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# Physical form in Selected Siswati Poetry: A Linear Approach

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## **Author's contribution**

*The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

The objectives of this article are to identify and discuss the repetition techniques that are depicting physical form in selected Siswati poetry. These structural techniques entail parallelism, linking, refrain and rhyme. They are integral parts of Siswati poetry that give literary taste, sense of appreciation, rhythmical and rhyming effects. They all produce rhythm that refers to a patterning of the sounds of words in a poem. Rhythm imposes a pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables which create a strong effect and hold attention. It is enforced by using pauses, stops at the end of the lines, enjambment, the sounds of words which are soft or harsh, monosyllabic or polysyllabic. When there is rhythm in a poem, it ought to help to suggest the meaning and to create a certain mood in keeping with the theme. We could talk of a fast rhythm which might probably convey a sense of urgency and determination. A slow rhythm might suggest sadness, tiredness and long cycles. The poet's tone, which will be recognized by using certain words helps in determining this. The repetition techniques depict the lexical organization, (the word stem, word or word group repetition); the syntactic organization, (the repetition of lines, parts of lines or syntactical parallelism) and semantic organization (the use of semantic relations and coherence). A linear approach occurs either vertically or horizontally to display a special schematic pattern.

**Keywords:** *Linear approach; repetition techniques; semantic organization; syntactical parallelism and rhyming effect.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Word form has a broad meaning as it is the organization of the parts of a poem into a whole. Cuddon, [1] gives his assertions about the form as follows:

The form of a literary work we refer to its shape and structure and the way it is made – as opposed to its substance or what it is about.

There are many types of forms that are prevalent in poetry explications, but the well-known types are mental and physical forms. The physical organization of a poem is examined in this study. The physical form concentrates on the external shape of a poem. The aspects that are structurally explicated are the following repetitions: sounds, words, phrases and refrains. The external shape of the poem is looked into in a situation where a poet uses emotive language to communicate his or her poetic message to the hearer, reader or listener.

Lenake, [2] emphasizes on added quotation of Jacob Korg about the poetic form as follows:

Poetic form belongs to the class of things we call conventions tacit agreements or understandings that grow up spontaneously in social groups... In any given situation, a speaker will express himself according to the custom, and his hearer will accept and understand his use of it. In the same way, the effect of poetic organization depends on both the work of the poet and expectations of the reader.

It is noted that poetic form brings together the poet, speaker or addresser and the hearer, reader or receiver through the work of art or expression. Structural approach plays a significant role in the organization of the literary and linguistic materials. The physical form or external structure of the poem is viewed as a scheme of words, sentences, phrases and clauses.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

The communication and linear models are complementing each other. The knowledge of communication models enables you to diagnose the problem and create solutions. Different

models provide us with different vantage points from which to view communication [3]. They focus attention on the sender's use of messages to influence other people. They examine one-way communication. The source is the person who originates the message and begins the process of communication. The source translates concepts, thoughts and ideas into verbal or non-verbal messages, the process is called encoding. The individual produces a message. Verbal communication is thought of as the words that are used. Non-verbal communication includes facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice and body movement.

### 2.1 Parallelism

Parallelism in poetry is described as linguistic similarities observed between certain successive poetic line and verses. It forms an integral part of various poetry, and it is also effectively used in modern poems for aesthetic purposes. In Kunene's [4], discussion on parallelism in Sotho poetry he subdivides parallelism as follows:

- The repetition of words and phrases.
- The restatement of ideas by synonyms and indirect references
- The grammatical structure through repetition of syntactical slots.

An important function of parallelism in Siswati is to create rhythmic conditions. It is done by the repetition of the same words or phrases in a single line or successive lines. The repetition of these rhythmic units creates the rhythmic pattern found in the poem. This poetic technique is explained as follows:

Typically, an unaesthetic repetition is one that repeats what has just been said, in the same words and without alleviation by incremental elements. By contrast, in aesthetic repetition, selected words and/or phrases are repeated while additional ones are brought in as 'incrementing' phrases to advance the narrative, or the syntactical order is reversed to attain emphasis. [4]

Parallelism as a structural pattern is juxtaposition of sentences having similar structures, matching at least two lexical items in each structure. The normal word, juxtaposition, is derived from the verb juxtapose. In terms of poetry, the verse lines

are, placed side by side. Furthermore, refers to similar structures matching at least two lexical items in each structure is thinking of partial syntactic agreement. The definition of parallelism overlooks semantic equivalence, because parallelism is a form of syntactic foregrounding underlined by both semantic equivalence and partial syntactic agreement. Walter [5] gives this view on this structural form:

Parallelism is a structure of a line that may be repeated in the next line, so that the line or part of the line may look similar.

In Shongwe's poems, parallelism performs three functions, that is, it emphasizes the meaning, establishes rhythm in the verse and in also harmonizes the sounds of a poem.

Ntuli [6] contends that:

In parallelism, we expect each unit first member of a verse to be balanced by another unit in the second member. If this correspondence is found between all the units, we have perfect parallelism.

Yelland [7] on the other hand, defines parallelism as:

Balancing one statement against another in clauses or phrases of similar length and grammatical structure to make a pattern of sound and sense that has a pleasing, if sometimes artificial, effect the idea expressed in the statements are generally balanced by similarity or contrast.

Guma [8] defines parallelism as:

Certain similarity between two parts or members of a sentence, whose words correspond to one another.

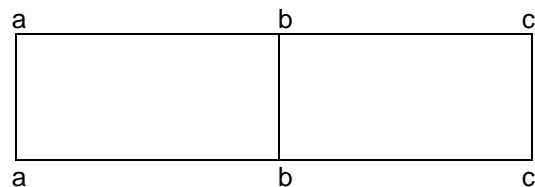
Parallelism is tactfully used for aesthetic purposes in modern poetry. It gives rhythmic recurrence of words. Rhythm is significant poetry because it depicts harmony and close relations. A poet understands the poem or song because he is familiar with the arrangement of the words in a sentence. Parallelism is another form of balancing words or phrases. Balancing of words cannot only be similar words or formatives but it can also be the repetition of words.

The above-mentioned idea is illustrated in Shongwe's poem entitled, *Inkondlo Ya-O.E.H.M Nxumalo*, (O.E.H Nxumalo's poem) where he says:

Inkondlo yakho ingemantjolo,  
Inkondlo yakho ingumtfunti  
[9]

(Your poem is full of thoughts)  
(Your poem is a shadow)

Although there are many kinds of perfect parallelism, he manages to use this pattern as follows:



Shongwe uses various forms of verse in a stanza. It is good for a poet to deviate from this pattern if it is good to do so. It shows that he does not have a specific form of writing. It just comes as it is and reflects spontaneity and creativity. That is why he uses different patterns of writing. Shongwe [10] in his poem entitled, *Asambe Ntsiki (Ntsiki, let us go)* writes:

Asambe Ntsiki siphikelele  
Siphemb' indlela, sibhul' ematolo  
Sigijimele sibhul' ematolo  
Siyivulele bantfwana bendlu lentima.  
[10]

(Let us keep on going Ntsiki,  
Let us pave the way and remove the dew,  
Let us run and open the pathway,  
Let us open it of the children of the black nation.)

As far as cross-parallelism is concerned Ntuli [6] says the following:

A rhetorical figure with two syntactically parallel constructions, one of which has the word order reversed.

The word order corresponds well in cross linking rather than vertical or horizontal. In the fourth stanza of, *Emtfonjeni wemfula* (In the river's fountain) we have cross parallelism in the following verse line:

Uyimphilo mtfombo!  
Mtfombo uyinjabulo!  
[9]  
(You are life, fountain!)  
Fountain you pleasure!)

The resultant pattern in these lines is as follows:

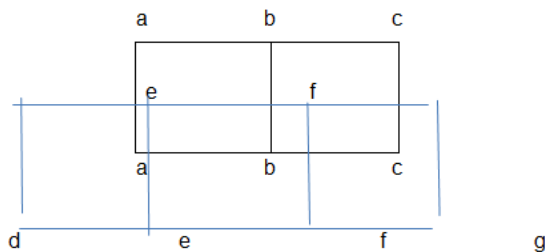


In the poem entitled, *Isahara* (Sahara) in the third stanza we find the example in which each unit first verse lines are balanced by another third verse line and each in the second verse line balances with the fourth verse line:

Deda, deda siminti,  
 Ubuyele kulo lemdzabu wakini,  
 Susa tidladla takho,  
 Ugocot' umboko wakho, utfutse.  
 [10]

(Move aside, move aside, you voracious  
 Go back to your indigenous land,  
 Remove your jaws,  
 Remove your elephant trunk.)

The resultant pattern is the following:



The balancing units in the first and third verses are equal, that is a,b,c, and the verse are equal, that is d,e,f and g. In some cases, a whole verse is repeated to create regular rhythmic conditions. Parallelism can be regarded as the repetition of the same morphemes, words and phrases as well as synonyms (or ideas) and syntactical slots in a stanza or even throughout the whole poem. It can thus be described as linguistic similarities observed between certain lines in a verse of poetry. Linking is the way in which independent choices in different points of a text correspond with or presuppose one another, forming a network of sequential relation. Like in parallelism, linking is partially common in songs and chants. It takes the form of the last detail in one line of song or poem, becoming the first detail in the next. It is a word or idea occurring in the second

half of a line and is repeated in the first half of the succeeding line.

Linking is none other than the repetition of items that could be the morphemes or words. This repetition of items can be in adjacent or successive lines. In this study the focus is on the vertical linking and horizontal linking. That can be seen in repetition of the whole word, stems or roots of words. The functions of linking in poetry are to emphasize through repetition and to bring harmony between the ideas and forms.

## 2.2 Vertical Linking

According to Ntuli [6], vertical linking is the type of linking where a word in the first line corresponds almost vertically with one in the second line. This usually happens when similar words (or stems, or roots) appear at the beginning of successive lines (Initial linking) or at the end (final linking).

In the poem called *Emagagasi Etikhatsi* (The waves of times) Shongwe uses the initial vertical linking which occurs in successive lines:

Sengiyawuhamba nemajaha e-Afrika,  
 Sengiyawuhamba nebantwana bendzabuko.  
 [9]

(I will go with African men  
 I will go with indigenous children)

The above pattern can be illustrated as follows:



In the above example, the emphasis is on *Sengiyawuhamba* (I will go). The poet stresses that he will go with African men. He stresses that he will go with indigenous children. Initial vertical linking can occur in alternating lines. He says in his poem entitled *vumani Ngigiye* (Allow me to dance)

Ngigiye ngelunyawo lolufanele,  
 Ngigiyel' ingwenyama esigodlweni,  
 Ngigiye ngifome ngigelet' umjuluko.  
 [10]

(I performed with correct foot,  
Performing for his majesty in his kraal,  
I performed until sweat runs down in my cheeks.)

The above examples are represented in the following pattern:



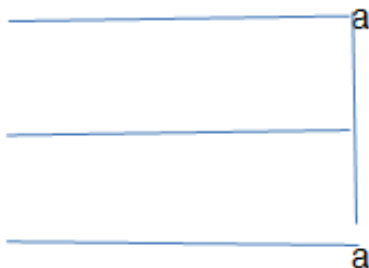
In the above example, initial vertical linking applies in alternating lines with the word, *Ngigiyiye* (I performed). The poet wants to dance for his king, because of ecstasy. He emphasizes the word '*Ngigiyiye*' (I performed) to alert people about what he wants to do.

Final vertical linking is also appearing in successive verse or in alternate lines. The following example is taken from stanza two of *Ngime Elugwini*, (I am standing at the seashore) where he lauds:

Ngim' elugwini lwelwandle,  
Ngiphandlwa tintfuli,  
Letiphakanyisw' umoya welwandle.  
[10]

(I am standing at the seashore,  
The dust blinds my eyes  
Which are raised up by sea breeze.)

The pattern reflects this illustration:



The functions of vertical linking are to emphasize the rhythmic effects, meanings and to promote harmony between the sense and the sound.

## 2.3 Oblique Linking

Kunene [4] comments on oblique linking as follows:

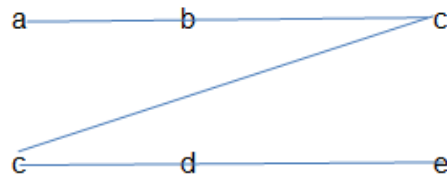
Line repetition, the line position of a repeated phrase is shifted and this shifting may result in a phrase that was mid-line position or end-line position in a following line, or an end-line position in a preceding line becoming a mid-line position in a following line.

It refers to one of its poetic lines that is repeated in the next line. It is also represented with the lines having a slant from one side to the other. The repetition represents a right to left swing pattern. The common type of right to left oblique linking is where the corresponding words occur in a successive line. This type of linking is observed in the following lines:

Uyofika ekhay' ulindzelwe,  
Ulindzelwe buso ba-Abraham.  
[9]

(You will arrive home being awaited,  
Awaited to be seen by Abraham's face.)

This is a repetition of a schematic representation of:

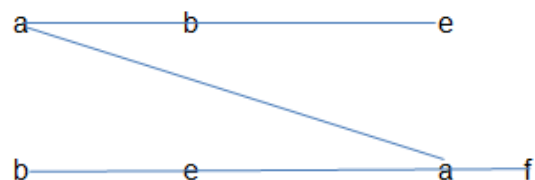


Shongwe has used this type of linking in many poems as can be illustrated in a poem called, *Imikhemetelo Yemphilo* (The drizzle of life):

Imikhemetelo yemhlaba ingigwanyisile,  
Sengiyakwati kunetfwa yimikhemetelo yetikhatsi.  
[9]

(The drizzling of the world has immuned me,  
I am now being showered by drizzles of time.)

The graphic representation is as follows:

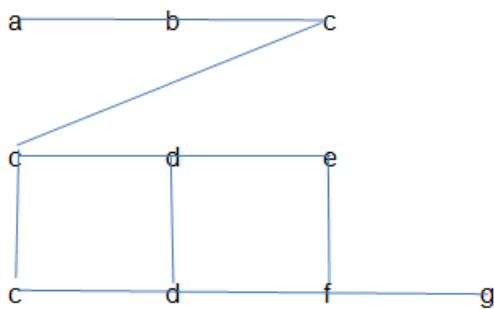


In some instances, units are found in alternate lines but not in successive ones. In a poem entitled, *Hamba kahle*, (Go well) he shows this alternating correspondence:

Uyofika ekhaya ulindzelwe,  
 Ulindzelwe buso ba-Abraham,  
 Ulindzelwe buso baJakobe na Davide.  
 [9]

(You will arrive home being expected,  
 Expected by Abraham's face,  
 Expected by Jacob and David's faces.)

This example is schematically represented as follows:



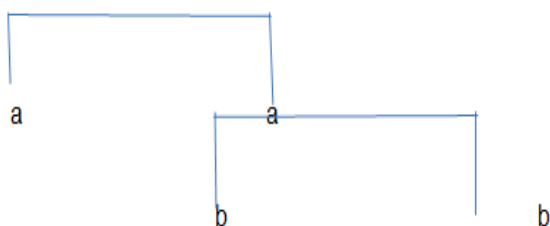
Horizontal Line Repetition Pattern

The horizontal line repetition pattern is the repetition that occurs in a single line. The poet manages to write these parallel lines carrying the same meaning and image. In the poem entitled, *Esicongweni* SeTable Mountain (The mountain's Peak) the poet says:

Anginako kuphumula ngingakeva  
 Liphimbo lakho nkuzi yakitsi.  
 Table Mountain! Table Mountain!  
 [10]

(I cannot rest till I here  
 Your voice our bull.  
 Table Mountain! Table Mountain!

This repetition in a line has a schematic representation of:



These lines are parallel because they are carrying the same meaning and image. The poet has applied each variation to suit a specific purpose. He uses the repetition to underlie the key word and put together all those parts of the poem whose relationship needs recognition. This repetition of words or stems in various positions in successive lines can result in beautiful patterns which could be significant in heightening the effect. Similarly, with parallelism and repetition, linking provides artists with patterns of pleasure and convenience.

## 2.4 Refrain

Heese and Lawton [11] says that 'refrain depends largely on rhythm and rhyme and was probably characteristic of the most ancient poetry'. They went further to define refrain as follows:

A line or several lines repeated at regular intervals throughout the poem.  
 [11]

Refrain is further viewed as a poetic device whose functions are amongst others to contribute to the thematic or tonal unity of a poem, and its regular occurrence as a way of marking off structural division. By remaining unchanged, the refrain acts to keep the poem always circling back upon itself.

Refrain in Shongwe's poetry occurs only in certain stanzas. In most of his poems he uses a single form of refrain. The wording of the refrain may either be the same or the variations. In *Ngime Elugwini*, in three stanzas, refrain is the same as the topic of the poem. It shows that he is emphasizing that he is at the bank of the sea and able to breathe the sea breeze air. In the same poem, the poet uses different kinds of refrain. The following refrain appears as the first line of each stanza:

### 2.4.1 Stanza 1

Ngim' elusebeni lwelwandle  
 (I am standing at the edge of the sea)

### 2.4.2 Stanza 2

Ngim' elugwini lwelwandle  
 (I am standing at the bank of the sea)

### 2.4.3 Stanza 3

Ngim' elugwini, emehlo ayababa  
(I am standing at the bank of the sea; my eyes  
are itching)

### 2.4.4 Stanza 4

Ngiselugwini lwelwandle  
(I am at the bank of the sea)

The same pattern occurs throughout the other stanzas. A remarkable feature is that it occurs in the first line of each stanza. In some of the poems, he uses a new variation. He introduces a new word in order to replace the other word. In the poem entitled, "Enkhundleni" (*In the field*) we have this refrain in the first and second stanza. This in all instances occurs as the first line of the stanza. The following lines give this clarification:

Ngivumele ngingen' enkhundleni  
(Allow me to get into the field)

In the third stanza, he substituted *enkhundleni* (*In the field*) with *nami* (*I*) and changed *ngivumele*, (allow me) to a verb, vuma, (allow), the refrain is the following:

Vuma ngingene nami  
(Allow me to get in)

To sum up, Heese and Lawton [11] state that: the refrain satisfies our natural love of repetition, give continuity and enhances the lyrical quality of any poem, be it joyful or serious. Their ideas about refrain are reiterated in all selected Siswati poems.

## 2.5 Rhyme

Lustrin and Pincus [12] give this explanation on the concept:

Rhyme depends on sounds, rather than on the written word. It is used for effect.

Ntuli [13] maintains that composers of traditional Zulu poetry never tried to use rhyme in their poetry. This is obvious because their poems were not written and there was therefore no opportunity to work out schemes whereby ending of the verses could be similar. What we find in traditional Zulu poetry is the repetition of whole words or sentence. There is only a repetition of

words and sentences as a poetic device in traditional poetry.

Emaswati poets followed Vilakazi's idea because they minimally use rhyme effectively in their poems. They use similarity in the sounds of words or syllables. In Siswati's poems, rhyme is achieved by repeating formatives, stems and words. Lenake [2] argues further when he says:

The term rhyme indicates the correspondence of sounds at the beginning, or verse lines. These rhymes schemes are normally referred to as initial rhyme, middle rhyme. And end-rhyme with various possible sub-divisions. The corresponding sounds could be syllables, parts of syllables or morphemes depending on the possibilities provided by the language concerned, and the genius of the poet.

The different types of rhyme are initial rhyme, middle rhyme and terminal rhyme. For this discourse, we will concentrate on selected Siswati poetry as determined by the positions in the verses. Thwala and Lusenga [14] comment as follows:

It is inappropriate to comment on rhyme in all African languages, without considering their differences in disjunctive and conjunctive writings, as well as the prosodic elements. It is the poet's choice to employ rhyme as an artificial art and spontaneous deliberation.

The poets try to include rhyme that is their art and science in the writing of poetry in African languages. There is no specific rule on how to use the rhyme device in poetry, but the poets are guided by their spontaneous feelings and emotions. Shongwe has sparingly used rhyme in his poems.

## 2.6 Initial Rhyme

Riccio [15] defines rhyme as follows:

Initial or head rhyme sometimes indicates rhyme occurring at the beginning of lines, but at other times, initial means the beginning consonants of words.

Many poets employ initial rhyme, by arranging identical syllables in a specific pattern. Initially, these syllables can be of the first words in successive verses, or consonants in the same position. Shongwe in his poem entitled, *Esicongweni SeTable Mountain* has employed initial rhyme as follows:

Ngitawubuta muphi umbuto?  
Ngiphelelwe ngemagama ntsabakati,  
Noko ngiyafisa kuceketsa nawe,  
Ngiyacela ngihlebele ntsabakati.  
[10]

What am I going to ask?  
I have no words mountain  
I wish to talk to you,  
Whisper to me, mountain.)

The above stanza forms a scheme which can be presented in this way, a,a,b,a. In some of his poems, he evokes the feeling of continuity of action. In his poem entitled, *Mphikeleli (Persistence)* he states that:

Sengiyawubambeleva kulo lijobo lakho,  
Sengiyawulandzela kuwo umvila lowuvulile,  
Sengiyawusabela kulo liphimbo lakho,  
Sengiyawuhogela emakha lavela kuwe  
[9]

(I will firmly by your loin,  
I will follow the trait you have opened,  
I will respond to your voice,  
I will smell scent that comes from you).

In the above stanza, the poet repeats the formative *sengiwu-*. This shows that he wanted these formatives to conform to the pattern he has chosen to decorate his stanza.

## 2.7 Middle (Internal) Rhyme

Reaske [16] has this to say about middle (internal) rhyme:

Sometimes we find internal rhyme where the rhyming words are found within the line, often a word in the middle of a line rhyming with the last word or sound in the line.

Shongwe uses internal rhyme in his poem entitled "*Lapha ngitintile*" (Here, I am settled).

Shongwe sometimes uses three consecutive rhyming in one sentence, which is rare in most of Siswati poetry, For example in his poem titled, "*Luhleko*" (Laughter):

Lugagatseke luhleke luhleko  
(The laugh giggles and laugh.)

Shongwe uses admirable pattern of rhymes. Rhymes of Shongwe have a wonderful binding effect in all the verses concerned. The repeated use of rhyme in one sentence shows that he wants to emphasize a point.

The repetition of formatives, *imphindzasakhi* or *siphindzasakhi* is evident in one-line, juxtaposed words and in successive lines. Ultimately, the repetition takes the form of alliteration in the poem. To other languages, they prefer to refer to them as alliterative sounds.

## 2.8 Terminal (End) Rhyme

Miller and Greenberg [17] assert that when rhyme occurs at the end of the lines it is called end rhyme. In some of Shongwe's poems there are poems which use end rhyme in their stanzas. The following verses drawn from stanza five of a poem entitled, *Inkondlo Yembongi (The Poet's Poem)*.

Luvo lwakho luluvo lwami,  
Liso lakho liliso lami,  
Nendlebe yakho seyingiyo yami,  
Uyayihlekis' inhlitiyo ngeluhleko lwakho,  
Lapho sengihlut' imilayeto yakho.  
[9]

(Your thought is my thought,  
Your eye is my eye  
Your ear is also mine,  
You make my heart laugh with your laughter,  
You make my heart to laugh at you,  
Where I analyze your warnings.)

All rhyming formatives above are boldly written. It is noticed that in the first syllable and in the last two lines the rhyme that consists of the vowel of the penultimate and the final syllable. In the extract below, rhyme occurs in the two last syllables.

lyinkondlo yembongi lengiyivako  
lyinkondlo yembongi lengiphambako.

(It's the poet's poem that I understand,  
It's the poet's poem that bits me.)

We talk in terms of rhyme when a word in a stanza of a poem repeats the same sound quality of another word. When this happens at the end of the line, it is called end rhyme. The syllables which are repeated are mostly vowels but there could be consonants which forms a rhyme scheme. This repetition of some arrangement of vowels and consonants may appear at the beginning of lines (initial rhyme). A rhyming word may have one or more syllables. It should be noted that rhyme is a phenomenon of sound and never of mere spelling. In our languages, like Siswati, tone plays an important



role because words, even when they are homonyms, cannot be said to rhyme. Lines having the same rhyme are represented by the same letter, for example, aa, bb, cc etc. Therefore, one needs to study the use of rhyme in the poem. Rhyme adds music to the poem and is thus a source of aesthetic satisfaction. Its other function is to connect words and ideas in lines together.

### 3. DISCUSSION

The structuralist strategies of approaching literary analysis from the units, parts, context or elements to the whole are significant in poetry. Parallelism is analyzed from the repetition of words, phrases and clauses. The words or phrases are rhythmically repeated to advance the narrative. Repetition of words stems and group of words reflect the real thoughts and feelings because they seem to be a poetic voice, whose, tone, resonance and timbre are inseparable. The repetition of speech sounds in a special sequence enhances the stylistic effects and reinforce the meaning to link the related words. Rhyme is the repetition of closely similar sounds arranged at regular intervals. There exists an argument as to the use of rhyme by African poets. Rhyme was introduced into African poetry as a result of the example set by hymns and Western verse in general.

The following are some examples of some of the views on rhyme in the African languages:

- some claim that rhyme is only successful, more convincing and even purer if it is extended over at least two syllables;
- others feel that this is a Western countries device unknown to the African traditional poetry and as such it is quite unnecessary that it should be used-without it, the same success as has been achieved with the traditional praise poem, can be achieved;
- Other authors maintain that because of the open syllabic structure of words in African languages and thus the fact that words end on vowels, the possibility of rhyming words are restricted and as such it puts modern poetry under restraint and it should rather not be utilized.

The findings reveal that the use of rhyme is defensible. He declares that art should have a form which is the beauty of the poem. This

beauty should supply aesthetical pleasure to both the writer and the reader; therefore, the use of rhyme is justified.

### 4. CONCLUSION

Form plays a significant role in Siswati poetry. Form and content are inseparable. The importance of the poetic form in Siswati work is reflected by the following:

- It is purely aesthetic, makes poetry more pleasurable to read and its message is clear.
- It shapes the poem's contents and generates the specific effects.
- It displays the way the poems use patterns of sound such as through rhyme schemes, assonance and consonance.
- Its relationship with the content in poetry, reinforces the semantic, syntactical and lexical functions, as well as the thematic structures and patterning.

There is parallelism, linking, refrain and rhyme that display a fair amount of skill and techniques. In selected poetry, refrain is used in a single line or in two consecutive lines. In some of his poems refrain has slight variations. The use of such variation is appreciated because it prevents monotony. Various types of rhyme have been used in the selected poetry. Initial rhyme is the most common one followed by the end rhyme. Middle rhyme is less frequent compared to the other two. The perfect parallelism is the most common one when compared to cross parallelism. As regards to linking, vertical linking and oblique linking are common whereas horizontal-line repetition pattern is uncommon.

### 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the physical form of poetry should be considered at various structural levels. Its functions as a repetition technique that need to inculcate the following:

- To emphasizes an idea,
- To creates a rhythm,
- To further the development in a poem,
- To introduces something new into a poem,
- To promotes unity in the poem,
- To provides the poem with a lyrical character that promotes sound usage in a poem.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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