




EXAMINING FOREGROUNDING AS A STRATEGY FOR IDENTITY MAINTENANCE THROUGH STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF AFRO-AMERICAN POETRY

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Foregrounding, Deviation, Parallelism, Langston Hughes, Harlem Renaissance, Identity, Racial Discrimination	<p>This study investigates the use of foregrounding that involves deviation and parallelism as a strategy to maintain the identity and disclose racial discrimination in poetry of Langston Hughes, a famous twentieth-century Afro-American poet during Harlem Renaissance. By adopting qualitative approach, researchers selected three different poems from three different volumes of Hughes's poetry by adopting random sampling technique and analyzed them by applying theory of foregrounding presented by Leech (1969). The foregrounding, a stylistic device emphasizing certain linguistic features to create emphasis or deviation from normative language patterns, serves as means for the poets to reclaim agency and articulate their unique experiences, histories, and perspectives. Researchers found that Hughes's poetry presents many foregrounded features upon the different levels, i.e., phonological, graphological, grammatical and semantic. The findings show that these foregrounded features upon different linguistic levels help the poet to maintain his identity and disclose racial discrimination. Therefore, these foregrounding features also help the poet revolt against the racial discrimination.</p>  <p>2024 Journal of Social Research Development</p>
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INTRODUCTION

Poetry, the oldest genre in literature, has played vital role in representing society and its social and cultural norms. Russian Formalists believe that poetry, in nature, is deviant from everyday speech as well as prose owing to its striking use of meter and various poetic devices such as metaphor, simile, alliteration, anaphora. to capture the readers' attention (Baldick, 2008). It has also been a constant source of inspiration for people who want to revolutionize society. The poets of revolutionary nature

have been raising their voices against social, cultural and political evils prevalent in society. Their efforts usually bear fruit and they become successful in waking people from the sleep of ignorance and inactivity. [Hughes \(1902-1967\)](#) was a greatly appreciated Afro-American writer often called 'The Poet Laureate of the Black' owing to his great contribution to the American/Afro-American literature. He is the most representative poet of Blacks because of his constant revolt against racial discrimination in America. His poetry transcends the limits of time and space. Many studies have been conducted on his works; most have done traditional analyses of his poems. Those studies focus on various themes of Hughes's poetry such as identity, dreams, freedom, and racial discrimination through the traditional approaches from literary criticism. In this inking, the theme of identity and racial discrimination has not been explored over stylistic analysis of his poems. Therefore, this study attempts to bridge this gap and do a stylistic analysis of Hughes's selected poems by applying the foregrounding theory.

Langston Hughes as a Poet

[Langston Hughes \(1902-1967\)](#), among other Afro-American poets, was the most revolutionary poet who raised his voice for his people against the Whites. He was a novelist, playwright, and essayist, but his reputation relied mainly on his poetry. He was a prolific writer and he produced the various volumes of poetry. *The Weary Blues* was published in 1926; *Fine Clothes to Jew* in 1927; *Harlem* in 1942; *Montage of a Dream Deferred* in 1951; and *Ask Your Mama* in 1961. Many of his poems are part of the syllabus in the subcontinent and all around the globe. According to [Richard Gray \(2011\)](#), Hughes was one of the most prominent poets in the history of American Literature and he was also an important figure of New Negro movement. In this drive, this movement was also famous as Negro Renaissance and Harlem Renaissance. Other than Langston Hughes poets like the Countee Cullen, Jean Toomer, and Claude McKay also belonged to this movement which was announced by Alain Locke in his anthology *The New Negro* in 1925 ([Baldick, 2008](#)). In Afro-American history, racial conflict between the Negroes and the Whites has been a never-ending issue. Even in the present, this racial conflict exists between the Blacks and Whites. The Blacks are thus constantly suffering from an identity crisis.

There was, and there is, a sense of inferiority among the Blacks, which is the reason for the physical, psychological, and social humiliation of Blacks ([Ali, 2023](#)). Langston Hughes was born to a poor family, and he led a life of poverty and misery. Due to his poor and miserable condition, Hughes was able to feel for sufferings of his fellow human beings, particularly the Blacks. Therefore, he raised his voice against maltreatment that they received from the Whites. [Gray \(2011\)](#) states that Hughes's poetry shows that he had the deep interest in the lives of ordinary and common men and women, particularly men and women of Harlem. According to [Epstein \(2023\)](#), in addition to the Countee Cullen, Jean Toomer, Richard Wright, and James Baldwin, Langston Hughes raised questions against racial discrimination, identity crisis and politics by adopting one strand of using the Afro-American vernacular by ignoring many other strands of modernism. In this linking, identity is one of the major themes of Hughes's poetry, and he seems to be more concerned about his Negro or Black identity than anything else. Similarly, Hughes once declared, in an interview that the basic purpose of his work had been to interpret the negro life concerning problems of democracy and to comment upon it ([Gray, 2011](#)).

By showing his love for his Negro identity, Hughes (1994) stated the young artist should change a Negro poet's desire of becoming the white poet into why he should want to be white when he was beautiful as a Negro. According to Gray (2011), the above statement by Hughes does not convey the meaning that black writers should idealize their black lives. But it does mean that the black writers should attempt to uncover the glory and strength of the African American tradition. This rhythmic complexity can serve to foreground cultural and artistic traditions of African American community. According to Gray (2011), Hughes's poems ask the readers to consider jazzy surface and mysterious essence of black life. It means that, like his contemporary poets, he has been much more concerned about his and his people's identity in presence of racial discrimination caused by Whites. Through such analysis, we can deepen our understanding of ways in which poetry serves as a tool for identity maintenance and cultural expression within African American literary tradition. By foregrounding these voices, poets can assert multiplicity of African American experiences and perspectives. The study aims to investigate foregrounding as a strategy for identity maintenance. It intends to identify the types of foregrounding that the Hughes employs to assert his identity in the presence of racial conflicts and discrimination.

What is Stylistics?

Stylistics is the formal study of style. It informs us about different style features, such as diction, vocabulary, and syntax. Each individual has his/her own way of expressing his/her personality, which can be called his/her style. Stylistics is the sub-branch of linguistics, which works as a bridge between linguistics and literature since it analyses literature using linguistic theories and models. In other words, stylistics targets literature and, for that purpose, it draws on Linguistics. According to Widdowson (1997), stylistics is a mediator because it mediates between subjects such as the English language, linguistics, and literature. He states that the stylistics is neither a separate subject nor a standalone discipline, but it serves as means of relating disciplines and subjects (Widdowson, 1997). Through stylistic choices such as repetition, alliteration, and parallelism, poets can foreground the strength and resilience of African American community. Stylistics has a wide scope encompassing a wide range of topics. Therefore, many attempts have been made by different stylisticians to define the term. According to Simpson (2004), stylistics is a method of interpreting texts by giving primary focus to language.

Simpson (2004) believes that the primary place is given to language owing to the importance of its multiple forms, various patterns, and several levels (e.g., phonological, morphological, syntactical, and semantic) that constitute linguistic structure. The word 'stylistics' derives meaning from French 'stylistique' and German 'Stilistik' from 1950s and 1960s. Stylistics emerged as a British-American field in the late 1960s which means that it is quite a new and young field if it is taken as a separate discipline (Stockwell & Whiteley, 2014). Nørgaard et al. (2010) state that stylistics, using linguistic models, theories, and frameworks, studies how meaning is created in literary texts and other texts through language. Stylistics also studies how a text works. Moreover, it also studies why a text works as it does and how we, as readers, complete our journey of reaching from words on the page to their meanings (Nørgaard et al., 2010). According to Burke (2017), stylistics, origin of which goes back to poetics and rhetoric in particular, is the study and analysis of texts, whether they are exclusively

literary or non-literary. In thus regard, to put it simply, stylistics is the study and analysis of style, which, according to [Wales \(2014\)](#), 'refers to perceived distinctive manner of expression in writing or speaking (p. 397).

Foregrounding

Foregrounding is a prominent term in stylistics. It refers to two significant terms known as deviation and parallelism/repetition. According to [Wales \(2014\)](#), foregrounding is popular term in stylistics, which was introduced by P.L. [Garvin \(1964\)](#), who translated 1930s term *aktualisace*, which means 'actualization'. [Quinn \(2006\)](#), on contrary, states that it was Jan Mukarovsky of the Prague School (early advocates of linguistic structuralism) who coined term foregrounding. Term foregrounding owes much to Russian formalists who believed that the function of poetic language was to surprise the reader ([Wales, 2014](#)). According to [Simpson \(2004\)](#), foregrounding involves textual patterning, which has 'literary-aesthetic purposes, stylistic distortion over deviation or parallelism/repletion (p. 50). Thus, foregrounding consists of two things: deviation and parallelism, and its major purpose is to create an effect of 'defamiliarization', which is translation of Shklovosky's Russian term *ostranenie* ([Simpson, 2004](#)). [Nørgaard et al. \(2010\)](#) point out that foregrounding is related to use of linguistic devices on all linguistic levels that appear to be prominent against the background of text. Since foregrounding includes deviation and parallelism as its major phenomena, former refers to moving away from a norm on all linguistic levels, and the latter refers to the overuse of repetitive structures ([Nørgaard et al., 2010](#)).

[Leech \(1969\)](#) defines parallelism as 'foregrounded regularity. Developing concept of foregrounding further, [Leech \(1969\)](#) states that foregrounding functions as a means to achieve a creative goal to create a special effect to invoke the analogy of a figure. According to [Leech \(1969\)](#), the system of language is the background that is taken for granted when any kind of linguistic deviation occurs. This linguistic deviation may be called foregrounding in the background of the language use. An example of foregrounding is Dylan Thomas's phrase 'a grief ago'. It arrests the reader's attention as it creates a sense of defamiliarization. Traditionally, in the background of the language, this phrase could be like, 'a minute ago', 'a week ago', 'a month ago', or 'a year ago' (normal paradigm) instead of 'a grief ago' (special paradigm) as [Leech \(1969\)](#) puts it. However, the use of the abstract noun 'grief' instead of time makes it a striking phrase, unlike the traditional ones. There is a certain deviation in the phrase 'a grief ago', creating a psychological effect on the reader. According to [Short \(2018\)](#), the deviation is such a linguistic phenomenon as reflects a considerable psychological effect upon the audience of a poem. [Short \(2018\)](#) calls this psychological effect 'foregrounding', pivotal thing in any text that helps one understand & interpret the message fully. [Leech \(1969\)](#) mentioned eight diverse types of deviations.

They include lexical, grammatical, phonological, graphological, semantic, dialectal, and deviation of register and historical period. (a) Lexical deviation involves neologism or invention of new words ([Leech, 1996](#)). (b) Grammatical deviation involves the use of unfamiliar structures of grammar by creating new structures or by distorting existing ones. (c) Phonological deviation refers to changing the pronunciation of some words or giving special pronunciation to them for the convenience of rhyming, e.g., the pronunciation of noun 'wind' /wɪnd/ as the verb 'wind' /waɪnd/ ([Leech, 1969](#)). (d)

Graphological deviation relates to deviance from punctuation, capitalization, and spelling rules. (e) Semantic deviation involves changing the meanings of words from literal to metaphoric. According to [Leech \(1969\)](#), metaphor which may also be called transference of meaning refers to the process through which the mind comprehends something on figurative plane. In this linking, the remaining three types of deviation (f) Dialectical, (g) Register, and (h) Historical Period fall in the domain of ancillary branches of linguistics. Thus, these deviations rarely occur in prose, but they occasionally occur in poetry.

Objectives of Study

1. To find out how Langston Hughes maintains identity over foregrounding in his poetry.
2. To examine that how these foregrounded features help the poet disclose racial conflict.

Research Questions

1. How does Langston Hughes maintain identity through the foregrounding?
2. How does he disclose the racial conflict & revolt against Whites through foregrounding?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Langston Hughes is one of the most prominent poets in history of American literature. Many studies have been done on his poetry, either from the perspective of the literary criticism, stylistics, or the sociolinguistics. Different scholars and thinkers have also done many traditional analyses of his poems. [Ebebe Eyang \(2016\)](#) studied the historical allusions in two of Hughes's poems from a Marxist point of view. The paper examined historical allusions as a strategy for the poetic communication. [Ebebe Eyang \(2016\)](#) found that poems "Jim Crow's Last Stand" and "Prelude to our Age: A Negro History Poem" are replete with the historical allusions. Several allusions and references to historical places and persons in both poems are linked with the struggle of blacks regarding racial conflicts. The study shows that allusions have been used as an expressive strategy to help the poet raise his for his people and stand up for them over his art ([Ebebe Eyang, 2016](#)). [Zahra et al. \(2023\)](#) conducted a morphological stylistic analysis of Hughes's renowned poem "Harlem", a representative poem of his dream for equal rights for blacks. In this regard, the study aimed to find out the dominant type of morphemes in poem. The researchers found sixteen (16) lexical morphemes, like nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs.

The number of functional morphemes, e.g., the pronouns, prepositions, articles, and conjunctions, was twenty-five (25). Moreover, there were seven (7) inflectional and three (3) derivational morphemes or suffixes ([Zahra et al., 2023](#)). "Harlem" consists of eleven lines, and [Zahra et al. \(2023\)](#) conducted a line-by-line morphological analysis of poem. Through in-depth analysis of the poem, researchers found that the most dominant morpheme is free morpheme, and as far as the type of morpheme is concerned, functional morpheme dominates the poem. Choice & arrangement of words in "Harlem" 'evoke strong emotions and reflections on consequences of unfulfilled dreams' about equal rights and freedom of the blacks ([Zahra et al., 2023](#)). The researchers could have concluded that dominant use of free morphemes in poem "Harlem" refers to poet's desire for freedom and emancipation from racial discrimination. Still, they could not see it from this perspective, leaving it as a research gap. Another study has been conducted on same poem, i.e., "Harlem" by [Raj Sharma \(2018\)](#), but from the

view of phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactic & semantic patterns. Morphologically, this study, like that of [Zahra et al. \(2023\)](#), also that poem is replete with root words or root morphemes, called free morphemes.

The study shows that the stylistic devices used by the poet help him enhance the meanings and help the readers grasp them. [Paudel \(2015\)](#) conducted a study from a sociolinguistics point of view that dealt with linguistic features like sounds, words, and structures underscoring issues like race, class, gender, ethnicity, inequality, nationality, and so on. The study shows that Hughes, in his poetry, uses sociolinguistic indicators to foreground linguistic and cultural diversity of Afro-American people. Hughes's sociolinguistic indicators include dreams, colloquial contractions, Afro-American images, euphemism, dialogue, double negation, and various literary devices such as metaphor, hyperbole, rhetoric questions to foreground class, ethnicity, slavery, and freedom ([Paudel, 2015](#)). Analyzing the poem 'Mother to Son' amid other poems, [Paudel \(2015\)](#) concludes that in this poem, Hughes exploits on Black English Vernacular to express his thoughts instead of merely communicating the mother's warmth, the lack of education, and her struggle. [Luo's \(2015\)](#) study on the foregrounded linguistic features i.e., deviation and over regularity in the different linguistic aspects examines foregrounded features on a surface level for the future interpretations and does not refer to them as a strategy for identity maintenance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, the researchers adopted a purely qualitative approach to analyze Langston Hughes's selected poems in-depth. Researchers randomly selected three poems from three diverse collections of poems by Langston Hughes. "Mother to Son" was taken from Hughes's first book entitled *Weary Blues*, published in 1926. This poem first appeared in 1922 in a magazine called *The Crisis*. Hughes composed "Remember" in 1930. However, it was not published until 2009. It was found written in pencil at back of book entitled *An Anthology of Revolutionary Poetry* which is Hughes's collection of the poems. According to another source, it was published posthumously in 1994 in *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes* by Knopf Publications. The third poem, "Share-Croppers", was taken from the volume 'Shakespeare in Harlem' published in 1942. For an in-depth analysis of the poems, the researchers have used the foregrounding theory as a framework. The researchers selected these three poems because they were written or published in different years with a considerable gap of time between them. Poems "Mother to Son" (1922) and "Remember" (1930) have gap of eight years. The poem, "Share-Croppers", published in 1942, has a twelve-year gap with "Remember" (1930). The researchers chose these three poems to analyze whether the poet's point of view changed over time or not. Moreover, the researchers wanted to see whether a change regarding use of foregrounded features occurred or not.

RESULTS OF STUDY

The study shows that Langston Hughes used foregrounding as a strategy for identity maintenance and to show racial discrimination between whites and blacks. For instance, in poem 'Mother to Son', he uses parallelism in the form of anaphora to refer to multiplicity of problems faced by blacks. One may notice graphological, syntactic, and semantic deviations in poem. Furthermore, parallelism, on the phonological and the clause level, and semantic deviation have also been found in the poem,

‘Remember’ through analyzing the poem from perspective of foregrounding. Poem, ‘Share-croppers’, appears to have alliteration regarding parallelism and change in meanings regarding semantic deviation. The researchers have given tables and figures in the following section for the clarity. The researchers found that in spite of the gap of eight to twelve years among poems, Langston Hughes has used the same foregrounded features, with a little variation, for identity maintenance and to show racial discrimination.

ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

‘Mother to Son’

Langston Hughes’s poem “Mother to Son” was first published in 1922 in the magazine, *The Crisis*, and then appeared in his first book, *The Weary Blues*, in 1926. The poem is a dramatic monologue in which a mother addresses her son, who is not present. The mother tells her son about the hardships that she has faced as an Afro-American by comparing life with a staircase. Many foregrounded features in the poem can be seen in the analysis below. In this regard, at the phonological level, the poet uses anaphora, a type of parallelism. The following lines (4-6 and 10-12) from the poem show the use of anaphora.

And splinters, (4)	And reachin’ landin’s, (10)
And boards torn up, (5)	And turnin’ corners, (11)
And places with no carpet on the floor- (6)	And sometimes goin’ in the dark (12)

The foregrounded repetition of the conjunction ‘and’ (repetition of conjunctions is also known as polysyndeton) at the beginning of various lines, perhaps, referring to the plurality and multiplicity of the problems that she has been facing as a Negro or a Black. Thus, the poet seems to be using this repetition deliberately because he intends to refer to various problems that his people (the Blacks) have been facing concerning their Afro-American identity. In this regard, the poem also contains syntactic deviation, which refers to the vernacular of the Afro-American people of Harlem. Using the vernacular asserts the identity of the poet, the persona, and the audience, supposedly the Afro-American people.

Deviant Structure	Non-deviant Structure
It’s had tacks in it	It had...
I’s e been a-climbin’ on	I’ve/ I have been climbing...
’Cause you finds it’s kinder hard	Because you find it...
For I’s e still goin’ , honey	For I am...
I’s e still climbin’	I am...

These foregrounded features of the syntactic deviations help the poet maintain his identity. As an educated person, he could have written this poem in formal language or standard English, but he preferred the vernacular for identity maintenance. The poem is graphologically foregrounded. The poet has made proper use of punctuation marks. There are ten commas, six periods/full stops, one colon, and two hyphens. On other hand, four verbs are in present participle form without the letter

'g', which has been replaced with apostrophe ('). The words, 'climbin', 'reachin', 'turnin' and 'goin'. The letter 'g' is also missing in gerund or noun 'landin's'. The traditional use of punctuation marks as per the standard rules of grammar, on one hand, and changing the spellings of present participle form of the verbs to show pronunciation, on other hand, refer to dual identity (Afro-American) of the poet, the persona, and the son (presumably the audience). The use of hyphens in poem also seems to refer to the poet's hyphenated identity, Afro-American. Mostly, there are end stops (.) in the poem. These graphologically foregrounded end stops perform two functions: (a) they help poet convey severity and intensity of obstacles and dangers that speaker is facing in her life; (b) they demand from reader to stop, ponder over those hardships, obstacles, and dangers that she faced in racist society because of her black identity.

The poem also contains semantic deviations. Life has been metaphorically compared with 'crystal stair'. The metaphor of 'crystal stair' extends to poem's end. Thus, this is an extended metaphor. The sentence, "Life for me ain't been no crystal stair", also has double negation, intensifying the effect of a sense of deprivation. It may refer to racial discrimination and racial inequality in the sense that for the Whites, life has been a crystal stair because they are the privileged people, unlike the Blacks. The 'tacks' and 'splinters' in the stairs and the 'boards torn up' refer to the hardships she, the mother, has been facing. So, the 'tacks' and 'splinters' are also semantically foregrounded. The word 'kinder' is lexically, semantically, and graphologically deviant. Lexically, it has been used for the hedging word 'kinda' (kind of); semantically, it refers to a child, and graphologically, the spellings of the hedging word 'kinda' have been changed. In this linking, there might be the pun on this word. For example, in one sense, it is referring to child as a 'kinder', and in another sense, it is referring to the hardships of life with a hedging device 'kinda' because the mother is not sure about the number or types of hardships that she has been facing in her life. Consequently, the poem "Mother to Son" has many foregrounded features that have helped the poet maintain his identity and disclose racial conflict and inequality.

'Remember'

The poem 'Remember' was composed by Hughes in 1930. This poem was published in 2009 when it was found written in pencil in the back of An Anthology of Revolutionary Poetry. According to another source, it was published posthumously in 1994 in The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes by Knopf Publications. In this regard, the poem 'Remember' has many foregrounded phonological, graphological, grammatical, and semantic features. Therefore, it uses alliteration, internal rhyme, and end rhymes.

Do not <u>s</u> tand <u>s</u> till. (4) Go to the <u>h</u> ighest <u>h</u> ill (5) And look <u>d</u> own upon the <u>t</u> own (6)
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In line four, there is a repetition of the consonant /s/, and in line five /h/ sound is repeated at the beginning of 'highest' and 'hill'. In line six, the words 'down' and 'town' rhyme with each other. This parallelism helps the poet motivate the readers, particularly the Blacks struggling for their equal rights. Lines four and five have end rhymes of 'still' and 'hill', both monosyllabic. It might be referring

to the stillness of the hill. The poet seems to ask the people not to stand still like a hill. The rhyme between 'down' and 'town' is also foregrounded because it makes the readers focus on the town. If the structure of this sentence is changed to "And look upon the downtown", it still makes sense, and the reader is being asked to pay attention to the city's center. Nevertheless, the sentence in line six is semantically foregrounded and contains other meanings that are investigated here. The poem is also graphologically foregrounded. Poet has properly used punctuation marks, just like he did in 'Mother to Son'. There are five periods, three commas, three colons & four hyphens. These punctuation marks help ideas flow quite coherently. The most striking thing is using a hyphen at the end of four different lines.

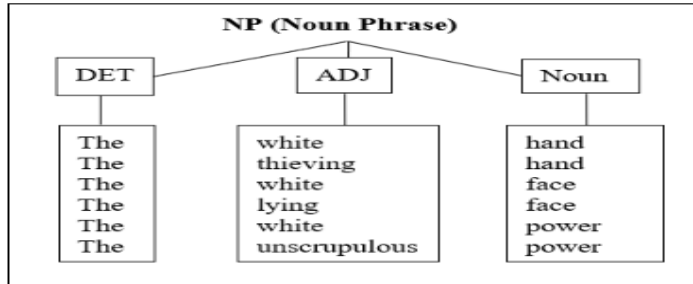
Remember	(1)
The days of bondage –	(2)
And remembering –	(3)
Do not stand still.	(4)
.....	
Or Africa, your homeland –	(10)
And you will see what I mean for you to see –	(11)
The white hand:	(12)
The thieving hand.	(13)

Using a hyphen (-) in line two with the word bondage likely refers to poet's hyphenated identity, which is the Afro-American identity that deprives him of his freedom. Then it also has been used with word 'remembering' to refer back to word 'bondage' which, perhaps, means 'And remembering the bondage/Do not stand still.' The hyphens used in lines ten and eleven indicate his dual identity. The hyphens in lines ten and eleven are linked with line twelve, which is about white people. Thus, the poet successfully maintains his identity through foregrounded use of hyphens. This helps him refer to racial discrimination. The lines 'And look down upon town' and 'Look down upon any town in Carolina' are semantically foregrounded. There is a pun on the meanings. On one hand, the poet is telling people to look down upon the town in literal sense, and on other hand, he is asking them to look at town with contempt. The second sense seems to be dominant if the following lines are read closely and critically:

'And you will see what I mean for you to see –	(11)
The white hand:	(12)
The thieving hand.	(13)
The white face:	(14)
The lying face.	(15)
The white power:	(16)
The unscrupulous power'	(17)

One may notice that he refers to white people in the derogatory and contemptuous way. The lines twelve to seventeen (12-17) are syntactically parallel. Thus, these noun phrases contain three words: determiner (article), modifier (adjective), and noun. There is parallelism on the syntactic level only.

The Determiners and Nouns are also parallel at the syllabic level but the adjectives are not parallel at syllabic level. For instance, 'white' has one syllable, and 'thieving' has two syllables. Again 'lying' has two syllables unlike 'white'. Moreover, 'unscrupulous' contains four syllables whereas 'white' has only one syllable.



This parallelism helps the poet disclose the hypocrisy of whites who call themselves civilized. Still, inwardly, they hold a grudge against other races and call them inferior. This helps the poet disclose racial conflict and racial discrimination. He is also able to maintain and assert his identity over the foregrounded features in this poem.

'Share-Croppers'

The poem 'Share-Croppers' appears in Hughes's 1942 volume 'Shakespeare in Harlem'. It is about the manipulation of Blacks by the Whites. The Blacks are the sharecroppers who do not get their deserved share because of Whites' hypocritical nature. This poem has foregrounded features that help the poet disclose racial discrimination and maintain identity. At phonological level, poem has alliterations and end rhymes.

Just a **h**erd of Negroes
 Driven to the **f**ield
Plowing, **p**lanning, hoeing,
 To make the cotton **y**ield.

The initial sound of 'herd' matches the initial sound of 'hoeing', and the initial sound of 'plowing' matches the initial sound of 'planting', which may refer to the continuous efforts of the workers in the field to make the cotton yield. Their efforts in field are parallel to yield. Other than parallelism, this stanza has a semantic deviation. The word 'herd' is semantically deviant. It is usually used for animals, and the poet has used it for Negroes, the humans, which means that they are being treated like animals by White landlords. It is also used for people but in a disapproving sense. In both senses, the word 'herd' is used in a negative sense. Some foregrounded features may also be traced in second stanza of the poem.

When the cotton is picked
 And the work is done
Boss **m**an takes the money
 And we **g**et none,

The phrase 'boss man' is syntactically foregrounded. The poet could have only used the word 'boss', and the sense would have been clear. However, he preferred to juxtapose two nouns side by side to create a sense of the defamiliarization and to intensify the meanings. The 'boss man', perhaps, is the white man who is exploiting the Negroes and treating them like animals. Moreover, the initial sound of 'man' alliterates with the initial sound of 'money', which also refers to the white man's love for money rather than humanity. The rhyming words 'done' and 'none' are also foregrounded. Even if the surrounding words of these two words are removed, they convey a sense that when Negroes' part is done, they get nothing in return. The word 'none' has been used instead of 'nothing' to maintain the rhyme, meaning that 'none' is also semantically foregrounded because 'none' is usually used for the people. The last two stanzas of the poem also seem to have foregrounded features shown through the analysis given below.

Leaves us hun**g**ry, ra**g**ged
As we were before.
Year by year **g**oes by
And we are no**thi**ng more
Than a herd of Negroes
Driven to the field –
Pl**o**w**i**ng **l**ife **a**way
To make the cotton **y**ield.

In the fourth stanza, the poet talks about hunger, and the /g/ sound, a velar stop, is repeatedly used. This more likely refers to need for the food swallowed through uvula near the velum. The repetitive use of consonant /g/, which is a hard sound (voiced), may be reflecting the hardships of the Negroes due to their exploitation by Whites. In last stanza, phrase 'herd of Negroes' has been repeated. The word 'plowing' has also been repeated in the phrase 'plowing life away' but with semantic deviation. Here, word 'plowing' means wasting. Semantic foregrounding on word plowing seems to be referring to Negroes' plowing in the fields and, by doing so, wasting their lives away in vain and only being exploited by the 'boss man'.

CONCLUSION

The in-depth analysis of the selected three poems of Langston Hughes shows that his poetry is full of foregrounded features like deviation & parallelism. Through the analysis, it is likely to conclude that Hughes's poetry reflects nearly all types of deviations. It may also be pointed out that these foregrounded features have helped poet express and maintain his Negro/Afro-American identity. The poet is able to disclose the racial conflicts and racial discrimination that existed in his times, and it continues to exist in world. To reach these findings, this study has focused on only three of Hughes's poems from three different volumes. These findings may not be generalized but features of foregrounding may be found in other poems of Langston Hughes. Future researchers can work on other poems by Langston Hughes to explore more foregrounded features from different or similar perspectives to study. The future researchers may select poetry of other Afro-American poets who fought against racial discrimination & struggled for identity maintenance to find out foregrounded features in their poetry.

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