

## Stylistic Investigation of Foregrounding in Contemporary Poetry

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**Abstract:** Contemporary poets are often observed to use foregrounding to appeal their readers and to give their newly-born works their distinctive and unusual identity. Foregrounding is the professional sureness and furtive element that poets resort to attain their purposes. With a literary consciousness and sensibility peculiar to the modernist school of poets, foregrounding is the indispensable characteristic of contemporary poems. Thus, this paper tends to examine various linguistic techniques exploited to highlight foregrounded deviations in some contemporary poems. The paper utilizes five levels of foregrounded deviations: graphological, phonological, lexical, syntactic, and semantic as suggested by Gibbons and Whiteley (2018). The paper concludes that selected poems foreground their themes by resorting to at least one of the five mentioned levels. Moreover, foregrounding in each poem crystalizes the poem's theme and give rise to strikingness and inducement: It enhances defamiliarization which evokes influence leading to 'refamiliarizing' informative exertions.

**Keywords:** Foregrounding, Contemporary Poems, Graphological, Phonological, Lexical, Syntactic, Semantic.

## INTRODUCTION

Appealing to foregrounding, contemporary poets can offer various colors of images and convey different types of meaning. Foregrounding some features in their work, those poets can produce "the child's sense of wonder and novelty" (Coleridge, 1984). The poet violates some phonetic, lexical structure, and the distribution of words to show his artistic characteristic, to get rid of automatism of perception, and to grant the intended image enhanced by that deautomatized perception. With the habitual practice language loses its attractiveness and fails to be a fruitful poetic medium. For example, when Shakespeare first introduced "*to be or not to be, this is the question*", it was reflected as a fashionable metaphor. Yet, such a metaphor lost its power by the time (Traugott and Pratt, 1980, p. 32).

Modernism is related to the Euro-American writing during the 20th century which is characterized by uncertainty, instability, doubt, wars and loss of dreams. American and European societies witnessed countless changes as the two World Wars had thoroughly shattered the world. Then, contemporary poetry becomes the essence of Euro-American unification. In fact, the 20th century witnessed a significant growth in "the poetic use of a range of language varieties not traditionally associated with poetry, including colloquial, conversational language". In UK, modern poetry has been influenced by French symbolism and American imagists who "wrote in reaction to the Victorian poetry, with its focus on traditional formalism" and decorative diction. In poetry, modernism is identified by its complication as modernists endeavor to create a novel vision of "human nature through the self-conscious" employment of formula. Contemporary poetry is accentuated by changes from tradition by defamiliarizing language to strike readers. In this case, foregrounding is utilized by contemporary poets to revive the disintegrated patterns, and provoke the simple language attraction (Jeffries 1993, pp. 31-2).

As it is often known, modern poetry is characterized by simple language, and sometimes written in dialect or jargon. It is asymmetrical, having no meter and rhyme scheme and sometimes written in the form of prose. As a result of the sophistication and alienation of the modern age, contemporary poetry is mostly sophisticated and the poet is alienated as a result of the alienation of modern man. Fragmentation is another feature of the modern poem, since sometimes the

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poem is fragmented like a series of broken images. It is written from the mind of the poet and addresses the mind of the reader, therefore, modern poetry is exceedingly intellectual and this characteristic mostly appears in the poems of T. S. Eliot. Taboo subjects and the dark side of life such as prostitution, drug addiction, crime, and political glitches are the most tackled themes (Leech, 1969, p. 40).

Additionally, the psychological aspect is an important part of the equivalence, many poets unconsciously wrote under the effect of wine or drugs. In this respect, pessimistic views dominate the scene as a result of the bad condition of man in many parts of the world, such as most of the poems of Thomas Hardy. The poems present different senses to different readers so they can be seen as universal since they appeal to man everywhere and at every time because they are concerned with the problems of humanity. Poets are engaged with experimental actions endeavoring to break new grounds and find new forms, new expressions, new structures, new patterns and new methods to express themselves. Although contemporary poets use simple language, most of the modern poetry seems to be ambiguous, for many reasons most of them related to the internal fragmentation of modern man. Issues can be varied between Greek myths and the problems of the average man and the lower classes of society (Norris, 2011).

Thus, this paper endeavors to present an overview and definitions of stylistics, foregrounding as an aspect of stylistics, methodology which implies method followed (qualitative research method), data collection, the model of analysis, analysis of data and findings.

### **Stylistics**

Broadly, stylistics is a term used for the relation of the linguistic structures authors decisively manipulate in their works in literature. In this sense, Widdowson (1975, p. 3) confirms that stylistics is mainly ascribed to "the study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation". Linguistically, stylistic analysts are engrossed with the "analysis of both style and stylistic variation". The aim of stylistics is to investigate and analyze the significance of the linguistic forms in terms of their interpretations in a given text. It is that branch of linguistics which is concerned with "the study of style". Since style is approached in terms of various viewpoints, stylistics can then be introduced in various manners i.e. various approaches have been established to identify what stylistics refers to (Wales, 2014: 399). Supportively, Ramtirth (2017:3) describes stylistics as "the study of different styles that are present in the text or the utterance of the character". Therefore, Fowler (1991: 68) comments that the main task of stylistician's is to analyze the complete "text as a unit not as mass of sentences connected together".

Likewise, Leech (2008, pp. 2f) acknowledges that the employment of linguistic units in literature is the dominant idea of stylisticians' consideration, signifying that stylistics is meant to "bridge the gap between the two areas literary studies and linguistics". Relationally, two all-inclusive and overall definitions are given by Crystal and Davy (2008, p. 544) Crystal (2008, p. 440). The first describes stylistics as:

"a discipline which studies literary or non-literary texts in a new way. It plays a significant role in the teaching of English literature ... It has been defined as a 'Sub discipline' of linguistics that is concerned with the systematic analysis of style in language and how this can vary according to such factors as, for example, genre, context, historical period and author."

The second (Crystal) maintains that stylistics deals with the features of "situationally distinctive uses (varieties) of language" which tries to construct standards "capable of accounting for the particular choices made by individual and social groups in their use of language." Focusing on the practice and aim of stylistics in linguistic studies and text. Simpson (2004, pp.2-3) contends that stylistics is:

"a method of textual interpretation in which primacy of place is assigned to language. The reason why language is so important to stylisticians is because the various forms, patterns and levels that constitute linguistic structure are an important index of the function of the text. The text's functional significance as discourse acts in turn as a gateway to its interpretation."

In brief, Thornborrow and Wareing (1998, p. 2) aver that stylistics is generally originated to investigate three main facets: They are: (i) "approaching literary texts throughout linguistic characters", (ii) "including objectivity in the examination and not just subjective and impressionistic ones", and (iii) "shedding lights on the aesthetic sides of language (e.g. rhyme reflects fun and delight)."

### **Foregrounding**

Stylistically, the notion of foregrounding is created "the Czech theorist Jan Mukarovsky from the Prague School of Linguistics". It is employed by many scholars, among which is Leech and Short (1981, p. 48) to point to the "artistically motivated deviation". Foregrounded structures are "the parts of the text which the author, consciously or unconsciously, is signalling as crucial to our understanding of what he has written ..." (Short, 1996, p. 36). Foregrounding is identified through the employment of "a linguistic unit in a position other than its conventional position

in a sentence or in narration. The other way to realize foregrounding is achieved through emphasizing a particular linguistic unit. The process of emphasizing is again created through the use of any grammatical unit in a non-conventionalized position" (Özünlü, 2001, p. 74).

Technically, foregrounding indicates the variety of stylistic influences that come about in literature, that is the phonetic/phonological level (e.g., "alliteration, rhythm, rhyme, meter"), morphological level (e.g. word formation), syntactic level (e.g., inversion, ellipsis), or semantic level (e.g. simile, metaphor, metonymy, irony.). Foregrounding was first introduced by Jan Mukarovsky, a leading linguist in the Prague linguistic circle; he commented "foregrounding is the opposite of automatization, that is the deautomatization of an act, the more an act is automatized the less consciously executed; the more it is foregrounded the more completely conscious does it become" (Mukarovsky 1970, p. 43).

The traditional employment of linguistic devices which does not attract the reader's/listener's attention is recognized as "automatization" (the opposite of foregrounding), thus it is associated with the common pattern in language use comprising forms and structures that language users manipulate in any circumstance. If linguistic devices, in contrast, get foregrounded, the employed patterns will attract the decipherer's particular attention, hence introduce unanticipated formulation for a specific context (e.g. the use of formulaic /archaic or formal expressions in common conversations). In this sense, foregrounding leads to deviations from the actual norms and standards. The various communicational requirements are the reason behind the foregrounded and automatized language use. In pure sciences, for instance, specialized lexical items are automatized, whereas in some persuasive stimulating speeches, foregrounding devices are adjusted (Leech, 2008).

Furthermore, the esthetically purposeful misrepresentation in foregrounding effects the scheme in the practice of, for instance, poetic language and the standard language is the substantial component of the work, thus an intentional violation of the norms such as "rhyme, repetition, and archaic de-automatize the standard language" transform the language to be literary. Elaborately, "in poetic language foregrounding achieves maximum intensity to the extent of pushing communication into the background as the objective of expression and of being used for its own sake; it is not used in the services of communication, but in order to place in the foreground the act of expression, the act of speech itself" ( Mukarovsky 1970, p. 43) . Those features become common in the conventions of poetic language, the author inclines to break up those conventions (Mukarovsky, *ibid*, p. 42).

At the phonological level, features such as "alliteration or rhyme" may yield a little influence on reading, principally if a reader engrosses in sub-vocal speech. This reflection on phonological characteristics may offer the comprehension of their sensitivity implications. At the syntactic level, features such as "inversion or ellipsis" may yield understanding problems, nonconformities in standard syntax hinder "processing and increase reading time". At the meaning/ semantic level, features such as "metaphor or irony" may involve less noticeable characteristics of textual referents. Extensive reflection may be essential to recognize those "less salient - and often affective" - characteristics. The categorized organization "of foregrounding around a dominant may require the integration of reactions to complexes of phonetic, grammatical and semantic features of a text" (David *et al.*, 1994, p. 394).

In poetry, poetic creativity takes places when the poet goes beyond the recognized patterns of the language, and generates new possibilities which are novel and can be labelled as "inventiveness" or "originality" (Leech, 1969, p. 24). Inventiveness comes about when the poet positions his sentences, depending on his own rules which have never heard before, while originality is observed when the author violates the directions of his/her language. This means that "the poet is nothing if not creative, and since language is his medium, one might well ask how he could be creative without using language in some sense creatively" (Leech, 1969, p. 23). In sum, 'inventiveness' is a kind of deviation in sense in terms of the convention, while 'originality' is "ungrammaticality", both are considered foregrounding as long as they contribute to the meaning of the literary text". Hence, foregrounding is "the motivated deviation from linguistic or other socially accepted norm" (Leech, 1969, p.121).

## METHODOLOGY

Utilizing Gibbons and Whiteley's (2018) model of stylistics, five contemporary poems are selected and analyzed in terms of foregrounding devices. The five poems are nominated due to the most prominent foregrounding devices (five levels) manipulated; phonological (Kamala Das' *The Stone Age*), graphological (Edwin Morgan's *Space Sonnet & Polyfilla*), lexical ('In The Rain', a poem by E.E Cummings), syntactic (Jeffrey McDaniel's poem 'don't touch it!) and semantic ("Cumming's 'next to of course god america I"). The descriptive-qualitative research method is used to account for the identification, description, and elicitation of the most distinctive features of foregrounding in the selected data. The five levels are presented in general and each is explained through the assigned poem.

### Phonological Level

Phonological foregrounding involves the "repetitions of particular sounds such as sibilants, liquids, plosives, or fricatives; devices of sound patterning such as alliteration, consonance, and assonance; deviations in sound choices; using rhyme and meter for emphasis" (Gibbons and Whiteley, 2018, p. 24). Stylisticians interested in how the segmental and suprasegmental features of a text might be purposefully worked to create poetic influences and develop the reader's literary experience. Foregrounding can either be triggered by using deviant phonological features or by the overuse of certain phonological patterns. For aesthetic effects, poets tend to employ speech sounds purposefully, thus stylistic analyst is interested in how the poet makes use of such type of deviation and how the sonic properties of the poem contribute to the literary experience (Gibbons and Whiteley, 2018, p. 27). Some poet relies heavily on the auditory quality of language in such a way that it becomes the point of some poems to enrich and facilitate meaning. It is a marked feature of some modern poetry such as that of Kamala Das. In her *The Stone Age*, the sound patterns are manipulated to create the contrast between the two emotional states of the characters.

The first seven lines of the poem, through certain phonological features (the dominance of plosives and certain consonant clusters), reveal her state of being angry with her husband. The density of consonant clusters at the end of words like /nd/ and /nt/ to produce plosives air is compressed then released suddenly which suggests the expelling out of accumulated anger, and particularly in post-vocalic positions, it is coupled with hardness. When the following lines present the 'strong men', the mood of the character changes with the change in phonological pattern, sibilants and liquids dominate rather than the plosives. The phonological manipulation and contrast represent the tension between the wife and husband, representing the usual conflict. Such a type of foregrounding summarizes the theme of the unsuccessful marriage, and failure to achieve love.

### *The Stone Age*

*Fond husband, ancient settler in the mind,  
Old fat spider, weaving webs of bewilderment,  
Be kind. You turn me into a bird of stone, a granite  
Dove, you build round me a shabby room,  
And stroke my pitted face absent-mindedly while  
You read. With loud talk you bruise my pre-morning sleep,  
You stick a finger into my dreaming eye. And  
Yet, on daydreams, strong men cast their shadows, they sink  
Like white suns in the swell of my Dravidian blood,  
Secretly flow the drains beneath sacred cities.* (Kamala Das, 2012)

### Graphological Level

The first traits that attract the reader and seize his/her attention are the graphological topographies of the poem. They are also the first topographies with which the analyst starts his investigation before other lexical or grammatical features. They have a significant role in the pragmatic force in a text. It signifies "the whole writing system: punctuation and paragraphing as well as spacing" (Leech 1969, p.69). Poets rely heavily on graphology to create the powerful effect on the readers through "slight changes in font styles, text layout, use of parenthesis, spacing, bullets, or underlining". Graphological foregrounding means manipulating typographical maneuvers "such as a change in type face/font; the presence of italics, capitalisation, bold, or spacing for emphasis; the presence of unconventional punctuation or the lack of punctuation; the use of colour" (Gibbons and Whiteley, 2018, p. 24).

The Scottish poet, Edwin Morgan, born in 1920, was identified by his tangible poetry. His 'Space Sonnet & Polyfilla' is one such example. The poem has two inseparable pieces; one entitled 'Space Sonnet', and the other 'Polyfilla':

### *Space Sonnet*

*A1 It's t delirium's avai le  
A2 on tap when r the light level ks  
A3 below w reas finds accep  
A4 The whole ht appa us gives the shrinks  
A5 excuses to date stra jacket form,  
A6 and n deep Mars they're hard at work.  
A7 We only ca e from t solar storm,  
A8 and w we're half to the frenzied jerk  
A9 of w they c their penal ther  
A10 I d 't re what it was I was  
A11 n r to forget. Guard! it's st too bright!*

*A12 I t to ride the swa g canopy*  
*A13 with mile- gh eleph, I want wet gauze*  
*A14 to roll in, and l ls of vul ite!*

#### **POLYFILLA**

*B1 rue lab*  
*B2 eve sin*  
*B3 hat on table*  
*B4 tig rat*  
*B5 up it*  
*B6 eve in*  
*B7 me her he*  
*B8 no way*  
*B9 hat all apy*  
*B10 on member*  
*B11 eve ill*  
*B12 wan yin*  
*B13 hi ants*  
*B14 ape can* (Edwin Morgan, 1977)

‘Space Sonnet’ is a fourteen-line sonnet, as the title suggests, it is a kind of play on words. The word ‘Space’ refers to both the poem’s setting on Mars and the fact that the poet picks up parts of words and left graphological spaces in their place, “white space as the visual, and often thematic, complement of black ink” (Cohen, 1987, p. 14). These parts are presented in the second sonnet ‘Polyfilla’, as they appear in the same graphological space; they would be presented in the poetic line in the first sonnet (Gibbons and Whiteley, 2018, p. 52). Consequently, readers have to match the two sonnets, (Space Sonnet and Polyfilla), to communicate a rather surreal narrative. Joining both sonnets, the poem reads:

#### **‘Space Sonnet & Polyfilla’**

*C1 It’s true delirium’s available*  
*C2 on tap whenever the light level sinks*  
*C3 below what reason finds acceptable*  
*C4 The whole tight apparatus gives the shrinks*  
*C5 excuses to update strait jacket form,*  
*C6 and even deep in Mars they’re hard at work.*  
*C7 We only came here from the solar storm,*  
*C8 and now we’re halfway to the frenzied jerk*  
*C9 of what they call their penal therapy*  
*C10 I don’t remember what it was I was*  
*C11 never to forget. Guard! it’s still too bright!*  
*C12 I want to ride the swaying canopy*  
*C13 with mile-high elephants, I want wet gauze*  
*C14 to roll in, and lapels of vulcanite!* (Edwin Morgan, 1977)

To display the subsequent development, the particles from ‘Polyfilla’ have been underlined. The poet’s choices of textual fragments in ‘Polyfilla’ present the intersection between graphology and morphology as graphological features such as line breaks and white space “intersect subtly with patterns at the level of morphology” (Simpson, 1997, p. 47). In Morgan’s poem the intersection results from extraction. Three salient effects of Morgan’s textual extractions can be noticed. The first effect is that both taken parts and remaining letters are free morphemes occur in the word. Such effect appears in ‘update’ in L5 which becomes ‘up’ in ‘Polyfilla’ and ‘date’ in ‘Space Sonnet’. The third and fourth effects express illusion. A word is divided and both parts become morphemes by themselves. That occurs in the division of ‘remember’ in L10 into ‘re’ and ‘member’; re- is prefix and member is a single word, which are not morphemes to remember. The illusion is also aroused as the third effect such as the extraction of ‘rat’ from ‘apparatus’ (L4). The part in ‘Polyfilla’ is a free morpheme, which leaves incoherent letters in ‘Space Sonnet’.

The uncommon “spaces between the letters/lines/stanzas and words are again a violation of the rules of written language. The big gaps and spaces seem to convey the idea of estrangement in the modern world”. The unusual graphological spaces express the irregular associations important to “ness”, “oneness”, and “loneliness” (Asher, 2012, p. 96), and these in sequence produce “more distances and gaps among people.”(Hussain and Saleem, 2017, p. 162). The characteristic feature of Morgan’s techniques occurs when the portion in ‘Polyfilla’ is a morpheme or even word (e.g. ‘rat’), the complex does not really exist within the context of the original word. For example, in addition to ‘rat’ (from

'apparatus') in L4, 'ants' (from 'elephants') in L13 and 'ape' (from 'lapels') in L14, all are disguised as free morphemes from the semantic field of animals; a group of pronouns seems to arise ('me', 'her', 'he') in L7.

Alongside the lines, 'eve' and 'sin' are other fragments that are expected to co-occur in L2 evoking the biblical myth whilst 'no' and 'way' in L8 collocate as a forceful interjection. Lastly, 'Polyfilla' 's fragments realized by graphological foregrounding presents an additional meaning to readers and give the new dimension to the poem. In doing so, a direct voice of a confused mind is shown (Gibbons and Whiteley, 2018, p. 53).

### Lexical Level

The manner that vocabulary induces specific impressions has to do with the knowledge of the context in which certain expressions are characteristically used; the lexical sets used in a poem can recall particular semantic fields. For example, if a text begins with the adjunct 'Once upon a time' what type of text would one expects it to be? Of course, the phrase evokes the semantic field of fairy tales. That is, being familiar with lexical word class helps you to be systematic in understanding how words function in their literary context (Gibbons and Whiteley, 2018, p. 43). An illustrative example of lexical foregrounding is "In the Rain", a poem by E.E Cummings. The poem has many lexical parallelisms and deviations that occur here and there. Words from open classes are linked together to create specific senses.

### In The Rain-

*in the rain-  
darkness, the sunset  
being sheathed i sit and  
think of you*

*the holy  
city which is your face  
your little cheeks the streets  
of smiles*

*your eyes half-  
thrush  
half-angel and your drowsy  
lips where float flowers of kiss  
and  
there is the sweet shy pirouette  
your hair  
and then*

*your dance song  
soul. rarely-beloved  
a single star is  
uttered, and i  
think of you (E.E Cummings, 1965, in Berry, 1994)*

Nouns like ("darkness, sunset, face, cheeks, lips, smiles, eyes, hair, and streets), and verbs like (think and float), adjectives like (shy and drowsy) and adverbs like (rarely). Nouns and verbs are the most frequent used among word classes. Nouns are varied between abstract (such as darkness) and physical (such as lips). In this poem, vocabulary has a key role in the foregrounding of the poem theme (Love) (Azhar *et al.*, 2014, p.17).

*"Think of you",  
"the holy city which is your face",  
"your eyes half-  
thrush  
half-angel and your drowsy  
lips where float flowers of kiss*

This excerpt represents an illustrative example of love theme in the poem as the poet refers to his beloved by exploiting various words. Utilizing the infrequent metaphor of city "to compare it with the face of the beloved and street for her smile, the poet uses certain vocabulary in the details of his metaphor." "Sweet shy pirouette" is used to refer to the hair of the beloved which is novel. The poet also foregrounded his theme lexically by forming new irregular words from two combined words such as 'half-thrush' and 'half-angel'. The new formations are used to show the beauty of the beloved (Azhar *et al.*, 2014, p.17).

### Syntactic Level

Syntactic foregrounding can be described as the "lexico-grammatical: repetitions of words or phrases, syntactic parallelisms, deviant syntactic structure" (Gibbons and Whiteley, 2018, p. 25). Syntactic analysis is dependent on a set of rules applied to different levels, sentence markers, and sentence structure. The more prominent type of syntactic grounding is syntactic parallelism; it is the more salient form of structural repetition as the syntactic structure is repeated. The use of syntactic parallelism to present structural contrast and internal incongruity is employed by poets to influence the interpreters of the language. Syntactic parallelism as a foregrounding structural device evidently occurs in Jeffrey McDaniel's (2008) poem 'don't touch it!':

#### *don't touch it*

*! if you touch it, it will melt if it melts, it will leave a stain  
if it leaves a stain, you will always remember it  
if you always remember it, it will block the road  
if it blocks the road, you will have to climb over it  
if you have to climb over it, you will become superstitious  
if you become superstitious, you will cover the mirror  
if you cover the mirror, you will forget to get dressed  
if you forget to get dressed, you will walk around naked in public  
if you walk around naked in public, you will get aroused  
if you get aroused, you will touch it.*

McDaniel builds his poem through the use of the repeated syntactic structure *if-clause*. The poem is overwhelmed by syntactic parallelism device which in addition to the implementation of rhythm and momentum, is endowed with a cause-and-effect relationship between the two clauses in each line using the conditional conjunction 'if'. The poem's idea lies in that along its eleven lines, it moves a circle taking the reader to the word 'touch' that is forbidden in the first line. The device of syntactic parallelisms leads readers to the relationship between the two parallel structures. The reader while processing the meaning tries to interpret the connection between elements. The semantic connections are realized by the relationships of correspondence in the poem. The syntactic parallelism in this poem invite readers to consider the meaningful relation between elements and use such meaning as they create their textual interpretations (Gibbons, & Whiteley, 2018, p. 19).

### Semantic Level

In accounting for the semantic foregrounding, stylisticians are concerned with how different semantic units encode meaning and how these units are linked together to form propositions. Simpson (2004, p.22) remarks that the Halliday's system of transitivity can be used to account for how ideational meaning, i.e. experiences, is encoded via language. Unlike in traditional grammar, transitivity, here, is used in a broader semantic sense to refer to the way meanings are encoded in the clause and to the way different types of semantic ideational elements (i.e. participants, processes and circumstances) are represented in language (Halliday, 1971).

In the language of poetry, a word such as "river" can have many configurations, and so obtain a particular implication depending on each poet's vision. In each situation, "the word takes on a different value in the unique frame of reference created by the internal patterns of language with the poem". In this respect, Widdowson argues that poetry reconciles two different codes: the usual language code of conversation and the unusual code of poetry. This process of settlement and struggle takes place, for instance, in the incidences of "river", in "the conventional code; the word may have the feature of inanimacy, but in the code of the poem it is animate: the river glideth at his own sweet will, the river sweats, the weariest river" (Widdowson, 1983, p.12).

Semantic foregrounding can be clearly perceived in the conceptual metaphor which is an umbrella term for the metaphoric realization (of correspondence), classified in rhetoric under simile and metaphor, as pervasive forces reordering thought and language. It helps poet present different layers of realities which reflect the world as "a powerful set of metaphors for understanding more complicated (possibly complex) systems, such as human culture" (Crutchfield, 2003, pp. 43-44). "Cumming's 'next to of course god america I' is an illustrative example used to demonstrate the semantic foregrounding found in contemporary poetry:

#### *next to of course god america i*

*1. "next to of course god america I            a  
2. love you land of the pilgrims' and so forth oh    b  
3. say can you see by the dawn's early my        a  
4. country 'tis of centuries come and go        b  
5. and are no more what of it we should worry    c*

6. *in every language even deafanddumb* d
7. *thy sons acclaim your glorious name by gory* c
8. *by jingo by gee by gosh by gum* d
9. *why talk of beauty what could be more beaut-* e
10. *iful than these heroic happy dead* f
11. *who rushed like lions to the roaring slaughter* g
12. *they did not stop to think they died instead* f
13. *then shall the voice of liberty be mute?"* e
14. *He spoke. And drank rapidly a glass of water* g

The title 'next to of course god America i' with its unusual punctuation forces on the priority; showing that "next to God, is America, and next to America" is you as an individual. However, Cummings puts all of these nouns in lowercase; it connotes the idea that these three should be equal with values and morals, and neither one of them should overshadow each other (Khaleil, 2006, p. 41). Semantic foregrounding is "cohesive lexical choices, unusual naming, innovative descriptions and novel metaphors, neologisms" (Gibbons and Whiteley, 2018, p. 25).

He is building a sarcastic answer a politician. Since Cummings exploits the "H" in he in line 14 and not the "I" in i, in line 1, Cummings calls readers to notice "the guy's character and what he says. By capitalizing the He and not doing the same thing with i america and even god", he shows the internal moods of the politician who considers "himself better than God, America, and other human beings". Moe (2011, p. 110) contends that here "Cummings shattered language, but he did so with precision."

Cummings employs the devices of multi layered via metaphors and symbols to present his sonnet that is supposed to have the theme of patriotism. But under the layers of metaphors and symbols, a novel satiric style is revealed against the American Politics; the poem is essentially about the lost meaning of liberty. Cummings confuses the readers when considering that "there is a deep meaning behind what is said when there isn't". In simple words, the poet articulates "his love to his country", but getting through the poem the poet loses concentration under the actions of the politician who badly represents America's democracy and freedom. The poem resembles a political speech when it criticizes "those who launches war that is unnecessary for the country" (Khaleil, 2006, p. 42).

The last line which reads "He spoke. And drank rapidly a glass of water" resolves the buzzle of the real identity of the speaker, since he speaks rapidly and drank a glass of water; this may mean that he has more to say. The line presents the character of a politician who talks rapidly and repeatedly over the same issue when he can always have more to say. Cummings satirizes the fact that America is great. He also criticizes the politicians for being talkative rather than taking actions, they tend to say but never do it. They repeat themselves again and again until it becomes meaningless.

## CONCLUSION

The analysis of foregrounding devices in the five selected modern poems has revealed that the type and grade to which foregrounding is introduced in each poem crystalizes the poem's theme and give rise to strikingness and inducement. By investigating foregrounding influence in these poems in terms of phonological, graphological, lexical, syntactic, and semantic levels, the current findings support the view that literary reply in modern poems has a distinguishing progression in which foregrounding enhances defamiliarization. Hence, defamiliarization induces influence which leads to 'refamiliarizing' interpretive efforts. However, the extended inspection of foregrounded lines allows the regular appearance of influence, the influence-directed thematization of the current and preceding foregrounded lines. Foregrounding in contemporary poems help readers to progress a coherent comprehension of the connotation of foregrounded lines; it is presented in these poems as striking, evocative, and interpretively challenging.

Foregrounding is certainly an effective literary quality in contemporary poems, since it directs readers' responses in a way that they will persuasively accept poets' viewpoints and opinions. In this way, foregrounding in these poems yields informative strategies that are characteristic of the literary area. Furthermore, foregrounding and the response to it appears to be a key aspect of the modern poetry, as it is amenable to advanced study; a systematic empirical study that enables us to prove with evidence that response to modern poetry does certainly come from dimensions substantial to the linguistic benefaction that is triggered by the use of foregrounding.

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