun re*

AGRIC: My Head, *gbogboaraloogun re*. (16)

... about us to the people. *Ori mi o!* (29)

PUB. MORALITY: Aaaa ... *Abi o* ... This *oyinbo* is too much *jare*. (18)

HEAD: Oh! Oh! *O kare!*... to Sokoto what we have in the pocket of our *sokoto*? (18-19)

Okay! *O too!* (20)

The intruding words (italicized) in the above samples are all from Yoruba lexicons “Abi” meaning “isn’t it”, “Agbagaaa” used to indicate the sound of shattering, “kojumaari `bi eseloogun re” meaning “if the eyes are not to see evil, the legs are the cure”, “gbogboaraloogun re” meaning “the entire body is the cure”, “oyinbo” is a Yoruba term for English (White) people, “O kare” is a word of appreciation, “sokoto” means “trousers”, “O too” means “enough” and “Ori mi o” meaning “my head o”.

All these lexicons that do not collocate attract the focus of the audience. Lexical intruders employed are not only from Yoruba lexicons. One or two words were taken from other Nigerian languages as in:

OBI: Not exactly ... they have been instructed by their *dibia* or *babalawo* or *afaa*. (30-31)

OBI: *Mba*, three men at a time? (33)

ETIM: Ah! *Na waah o!* (36)

POLICEMAN: *Heey* you people, ... (37)

The intruding lexis are “dibia”, “babalawo”, “afaa”, “mba”, “nawaah o” and “heey”. They are Igbo, Yoruba and pidgin words. The presence of these words in the midst of English words creates a certain level of strangeness on the audience.

The use of intruding lexicons in the play signifies the level of abnormality in the play. Lexical deviation is also employed by the playwright as a tool for characterization. It shows that the first Language (L1) of the speaker has great interference in the speaker’s second language (L2) which is English. This is a typical linguistic reflection of most African English speakers.

Semantic Deviations

Semantic deviation often makes a grammatical unit, at first glance, looklike a ridiculous and strange unit. It is a departure from the conventional meaning of a linguistic item. Semantic deviation is possible because “language contains RULES OF TRANSFERENCE, or particular mechanisms for deriving one meaning of a word from another” (Leech, 1969, p. 148). Osundare deliberately shocks the audience through shift in the meaning of some words thereby achieving semantic deviation. For example, a prison is known to be a place of suffering where one’s entire freedom is curtailed thereby causing discomfort to the prisoner. However, the Head refers to prison as a safe and enjoyable place. He says “... and dumped vocal critics in some safe prison ... where they receive a real royal treatment! (13). The Head shocks the audience when he informs members of his cabinet thus “we need weapons of war to maintain our peace. You see, peace is like a

machine: if you don't service it with jets and tanks and armoured cars, it breaks down irreparably" (16). This explanation from the Head is absurd and creates a gap in the comprehension of the message by the audience. Of course, the playwright uses this utterance to underscore the absurdity in the land of Yanke and the insincerity which is characteristic of most African ruling classes.

Semantic deviation also occurs in the notion assigned to the HEAD by making reference to him as "a beloved leader, God-fearing" (14) and "Saviour of Yanke" (43). From the behaviour of the Head and the comments on him by the masses, he does not deserve to be referred to as "a beloved leader", "God-fearing" and "saviour". Osundare uses this positive description sarcastically and to demonstrate the insincerity of the ministers who are praise singers of the Head because they do not want to be thrown off the circle of those in the good book of the Head. This act of false praise singing of the Head is also done by a few who, though they are not members of the cabinet, also benefit positively from the evil behaviour and wickedness of the Head. For example, the journalist refers to him as "our God-chosen, our Messiah" (20). The External Affairs Minister's utterances constantly contain meaning shift. Below are some of his utterances:

EXT. AFFAIRS: In diplomatic circles, such denials are called *restatements*21);

.... In diplomatic circles, that's what we call *tit-for-tat* (22); In diplomatic circles, we call that *sanitized elimination* (29); that's what we call "*information squeeze*" which is part of the legitimate intelligence control of any nation (44).

The meaning assigned to the italicized words: "restatements", "tit-for-tat", "sanitized elimination" and "information squeeze" deviate from the conventional meanings of these words. The minister elongates the meanings of these words in order to justify the evil acts of the government. This manipulation of language where words are stretched beyond their intended meaning exposes the overzealousness of some African leaders and inflates the importance of their governance.

Repetition as a Foregrounding Device

Repetition involves the occurrence of a grammatical unit or a grammatical structure more than once within a close range. It usually produces a deep structural relationship of similarity or contrast. Repetition as a tool is examined from two sub-levels: lexical repetition and structural repetition.

Lexical Repetition

Osundare uses lexical repetition to emphasize some ideas, to astonish his audience as well as for aesthetic purpose. Below are some illustrations:

HEAD: Yes, yes, yes ... it is true (15).

FINANCE: Our masters! Debtors and creditors... Debts, debts. Debts eat away our freedom... (18).

JOURNALIST: the people... The ... the... market women ... the students ... the ... the ... (22).

The repetition of the word "yes" by the Head is significant in that it draws the attention of the audience to the fact that the Head was shocked at the question he was asked and was hesitant to respond. He was searching for the appropriate reasons to give for the withdrawal of so much money (three hundred million) from the government treasury without the knowledge of the Minister of Finance. The repetition of "debts" by Finance is used as a tool of emphasis; it shows the continuous collection of debts and the huge effect on the land. The journalist's repetition of the words 'but' and 'the', on the other hand, highlights the fact that he is confused, and afraid of what to say so as not to offend the Head and thereby fall off his 'good book'. So he stammers in his response as an indication that it is unethical for journalists to deny previously published truths and present falsehood as the truth.

Repetition is also employed by Osundare to emphasize the continuous act of subjugation of the disabled, as in:

SULE: O yes, sacrifices for a profitable week.

ETIM: Sacrifices for good luck, sacrifices for wealth.

OBI: Sacrifices for the twentieth wife, sacrifices for the seventh child.

SULE: Sacrifices! Sacrifice! Are we vultures or crows ... (30)

Repeating the word 'sacrifice' seven times among three speakers is quite significant. Apart from functioning as a tool of emphasis, the word keeps reverberating in the minds of the audience thereby making the act memorable.

Also in:

POLICEMAN: Home, of course, home!

ETIM: We have no home

OBI: This is our home (37).

‘Home’ is an essential commodity for everybody. It is repeated in order to draw the attention of the audience to the fact that the beggars are deprived of accommodation; and are exposed to all kinds of ills in the hands of the mighty ones in the land.

Lexical repetition is also employed to demonstrate the disappointment and annoyance of the Head when the painter bluntly refuses to paint his image:

HEAD: ...Strange times! ... Who are you? You one-penny bread, you leftover from..., you rag for..., you dwarf without..., you toadstool, you hunchback, you gun without trigger, you nose without face, you lion with no claws, you... you... you... (54).

The second person pronoun ‘you’ is repeated twelve times to emphasis the degree of shock and anger of the Head who has always had everyone ready to do his will and bidding but now meets with opposition and a strong refusal from a common artisan, the painter. It is as if the world should grumble and swallow the painter for being so bold to reject his proposal, Osundare uses the repetition of ‘you’ to highlight the feelings of the Head who is hysterically upset and could not control his emotion.

Structural Repetition

Structural repetition sometimes includes repetition of some lexicons in the process of repeating a grammatical structure. Osundare employs series of structural repetitions in the play as a means of aesthetics and emphasis, as demonstrated in:

HEAD: Thank you. We have the people in our hand. We decide *what they eat, where they sleep, when they live, when they die*. We may banish them; dissolve them if we choose (22).

In this utterance, there are repetition of words ‘we’, ‘they’ and ‘wh’ words emphasizing the extent of the power of the Head and his cabinet.

Structural repetition also occurs in the utterances of the beggars:

ETIM: We live here

OBI: We eat here

ABEKE: We breed here. (pp.37-38)

The repetition of the words ‘we’, and ‘here’ underline the extent of the collective endless suffering of the beggars. The structural repetition in the speeches of the stresses the continuous suffering of the beggars as a result of the evil acts of the Head and his cohorts. Most of the utterances of the beggars feature several repetitions employed to draw the attention of the audience to the monotony of the lifestyle of the beggars as demonstrated in the following:

ABEKE:...There was so much silence all around. Silence as a funeral: *no sound* of laughter, *no sound* of mothers singing lullabies to rock their babies to sleep, *no sound* of singing birds. ... (33).

...our wish to be here, scorched *by the sun*, beaten *by the rain*, spat upon *by people* ... (38-39).

The repetition of “no sound of” underscores the lack of variety and deprivation of joyous celebrations in the land of Yanke. Similarly in the latter, the repetition of ‘by’ phrases stresses the fact that both nature – sun and rain – and human beings have contributed to the ugly and dehumanizing situations in which the beggars find themselves.

Osundare also employs both lexical and structural repetition for the purpose of musicality and aesthetics. This is demonstrated in the use of songs. The play features several songs. This is a reflection of Yoruba cultural heritage.

Cooperative Maxims

Osundare explores the notion of cooperative principles through the PAINTER’s responses to HEAD’s request, thereby achieving discursual deviation. According to Grice (1975), participants in most conversations obey salient rules which make the interaction successful. He tagged these salient rules conversational maxims; they are maxims of quantity, quality, relation and manner. Any form of non-

conformity to any of these maxims could lead to implicature. Osundare presents the painter as a character that did not adhere to these conversational maxims in his interaction with the HEAD.

HEAD: Are you the one that disobeyed our orders?

PAINTER: I am not a public painter: my brush wrinkles the face of a tyrant.

Implicature: The Painter's brush will not paint what the HEAD expects to see. The painting will reflect the evil acts of the HEAD.

PAINTER: The brush has a pulse which only responds to the feelings of humans; monsters need a witch's broom for their self-image (51).

Implicature: The HEAD is a monster, a wicked and inhuman leader. Therefore, the Painter's brush will not produce a 'beautiful' image of the HEAD.

The painter violates the maxim of relation and manner because his responses seem irrelevant; they are ambiguous, and obscure. His response to the Head's question should have been "yes or no" but his response is long and verbose and fails to satisfy the Head's inquiry.

The painter's responses and utterances are highly metaphorical and through these metaphors, the painter is revealed as a fearless character who is ready to sacrifice his life rather than go against the philosophy of his profession. Osundare uses the painter's violation of conversational maxim to highlight how some citizens of Yanke could bravely speak the truth to the HEAD, even indirectly. Speaking the truth, however, sent the painter to his early grave. His role is very crucial in that in most African society, whoever is bold to tell the leaders the truth is usually dealt with without reservations.

Through discursal deviation, Osundare demonstrates the fact that there are very few persons in the society who are bold and ready to die for what they believe.

Conclusion

Niyi Osundare, once again, demonstrates his belief that African writers have special and political roles to play with their writings. In a stylistic and unique manner, he exposes the ills and effects of corrupt and inhuman leaders in Africa with particular interest in Nigeria. Using foregrounding, he depicts, in a very concretized and aesthetic manners, the socio-degradations and political mal-treatments experienced by the masses.

This study reveals that Osundare's use of foregrounding as a stylistic device has helped to highlight the major themes of corruption, autocracy, poverty, insincerity, and immorality of African leaders in the play *The State Visit*. By exploring the two sources of foregrounding - deviation and repetition - he condemns the ruling class for their insensitivity to the plights of the masses, their wastage on frivolity and the act of ignoring the essential needs of the governed. In a very innovative, aesthetic and creative manner, he violates and departs from some language norms, and by extension creates a unique technique to reveal the personalities of the characters in the play and to represent his themes in a very vivid and imagery manner. Various forms of deviations - phonological, lexical and semantic deviation characterize the play. Semantic deviation is realised through meaning swing and elongation as well as the use of concrete, animistic, humanizing and synesthetic metaphors. The play also features lexical and structural repetitions which help to reveal the characters and to emphasize the themes of the plays. Osundare also uses repetition to create aesthetics and fun for his audience.

Pragmatically, the play validates Grice's conversational principle. The Painter failed to conform to the maxims of relation and manner in his interlocution with the Head.

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