





The Use of Deverbative Nouns as a Stylistic Technique in Mqapheli Mngadi's Selected Editorial Cartoons

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Introduction

Deverbative nouns have been mainly studied from a linguistic point of view. Little has been done to investigate this aspect from a genre like cartoons. This chapter attempts to fill in this gap by investigating the use of deverbative nouns as a stylistic technique in Mqapheli Mngadi's cartoons. Mngadi uses these nouns as a stylistic technique in his cartoons, but there seems to be no work that has been done in academic discourse to cover this so far. Linguistic stylistics is adopted as the main theoretical lens. Furthermore, the study is done qualitatively as it leans on visual analysis to interpret the intended meaning from the selected cartoons. Deverbative nouns are nouns that are formed from verbs (Bussmann, 1996: 123). Certain morphemes are affixed to verbs to make them nouns. This means that those nouns are formed as a result of certain actions. If a deverbative noun is used to label someone or something, it will thus be a

result of certain observed actions or habits a particular person or thing demonstrates. Using linguistic stylistics, this study attempts to investigate the artistic use of deverbative nouns in Mqapheli Mngadi's selected cartoons. Such an approach will indicate the interdisciplinary nature of linguistics and literary criticism, since deverbative nouns are generally perceived to be a pure linguistic aspect.

A research method is crucial in any study as it gives a clear indication of how the researcher will conduct his/her research. In this study, a qualitative research approach is utilised. Qualitative research centers on an individual's perspectives about the world. It helps in the understanding of social life through the study of targeted populations. A qualitative approach is utilised to uncover meaning that explains the actions and outcomes of different situations. Thus, it permits scientists to gather information and give descriptive meaning using difficult and systematic methods of transcribing. This method of research generally includes interviews, observations, surveys, content analysis of visual and written materials, and oral history (Mason, 2002: 49). It allows researchers to observe the nature of things and give meaning based on the observations made. This approach is used to describe and make clarifications about human nature.

A qualitative research approach is regarded as the best in uncovering various insights into knowledge as there may be more than one viewpoint of the subject researched. It gives researchers a chance to observe the idea of things and give meaning based on perceptions made. This methodology is utilised to depict and make explanations about human nature. Therefore, any data collected through the use of interviews and other spoken and written data is considered as evidence that may be utilised by the researcher to conduct a descriptive report. In this study, a qualitative approach is used to analyse how Mqapheli Mngadi uses deverbative nouns to give vivid descriptions in his cartoons. As mentioned before, qualitative approaches allow the researcher to observe and give meaning based on the observations made. Thus, this study seeks to

describe how Mngadi uses deverbatives to contextualise meaning in his cartoons.

It is also important to have a theory that underpins a study. A theory gives direction to any research discourse. According to Ragsdell et al., (2002: 196-198), theories can help scholars organise knowledge and understand what has already been observed and why it occurred. Theories can also highlight gaps in knowledge. This study utilises linguistic stylistics as an underpinning theory, as highlighted briefly above. Linguistic stylistic focuses more on the scientific part of language rules. This is governed by linguistic levels such as the lexical/grammatical, figures of speech, and context and cohesion categories (Crystal, 2003: 460). Halliday (1962: 2) comments on linguistic stylistics by positing:

Linguistic stylistics is the description of literary texts by methods derived from general linguistic theory, using the categories of the description of the language as a whole and the comparison of each text with others by the same and by the different authors in the same and in different genres.

The above definition suggests that linguistic stylistics seeks to examine grammar, lexis, phonology, morphology, semantics and other language properties embedded in a text. Linguistic stylistics focuses more on the form rather than the function. Therefore, this study will employ the linguistic stylistic approach by focusing on deverbatives nouns and how Mngadi uses them in his cartoons to depict meaning. It will examine how he uses deverbatives to give meaning to the cartoon. This study leans on linguistic stylistics and aligns with Ngara's (1982) linguistic format. Ngara's linguistic format attempts to conceptualise style through a linguistic approach. The format is divided into two subsets, namely, linguistic-proper features and para-linguistic affective devices. While the linguistic-proper features refer to features analysed according to normal linguistic descriptions, para-linguistic affective devices are opposite. In other words, they are not analysed according to normal linguistic descriptions (Ngara, 1982: 17). These features may include devices like symbolism, myth, allusions, and allegory,

for instance. Since the linguistic-proper format features are analysed according to normal linguistic descriptions, Ngara (op cit.) classifies them according to the following levels:

- The grammatical level which considers grammatical features such as syntax, types of sentences and the correlation of form and meaning.
- The lexical level where focus is on the author's choice of words. This may involve aspects like figures of speech – similes, metaphors, etc.
- The level of tenor of discourse refers to tone and the nature of formality and informality between the author and audience.
- The phonological level observes poetic patterns. This may include sounds like rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, parallelism, etc.
- The graphological level involves writing techniques, such as punctuation, paragraphing, colour, shape, etc.

Out of the five levels highlighted above, only the lexical level will be observed to meet the scope of this study. As already indicated, this level covers word choice and deverbative nouns which are the focus of the study fall under this category. Ngara's linguistic proper format is thus the suitable theoretical lens for this discourse since it covers the lexical feature as a linguistic level.

The analysis of deverbative nouns in Mqapheli Mngadi's cartoon

Deverbative nouns form part of Mngadi's word choice. He uses them as a context depiction technique. The cartoon below serves as the first example to demonstrate this:

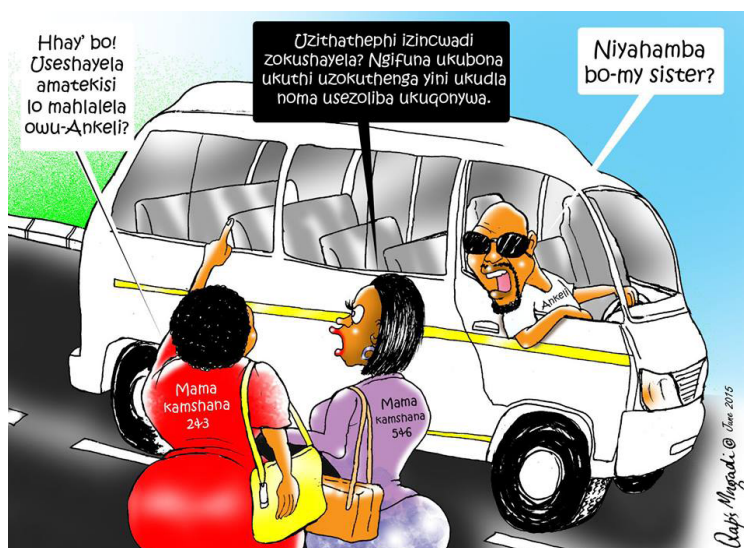


Figure 1: Cartoon 1

(Mngadi, 2015)

In this cartoon, Uncle's sister is amazed to see him driving a taxi as shown in the expression: "Hhay' bo! Useshayela amatekisi lo mahlalela owu-Ankele?" (Oh No! is this good for nothing Ankele driving taxis now?). By calling Ankele 'lo mahlalela', the sister suggests that Uncle is known for staying at home and doing nothing. This is not written in the cartoon but the deverbative noun 'umahlalela' explicates this information. 'Umahlalela' is derived from the verb 'ukuhlala' (to sit). Mngadi successfully uses the deverbative noun to give readers a bit of information about Uncle. The reader can easily pick up that he is someone who is lazy because of the use of this deverbative to describe him. Posthumus (1994: 30) argues that the term 'deverbative' signifies that the verb is a complete word from which a noun is derived. The following illustration demonstrates how the deverbative noun 'umahlalela' is derived from the verb 'ukuhlala':

The Uncommon becomes Common

u- -ma- -hlal- -el- -a (*the one who sits and does nothing*)

uku- -hlal- -el- -a (*to sit and do nothing*)

uku- -hlal- -a (*to sit*)

Note should be taken that the prefix uku- is substituted by the noun class 1 pre-prefix u- to personalise the noun. The pre-root infix -ma- which serves as the prefix proper as well as the applied verbal extension -el are added to the actual verb 'ukuhlala' to form the deverbative 'umahlalela'.

The following cartoon also illustrates the use of deverbative nouns in Mngadi's cartoons:



Figure 2: Cartoon 2

(Mngadi, 2017)

In this cartoon, Bhoza calls the South African national soccer team (Bafana Bafana) 'Odumazile' (the ones who disappoint) because of their habit of disappointing the fans by constantly losing games. This again is not explicitly written in the cartoon, but they are called 'Odumazile' because of their habit of losing soccer games. This deverbative noun is derived from the verb 'ukudumaza' (to disappoint). The message is thus embedded in the noun and Mngadi uses this to successfully express his idea.

The following illustration demonstrates how the deverbative noun 'odumazile' is derived from the verb 'ukudumaza':

o- -dumaz- -ile (*the ones who disappointed*)

uku- -dumaz- -a (*to disappoint*)

The prefix uku- is substituted by o- as a prefix for noun class 2a to personalise the noun. The last vowel -a is also substituted by the past perfect tense long form suffix -ile. The two examples discussed above demonstrate Mngadi's artistic skill of using deverbative nouns to communicate his ideas. The use of these nouns plays an important role in helping readers better understand the characters being referred to in the cartoons. Moreover, the cartoonist successfully uses these nouns as a technique to meet the element of brevity of expression. As shown in Figure 1, for example, it is not directly stated that Uncle is known for staying at home and doing nothing, but this information is conveyed through the deverbative noun 'umahlalela'. Likewise, in Figure 2, it is not directly stated that Bafana Bafana specialise in disappointing fans. The deverbative noun 'odumazile' plays an important role in presenting this information. The use of deverbative nouns is thus one of the techniques Mngadi uses to meet the element of brevity of expression by conveying in one word what could have been presented by using many words.

Mngadi's use of deverbative nouns is also analysed from cartoon 3:

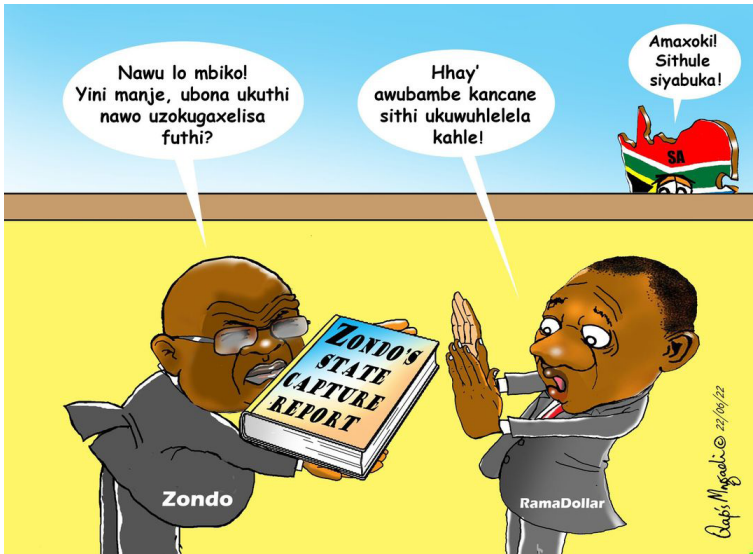


Figure 3: Cartoon 3

(Mngadi, 2017)

In figure 3 above, the cartoonist depicts Raymond Zondo, a South African judge, and Cyril Ramaphosa, the Republic of South Africa's President. Behind them, there is a character personified as South Africans. Zondo and Ramaphosa are talking about the state capture report, which was compiled to report on the corruption found in different government departments. In the cartoon above, Zondo, who was appointed by Ramaphosa as the chief judge for the commission into state capture, is handing Ramaphosa the report but Ramaphosa seems to be not interested. The cartoonist seems to suggest that Ramaphosa is not showing any interest because the report could also implicate him, somehow. He is then suggesting that the report should be kept and not released for a while. The details of what the report entails, and its relation to Ramaphosa, are not included in the cartoon.

The character personified as South Africa seems to be disappointed by this. This is demonstrated by the following words: "Amaxoki! Sithule siyabuka!" (Liars! We are just quiet

and observing!). This statement consists of the deverbative noun 'amaxoki' (liars), which is derived from the verb 'ukuxoka'. Generally, 'ukuxoka' means to lie or to cause quarrels between people. The word 'amaxoki' is thus used to refer to people who tell lies or instigate quarrels among people. By referring to President Ramaphosa and Chief Justice Zondo as 'amaxoki', the cartoonist is suggesting that the two are dishonest. The use of this deverbative noun plays an important role in drawing the reader's attention to investigate what the two leaders are supposedly implicated for. The demonstration of how the deverbative verb 'amaxoki' is derived from the infinite verb 'ukuxoka', is as follows:

ama - -xok- -i (*the ones who lie*)

uku - -xok- -a (*to lie*)

In the above illustration, the prefix uku- is substituted by the noun class prefix 6 ama-. The last categorial morpheme -a is substituted by the vowel -i. As indicated above, the deverbative noun 'amaxoki' (liars/the ones who lie) is used to introduce readers to the background knowledge behind the cartoon. Because of the brevity of cartoons, cartoonist do not have enough space to fully convey their ideas as compared to an author of a novel, for instance. There were widespread complaints in the nation that the Zondo commission failed to conclude its investigation when it came to high profile government figures. The deverbative noun 'amaxoki' is thus used to reiterate and contextualise this background knowledge.

The last example is examined from Figure 4:

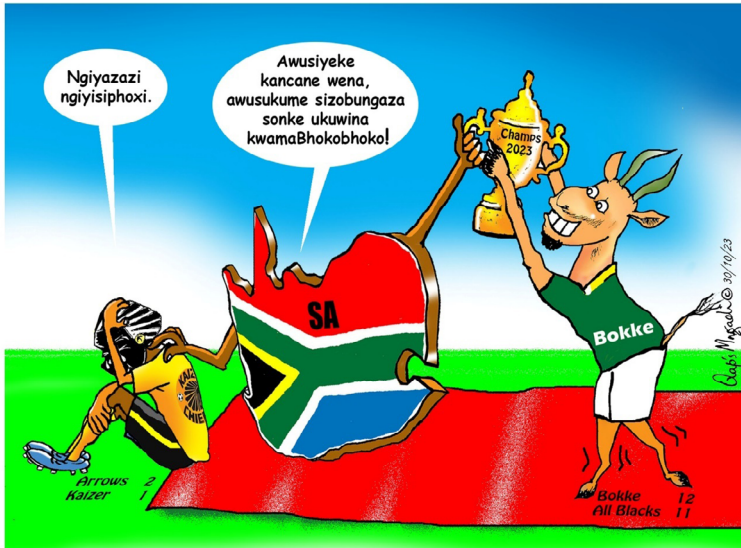


Figure 4: Cartoon 4

(Mngadi, 2023)

Figure 4 depicts three characters who represent Kaizer Chiefs, South Africans (SA), and the South African rugby national team (Bokke). The character representing Kaizer Chiefs is depicted sitting down in disappointment. This is echoed by the words, “Ngiyazazi ngiyisiphoxi” (I know I am a disappointment). In an attempt to console him, the character representing South Africa remarks; “Awusiyeke kancane wena, awusukume sizobungaza sonke ukuwina kwamaBhokobhoko” (Excuse us for a moment. Stand up so that we can all celebrate together the Springboks’ win). This cartoon was designed after the South African rugby national team had won the Rugby World Cup for the fourth time. This was a historic moment for the nation. AmaBhokobhoko, as they are affectionately known in South Africa, became the first rugby national team to win the World Cup four times. In the 2023 final, they defeated New Zealand (All Blacks) who are historically their main rival. While this was the case, Kaizer Chiefs, one of the prominent soccer teams in South African football, was going through a difficult period as they were not getting any positive results.

The deverbative noun that is used in this cartoon is “ngiyisiphoxi” (I am a disappointment) from the statement made by the Kaizer Chiefs character. This word is morphologically derived from the deverbative noun “isiphoxi” (the one who disappoints), which is then derived from the verb ukuphoxa (to disappoint). This is demonstrated below:

ngi- -yi- -si- -phox- -i (*i am a disappointment*)

isi- -phox- -i (*the one who disappoints*)

uku- -phox- -a (*to disappoint*)

The illustration above demonstrates how the deverbative noun ‘isiphoxi’ (the one who disappoints) is derived from the infinite verb ‘ukuphoxa’ (to disappoint). Here, the noun class 7 full norm prefix ‘isi-’ replaces the noun class 15 prefix ‘uku-’, while the root ‘-phox-’ is maintained in both words. Lastly, the last categorical morpheme ‘-i’ of ‘isiphoxi’ substitutes the last categorical morpheme ‘-a’ of ‘ukuphoxa’.

This deverbative noun is used to signify the idea that Kaizer Chiefs is a perpetual disappointment. During the 2022–2023 Premier League season, Kaizer Chiefs finished in position 10 in a league of 16 teams. This was after the team recorded only nine wins, nine draws, and 12 defeats. For a team of Kaizer Chiefs’ stature, this was considered as a big disappointment. It is for this reason that the character representing Kaizer Chiefs in Figure 4 above, regards himself as ‘isiphoxi’ (the one who disappoints). This is another example that demonstrates the cartoonist’s use of a deverbative noun stylistically to depict context. Reading the cartoon would make a person who is not well informed about Kaizer Chiefs to be intrigued and tempted to go and investigate about the team. The deverbative noun is therefore pregnant with information that needs to be unpacked through context and investigation.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how deverbative nouns are used as a stylistic technique in Mqapheli Mngadi’s cartoons. The

findings highlight that Mngadi uses this technique as a context depiction technique. As a result of the brevity of expression in cartoons, the cartoonist opts to use deverbative nouns to express his ideas succinctly. This intrigues readers to engage with the cartoons and conduct more investigations to understand the full context. The analysis of data was done through the lenses of Ngara's linguistic format because this approach weaves together literary criticism and linguistics. While deverbative nouns are purely a linguistic entity, their investigation in the context of the cartoons highlighted their literary significance.

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