

Asyndetic sentence patterns in E.D.M. Sibiya's novels: A syntactic-stylistic critique

Sizwe Zwelakhe Dlamini

E-mail: sizwed@uj.ac.za

Department of African Languages, Faculty of Humanities, University of Johannesburg,
Johannesburg, South Africa

Abstract

The aim of this article is to investigate the use of asyndetic sentence patterns in E.D.M. Sibiya's novels. The study is motivated by the fact that, even though Sibiya uses asyndeton artistically in his novels, there is no study so far that has explored this aspect of his literary works. A linguistic stylistic approach, through the lenses of Leech and Short's checklist of linguistic and stylistic categories, is proposed to theoretically ground the textually analysed data. As the study seeks to critically appraise Sibiya's artistic use of asyndeton in his novels, the findings highlight that the use of this device contributes to the creation of a steady reading pace, rhythm, and flow when the novels are read. This was proven to be instrumental in enhancing the overall comprehension and quality of the text. The discussion of asyndeton is observed according to the following syntactic features: asyndeton in sentences separated by full stops, and asyndeton in sentences separated by commas.

Key words: Asyndeton, syntax, linguistic stylistics, novel

Introduction

E.D.M. Sibiya is one of the authors who has made a significant contribution to the literature of the South African indigenous languages, specifically the isiZulu language. Even though he is an award-winning novelist, generally, there seems to be little that has been done to investigate the manipulation of language in his novels. Studies on Sibiya's novels have focused mainly on literary elements such as characterisation (Mjaji, 2016; Mtumane & Hadebe, 2021; Mtumane & Hadebe,

2022), setting and themes (Poswa, 2023), narration (Ndebele, 2007), and the depiction of social issues (Zulu, 2004; Ngema, 2017; Ngema, 2020; Mabuza, 2021). The only study that has focused on language usage is by Mbathu (2018), but it only investigates idioms and proverbs. Generally, there is also less studies, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, that have been done on asyndeton in the context of the South African indigenous language's literary works. One of the identified is by Thwala (2000), who evaluates asyndeton as one of the elements of form in C.T. Msimanga's isiZulu poetry.

The study is thus motivated by the above highlighted gap. It seeks to investigate asyndeton as a syntactic feature in the novel genre. The aim is to evaluate Sibiya's manipulation of language by focusing on asyndeton. This means asyndeton is considered as a syntactic feature, which is then investigated to determine its artistic effect on the text. To be put succinctly, the study is a critical appraisal of the artistic significance of asyndeton in the novel genre with special reference to Sibiya's four novels.

The study adopts linguistic stylistics as a theoretical base. By focusing only on the grammatical category, Leech and Short's (1981) checklist to linguistic and stylistic categories is utilised. This category covers the syntactic level and its literary significance in a text. Before the analysis section, a section of theory will be provided to expand on this. The other sections will include the research methodology of the study, the definition of the concept of 'asyndeton', as well the synopsis of the following analysed novels: *Kungasa Ngifile* (2002), *Ngidedele Ngife* (2006), *Ngiyolibala Ngifile* (2010), and *Inkululeko Engakhulekile* (2020). The analysis is done on all four of Sibiya's novels because the aim is to demonstrate Sibiya's consistent use of asyndeton in the writing of this novels.

Research methodology

A qualitative research study is typically underpinned by an interest, problem, or question (Ravitch & Carl, 2016: 2). This means that this method is driven by an interest on a particular aspect. It is also driven by the desire to conceptualise a problem in order to find answers. Data is then analysed by words (written or spoken language) instead of numbers to fulfil these desires. The qualitative research method aims to understand and interpret the meaning of data that is gathered in context (Braun & Clarke, 2013: 4). This method adopts a naturalistic and interpretative approach to understand the meaning of phenomena in the social world (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003: 3).

The qualitative research method employs different approaches for data collection and analysis. These may include interviews and observations, for instance. It may also include documents, films, or videotapes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998: 11). Novels, as one of the examples of documents, are also of no exception since data can be collected, organised and interpreted qualitatively from them. It is for this reason that this study adopts the qualitative research method. The study analyses Sibiya's four novels to get their meaning. This is done by specifically focusing on the syntactic-stylistic use of asyndeton in the novels.

Theoretical framework

As indicated in the introduction earlier, the study adopts a linguistic stylistic approach through Leech and Short's (1981) checklist of linguistic and stylistic categories. This approach conceptualise about style through a linguistic approach. Leech and Short categorise their checklist into four categories, namely: the lexical, grammatical, figures of speech, context, and cohesion. The approach is concerned with both the linguistic and critical interpretation of literary texts. In other words, it focuses on the artistic effects of a text and how linguistic details fit into the equation. A brief description of the checklist categories is provided below:

- *Lexical categories* - covers the nature of the vocabulary. This includes lexical sets such as nouns, adjectives, and verbs.
- *Grammatical categories* - places interest on the syntactic patterns of the text. This covers sentence types, sentence complexity, clause types, clause structures, noun phases, verb phases, etc.
- *Figures of speech* – observation is made to the grammatical and lexical features. This may cover (word) repetition, mirror image patterns or rhetorical devices, etc. This also includes phonological schemes (rhyme, alliteration, etc) and tropes.
- *Cohesion and context* – While cohesion considers the different elements of the text (such as sentences and a variety of words) and how they are related, context considers the relationship between the text, the writer, and they reader.

Out of the four categories above, only the grammatical category is considered because the study at hand deals with asyndeton as a literary syntactic feature. Even though this study focuses on one

category, Leech and Short's theory is relevant since this approach advocates for a linguistic and stylistic analysis of a literary text.

The concept of asyndeton

Conjunctions are regarded as one of the essential features that mostly characterise compound, complex, or complex-compound sentences. Even though this is true, there are instances where conjunctions are syntactically omitted in sentences for rhetoric effects. When this is done, such a pattern is referred to as 'asyndeton'. While syndeton refers for the use of several conjunction in sentences, asyndeton is the opposite. It refers to the omission of conjunctions in sentences, clauses, or phrases (Greene, *et al.*, 2012: 97). Asyndeton occurs when sentences or clauses appear without conjunctions (Ndiritu & Maina, 2021: 72). Commenting on this device, Hebron (2003: 21) avers:

For certain poetic purposes, and perhaps also for certain modes of reasoning, one of the most effective uses of connectives, or conjunctions, is to omit them altogether- the rhetorical figure of asyndeton.

Hebron's view above highlights the artistic role of asyndeton. This device is credited for its poetic influence on the text. Asyndeton can also be easily associated with isocolon or parison. It is important to take note, however, that even though the two can work side by side, they are different devices. Asyndeton refers to the omission of conjunctions (where they are considered to have been) and isocolon refers to the parallel sequence of sentences, clauses, and phrases that are equal in length and structure. There are cases where asyndeton occurs within isocolon. In such cases, sequential sentences, clauses, or phrases appear without conjunctions and they tend to be separated by commas or full stops.

For instance, the sentence: "*Ziyasebenza izisebenzi, zidinga imali*" (Workers are working, they need money) marks both isocolon and asyndeton. It is considered as isocolon because the two sentences are parallel and equal in structure and length. While this is true, a conjunction has been omitted in this sentence and this marks asyndeton. The sentence could have been structured in the following manner, for instance: "*Ziyasebenza izisebenzi ngoba zidinga imali*" (Workers are working because they need money). It is the omission of the conjunction '*ngoba*' (because) and its replacement with a comma that reflects the use of asyndeton in this sentence.

The synopsis of novels

To provide context before the analysis of data is done, this section provides a synopsis of the following analysed novels: *Kungasa Ngifile* (2002), *Ngidedele Ngife* (2006), *Ngiyolibala Ngifile* (2010), and *Inkululeko Engakhulekile* (2020).

Kungasa Ngifile

The novel is about a young man named Senzo. He is in a relationship with Nokuthula but his mother, MaMemela, disapproves of this relationship. She tries to stop Senzo from dating Nokuthula. This troubles Senzo; he struggles to understand why his mother deplores Nokuthula so much. On the other hand, Mhlungu, MaMemela's husband, is determined to see Senzo getting married. There is conflict of interest between MaMemela and Mhlungu because Mhlungu sees Nokuthula as a suitable woman for Senzo. It is later revealed in the story that MaMemela is against Senzo and Nokuthula's relationship because she had an affair with Zondi, who is assumed to be Nokuthula's father. After MaMemela's infidelity is exposed, MaMemela confesses that Senzo is Zondi's child. Mhlungu then dies after the shock and depression he suffers as a result of this truth. While readers are captivated and intrigued by this, the story ends by highlighting that Nokuthula is not Zondi's biological daughter.

Ngidedele Ngife

In this novel, a man by the name of Ndabayakhe, is depicted attempting to commit suicide. He is convinced that he is HIV positive and, as a result, he sees ending his life as the right thing to do at the time. He is rescued by John and Khona who see him in the bush while he is hanging on a tree. Prior to this, Ndabayakhe is sought by family and friends without any success. They are troubled because they are aware that Ndabayakhe went missing feeling sick. Even though John and Khona are hesitant about saving Ndabayakhe, since they are running away from the police, they end up taking him to hospital. Ndabayakhe recovers in hospital, but he is soon arrested because of an unlicensed gun found by police in his room. While serving his sentence, he is diagnosed with Tuberculosis after he becomes severely ill. He is then released from prison since he is a few months away from being released by parole due to good conduct.

Ngiyolibala Ngifile

The story is about a young girl named Khanyisile who is raped by her biological father, Madonsela. Madonsela is a member of parliament and a distinguished political hero in the novel. Seeing that his life was in danger, Madonsela left and spent some time in exile. His parents' house was burned down, and it was assumed that everyone had passed on. As he was in exile, his wife, MaKhoza, took care of their daughter, Khanyisile. Madonsela comes back as a hero and is rewarded with a luxurious life. Despite being a hero, he rapes Khanyisile and threatens to kill her if she discloses the truth to anyone. Khanyisile falls pregnant and is forced to lie about the baby's father. This means that she keeps the truth from her mother. However, she can no longer keep it to herself because she eventually tells MaKhoza while Madonsela is away on a political trip. MaKhoza struggles to believe the truth and tries to convince Khanyisile that the issue can be dealt with internally. Surprised by this, Khanyisile decides to run away from home. She stays in the streets of Johannesburg. That is where she meets her grandfather who was presumed dead. Madonsela is then arrested at the end of the story.

Inkululeko Engakhululekile

The novel is about a married couple who have two homosexual children among their four children. They give birth to a child with two private parts, and they are forced to choose the child's gender. Since they have been longing to have a daughter, they decide that the child, whom they named Nozipho, should be female. As the child grows, it becomes clear that she has feelings for women. A similar situation happens with their son, Mthokozisi. He is an educated young man who gets married to Sonto, a lady who has been loving him dearly from childhood. They have a child together and seem to have a happy family. The situation changes when Mthokozisi meets Chris. He can no longer hide his identity. He decides to divorce Sonto to pursue his relationship with Chris. Sonto passes on because of depression, as a result. A bizarre situation happens when both Nozipho and Mthokozisi are paid dowry for on the same day.

The analysis of asyndeton as a syntactic-stylistic feature in E.D.M. Sibiya's novels

The discussion below analyses asyndeton as a literary syntactic feature in Sibiya's novels through the following sub-headings: asyndeton in sentences that are separated by full stops, and asyndeton in clauses that are separated by commas.

Asyndeton in sentences separated by full stops

In this section, attention is paid to asyndeton that appears in clauses that are separated by full stops in-between. Essentially, these are cases where the author employs full stops where conjunctions could have been used instead. The first example is illustrated in the excerpt below, from *Kungasa Ngifile* (2002):

Aqale angaphenduli uSenzo sengathi akakangeni emdlandleni wokudlala. Kuze kuphendule yena uNokuthula esedlala indawo kaSenzo. Ezwe sekuthi makaphendule uSenzo. Uqala ukumheha lo mdlalo.

(Senzo started by not answering as if he is not yet in the mood to play. Nokuthula is the one that answered playing Senzo's role. Senzo felt like answering. The play is starting to attract him.)

(Sibiya, 2002: 37)

Senzo and Nokuthula are depicted engaging in a role play in this scenario. They are pretending to be getting married. Even though Senzo initially seems reluctant to participate, he ends up being keen to take part. Asyndeton is demonstrated through the following sequence of independent clauses: "*Ezwe sekuthi makaphendule uSenzo. Uqala ukumheha lo mdlalo*" (Senzo felt like answering. The play is starting to attract him). Even though these clauses are separated by a full stop, a conjunction could have been used to join them. In that way, the sentence could have probably been structured in the following manner: "*Ezwe sekuthi makaphendule uSenzo ngoba uqala ukumheha lo mdlalo*" (Senzo felt like answering because the play is starting to attract him). The omission of the conjunction *ngoba* (because), and replacing it with a full stop, thus marks asyndeton; clauses that could have been joined by a conjunction are not. Instead, they are separated by a full stop.

Even though it might not be clear as to whether the author employs asyndeton intentionally or not, it is evident that this produces some artistic effects on the text. Short sentences or clauses that are separated by full stops tend to make the reading process to be direct and flow. The use of a full stop, instead of a conjunction, allows readers to read at a slow pace and this plays a significant role in enhancing the comprehension of the clauses. By pausing, a reader gathers his/her thoughts before reading the second sentence or clause. Even though there is a pause, the omission of a

conjunction makes the clauses to be read with pace and rhythm. Essentially, this omission of a conjunction links the two clauses and makes the reading to be short in length. This makes the reading process to be efficient and enjoyable. Since readers sometimes get tired of reading, because of the long length of novels, asyndeton assists in helping them to stay tuned. They are kept captivated.

It was mentioned above that there are cases where both isocolon and asyndeton are marked, and the highlighted example above is an instance of such a case. In the asyndeton example above, each of the clauses are made up of four parallel words. The two clauses are thus equal in structure and length.

The use of asyndeton is also evident in *Ngidedele Ngife* (2006), as demonstrated below:

Azame ukuyibamba intambo, kodwa ehluleke. Negatsha eliseduze isandla asifikeleli kulo. Azame ukuselula isandla. Lutho ukufinyelela egatsheni. Akusaqhamuki namuntu amsize nje bandla.

(He tried to grab the rope, but he could not. He cannot even reach the branch of the tree near to him. He tried to stretch his hand. He could not reach the branch. There is not even a person who can come and help him.)

(Sibiya, 2006: 9)

Ndabayakhe is on the verge of dying after hanging himself on a tree. As a result of the pain he is suffering from, he is making attempts to deliver himself. He is trying to stretch out his hand to grab a branch of the tree, but he is failing. Asyndeton is employed in describing this. The clauses: “*Azame ukuselula isandla. Lutho ukufinyelela egatsheni*” (He tried to stretch his hand. He could not reach the branch), are separated by a full stop. They could have potentially been joined by the conjunction ‘*kodwa*’ (but), and the sentence was going to be structured in this manner: “*Azame ukuselula isandla **kodwa** lutho ukufinyelela egatsheni*” (He tried to stretch his hand, but he could not reach the branch). The employment of asyndeton is therefore marked by the omission of this possible conjunction and replacing it with a full stop.

In the same novel, the following excerpt also highlights asyndeton:

Esalalele lolo hleko kuthi gakla isicabha. Kuphume leliya patshazi lentokazi. Iyamoyizela. Ishaya kancane sengathi ifuna ayibuke. Cha, yona yinhle bo. Yisibutubutu nje esinomzimba wesidudla. Sifishanyana nje. Simpofu ngebala.

(While he was still listening to that laughter, the door opened. That beautiful lady came out. She is smiling. She is walking slowly as if she wants him to look at her. She is a beautiful thick girl. She is just short with a weighty body. She is light in complexion.)

(Sibiya, 2006: 44)

A nurse is described to be thick and beautiful in this scene. She is further described as short and light in complexion in the following words: “*Sifishane nje. Simpofu ngebala*” (She is just short. She is light in complexion). It is evident even here that asyndeton is employed since a conjunction is omitted. Instead of placing a full stop in-between the two sentences, the conjunction ‘*futhi*’ (and) could have been used, possibly. In that manner, the clauses would be combined, and the sentence would be phrased as: “*Sifishane nje futhi simpofu ngebala*” (She is just short and light in complexion). This is another example where asyndeton occurs simultaneously with isocolon. Two clauses, equal in structure and length, are parallel.

The art of asyndeton is also evident in *Ngiyolibala Ngifile* (2010), as shown by the highlighted clauses in the paragraph below:

Kusenjalo abone sengathi uKhanyisile useyazigingqagingqa phansi okomuntu oshukwa yisisu. Athi uma ejeqeza uMaKhoza abone ukuthi akusekho nelilodwa iphilisi kulawo aphezu kwetafula. Hhawu Nkosi yami, usefa ngempela madoda? Azame ukukhala. Lutho ukuphuma izwi. Kuthi lapho liphuma khona kube ukuphaphama kwakhe.

(In that manner she saw as if Khanyisile was rolling down like someone with stomach cramps. As she glanced, Makhoza saw as if there were longer any pills from the ones on top of the table. *Hhawu*, my Lord, is she really dying? She tried to cry. No voice came out. When it came out, she woke up.)

(Sibiya, 2010: 37)

This is another example of two sentences that could have possibly been combined by the conjunction ‘*kodwa*’ (but). The sentence would then be structured in the following manner: “*Azame ukukhala **kodwa** lutho ukuphuma izwi*” (She tried to cry but the voice did not come out). The omission of this possible conjunction demonstrates an instance of asyndeton. MaKhoza is described to be dreaming in this part of the story. This is after Khanyisile left home. In the dream, she sees Khanyisile rolling because of stomach cramps. It appears like she has overdosed some pills. This is a tense situation and readers are captivated to find out how MaKhoza’s dream will turn out. The use of asyndeton is crucial in the narration of such an event because the tool creates a flow when the description of what is happening is made. The use of the full stop enables readers to have a short pause to think and visualise the scenario before continuing with the reading.

The bold clauses below, also in *Ngiyolibala Ngifile* (2010), demonstrate the use of asyndeton as well:

*Alinde ke. Kuze kuphazamise lona onqongqothayo emnyango. **Kuvuleke umnyango. Aphenduke uMadonsela.** Lowo kwakumfowabo ongumagcino, uMzabalazo, ofunda lena oNgoye.*

(He then waited. Until the one knocking at the door disturbed. The door opened. Madonsela turned. That was his last born brother, Mzabalazo, who studied in Ngoye.)

(Sibiya, 2010: 56)

The sentence: “*Kuvuleke umnyango*” and “*Aphenduke uMadonsela*” (The door opened. Madonsela turned) are separated by a full stop. These sentences could have been possibly combined by the conjunction ‘*bese*’ (and then) to construct the sentence: “*Kuvuleke umnyango bese aphenduke uMadonsela*” (The door opened and then Madonsela turned). However, this conjunction is omitted, and this results in asyndeton. The equal structure and length of the two sentences also suggests that this example is also an instance of isocolon. The clauses are used to describe how Madonsela turns when his brother, Mzabalazo, enters the house.

Asyndeton in clauses separated by a comma

Here, asyndeton is analysed from clauses that are separated by commas. These are cases where commas are used to separate clauses instead of conjunctions, as in the case of the example below, from *Ngiyolibala Ngifile* (2010):

*Kufanele yena ajeze noma kanjani. Kumele kube yisijeziso abazovumelana ngaso bebobathathu njengomndeni. Nalezi zinsuku ezinhlanu ezisele ngaphambi kokuthi abuye phesheya usokhaya sengathi seziziningi kakhulu. **Ngcono ukuba ubuya kusashisa nje, azowotha lo mlilo awuphemba yena ngokwakhe.***

(He most definitely has to be punished. It has to be a form of punishment they are going to agree on, the three of them as a family. Even these five remaining days before the head of the household comes back from overseas seem a lot. It was going to be better if he comes back while the situation is still tense, to deal with the situation he created himself.)

(Sibiya, 2010: 33)

The bold clauses above consist of the clauses: “*Ngcono ukuba ubuya kusashisa nje*” (It is better he comes back while the situation is still intense) and “*azowotha lo mlilo awuphemba yena ngokwakhe*” (to come and deal with the situation he created himself). If the two clauses were not separated by a comma, the conjunction ‘*ukuze*’ (so that) could potentially have been used to join them. If this was to be the case, the sentence would be structured in this manner: “*Ngcono ukuba ubuya kusashisa nje **ukuze** azowotha lo mlilo awuphemba yena ngokwakhe*” (It was going to be better if he comes back while the situation is still tense so that he can deal with the situation he created himself). Asyndeton is therefore marked by the omission of this conjunction. The use of a comma also facilitates a bit of a pause like in the case of a full stop. This pause is not high in intensity, as compared to the one introduced by a full stop. Even with the use of a comma, because a conjunction has been omitted, there is a steady pace when the clauses are read. Another example is also examined from *Ngiyolibala Ngifile* (2010) below:

*Ilokishi laseSoweto lingelinye lamalokishi amadala kakhulu kuleli lizwe laseNingizimu Afrika. **Likhulu, lendlaleke ethafeni;** ulibuka kuphele amehlo. LiseNingizimu Ntshonalanga nedolobha lodumo iGoli.*

(Soweto is one of the oldest locations of the country in South Africa. It is huge, spread across the plain; you look at it as wide as you can. It is in the Southwest of the famous Johannesburg.)

(Sibiya, 2010: 23)

The location of Soweto forms part of the story setting in the novel above. Madonsela and his wife, MaKhoza, were staying there during the struggle against apartheid. This is before Madonsela went to exile. In describing how huge and how spread across the plain Soweto is, the author uses the clauses: “*Likhulu, lendlaleke ethafeni*” (It is huge, spread across the plain). A conjunction, that could have been used to join the two clauses, is omitted in this case. The clauses are separated by a comma as shown. The conjunction ‘*futhi*’ (and) could have been possibly used for the sentence to be structured as: “*Likhulu futhi lendlaleke ethafeni*” (It is huge and spread across the plain). The inclusion of this conjunction could have slowed the pace and affected the rhythm of the clauses when read.

The use of asyndeton in-between clauses that are separated by a comma is also evident in *Kungasa Ngifile* (2002) below:

Ingqondo yakhe yayelukile, inhliziyi yakhe ishaya kamnandi uma ecabanga ngoNokuthula. Okubuhlungu nje wukuthi isithandwa sakhe kwakungasensuku zatshwala sibone indlela ebheke oPhongolo laphe sasifunda khona ibanga leshumi nambili.

(His mind was relaxed, his heart beating nicely when he thought about Nokuthula. What is painful is that it was not long before Nokuthula left for Phongolo where she was studying grade twelve.)

(Sibiya, 2002: 49)

The statement: “*Ingqondo yakhe yayelukile, inhliziyi yakhe ishaya kamnandi uma ecabanga ngoNokuthula*” (His mind was relaxed, his heart beating nicely when he thought about Nokuthula) consists of three clauses; the first one is: “*Ingqondo yakhe yayelukile*” (His mind was relaxed), the second one: “*Inhliziyi yakhe ishaya kamnandi*” (His heart beating nicely), and the last one: “*uma ecabanga uNokuthula*” (when he thought about Nokuthula). The first and the second clause are

independent and the last one is dependent. The former two are separated by a comma instead of a conjunction, and this demonstrates asyndeton. With the use of the conjunction ‘*futhi*’ (and), for instance, the sentence could be structured as: “*Ingqondo yakhe yayelukile **futhi** inhliziyi yakhe ishaya kamnandi ...*” (His mind was relaxed and his heart beating nicely ...).

The bold clauses below, in *Inkululeko Engakhululekile* (2020), also indicate asyndeton:

*Wayephethe nepheshana ayelibhalelwe nguSiphiwe phansi ukuthi uzohamba alandele lokhu okudwetshiwe phansi aze ayofika khona enyuvesi yaseWits. **Wehla ngomgwaqo uJeppe, wedlula eSpar ngakwesokudla.** Wathi uma efika erobhothini wajikela ngakwesokudla wathatha umgwaqo uRissik.*

(He had a paper with him that Siphiwe wrote so that he could follow the drawing until he reached Wits University. He went down Jeppe Street, he passed Spar on the right. When he arrived at the robot, he turned on his right and took Rissik Street.)

(Sibiya, 2020: 99)

The bold clauses above demonstrate the use of asyndeton. The clauses: “*Wehla ngomgwaqo uJeppe*” (He went down Jeppe Street) and “*Wedlula eSpar ngakwesokudla*” (He passed Spar on the right) are independent clauses separated by a comma. They could have been possibly joined by the conjunction ‘*bese*’ (and then) to structure the sentence as: “*Wehla ngomgwaqo uJeppe **bese** wedlula eSpar ngakwesokudla*” (He went down with Jeppe Street and then passed Spar on the right).

Mthokozisi is a first-year student at Wits. It is his first time going to campus and, as a result, Sphiwe has written him directions to follow. The scenario above demonstrates how he navigates around the streets to get to campus. Asyndeton is used in the bold clause to highlight how he uses Jeppe Street, with Spar on his right. He is walking and in motion and the best device that could have been used to present this meaningfully is asyndeton. This device enables the reading of the clauses to be quick and by doing so, readers can visualise Mthokozisi as he walks. One would assume that he is not walking slowly; people hardly walk slowly in Johannesburg, especially those who are not familiar with the environment.

Asyndeton is also highlighted by the clauses in bold below:

*Umngani wakhe wamondla wagcina esekhathela naye ngoba kwakungekho mali engakanani ayithunyelelwa nguyise ezimayini. **Wayeke ahlale egqolozele incwadi, kungangeni nakufundayo ngenxa kamashayandawonye.** Kwesinye isikhathi wayekhala izinyembezi ziconsele phezu kwezincwadi.*

(His friend fed him until he became tired because he was not receiving much money from his dad in the mines. He would sometimes gaze at the book, nothing he read internalised because of hunger. He would cry and his tears would be shed on to his books some other time.)

(Sibiya, 2020: 104)

The passage above highlights the challenges Mthokozisi is encountering at university. He has no means to buy food and he is struggling to study. This is a common challenge faced by many students in higher educational institutions. The sentence: “*Wayeke ahlale egqolozele incwadi, kungangeni nakufundayo ngenxa kamashayandawonye*” (He would gaze at the book, nothing he read internalised because of hunger) marks asyndeton. The two clauses are separated by a comma instead of a conjunction. ‘*Kodwa*’ (but) could have been used as a conjunction to join the clauses and this would have resulted in: “*Wayeke ahlale egqolozele incwadi **kodwa** kungangeni nakufundayo ngenxa kamashayandawonye*” (He would gaze at the book but nothing he read would be internalised because of hunger).

Conclusion

This article has attempted to examine the stylistic use of asyndeton in E.D.M. Sibiya’s novels. This device was considered as a syntactic feature, and it was investigated according to its use in sentences that are separated by full stops and sentences that are separated by a comma. The findings of the study conclude that asyndeton is artistically employed to enhance the reading of the novels. Its use ensures that there is steady pace, rhythm, and flow when the texts are read. Such stylistic effects are typically evident in genres like poetry but they appear to be also evident in Sibiya’s novels, and this can be attributed to the artistic use of asyndeton in the novels.

Acknowledgement

The financial assistance of the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences, in collaboration with the South African Humanities Deans Association (SAHUDA) towards this research, is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to NIHSS and SAHUDA.

References

- Braun, V., Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide for Beginners*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, Ltd.
- Greene, R., Cushman, S., Cavanagh, C., Ramazani, J., Router, P. (2012). *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Hebron, M. (2003). 'Seven Types of Asyndeton in *Paradise Lost*'. *The English Association*. 52: 21-36.
- Leech, G.N., Short, M.H. (1981). *Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose*. London: Longman.
- Mabuza, X. (2021). Challenges and Possibilities of a Girl Child as Depicted in Selected Zulu Novels. Unpublished Master's Dissertation. Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg.
- Mbathu, O.N. (2018). Izaga Nezisho Emibhalweni Yababhali Ababili BesiZulu. Unpublished Master's dissertation. Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg.
- Mjaji, V. (2016). The Portrayal of Characters in E.D.M. Sibiya's Novel *Kungasa Ngifile*. Unpublished Honours Research Essay. Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg.
- Mtumane, Z., Hadebe, M. (2021). 'Speech as a Device of Characterisation in E.D.M. Sibiya's *Ngiyolibala Ngifile*'. *International Journal of Science Research*. 77 (3/1): 2-14.
- Mtumane, Z., Hadebe, M. (2022). 'Action as a Device of Characterisation in E.D.M. Sibiya's *Ngiyolibala Ngifile*'. In: Z. Mtumane, E.D.M. Sibiya (eds). *Trends and Troops, Some Aspects of the African languages of South Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: UKZ Press.
- Ndebele, S.A. (2007). A Narratological Analysis of Two Zulu Novels. Unpublished Master's dissertation. Pretoria: University of Pretoria.
- Ndiritu, N., Maina, J. (2021). 'Delivering Covid-19 Containment Measures: A Case of Persuasion and Power'. *Asian Journal of Social Science and Management Technology*. 3 (1): 67-76.
- Ngema, D. (2017). Ukuhlukunyezwa Kwengane Enovelini ka-E.D.M. Sibiya ethi *Ngiyolibala Ngifile*. Unpublished Honours Research Essay. Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg.

- Ngema, D. (2020). Ukuvezwa Kwezinkinga Zomphakathi Emanovelini EsiZulu Akhethiwe. Unpublished Master's Dissertation. Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg.
- Poswa, N.L. (2023). Ukusetshenziswa kwesakhiwo nabalingiswa ukwethula indikimba Enovelini kaSibiya ethi Ngidedele Ngife. Unpublished Master's Dissertation. Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg.
- Ravitch, S.M., Carl, N.M. (2016). *Qualitative Research: Bridging the Conceptual, Theoretical, and Methodological*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, inc.
- Ritchie, J., Lewis, J. (2003). *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. London: Sage Publications, Ltd.
- Sibiya, E.D.M. (2002). *Kungasa Ngifile*. Cape Town: Tafelburg.
- Sibiya, E.D.M. (2006). *Ngidedele Ngife*. Cape Town: Tafelburg.
- Sibiya, E.D.M. (2010). *Ngiyolibala Ngifile*. Cape Town: Tafelburg.
- Sibiya, E.D.M. (2020). *Inkululeko Engakhululekile*. Pretoria: Weza Home Publishers
- Strauss, A. Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of Qualitative Research*. California: SAGE Publications.
- Thwala, J.J. (2000). An explication of some aspects of Christian Themba Msimang's poetry. Unpublished PHD Thesis. Durban: University of Zululand.
- Zulu, N.S. (2004). 'Post-Apartheid Representations of Youth in the Zulu Novel *Kungasa Ngifile*'. *Literator*. 25 (3): 199-216.