

# A STUDY OF ONOMATOPOEIA ON SELECTED TIGRINA POEMS

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## ABSTRACT

The article deals with a study of sound devices in selected Tigrina poems focusing on onomatopoeia. The main aim of this study is to spot onomatopoeia used as devices in the selected poems and to examine the role of this sound device in producing and succeeding appealing effects and what they are used to suggest. As a model, the revised method proposed by Leech (1969) in his book “A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry has adopted for the study. Consequently, the result of the study shows that, onomatopoeia has been used as a sound device in the selected poems to produce a humoring effect to the ear and also serves as a fine connection that suggests the meaning of the words via their natural sounds.

**Key words:** onomatopoeia, Tigrina

Yeibo (2011:1067) says “onomatopoeia is a phonological device of stylistics in which the sounds suggest the meaning of words or expressions because the words are formed by imitating the actual or natural sound associated with the things concerned.”

This device is used by authors to foreground meaning and also for stylistic effects, even though we agree with Leech’s (1969) contention that, “...this power of suggesting natural sounds or other qualities is relatively weak – too weak to operate unsupported by meaning – and because of its range, is only latent”.

Although we also agree with Yankson (1987:54) view that “this is perhaps the most subjective area of literary appreciation, there is no doubt that this device helps the author to create a palpable sense of realism and splendor in the work”. Considerably, this style seems to work out with Yankson’s (1987:54) contention that, “Any sound features which a poet may employ to echo, suggest or enact meaning can work only in conjunction with the meaning of the poetic text”. In other words, the suggestive power of the onomatopoeic

usages in the text is apprehended by the textual contexts in which they appear.

From the above points we can recognize that even though onomatopoeic words may be weak in suggesting natural sounds, there is no hesitation that this device helps the author to create a clear sense of realism and magnificence in the work. The suggestive power of the onomatopoeic usages in the text then is seized by the textual contexts in which they materialize. To put it clearly it is worth illustrating what Markus (2006:7) observes:

*It is understood that language, including speech and sounds, writing and letters, is arbitrary, i.e. There is no real link between a word and the object it delegate. For instance, the written word table doesn't have anything in common with the actual piece of furniture; neither do the sounds we produce when saying the word table in any way corresponds to any feature of real table. However, whenever an artist tries to establish such a connection, and succeeds in overcoming this arbitrariness, it is an instance of onomatopoeia.*

From the above points, we can say that the naming of a thing or action by a vocal imitation of the sound associated with it is onomatopoeia. It may also refer to the use of words whose sound suggests the sense.

Like any other languages onomatopoeia is an interesting sound device that we can observe in Tigrigna poems. Tigrigna writers for instance use this device to reflect sense in the sound of words which have similar sounds to the one described. This device is used by authors in Tigrinya poems to foreground meaning and also for stylistic effects. As a result, readers can merely describe the onomatopoeic usages in the text by the textual contexts in which they materialize. For the case in point, typical examples of onomatopoeia in Tigrinya selected poems are analyzed below:

ደሃይ!ደሃይ!

አብርሃይ ላምባዩ  
መሬት ምስ መሳዩ

እስኪ ኸበሮ

እዝም! ዝእዝም!እዝም! ዝእዝም!

እቡ-ም!ብእቡ-ም!እቡ-ም!ብእቡ-ም!

DahæI DahæI

'æbərəhəɫɪ læməbæjɪ

Maret məs məsɪjɪ

'əsəki xabərɔ

'əzəm zə 'əzəm 'əzəm zə 'əzəm

'əbum bə 'əbum 'əbum bə 'əbum

Voice. Voice!

In the dark with a candle to think

Sisters, brothers, citizens, drums!

'əzəm zə 'əzəm 'əzəm zə 'əzəm

'əbum bə 'əbum 'əbum bə 'əbum

In this example, we see that the author of this poem captures the sound of the drum produced as it is being played with hands which fabricate a kind of sound that is “□□□! □□□□! □□□! □□□□! Or □□□! □□□□□□□□!□□□□□!”[‘əzəm zə’əzəm ‘əzəm zə’əzəm or ‘əbum bə’əbum ‘əbu bə’əbum]. Therefore, he uses this technique to make meaning quite accessible and realistic and also to add rhythmic beauty to the work. Other examples of this device are also extracted and analyzed below.

እሀሀ እየይ...ትብል እላ ማማ  
ዘይጥባኪ ሕቡጥ ዘይከለኪ ማካጎማ።

'əhəh 'æjɪɪ... təbəl 'æɪæ məmæ

zɪɪət'əbæhɪ həbɪɪ'ə zɪɪəkəlæhɪ məhɪgɔmæ

'əhəh 'æjɪɪ ...is saying mom

By the absence of solution for her swelling

If we concentrate on words “□□□ and □□□” it should be clear that there is an instance of onomatopoeic sound. This is because “□□□□□□□□” [‘əhəh ‘æjɪɪ] is a kind of natural sound that is produced by people

while they are in a certain grief. Based on the context of the above extract, the sound is used to represent to a natural sound which is produced by else who is patient of swelling. In this case, we can understand that the sounds used above suggest the meaning of words or expressions. This is because the words are formed by imitating the actual or natural sounds associated with the things concerned. Moreover, the function of this device in the extracts above is used to create musicality in the words, and reinforce the overall theme of the poem. For more, the following extracts can also show the instance of onomatopoeic in Tigrinya poems.

ቦጽጽ ቦጽጽ ጥራይ ከም ሎቛታ ጥሕኒ  
ከንቲታ ዝገነ ሰብ ከመይ የፅለኣኒ

Boxox boxox t'aræI kam lox'otæ t'əhəni  
Kənətīt zəxonā sab kamāl jas'əla'æni

Boxox boxox only like a leather sack  
I hate a person who seems a wing

ከብደይ ሎቛን ጨርቕ ጨርቕሮቕ

ሕውስ መግንጣይ ፎርቕ ፎርቕሮቕ

Kabədal huxw'n tʃarox' tʃarox'ərox'

həwus ma'ænat'æI forox' 'forox'ərox'

ዕልልታ ደኣ ይስረን ከንደይ ግዜ ዋይታ

'ələtətæ də'æ jasəfan kənədal gəze wælatæ

'ələtətæ' should come how many times scream

In the above extracts the writer used onomatopoeic words like “□□□ □□□” [Boxox boxox] in the first line of example one. This kind of sound is produced by when any kinds of grains are poured out or flew from a leather sack to the ground. The other instance of onomatopoeic words are “□□□ □□□□□”[ tʃarox' tʃarox'ərox'] in the first line of example two, and “□□□ □□□□□”[ forox' ,forox'ərox'] in the second line of example two. This kind of sound on the other hand can be produced in our belly when we are hungry or by someone who is a patient of bellyache or infected by a bacteria which is called amoeba that represents a kind of trepidation. “□□□□” ['ələtətæ] is also another instance in the last example. This is also a kind of sound that we traditionally performed to express our happiness. For that reason, these instances of

onomatopoeic sounds which make up a word are reflection to mimic the sound which the word refers to.

Accordingly, we can conclude that writers in Tigrigna poems used onomatopoeic device which is the use of words that sound like their meanings in order to create rhythmical cadences of music and highlighting the meaning of the poems.

All in all, the above instances of onomatopoeic words clearly show us the indicative power of the naming of a thing or action by a vocal imitation of the sound associated with it. Accordingly, we can recognize that even though onomatopoeic words may be feeble in suggesting natural sounds, there is no hesitation that this device helps the author to create a clear sagacity of realism and magnificence in the work. As a result, the analysis of these kinds of devices is better essentially, by its textual contexts in which they are materialized.

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