Lexical Repetition and Syntactic Parallelism in Selected Political Essays of Niyi Osundare and Ray Ekpu

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Abstract

This paper examines lexical repetition and syntactic parallelism in selected political essays of Niyi Osundare and Ray Ekpu, which have been relatively underexplored, in order to determine how they have

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been deployed to represent Nigeria's socio-political concerns as well as the points of convergence and divergence in the use of these devices by both writers. M.A.K Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar served as the framework. Eighteen (18) essays were purposively sampled; 9 each from Osundare and Ekpu's publications in *Newswatch* where they both published between the Second and Fourth Republics (1979–1999). The study shows that lexical repetitions underscore argument, expand the thematic range and create lexical links between words in the discourses. Syntactic parallelism creates a multidimensional representation of discourse themes such as deprivation, anarchy, civil unrest, moral decline, government's harsh economic policies and intimidation of the press. These themes are situated within a specific context in order to reinforce their gravity. Osundare's essays deployed the *mhq* patterns for effective description and thematic projection. Conversely, Ekpu's essays use the *mhq* and *hq* patterns for effective description and thematic projection. The essays of Osundare employ the SPC[1] structure to foreground the blatant disregard for human rights while Ekpu's employs the SPCA and SPA structures in projecting the breach of the judiciary. These devices contribute to the structure of the selected essays and create room for according emphasis and explicitness to the discourse themes. Osundare and Ekpu draw on lexical repetition and syntactic parallelism to unveil and denounce socio-political ills in the country. They employ these devices to underscore their political stance.

Keywords: lexical repetition, media essay, parallel structure, Niyi Osundare, Ray Ekpu

1. Introduction

'Essay' is concise writing in prose that examines a topic, articulates an opinion and induces readers to acknowledge a theme on any

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[1] The following abbreviations are used in this paper: ASPC (adjunct, subject, predicate and complement), SPA (subject, predicate and adjunct), SPC (subject, predicate and complement), SPCA (subject, predicate, complement and adjunct).

composition (Abrams & Harpham 2009). It is a short literary discourse on a specific topic in prose and generally "analytic, speculative or interpretative" (Diyanni 1997: 1711). From its inception to its most current post-modern examples, the essay has been distinguished from other literary genres. Woolridge (2007: 1) identifies the distinctive features of the essay form as "spontaneous, brief, exploratory, subjective, experiential, conversational, fragmentary, elastic and unmethodical". Atwan (2012: 201) explains that the essay mode is "experimental, experiential, exploratory, and open-ended". The openness of the essay form makes it much more conducive to engaging actively with the world in so many ways. Similarly, Klaus (2014) reveals that the essay form is used for testing ideas, offering direct information and investigating issues, as well as being anti-methodical. The anti-methodical nature of the essay is what gives it freedom over the conventionalised structures that prevail in other forms of discourse (Good 2014).

Considering the essay's concern for freedom and uniqueness as revealed in the preliminary discourse, the form has been used by writers in Europe and Africa to investigate issues and elucidate specific subject matters with a view to proffering solutions to global concerns. These include Niyi Osundare and Ray Ekpu whose essays address many social themes. Niyi Osundare and Ray Ekpu are renowned Nigerian essayists who commenced writing in the 1970s. As social critics and human rights activists, Osundare and Ekpu have witnessed the moral degeneration in Nigeria. For many decades, they have been provocative contributors to public discourse on religion, politics, and the economy. Both writers are dissatisfied with the failure of Nigeria and Nigerians, the poor leadership, misplaced chances and unexploited opportunities, as well as the inactive masses and their readiness to accept everything from governance. To this end, they

discuss these issues and bring their journalistic intellect and creative skills to bear on their essays (Aluya 2018).

Despite the landmark contributions of Osundare and Ekpu's essays to Nigeria's socio-political development, not many systematic studies have been done on them. This paper was, therefore, designed to examine selected political essays of these writers in order to determine how lexical repetition and syntactic parallelism have been deployed to represent Nigeria's socio-political concerns as well as the points of convergence and divergence in the use of these devices by both writers. The next subsection examines the concepts of repetition and parallelism and their discourse functions in literary works.

2. Repetition and Parallelism

Repetition and parallelism are devices that "capture musicality, aesthetics, emphasis and meaning" in literary works (Adagbonyin & Dada 2012: 92). Repetition is defined as the reiteration of similar "lexical items in two or more sentences thereby showing that the sentences are related in meaning" (Gbenga 2015: 118). To Wales (2011: 366), it is a "powerful resource of interpersonal involvement and rapport"; and Carter (2004) observes that it may be deployed for emphasis or out of the intensity of feeling. Repetition is not only restricted to the reiteration of the same lexical item but also the occurrence of a related item. It is the most direct form of creating lexical links in discourse (Hebblethwaite 2002, Halliday & Matthiessen 2004).

Parallelism (also called parallel structure or parallel construction) is the recurrence of identical structural patterns usually between phrases and clauses (Wales 2011). In other words, when syntactic forms display resemblance or the same patterns they are said to be

parallel. The sameness of patterns may result in the parallel presentation of contrasts, oppositions and surprise in spoken or written communication. Nørgaard et al. (2010) say that parallelism is marked by excessive use of repetitive structures and that by this means linguistic items are promoted to the forefront. While Leech (1969: 62) describes the term as "foregrounded regularity", that is, the consistent piling up of language patterns for a special effect, and explains further that all occurrences of parallelism create a relationship of equivalence between two or more constituents; Jeffries & McIntyre (2010: 32) see parallelism as "unexpected regularity". In conformity with Leech's submission, Wales (2011) avows that there is usually some noticeable connection in meaning between the recurring elements which reinforce the equivalence.

As the foregoing comments indicate, parallelism juxtaposes ideas that are related in order to provide a proper semantic connection (Adagbonyin & Dada 2012). Also, it provides rhetorical emphasis, ensures memorability, offers pleasure and reinforces the propositional content of a text (Leech 1969). Its repetitive quality makes the phrase or clause in a text symmetrical and therefore very striking for readers to follow (Jeffries & McIntyre 2010, Sobola 2019, Tak 2020). To investigate parallelism in a work of art, Leech (1969: 57) stresses that prominence should be accorded to "elements of interest and surprise rather than on the automatic pattern". Hence, this study will only explore patterns in the selected essays which create interest and call for surprise. It is important to mention here that among the various distinct linguistic levels (Lexis, syntax, semantics, phonology and graphology) from which repetition and parallelism can be explored, this paper focuses exclusively on lexis, which refers to diction, and syntax, which deals largely with the arrangement of sentences, clauses and phrases. This paper employs Systemic Functional Grammar in examining the essays under study.

3. Theoretical Consideration

The Systemic Functional Grammar recognises four major elements of grammar: unit, structure, class, and system: which function as a framework for the description of all natural languages. These categories are referred to as the "categories of the highest order of abstraction" and they account for the structural patterns in language (Halliday 1961). The discussion of this framework will focus exclusively on the category of structure because of its relevance to this study which seeks to examine the essays of Osundare and Ekpu for cases of parallel structures. Structure is defined as the category of grammar that accounts for the nature of patterns which units carry (Tomori 1977). Also, it is seen as the organisation of these patterns (Ogunsiji 2001).

In English, structure is divided into two parts, namely: clause structure and group or phrase structure. The four elements of the English clause structure given by Halliday are S, P, C, A, representing Subject, Predicator, Complement, and Adjunct, respectively. All clause structures in English combine all or some of these elements in the various places allowed by the grammar of the language. This point is illustrated in the following clause structures: (a) *Man/is/a social animal* (SPC); (b) *The president/gave/a speech/yesterday* (SPCA); (c) *After 1959,/Nigeria/was/independent* (ASPC). The first clause has SPC structure, the second consists of SPCA structure and the third is made up of ASPC structure.

The group structure has four major classes, namely: nominal group, verbal group, adverbial group, and prepositional group. Since the examination of parallel structures in the selected essays will be delimited to the nominal and verbal groups, discussion of group structure shall be limited to these two types of groups. The elements of the nominal group structure are modifier, head and qualifier (m, h,

q). Whereas *h* is a required element, *m* and *q* are elective and dependent. The component introducing the *head* is called the *pre-modifier* and that which appears after it is the *post-modifier*. The four structural types of nominal group are: the *h-type* (head only), *mh-type* (head with pre-modifier), *hq-type* (head with qualifier) and the *mhq-type* (full structure of pre-modification and post-modification).

The verbal group is the component that operates as Finite plus Predicator. It comprises a main verb as head and in many instances concomitant with auxiliaries, which aid to articulate differences of voice, aspect, and negation (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004). The logical systems of verbal group change correspondingly, a fundamental distinction being between the finite and non-finite forms (Kim 2005, Wales 2011). For example, in the expression *the children have been eating their lunch,* the verbal group is, *has been eating.* The verbal group can be interpreted as the extension of a verb and it comprises a group of words within the class of a verb (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004). This paper employs the above framework in dissecting the selected essays of Osundare and Ekpu for instance of lexical repetition and parallel structures.

4. Methodology

Eighteen essays were purposively sampled; 9 each from Osundare and Ekpu's publications in *Newswatch*. While Ekpu's essays were extracted directly from several issues of *Newswatch*, those of Osundare were sourced from *Dialogue with my country*, an independently published compendium of the essays he contributed to the magazine. Osundare's essays selected for this study are "Scars of the Seasons I" (SOTS 1), "Scars of the Seasons II" (SOTS, 2), "Not an Internal

Affairs" (NAIA), "Parable from Koma" (PFK), "Trouble in the House" (TITH), "Abominations" (A), "Tears for my Country" (TFMC), "Murderers, Be not Proud" (MBNP) and "Mad Times" (MT) (Osundare 2011).

The selection from Ekpu's collection is "A Day after the Party" (ADATP), "A Dialogue with the Future" (ADWTF), "On Eve of the Passover" (OEOTPO), "A Time for Peace" (ATFP), "Leadership" the flock or fleece" (LTFOTF), "Messiah as Mercenary" (MAM), "A Nation's Questions (ANQ), "Shades of Rainbow" (SOR), and "Corruption" (C).

The above essays are narrative, descriptive, argumentative and instructive. They share the following textual properties: intentionality, acceptability, informationality, instructionality and intertextuality. The essays are intentional because they have similar purposes; acceptable for containing useful and relevant information; informative for being instructive; situational for sharing similar situations of occurrence and intertextual for possessing factors which make their utilisation dependent upon knowledge of one or more previously encountered text. The essays were read and carefully studied for thorough familiarisation with their relevant details before they were subjected to analysis.

5. Thematic Concerns of the Selected Essays

This section contextualizes the selected essays of Osundare and Ekpu. Osundare's "Parable from Koma" depicts the widespread famine and other areas of lack in Nigeria owing to the squandering of its rich national resources (Osundare 1986b: 3). The focus in "Scars of the Season I" is on the deteriorating state of Nigeria's economy, rendering

many citizens skeptical about the country's future (Osundare 1986c: 6). In "Scars of the Season II", Osundare (1986d: 9) explores the deplorable condition of Nigerian hospitals and the poor attendant services. "Abominations" captures the destruction of Nigeria and Nigerians. It describes Nigeria as one of the countries in Africa where the government imposes a choice of leadership on the citizens (Osundare 1996a: 319). In "Murderers, be not Proud", Osundare (1986a: 347) reflects the precarious condition faced by human rights activists in Nigeria. "Tears for my Country" laments the various atrocities perpetrated by Nigerians and by the government (Osundare 2002: 364). "Not an Internal Affair" criticises the blatant disregard of fundamental human rights by the government (Osundare 1996b: 69) and "Mad Times" addresses the issues of tyranny, betrayals, ethnic and religious intolerance which have been threatening the fabrics of the country (Osundare 1994a: 300). Finally, "Trouble in the House" examines the issues of ethnicity and religion and how they have impeded cohesion among the various geopolitical zones in Nigeria (Osundare 1994b: 253).

However, Ekpu (1985a) in "A Dialogue with the Future" laments the poor state of education in Nigeria and advises the government to invest in education in order to secure a meaningful future for the youths. "On Eve of the Passover" addresses some of the negative traits of Nigerian politics, which include election rigging; stealing of ballot papers and boxes and bribing of electoral officials (Ekpe 1993: 21). In "Shades of Rainbow", Ekpu (1985b) reports the unlawful intimidation of Nigerian citizens by law enforcement agencies while "Corruption", he relates the depth of moral disintegration in the country (Ekpu 2001: 41). "Day after the Party" delves into Nigeria's past and recounts the occurrences after the country's attainment of independence (Ekpu 1987: 20). In "A Time for Peace", the writer reflects on the various crises which Nigeria has witnessed and their effects on the country,

the people, and the economy (Ekpu 1994a). "Leadership: the Flock or Fleece" comments on the subject of leadership in Nigeria and why Nigerian leaders do not succeed in office (Ekpu 2010: 10). "Messiah as Mercenary" invokes the 1966 coup in Nigeria together with the negative impression which the public has formed about the military afterwards (Ekpu 1994b). Finally, "A Nation's Questions" examines the various systems of government Nigeria has adopted since independence and offers reasons why the country has not succeeded in spite of the adoption of these systems of government (Ekpu 1992: 15). As the foregoing contextualisation has shown, Osundare and Ekpu address human-angle issues through the print media with the aim of building a better Nigerian society.

6. Textual Discussion

This section examines the selected essays for cases of lexical repetition and syntactic parallelism in order to showcase how they have been used to represent Nigeria's sociopolitical concerns. Also, the analysis hopes to determine the points of convergence and divergence in the use of these devices by Osundare and Ekpu.

6.1. Lexical Repetition in Osundare's Essays

Osundare repeats certain lexical items in his essays in order to foreground them. This is exemplified in the text below:

Text 1
Their entreaties are *more* quiet, *more* refined, *more* harrowing, for they are carried right to the portals of the ears (SOTS 1, 8).

Text 2

Yes, indeed, that *crazy* letter is the *crazy* product of a *crazy* country (TFMC, 366).

Text 3

They have *murdered* Dele Giwa but they cannot *murder* the truth (MBNP, 345).

Text 1, is a complex sentence consisting of two clauses. The lexical item 'more' is repeated severally in the first clause. The repeated item refers to the pleas of hapless Nigerians who have been turned into mendicants due to the government's harsh economic policy. Observe that the word, 'entreaties' being magnified by the reoccurrence of 'more', is in a harmonious relationship with the reference item 'they' in the second clause. The connection between the repeated item and the reference helps to track the flow of the writer's message. Besides, the repetition creates a lexical link between these words in the text and as well reveals the emotive state of mind of the writer considering the pathetic situation of Nigerians to which reference is being made.

As for Text 2, it is configured with a simple sentence. Here, the lexical item repeated is 'crazy'. The repeated word shows the logical emphasis that is necessary to attract the reader's attention to the keyword in the text and emphasis are pointers to the breakdown of law and order in Nigeria due to the inability of the Nigerian leaders to restore orderliness to the country. The writer expresses anger and embarrassment over this situation. Hence, the reiteration of 'crazy' deployed out of the intensity of feeling to describe Nigeria as a failed state. In this instance, the second and third occurrences of 'crazy' hark back to the first. This interrelation aids to link the two parts of the discourse and reminds the reader of their importance, that is, the

repeated words, making them keywords in the text.

Finally, the third text is a complex sentence where the lexical item 'murder' is repeatedly deployed. The second appearance of 'murder' refers back to the first. Though 'murdered' and 'murder' have different morphological shapes, they are still regarded as similar lexical items as one is derived from the other. The repetition of 'murder' is deployed by the writer to underscore the unlawful assassination of journalists in Nigeria. Repetition in this discourse creates cohesive links and highlights the writer's thematic concern which helps to evoke an emotion of pity in the reader owing to the brutal assassination of journalists in the country.

A remarkable point to be made on Osundare's deployment of lexical repetition is that he aims for emphasis while also expanding his thematic range. That he consistently exploits this semantic device, revealing his desire, to semantically foreground the lexical items deployed, which helps to heighten the communicative impact.

6.2. Syntactic Parallelism in Osundare's Essays

A noticeable feature of Osundare's syntactic organisation is the much concern he has for creating parallel structures and building up repetitive patterns. The parallel structures in his essays exist at the levels of the nominal group, verbal group and sentence. The analysis shall begin with the nominal group.

6.2.1. The Nominal Group

A significant point to be made on Osundare's utilisation of structural patterns at the nominal group level is that he aims for effective description as illustrated in the texts below.

Text 4

The sanctity of human life, the right to basic human freedoms including the right to fair trial and civilised judicial processes, (NAIA, 71).

Text 5

A few weeks before the Koma discovery, a perniciously orchestrated film version of Karen Blixen's *Out of Africa*… (PFK, 3).

Text 4 consists of four nominal groups, namely: "The sanctity of human life", "the right to basic human freedoms", "the right to fair trial" and "the right to civilised judicial processes". The sameness of pattern perceptible in these nominal groups is the *mhq-type* (full structure of pre-modification and post-modification). The nominal group structure is captured as follows: The (M) sanctity (H) of human life (Q), the (M) right (H) to basic human freedoms (Q), the (M) right (H) to fair trial (Q) and the (M) right (H) to civilised judicial processes (Q). Observe that the (Q) element in each of the structures comprises a Prepositional headed-qualifier and a Nominal Group Complement. The nominal group structures are syntagamatically related. The patterns indicate the fundamental rights to which every citizen of Nigeria is entitled. In this way, then, the items have paradigmatic relationship with "sanctity" and "right" representing the subject head in the nominal group structures. All the nominal groups serve descriptive functions and in fact, provide more information on "sanctity" and "right". The four nominal groups represent abstract ideas. Together, they convey the essayist's appraisal of fundamental human rights in the country. They are repeatedly used by the essayist in advancing his discourse theme on the blatant disregard for fundamental human rights in Nigeria.

Osundare speaks on the Koma ethnic group located in the Atlantika Mountains of Adamawa State in Text 5. The expressions "A few weeks before the Koma discovery" and "A perniciously orchestrated film version of Karen Blixen…" are all nominal patterns with the *mhq-type* (full structure of pre-modification and post-modification) as represented thus: A (M) few (M) weeks (H) before the Koma discovery (Q) and A (M) perniciously (M) orchestrated (M), film (M) version (H) of Karen Blixen… (Q). The patterns are repeatedly deployed by Osundare in projecting his discourse theme. The essayist's choice of these nominal groups is quite satirical. In conveying his message about the Koma tribe, he refers to the manner in which Africans have been portrayed in Karen Blixen's *Out of Africa*. Considering the primitive lifestyle practiced by the Koma ethnic group, Osundare is stunned that despite the fact that Nigeria has embraced civilisation, some parts of it, like the Koma people who still use fresh leaves and animal skin for clothing, have not. Note that the nominal groups "A few weeks before the Koma discovery" and "A perniciously orchestrated film version of Karen Blixen…" are in a syntagmatic relationship with their subject heads "weeks" and "version" and are also in a paradigmatic relationship with each other in that the portrait of Africa depicted in Karen's *Out of Africa* vividly reflects the primitive lifestyle discovered among the Koma people. The fact that they occur in the same paradigm suggests that they have a relationship of equivalence (Leech 1969). It is the repetition of same nominal group structure that calls for attention and also lends prominence to the discourse theme.

6.2.2. The Verbal Group

Apart from nominal group, the recurrent use of parallel structures at the verbal group constitutes an important stylistic feature of

Osundare's foregrounded regularity. The following texts buttress this point.

Text 6
Unexamined, unadmitted, unnoticed, the woman bled to death on a stretcher (SOTS II, 10).

Text 7
Tricked in so many years of General Babangida's Maradonic manipulation, frustrated by General Abacha's elephantine insensitivity, fed upon facts with a heavy ethnic and sectional coloration, Nigerians are finding it increasingly difficult to spot the difference between truth and falsehood (MT, 300).

In Text 6 above, Osundare laments the deplorable condition of Nigerian hospitals and the poor attendant services. To achieve this, he employs the following lexical verbs: "unexamined", "unadmitted" and "unnoticed" to depict the poor services in Nigerian teaching hospitals. What is striking in this text is the fronting of these lexical verbs deployed to foreground the poor medical services in these hospitals. The items which succeed the lexical verbs are worth commenting on. They perform complementary roles by supplying additional information to the verbs thereby aiding to elaborate on Osundare's discourse subject. Processed together, the lexical verbs together with the items succeeding them reveal the multiple trauma which Nigerian citizens experience in the hands of Nigerian medical practitioners.

The utilisation of parallel structure in Text 7 is observed in the essayist's fronting of the lexical verbs "tricked", "frustrated" and "fed" respectively. Here, Osundare accentuates the themes of callousness and deceit of Nigerian leaders and employs each of the

lexical verbs together with the items succeeding them to foreground the horrible treatment meted out to Nigerians by their so-called leaders.

6.2.3. The Sentence Level

On structural parallelism at the level of the sentence, it is noticeable that Osundare fully repeats clauses that have identical patterns. Consider, for example, the following examples below.

Text 8
What all this boils down to is that more and more Nigerians are becoming hungry, ill and dehumanised (SOTS 1, 8).

Text 9
The gun is the ballot, the gun is the parliament and the gun is even God to whom citizens like conquered subjects must bow and bend (TITH, 253).

Text 10
We have been lied to, cheated, swindled, denied our rights, hanged, and dehumanised in countless ways (A, 320).

Osundare makes use of parallel structures as devices to reinforce and re-emphasize his ideas in Text 8. The parallel structures are the items realising the complement in the final sentence as shown below.

S   P   C
Nigerians / are becoming / hungry, ill and dehumanised

The items realising the compliment are syntagmatically related to

the predicate, *are becoming,* and also in a paradigmatic relationship with each other. The fact that they occur in the same paradigm suggests that they have a relationship of equivalence. Each item represents one of a number of precarious situations which unemployment has plunged Nigerians into. In other words, the parallel structures are channels through which Osundare provides a multidimensional perspective of the contemptible plights of Nigerians.

The recurrent structures in Text 9 are configured with SPC structural pattern. Observe that the item signifying the subject and predicate functions are repeated while those representing the complement functions in the structure are varied. What is appealing in the repetition is not in the lexical items but in the structures. Therefore, the parallel structures are represented thus:

    S   **P**   **C**
The gun / is / the ballot,

    S   **P**   **C**
The gun / is / the parliament,

    S   **P**   **C**
The gun / is / God…,

Unlike in the preceeding text where the structural patterns are located in the complement position, they run through all the clauses here. Observe that all the constructions realising the complement functions are complement of the same subject, *the gun,* and predicate, *is.* They represent the various uses of the gun during the military dispensation in Nigeria. For example, the gun is used by the military government to impose choice of leadership on the electorate, enact

laws which they must obey and forcefully demand reverence from them. Apart from aiding to specify the different functions of the gun, the repetition of structures also create rhetorical emphasis. Besides, the forms of repetition are remarkable for the effects of the variety they create. The pattern *the gun* plus *is* is repeated three times. In each case, there is a variation of the complement, which creates variety thereby aiding to foreground the excesses of military government in Nigeria.

The parallel structures in Text 10 run through all the items realising the predicate as shown below.

S	P	A
We /	have been lied to, swindled /	in countless ways.
	cheated, swindled, denied our	
	right, hanged and dehumanised	

The items functioning as the predicates in above sentence are linked to the subject and are employed by Osundare to effectively provide a multidimensional representation of the various ways in which Nigerians have been maltreated by their leaders. Apart from this function, the repeated structures serve for rhetorical emphasis which also reinforces the writer's message. Having examined lexical repetition and syntactic parallelism in Osundare's essays as the foregoing discussion has demonstrated, the second phase of the textual analysis will examine Ekpu's essays for how lexical repetition and syntactic parallelism have been deployed to capture Nigeria's socio-political concerns.

6.3. Lexical Repetition in Ekpu's Essays

Lexical repetitions are also the hallmarks of Ekpu's essays. They

give logical emphasis to his utterance and capture the attention of readers as illustrated in the texts below.

Text 11
When the youths *grow up*, they will certainly *grow up* in the *image* of the elders and that *image*, if you look at it in the mirror, is *ugly*, *very, very, ugly* (ADWTF, 17).

Text 12
When Transparency International named Nigeria as the leader in the pantheon of *corrupt* nations, yes, some of us thought, Nigeria is *corrupt,* very *corrupt* but no, it couldn't possibly breast the tape before Pakistan, India or Russia (C, 2).

Text 13
One understands that where there's no law, the police *creates* it. Where he does not *create* it, because he has no power to *create* it, harassment becomes the law (SOR, 9).

In Text 11 above, Ekpu speaks on the consequence of parents' negligence towards the education and moral upbringing of their children and government's failure to equip schools with modern facilities that would help to provide them quality education. Four lexical items repeatedly deployed are 'grow up', 'image', 'very' and 'ugly'. Observe that there is an interrelation between these lexical items and reference items in the text. For instance, the second occurrence of 'grow-up' harks back to the first; it is harmoniously related to the reference item 'they' and the lexical item 'image' succeeding it. The choice of the repeated items serve to accentuate what youths' future would become if neglected thereby drawing the

reader's attention to the significance of the writer's message.

Also, the use of repetition for logical emphasis is the writer's objective in Text 12 where 'corrupt' is recurrently deployed to vividly portray the theme of moral decline in Nigeria. The third appearance of 'corrupt' is harmoniously related to the first and second in the text. The repeated lexical item is intended to draw the reader's attention to the depth of moral decline being referred to by the writer. The focus in Text 13 is on the unlawful treatment of ordinary Nigerians by law enforcement agencies. Observe that 'create' is the lexical item repeatedly deployed in this text. The writer's choice of the repeated word is to foreground the tactics used by the police in intimidating innocent citizens.

6.4. Syntactic Parallelism in Ekpu's Essays

Just like Osundare, Ekpu seems to have a penchant for forming parallel structures and building up repetitive patterns. The paper examines cases of syntactic parallelism in his essays from the nominal group, verbal group and the sentence levels. The analysis shall begin with the nominal group.

6.4.1. The Nominal Group

Ekpu employs parallel structures at the nominal group level for effective description and thematic projection. The constant utilisation of identical nominal group patterns uncovers his proclivity to foreground those patterns in order to make his message clearer and interesting. The following sample texts illustrate his use of syntactic parallelism.

Text 14

Author of four books, The Audacity of Hope, Dreams from my Father, A Story of Race and Inheritance, Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dreams (LTFOTF, 12).

Text 15

Gold in their teeth, gold in their noses, gold in their ears, gold in their necks, gold in their wrists, gold in their wrists, gold in their ankles and gold on their waist (ADATP, 18).

Text 14 comprises five nominal groups which are all used by Ekpu to refer to President Barack Obama. A pattern of parallel construction most noticeable here is the coalescing of two nominal group types. Whereas the first, third and fifth nominal expressions are constructed with the *hq-type* (head with qualifier) as captured in the following expressions: Author (H) of four books (Q), Dreams (H) from my Father (Q), and Thought (H) on reclaiming the American Dreams (Q); the second and fourth expressions are constructed with the *mhq-type* (full structure of pre-modification and post-modification) as indicated in the following expressions: (M) Audacity (H) of hope (Q) and A (M) story (H) of race. One nominal group does not seem to be enough for Ekpu in describing Barack Obama. Five nominal groups must be used, each one building towards his vision which is to vividly and elaborately capture Obama's achievements as a great leader. The effect of the above patterns is that it enables Ekpu to elevate his description of Obama's achievement as one of the great leaders of all time.

A pattern of parallel construction most noticeable in Text 15 is 'listing'. It is generally typified by two or three lines in which a central theme is provided and other ideas in the units that are juxtaposed are made to affirm it. For illustration, the efficacy of parallelism in this

text lies in the repetition of *hq-type* (head with qualifier). Also, all the lines which form this structure have a similar structural composition of the nominal group. They are however only divergent in terms of the final set of words in each line. The parallel structure is drawn across and within the lines in the discourse. The seven nominal groups are in a syntagmatic relationship with the subject head 'gold' and are also in a paradigmatic relationship with each other. The parallel structures are deployed to effectively describe the different ways in which Nigerians flaunt their loot. The arrangement of this structural pattern in the collection calls for attention as Ekpu epitomises the situation being revealed through the structural beauty of the lines. Each line captures an effect that is aesthetically blended to touch emotions and realise the amplification of the subject matter, which is presented.

6.4.2. The Verbal Group

Ekpu's essays, just like Osundare's, exhibit structural patterns in the verbal group. The use of parallel structures at the verbal group is captured below.

Text 16
Remember Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu, the architect of the 1966 coup, with his trademark white muffler and the terror that he instilled into Nigerians; remember Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi and the mythical stories, some of them apocryphal, about Ironsi's crocodile, Ironsi's invulnerability and Ironsi's immortality, all of which fed the myth of the soldier as supernatural god (MSM, 3).

Text 17

Do you also realise that no businessman has ever ruled Nigeria? Would that be why Nigeria has lacked the ruthless efficiency of private enterprise? (OEOTPO, 4).

In Text 16, Ekpu refers to the January 1966 coup in Nigeria and the negative perception which the public has held about the military afterwards. The expressions *Remember Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu, the architect of the 1966 coup…* and *Remember Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi and the mythical stories…* are instances of syntactic parallelism. This is because the two lexical verbs *remember* and *remember* have similar tenses (present tense), are fronted and repeatedly deployed by Ekpu in invoking the January 1966 coup in Nigeria. Also, they are finite verbs which serve as the heads of the clauses in which they appear. Observe that all the items which succeed the lexical verbs and which precede the nouns, *Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu* and *Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi* are varied. They are in a syntagmatic relationship with the lexical verbs and also in a paradigmatic relationship with each other for relaying a similar subject matter that borders on the coup. They perform complementary roles for adding extra information to the verbs. Combined together, the verbs in each clause, together with the items which succeed them buttress the negative perception which the public has held about the military owing to the damaging roles which Chukwuma Nzeogwu (the mastermind the 1966 coup) and Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi (who seized power as a result of the chaos occasioned by the coup) played during the coup.

Similarly, the utilisation of parallel patterns in Text 17 is observed in the essayist's fronting of the auxiliary verbs, *do* and *would.* Whereas the first verb belongs to the primary auxiliary category, the second is from the modal category. More importantly, both verbs

function as headwords and the items succeeding them are paradigmatically related with each other and also in a syntagmatic relationship with both auxiliary verbs. The items which succeed both auxiliary verbs intensify their significance and they are deployed by the essayist to render prominence to his discourse subject on the kinds of leaders who have ruled the country.

6.4.3. The Sentence Level

Parallel structures are consistent in Ekpu's data at the sentence level. Like Osundare, Ekpu deploys parallel structures at this level to project and reinforce his message of a miscarriage of justice, the devastating effects of conflict and the wrong practice of political systems in the country. The texts below illustrate this use.

Text 18
There has been a multitude of court cases, which is all very well, and there has been a multitude of unobeyed court orders, which is all very bad (ATFP, 22).

Text 19
The seed must be right, the soil must be fertile and the farmer must be diligent (ANQ, 15).

Text 20
War is death, war is hell and war is objectionable (ATFP, 10).

The parallel construction in Text 18 is foregrounded by the graphological arrangement of protrusion of the subject/predicate ("There has been") and ("Which is") constituents of the clauses. Basically, whereas the first and third clauses have the SPCA structural

pattern, the second and fourth are configured with SPA pattern respectively as shown below:

   S   **P**   **C**   **A**
There / has been / a multitude / of court cases

   S   **P**   **A**
Which / is / all very well, and

   S   **P**   **C**   **A**
There / has been / a multitude / of unobeyed court orders,

   S   **P**   **A**
Which / is / all very bad

Here, there is a juxtaposition of the first and third as well the second and the fourth clauses. All the clauses in a parallel relationship have the same thematic orientation which borders on a breach of the judicial arm of government. The repetition of structural equivalence provides the rendering of the text a certain rhythmic power that produces the mood of sadness as a result of the subject matter presented by Ekpu which can lead to societal dislocation.

In Text 19, Ekpu examines the various political systems which Nigeria has practiced since independence, provides reasons why each system has not worked for the country and also highlights what must be done for any political system to work for the country. Here, the essayist repeats the SPC structural pattern with a unique arrangement in order to arrest not only the attention and interest of the reader but also to achieve aesthetics values as captured thus:

S	P	C
The seed / must be / right		
The soil / must be / fertile		
The farmer / must be / diligent.		

The parallel structures in this text are deployed for specification. Each clause specifies the conditions which Ekpu offers. The first clause refers to the accurateness of the political system, the second relates to the preparedness of the country and the third to the leaders' concerted effort in ensuring that the political system works for the country. The repetition intensifies the ideas being explained by Ekpu and allows the reader much room for understanding the message on the conditions which must be fulfilled for a political system to work for the country.

A pattern of parallelism most noticeable in Text 20 is listing. It is generally typified by three lines in which a central theme is provided and other ideas in the units that are juxtaposed are made to affirm it. For illustration, the efficacy of parallelism in this text lies in the repetition of SPC structure as projected below.

S	P	C
War / is / death,		
war / is / hell,		
war / is / objectionable		

All the lines which form this structure have a similar structural composition. However, they are only divergent in terms of the items realising the complement. The parallel structure is drawn across and within the lines in the text. The three items functioning as complements are in a syntagmatic relationship with the predicate, *is,*

and are also in a paradigmatic relationship with each other. The parallel structures are deployed to foreground the essayist's perception on war.

6.5. The Points of Convergence and Divergence

From the analysis carried out, lexical repetition and syntactic parallelism form the bulk of Osundare and Ekpu's literary style. Both writers share certain similarities and differences in the deployment of these devices. To begin with, Osundare and Ekpu employ lexical repetition to underscore argument, expand the thematic range and create lexical links in their discourses. While repetitions in Osundare's data serve to uncover emotive states of mind, those in Ekpu's function to capture attention in order to redirect focus to the discourse subjects.

Both writers employ nominal group structures for effective description and thematic projection. Osundare uses the *mhq* patterns for effective description and thematic projection; Ekpu shows a preference for the *mhq* and *hq* patterns for effective description and thematic projection. As regards the verbal group, Osundare and Ekpu front verbs with a view to foregrounding their discourse subjects. While the verbs fronted in Osundare's data are completely lexical in nature, those in Ekpu's are a mixture of lexical and auxiliary verbs.

More so, at the level of the sentence, both writers employ syntactic parallelism for identification, rhetorical emphasis and to create a multidimensional representation of the issues addressed. For example, Osundare and Ekpu employ the SPC structure (with repeated patterns across the clause) to identify the excesses of government during the military dispensation and the adverse effects of the crisis in the country respectively. Also, they exploit similar sentence structures (with repeated patterns in the complement position) to create a multidimensional representation of their discourse themes.

Although Osundare employs the SPC structure (with repeated

patterns in the predicate position) to highlight the various ways in which Nigerians have been maltreated by their so-called leaders; Ekpu shows a preference for SPCA and SPA structures (with repeated patterns across the clause) in accentuating the breach of the judiciary. The repetitive patterns deployed by these writers in advancing their themes in the selected essay texts are useful stylistic devices which help make their messages clearer and more interesting. They bring into the selected essays an unending pleasure that increases interest to appreciate the message of the essayists. Also, they contribute to the structure of the essays and create room for giving emphasis to certain ideas or concepts being dealt with in the essays. In all, they create room for clarity and bring explicitness.

6.6. Conclusion

The foregoing analysis has demonstrated that the political essays of Niyi Osundare and Ray Ekpu exhibit lexical repetition and syntactic parallelism which have been utilised to represent Nigeria's socio-political challenges. Osundare and Ekpu deploy lexical repetition to re-emphasize their ideas. They also utilised parallel structures to create intriguing complex structures in the essays which help to underscore the issues raised. This facility, as a manifestation of syntactic foregrounding, in fact, constitutes such important devices for the essayists that it is no over-generalisation saying that the very artifice of these writers' essays reduces themselves to the principle of parallelism (Leech 1969). Osundare and Ekpu strive, through their lexical and syntactic patterning, to heighten the intensity and immediacy of their messages.

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