A STUDY OF FOREGROUNDING: SAMUEL BECKETT'S SHORT STORY *PING*

BİR ÖNCELEME İNCELEMESİ: SAMUEL BECKETT'IN PING ADLI KISA HİKÂYESİ

Ufuk ŞAHİN [iD]

Assist, Prof. Dr., Atatürk University, Faculty of Letters, Department of English Language and Literature, ufuk.sahin@atauni.edu.tr

Abstract

This study investigates the foregrounded patterns inosculated to form Nobel Prize-winning author, critic, and playwright Samuel Beckett's short story "Ping" and aims to reveal his purpose of using these patterns. One of the remarkable contributions of Russian Formalism and Prag School Structuralism to stylistics is the concept of foregrounding by which writers bring a particular textual pattern (a phoneme, word, phrase, clause, etc.) to the fore by making it salient or deviant from what surrounds it to draw readers' attention to it and to make it both memorable and interpretable. Beckett, like many authors, takes two basic ways to foreground certain elements: foregrounding-through-deviation and foregrounding-through-parallelism/repetition. Besides its confinement to a single paragraph, from the beginning, the story stands out with the omission of punctuation marks, except for the full stop, sentences with no verb or with only non-finite verbs (the present and past participles), and the conversion of some adjectives into verbs. These deviant patterns enable Beckett to present a free-flowing form of (limited or impaired) consciousness and emphasize that the character is in his very last moment and s/he cannot move. By doing so, he invites readers to immerse themselves unreservedly in what the character feels or perceives. To reflect an instance of awareness or perception in an extreme situation where the character is on the brink of existence or non-existence and is struggling to find some meaning, Beckett also adopts other foregrounded patterns such as the repetition of a limited number of words and phrases with some alterations, employment of certain nouns in different positions in the sentences, and sentences that begin with particular words or phrases but end differently. Apart from those, Beckett offers another example of foregrounding at the end of the English version. Thus, he makes the readers aware of the fictionality of the story.

Öz

Bu çalışma Nobel ödüllü yazar, eleştirmen ve oyun yazarı Samuel Beckett'in kısa hikâyesini oluşturmak için bir araya gelmiş öncelenen yapıları incelemekte ve yazarın bu yapıları ne amaçla kullandığını açığa çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Rus Biçimciliği ve Prag Okulu Yapısalcılığının biçembilime önemli katkılarından biri yazarların okuyucuların dikkatini çekmek ve hem akılda kalıcı hem de yorumlanabilir olmasını sağlamak amacıyla belirli bir yapıyı (bir ses birimi, sözcük, sözcük öbeği, cümle, vb.) kendisini çevreleyen diğer yapılardan daha belirgin hale getirerek ya da saptırarak kasıtlı olarak öne çıkarmalarını sağlayan önceleme kavramıdır. Birçok yazar gibi Beckett da belirli öğeleri öncelemek için iki temel yol kullanır: sapma-yoluyla-önceleme ve paralelizm/tekrar-yoluyla-önceleme. Hikâye tek bir paragraftan oluşmasının yanı sıra başından itibaren nokta dışında diğer noktalama işaretlerinin atılması, fiilsiz ya da çekimsiz fiillerin (geniş zaman ve geçmiş zaman ortaçlarının) kullanıldığı cümleler, bazı sıfatların fiilleştirme adı verilen teknikle fiile dönüştürülmesiyle öne çıkmaktadır. Sapma yoluyla öncelenen bu yapılar Beckett'in (sınırlı veya bozuk) bir bilinç akışı biçimi sunmasını ve karakterin son anında olduğunu ve hareket edemediğini vurgulamasını sağlar. Böyle yaparak, okuyucuları kayıtsız şartsız karakterin hissettiklerine veya algıladıklarına kendilerini kaptırmaya davet eder. Karakterin varoluşun veya yokluğun eşiğinde olduğu ve bir anlam bulmaya çalıştığı istisnai bir durumda deneyimlediği bir farkındalık veya algı örneğini yansıtmak amacıyla Beckett ayrıca sınırlı sayıda sözcük ve sözcük öbeğinin bazı küçük değişikliklerle tekrarı, belirli merkezi isimlerin cümlelerde farklı konumlarda kullanılması ve belirli sözcüklerle veya sözcük öbekleriyle başlayan ama farklı bir şekilde biten cümleler gibi öncelenen diğer yapıları da kullanır. Bunların dışında, Beckett hikâyenin İngilizce versiyonunun sonunda kullandığı italik ifadeyle öncelemenin bir başka örneğini verir. Böylece okuyucunun hikâyenin kurgusallığının farkına varmasını sağlar.

1. Introduction

Style is generally defined as the use of language in a specific context, by a specific person, for a specific purpose, and includes operations such as selecting language tools, deviating from standard language use, repetition of specific linguistic forms in the text, and comparison. Thus, stylistics focuses on grammar, vocabulary, and meaning, as well as the phonetic features of the text and discursive tools. (Erden, 2002, p. 17-18; Young et al., 1970, p. 359; Van Dijk, 1985, p. 40)

Stylistics emerged as a subdiscipline of linguistics in the second half of the 20th century, tries to analyze the words and syntax of a literary text linguistically, more clearly, analyze and describe the diversity of linguistic forms used in different contexts, and determine their fuctional significance for the interpretation of the text linking them with the author, the period in which the work was written, and also other works written in the same period. (Gray, 1973, p. 501-512)

Besides the style of the author and the text, stylistics also examines literary texts from the reader's perspective. By doing so, it identifies the quality of verbal communication between the author and the reader, how the reader works out the style and poetic effect in a text. (Erden, 2002, p. 14-15)

A term that is very common in stylistic analysis of texts is "Foregrounding", the equivalent of the Czech word *aktualisace.* It is one of the remarkable contributions of the former Russian Formalists and the Prag School Structuralists such as Mukařovsky and Havránek. Like their predecessors, Mukařovsky and Havránek thought that foregrounding "*was the function of poetic language to surprise the reader with a fresh and dynamic awareness of its linguistic MEDIUM, to DE-AUTOMATIZE what was normally taken for granted, to exploit language AESTHETICALLY*" (Wales, 2011, p. 166, capitalization in original), thus to draw their attention to the language itself.

By being out of the box through backgrounding the norms of ordinary language and thus highlighting particular linguistic features (a phoneme, word, phrase, clause, sentence) within a text, authors aim to make these features prominent for their specific purposes, to make their works more memorable and also profoundly interpretable.

There are two basic types of foregrounding: deviation and parallelism/repetition. Foregrounding-through-deviation is "*unexpected irregularity in language*" and occurs at any level of language (Jeffries and McIntyre, 2010: 31) (i.e. phonology, graphology,

morphology, syntax (grammar), lexicology, semantics and pragmatics (discourse)), therewith writers surprise readers and create a psychological effect on them to make particular patterns "*especially noticeable or perceptually prominent*" (Short, 1996: 11). As for foregrounding-through-repetition, it is realized through repetitive patterns such as sound, word, syntax (Cuddon, 1998, p. 325, Wales, 2011, pp.166-167, Jeffries and McIntyre, 2010, pp. 31-32).

In different parts of his seminal book *Stylistics*, Paul Simpson, too, addresses this term several times by examining some examples from literature and explains it as follows:

> *Foregrounding* refers to a form of textual patterning which is motivated specifically for literary-aesthetic purposes. Capable of working at any level of language, foregrounding typically involves a stylistic distortion of some sort, either through an aspect of the text which deviates from a linguistic norm or, alternatively, where an aspect of the text is brought to the fore through repetition or parallelism. That means that foregrounding comes in two main guises: foregrounding as 'deviation from a norm' and foregrounding as 'more of the same'. Foregrounding is essentially a technique for 'making strange' in language, or to extrapolate from Shklovsky's Russian term ostranenie, a method of 'defamiliarisation' in textual composition (Simpson, 2004, p. 50, italic in original).

Suffice it to say here that, like Simpson, Lesley Jeffries and Daniel McIntyre aver that "*As with deviation, parallelism can occur at different levels of linguistic structure.*", and for them, "*the relationship between foregrounded elements and less prominent features is crucial to our understanding of the language of literature*" (2010, pp. 33-34).

One particularly pertinent example for the analysis of foregrounding is "Ping", written by Irish poet, theatre director, playwright, and novelist Samuel Beckett. The story was originally published in French ("Bing") in 1966 and later translated into English by Beckett himself and published in 1967. Since the story has no plot, character, and setting in the traditional sense, over the years, it has attracted the attention of many literary critics, including David Lodge. In addition to the methods of critical reading from conventional literature, drawing upon knowledge of stylistics will, therefore, contribute to a better understanding of the story that also stands out with its confinement to a single paragraph and with several foregrounded patterns: the repetition of the limited number of words and phrases, the absence of verbs and

the punctuation marks other than the full stop, the use of the present and past participles, and the conversion of some adjectives into verbs.

Thus, this paper aims to go a step further and demonstrate through a stylistic analysis of the text that the best possible way to describe a supreme moment like death is to break the norms of language through a stylistic tool called foregrounding because it is not possible to describe such an experience with the existing rules of language. It should also be pointed out here that throughout the article, when necessary, the theoretical discussion will accompany the analysis of the foregrounded patterns. In addition, the numbers given at the beginning of the sentences quoted from the story represent the order of these sentences in the English version of the text.

2. Foregrounded Patterns and Their Stylistic Effects
2.1. Foregrounding-through-Deviation
2.1.1. Graphological Foregrounding

The most important stylistic feature that will attract readers' attention in their first reading experience of the story is that it consists of only one paragraph. This example of the graphological foregrounding, also foregrounding-through-deviation[1], suggests Beckett's continuous minimalist description of the surroundings and location of the heterodiegetic (covert) narrator and the internal focalizer who hears the sound "ping" and sees or perceives what is around. Short sentences, or more likely the internal focalizer's relatively continuous flow of thoughts, become longer through the end of this single paragraph text. Both the heterodiegetic narrator and the internal focalizer seem trapped in a short-term memory cycle and are desperately trying to re-establish a sense of location and existence before the focalizer's memory clouds again.

A special mention should also be made that since the entire story is confined to a single paragraph which is composed of a limited number of words or phrases and there is no process or movement within it, Beckett has highly likely benefited from the features of the Imagist movement in poetry founded in the early twentieth century by Ezra Pound. Pound described an image as "*an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time*" (Simpson, 2004, p. 111) and emphasized simplicity through the exactitude of vocabulary, clarity of expression, and precision through the use of

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[1] The examples are analyzed according to one particular system of norms, namely the rule system of the English language.

instantaneously presented visual images. So by praising the directness of presentation and economy of language, the imagists attempted to isolate a single image to reveal its essence (Simpson, 2004, p. 111; Imagism, 2021). Similarly, Almaaroof et al. highlight this feature of the text. For them, *""Ping" is slowly exposed. It, in contrast, ends up as nothing but a landscape. The text presents a frozen situation that cannot be changed or altered."* (2016, p. 11).

2.1.2. Foregrounded patterns of punctuation and grammar

Another key structural feature that must be noted is that the text contains only the full stops. The removal of other punctuation marks (e.g., comma, semi-colon) provides it with a conspicuous spelling and orthography, which is another example of foregrounding-through-deviation by which Beckett presents a free-flowing form of (limited or impaired) consciousness of the character at the point of death. Oya Batum Menteşe writes appositely on this feature of the story:

> Artistically "Ping" is of course a masterpiece of language. The rhythm of sentences, the scantiness of data, the unbroken flow of words and phrases not meaningful maybe but symmetrically juxtaposed on the level of syntax, seeming patterns of key words which reflect incoherence within a seeming coherence all placed skilfully within the unparagraphed narrative are unquestionably the work of a genius (2015, p. 17).

She says in plain language that although such features as the rhythm of the sentences and the uninterrupted succession of the limited number of words and phrases may not make sense, Beckett brings them together on the syntax level symmetrically and thus creates such a masterpiece. She sees Beckett's embeds of some central words that reflect inconsistency into the apparent coherence of this single-paragraph text with dexterity as evidence of his literary genius.

In this sense, the first sentences of the story are true representatives of the whole story in terms of its mostly punctuation-free structure:

> All known all white bare white body fixed one yard legs joined like sewn. Light heat white floor one square yard never seen. White walls one yard by two white ceiling one square yard never seen. Bare white body fixed only the eyes only just. Traces blurs light grey almost white on white. Hands hanging palms front white feet heels together right angle. Light heat white planes shining white bare white body fixed ping fixed elsewhere. Traces blurs signs no meaning light grey almost white.

> Bare white body fixed white on white invisible. Only the eyes only just
>
> light blue almost white (Beckett, 1987 [1967], p. 29).

The text, therefore, is arranged to reflect that the character's thoughts are as disconnected as the signs. Despite being stopped by a full stop; the unpunctuated space of floating signs evolves like the stream of consciousness. The brain tries to maintain its function until death. However, this effort is interrupted by a ping sound, and although it does not give up and starts again, it has to stop because it does not have enough strength. After each short pause by a full stop, the effort begins again. It continues until the story ends, namely until brain death occurs.

Besides, all the sentences in Beckett's text lack the Predicator element (verbs or verb phrases) that sweeps away many contingent structures such as finiteness, tense, time reference, and propositional value. It also results in losing other aspects of clause structure. For example, within a verb-less clause, a grammatical Subject cannot be formed, the self-referential pronouns or possessive pronouns cannot be placed, and Complement elements cannot be positioned relative to a verb. Thus, what remains is only a sequence of phrases that denote things or their locations:

> (8) Traces blurs signs no meaning light grey almost white.
>
> (10) Only the eyes only just light blue almost white.
>
> (21) Murmur only just almost never one second perhaps not alone.
>
> (37) Ping elsewhere always there but that known not.
>
> (66) White ceiling never seen ping of old only just almost never one
>
>   second light time white floor never seen ping of old perhaps there.

In the wake of Halliday's transitivity system[2], it is not wrong to say that sentences without verbs also lack any process. To illustrate this further, we cannot identify whether the clauses contain material, mental, behavioural, relational, or existential processes. By doing so, Beckett wants to reflect the fact that the perceiving

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[2] According to Halliday, "*Transitivity specifies the different types of process that are recognized in the language, and the structures by which they are expressed. The basic semantic framework for the representation of processes is very simple. A process consists potentially of three components: (i) the process itself; (ii) participants in the process; (iii) circumstances associated with the process.*" (Halliday, 1985, p. 101) which is expressed by prepositional and/or adverb phrases. Drawing from Halliday's work, Paul Simpson states that one of the important functions of language is to represent the everyday human experience that is shaped and defined by actions, events, thoughts, and perceptions. To serve its experiential function or to constitute, in Halliday's term, "mental picture of reality", language has different types of processes with different participant roles. This functional model of "transitivity" is then defined as "*the way meanings are encoded in the clause*" and "*the way different types of processes are represented in language.*" (2004, p. 22, emphasis in original).

or experiencing "I" cannot take any particular action because, as the text implies, s/he lays still in his/her deathbed, more likely in a hospital room, all s/he can do is to think intermittently and try to make sense of what is around him- or herself. So, processes between things become suspended.

David Lodge, in his essay "Some Ping Understood", supports this idea and states that "*Ping is the rendering of the consciousness of a person confined in a small, bare, white room, a person who is evidently under extreme duress, and probably at the last gasp of life. He has no freedom of movement.*" (Lodge, 1968, p. 86) In the same vein, Elisabeth Bregman Segrè confirms that the character is somewhere between existence and non-existence: "*We sense in "Ping" that we are experiencing existence itself, being on the brink of non-being, the fluidity and formlessness of our perceptions and emotions* [...]" (1977, p. 146).

Beckett omits auxiliary verbs in the Predicator elements, too; however, he offers the main verbal components, without finiteness that provides tense, polarity, and grammatical agreement with the subject: the present participles to convey a sense of continuing and the past participles to refer to the actions that were started and completed entirely in the past. Both can behave like adjectives or adverbs. A selection from the text includes but is not limited to:

Table 1:

fixed	(9) Bare white body **fixed** white on white invisible.
given, fixed	(22) **Given** rose only just bare white body **fixed** one yard white on white invisible.
hanging, joined, sewn	(35) Hands **hanging** palms front legs **joined** like **sewn**.
known, shining	(39) All white all **known** white planes **shining** white ping murmur only just almost never one second light time that much memory almost never.
seen	(66) White ceiling never **seen** ping of old only just almost never one second light time white floor never **seen** ping of old perhaps there.
haught, imploring	(70) Head **haught** eyes white fixed front old ping last murmur one second perhaps not alone eye unlustrous black and white half closed long lashes **imploring** ping silence ping over.

It is interesting to note that the story also contains an invented word, a neologism, "unover" which assumes the role of a verb. Since Beckett does not use any verbs but participles in the entire text, he prefers to turn the adjective "over" into

a verb, which is the process called "verbifying (or verbing)". He also adds the negative suffix "un-" to refer to something unfinished. The shift from "unover" into "over" suggests a process in which parts of the body gradually lose their functions. Likewise, Lodge states that although the person lays still and his/her perceptions are very limited, his/her consciousness is still going on. Even at the beginning of the last sentence, his/her efforts to perceive or to make sense of his/her surroundings continue, but with the very last words of the story ("ping silence ping over."), both the story and the consciousness end, so does his/her life (Lodge, 1968, p. 87).

2.2. Foregrounding-through-parallelism and repetition

A close stylistic analysis revealed that Beckett offers some patterns of "syntactic parallelism", according to which some sentences begin with particular words or phrases, but end differently, as Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4 below show:

Table 2: "bare white"

(4) **Bare white**	**body fixed** only the eyes only just.
(17) **Bare white**	**body fixed** one yard ping fixed elsewhere.
(25) **Bare white**	**body fixed** ping fixed elsewhere.
(40) **Bare white**	**body fixed** one yard ping fixed elsewhere white on white invisible heart breath no sound.
(59) **Bare white**	one yard fixed ping fixed elsewhere no sound legs joined like sewn heels together right angle hands hanging palms front.

Table 3: "light heat"

(2) **Light heat**	**white** floor one square yard never seen.
(7) **Light heat**	**white** planes shining white bare white body fixed ping fixed elsewhere.
(16) **Light heat**	**white** walls shining white one yard by two.
(24) **Light heat**	hands hanging palms front white on white invisible.
(32) **Light heat**	all known all white planes meeting invisible.

Table 4: "head haught"

(11) **Head haught**	**eyes light blue almost white** silence within.
(28) **Head haught**	**eyes light blue almost white** fixed front ping murmur ping silence.
(54) **Head haught**	nose ears white holes mouth white seam like sewn invisible over.
(60) **Head haught**	**eyes** holes light blue almost white fixed front silence within.

(70) **Head haught**	**eyes** white fixed front old ping last murmur one second perhaps not alone eye unlustrous black and white half closed long lashes imploring ping silence ping over.

The mere repetitions of the same lexical items as well as the same structure have been written in bold black in a separate column in Table 2 ("bare white"), Table 3 ("light heat") and Table 4 ("head haught"). In Table 2, while "bare white" remains the same in all sentences, sentences (4), (17), (25) and (40) differ from sentence (59) with their other repetitions of the same lexical items "body fixed" written in bold blue. In Table 3, sentences (2), (7) and (16) have the word "white" in common, thus written in bold blue as well. In Table 4, while sentences (11) and (28) include "eyes light blue almost white" as a parallel structure, sentences (60) and (70) have only the word "eyes" in parallel with sentences (11) and (28), and to distinguish them, "light blue almost white" is written in bold green.

Admittedly, the story stands out with the repetition of some words and phrases with some alterations or different combinations as well. Mick Short views repetition as "*the limiting case of parallelism, where everything is paralleled and nothing is varied*". (1996: 16) Katie Wales also explicates that "*ALLITERATION, PARALLELISM, and many FIGURES OF SPEECH OR SCHEMES involving repetition of LEXICAL ITEMS are thus commonly exploited in foregrounding in poetic language.*" (Wales, 2011, p. 167, capitalization in original).

For example, the central words "ping" occurs 35 times in the text, including the title, and "white" 91 times.[3] The reason why "ping" is repeated many times in the story is to serve as an element that enables the character to reach consciousness. Dan O'Hara, too, suggests that the person is a patient lying in a sickbed, and the "ping" is a sound of a bedside monitor (2010, p. 440). So, the patient is on the verge of death and does not need many words, or s/he cannot think properly. S/he has a limited perspective and cannot perceive what is around him/her or where s/he is. Whenever s/he loses consciousness, this sound wakes him/her up, and s/he tries to perceive his/her surroundings but sees nothing but white:

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[3] Since the original name of the story was "Blanc" (which means white) and was later changed into "Bing" ("Ping") (Parrott, 2009, p. 79, see also Almaaroof et al., 2016, p.12), these two words, which are repeated many times in the text, are examined as examples within this section.

Table 5: Typical variations of "ping".

ping	fixed elsewhere	ping	a nature
ping	fixed elsewhere	**ping**	a nature
ping	murmur	**ping**	a meaning
ping	silence	**ping**	flash
ping	elsewhere	**ping**	white over
ping	murmurs	**ping**	fixed last elsewhere
ping	perhaps a nature	**ping**	of old
ping	perhaps way out	**ping**	last murmur
ping	perhaps not alone	**ping**	over
ping	image		

Table 6: Typical variations of "white".

white	walls	almost	white
white	walls	almost	**white**
white	ceiling	all	**white**
white	body	shining	**white**
white	on white	a ittle less blue and	**white**
white	feet	invisible same	**white**
white	planes	light blue almost	**white**
white	silence	a little less dim eye black and	**white**
white	seam	eyes	**white**
white	scars	invisible bare	**white**
white	holes	blue and	**white**

Concerning this point, David Lodge views Beckett's repetitions of limited numbers of words in the text as "permutation", and identifies that: "*The word white, which seems to be the most frequently recurring word, is used more than ninety times. Many phrases or word groups are repeated, but rarely an entire sentence.*" (1968, p. 85) He also tries to make sense of the repetition of the words and word groups, particularly the word "ping":

> If we look at the words and phrases which immediately precede ping we get, in fact, a sequence which is no less patterned, but it is interesting that these words and phrases are mostly of a quite different order; they tend to stress the bleak limitations of the character's situation and field of perception: bare white body fixed, invisible, never seen, almost never, are among the most frequently recurring. We might suggest that ping marks the intervals between the oscillating movements of the character's consciousness from dull despair to

tentative hope; though this leaves open the question of whether it is part of the discourse, or an intrusion from outside which stimulates thought in a mechanical and arbitrary way (Lodge, 1968, p. 89).

More tellingly, Lodge argues that this key word marks the intervals between the movements of the character's limited consciousness that swing from despair to hope. However, he is not so sure about whether this is part of the discourse or outside intervention.

Like Lodge, Maria H. P. Kopschitz, in her article "Conventional Criticism of an Unconventional Text: on Samuel Beckett's **Ping**" (sic), emphasizes that "Ping" is organized as a text of "*juxtaposition or permutation.*" She also explicates that since this permutation deconstructs and at the same time reconstructs each sentence in the story, it becomes necessary to follow this pattern to realize "*the value of ambiguity and indeterminacy in the text*" (2008, p. 94).

In addition to the minimalist description of setting within a single paragraph, K. S. Dearsley states that the use of the limited number of words stems from Beckett's minimalism, and like Lodge, she tries to identify what the "ping" is:

> How does Beckett work this magic? Because the vocabulary is so limited, a large amount of repetition is used, with pairs of words recurring frequently so that a pattern emerges. This gives the phrases a cumulative effect, making them seem more significant. The repetition develops a rhythm, interrupted by the word 'ping'. This feels like a signal of time up, or the return of a typewriter carriage, only to begin again. Both the pace and the feelings of tension and apprehension gain momentum as the sentences grow longer. What is about to happen draws closer, but you still cannot see it clearly (Dearsley, 2018).

To put a finer point on it, Dearsley avers that the repetition develops a rhythm, interrupted by a 'ping' sound, and it can be considered as a sign that the character's time is running out or the sound of a typewriter. Moreover, both the tempo and the feelings of tension and anxiety accelerate as the sentences get longer.

As for Almaaroof et al., they think that with the help of repetition, readers immerse themselves in tension and drama, and there are two reasons why the word "ping" is frequently used in the text. Firstly, Beckett avails himself of it to give readers the message that "*there is nothing but emptiness*". Secondly, it serves the purpose of minimalizing "*the ontology of the character to this emptiness.*" (2016, p. 12).

2.3. Internal Foregrounding

The story presents an example for internal foregrounding, defined by Paul Simpson as "*a kind of deviation within a deviation.*" (2004, p. 51): Beckett uses the words "ping" and "white" sometimes at the beginning, sometimes in the middle, or at the end of the sentences, as clearly seen in the following table:

Table 7: Examples of Internal Foregrounding

(1) All known all **white** bare **white** body fixed one yard legs joined like sewn.
(3) **White** walls one yard by two **white** ceiling one square yard never seen.
(11) Head haught eyes light blue almost **white** silence within.
(30) **Ping** murmur perhaps a nature one second almost never that much memory almost never.
(34) **White** feet toes joined like sewn heels together right angle **ping** elsewhere no sound.
(47) **White** ceiling shining **white** one square yard never seen **ping** perhaps way out there one second **ping** silence.
(58) Traces blurs light grey eyes holes light blue almost **white** fixed front **ping** a meaning only just almost never **ping** silence.
(63) Afar flash of time all **white** all over all of old **ping** flash **white** walls shining **white** no trace eyes holes light blue almost **white** last colour ping **white** over.
64) **Ping** fixed last elsewhere legs joined like sewn heels together right angle hands hanging palms front head haught eyes **white** invisible fixed front over.
(68) **White** planes no trace shining **white** one only shining **white** infinite but that known not.

2.4. Foregrounding as Defamiliarization

Before concluding, it is also worth dwelling on the short note at the very end of the English version of the story: "*Translated from the French by the author*". This elliptical expression written in italics is another example of foregrounding, which also functions as a form of defamiliarization[4]. It helps him to remind his readers of the fictionality of the story.

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[4] "*A concept and term introduced by Viktor Shklovsky (1983 -1984), an important member of the Russian School of Formalism. It is a translation of the Russian ostranenie 'making strange'. To 'defamiliarize' is to make fresh, new, strange, different what is familiar and known. Through defamiliarization the writer modifies the reader's habitual perceptions by drawing attention to the artifice of the text.*" (Cuddon, 1998, pp. 213-214).

3. Conclusion

Upon a close reading, Beckett's story is full of pertinent examples for the study of foregrounding. From the beginning, it is full of linguistic patterns foregrounded through deviation. In addition to its limitation to only one paragraph, the story stands out with its certain linguistic features such as the omission of all punctuation marks except the full stop and the absence of a predicate in almost every sentence. The story is also an assemblage of words arranged with repetition with some modification and the continual addition of small new details. Placing central nouns such as "white" and "ping" in different positions in the sentences and sentences that begin with particular words and phrases but end differently are other examples of foregrounding-through-parallelism.

Through all these stylistic tools, Beckett reflects an instance of awareness or perception in an extreme situation where the character is on the brink of existence or the verge of non-existence, and s/he is struggling to find some meaning. However, despite all his/her efforts, language has lost its most important function, so s/he no longer needs to form regular, logical, and understandable sentences, use different words, or think about punctuation marks. S/he is not even capable of it. The brain or the senses that have lost their sharpness have to be content with whatever they perceive or feel. That is what lies behind Beckett's structuring his story in fractions of the very last moment of the character.

Proving the idea that less is more, he cleverly shows us that the norms of language cannot explain such an experience, so he must violate these norms by deviation and parallelism/repetition. He, therefore, enables readers to realize that this person perceives, sees, or hears the things around him from a limited perspective and thus develop empathy.

Moreover, all the parallel structures allow Beckett to have control over readers: he invites them to see these structures as being in some sense the same, despite their different parts, or to establish contrastive meaning links between those patterns and therefore to motivate them to decide which associations are appropriate for a particular word, phrase or sentence.

Last but not least, at the very end of the English version of the story, he presents his last and differential foregrounding example, which also functions as a way of defamiliarization. Thus, he wants to distract readers from the fictionality of the text.

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Summary

Style is generally defined as the use of language in a specific context, by a specific person, for a specific purpose, and includes operations such as selecting language tools, deviating from standard language use, repetition of specific linguistic forms in the text, and comparison. Thus, stylistics deals with grammatical, lexical, and meaning, as well as the phonetic features of the text and discursive tools. Stylisticians try to analyze specific texts and stylistic differences between texts as they conduct research at all language levels, such as vocabulary, syntax, and text.

Stylistics, as a subdiscipline of linguistics, concerns the systematic analysis of style. It tries to analyze the words and syntax of a literary text, that is, analyze and describe the diversity of linguistic forms used in different contexts, and explain the results by associating them with the meaning of the text, the author, the period in which the work was written, and also other works written in the same period.

Besides the style of the author and the text, stylistics investigates literary texts and what the reader understands from them. In this way, it determines the quality of verbal communication between the author and the reader, how the reader decodes the style and poetic effect in a literary text, and his/her attitude towards it.

One of the terms used in stylistics to look systematically at the formal features of a text is "foregrounding" which was first introduced by former Russian Formalists and Prag School Structuralists, particularly Mukařovsky and Havránek. Writers deliberately employ this stylistic tool to make a particular textual pattern, including a phoneme, word, phrase, or clause salient or deviant from other elements. Their purpose is to draw their reader's attention to that pattern and make it memorable and interpretable.

By highlighting particular linguistic features (phoneme, word, phrase, clause, etc.) within a text, writers aim to make those features prominent for their aesthetic purposes. There are two basic types of foregrounding: deviation and parallelism/repetition. While writers achieve foregrounding-through-deviation by violating grammatical and semantic norms of language, foregrounding-through-repetition is realized through repetitive patterns such as sound, word, and syntax.

One of the best examples that are full of foregrounded elements is the short story "Ping", written by Irish poet, theatre director, playwright, and novelist Samuel Beckett. Because the story has no plot, character, and setting in the traditional sense, for years, it has been analyzed by many literary critics, including David Lodge.

Based on this fact, I think it is time to analyze the story by unpacking it stylistically and availing myself of linguistic tools to uncover Nobel Prize-winning author, critic, and playwright Beckett's purpose for using these patterns and thus contribute to a better understanding of the story. For this purpose, while identifying and analyzing the foregrounded examples, I will also give theoretical information when necessary. Moreover, I shall number the sentences for ease of reference and provide a limited number of examples.

The overall point that I want to make is that like many writers, Beckett resorts to two ways to foreground some elements in his story. The first way is foregrounding-through-deviation. The first remarkable deviant pattern in the story is its confinement to a single paragraph. The story also comes to the fore by not using punctuation marks other than the full stop, with its verb-less sentences or only sentences with the present and past participles and the verbified adjectives. The second way he takes is foregrounding-through-repetition. Within his rather short story, he repeats a limited number of words and phrases but with some alterations, uses some nouns such as "white" and "ping" in different positions in the sentences, and sentences that begin with particular words or phrases but end differently to present character's awareness or perception, in snatches though, in an extreme situation where s/he is either on the brink of existence or non-existence and is struggling to make sense what happens around.

It should also be noted here that while Beckett uses same lexical and syntactic patterns with some alterations as an example of foregrounding-through-parallelism, he also presents some repeated patterns. The story also harbours an internal foregrounding, defined by Paul Simpson as "*deviation within a deviation*". (2004, p. 51). For example: the use of central words such as "ping" and "white" sometimes at the beginning, sometimes in the middle, or at the end of the sentences.

Last but not least, Beckett adopts a different type of foregrounding, which is also an example of defamiliarization, at the end of the English version by indicating that the story is translated from French into English by himself to make his readers aware of the fact that everything told is nothing but fiction.