

Fictional dialogue and characterisation in Nelson Makuya's short stories in *A zwi faneli*

**Author:**Mmbulaheni L. Mudau¹ **Affiliation:**

¹Department of African Languages, Faculty of Humanities, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

Corresponding author:

Mmbulaheni Mudau,
mudauml@unisa.ac.za

Dates:

Received: 30 Sept. 2024

Accepted: 04 Feb. 2025

Published: 30 May 2025

How to cite this article:

Mudau, M.L., 2025, 'Fictional dialogue and characterisation in Nelson Makuya's short stories in *A zwi faneli*', *Literator* 46(1), a2130.
<https://doi.org/10.4102/lit.v46i1.2130>

Copyright:

© 2025. The Author.
Licensee: AOSIS. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.

This article examines the role of fictional dialogue in character development in Tshikhuse Nelson Makuya's anthology of short stories, particularly in his 1972 collection *A zwi faneli*. Fictional dialogue is a vital literary device that reveals the complexities of characters' identities, motivations and cultural backgrounds, yet it remains underexplored in African languages literature. This article analyses how dialogue functions as a literary tool for characterisation, explicitly focussing on the themes of personality traits and relationships, thereby addressing a significant gap in existing literary studies. Employing a qualitative research methodology, the article uses textual analysis to closely examine the characters' dialogues, idiolects and interactions. It is framed within a dialogic theoretical framework, which emphasises the relational nature of identity and the dynamic evolution of characters through verbal exchanges. This framework, developed by Mikhail Bakhtin, helps understand how characters' identities are shaped and revealed through their dialogues.

Contribution: Findings indicate that fictional dialogue is instrumental in articulating characters' thoughts and emotions, reflecting their identities and social standings. The article highlights that dialogue reveals personality traits and illustrates the intricacies of relationships among characters, enriching their portrayal. As a recommendation for future research, the article suggests exploring the influence of cultural context on dialogue in Makuya's works and other African language literature. The focus on Makuya is due to the under-exploration of his works in scholarly literature, particularly regarding the significance of dialogue in revealing character traits and relationships within cultural contexts. This investigation could provide deeper insights into how sociocultural factors shape character development and interactions, ultimately enhancing the understanding of narrative techniques in African literary studies.

Keywords: characterisation; fictional dialogue; short story; personality traits; relationships.

Introduction and background

Makuya's (1972) anthology of short stories, *A zwi faneli*, presents intricate narratives that capture the sociocultural dynamics of the societies he portrays. Even though character development in literature has been extensively studied, a significant knowledge vacuum remains regarding the analysis of fictional dialogue as a particular device for character development in African short stories, especially those written by Makuya. For instance, studies such as Martin (2004), Niall (2022), and Maslej, Oatley and Mar (2017) have explored various aspects of character development. However, they do not specifically address the role of dialogue in shaping characters within the context of African language literature. Previous studies, such as Masuku (2005) and Ndhobela (2022), have focussed on more general topics like identity, including women's struggles, to define their identities against societal expectations and culture. Studies such as Wa Thiong'o (1986) and Ngozi (2009) address the clash between traditional cultures, modernity and social issues rather than thoroughly examining the mechanics of fictional dialogue and how they affect character development. This article aims to fill this gap by providing a focussed analysis of how fictional dialogue serves as a device for characterisation in Makuya's anthology of short stories, offering a unique perspective on the subject that will intrigue and engage readers.

Understanding how fictional dialogue influences character development is essential for various reasons. It enhances our understanding of Makuya's storytelling techniques and his engagement with social and cultural issues. Authors use character analysis as a critical literary analysis component to express the human condition's complexity. Fictional dialogue is crucial in developing characters and moving stories forward in African language literature (Mafela 2002). Makuya is a prominent South African author known for contributing to Tshivenda literature.

Read online:

Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

Born in the province of Limpopo, Makuya has significantly promoted and preserved the Tshivenda language and culture through his writing. His anthology of short stories, *A zwi faneli*, published in 1972, showcases his storytelling prowess and explores themes relevant to the experiences and identities of the Venda people. His works often reflect the complexities of social relationships, cultural traditions, and the challenges individuals face within their communities, making him a vital in African language literature. He employs fictional dialogue in his short stories to illuminate the characters' complex identities, motivations and cultural origins.

The term 'dialogue' originates from the Greek word *dialogos*, which means 'through speech' or 'the discourse between two or more people' (Koivisto & Nykänen 2016:2). In literature, dialogue refers to the spoken exchanges between characters. It is called 'fictional dialogue' because it represents the constructed conversations between characters within a fictional narrative. This form of dialogue is often referred to as direct speech dialogue. In direct speech, characters express themselves through conversations, which are essential for presenting their personalities, motivations and relationships. Scholars such as Bakhtin (1981), Wood (2008), and Todorov (1977) have debated the effectiveness of fictional dialogue as a measure of a character's authenticity and depth. Bakhtin (1981) argues that dialogue can provide deep insights into characters' inner lives, while Wood (2008) points out that it can flatten character complexity if not used carefully. Todorov (1977) critiques the reliance on dialogue for characterisation, suggesting it may oversimplify characters into stereotypes. The interpretation of fictional dialogue can also be influenced by the cultural context in which it is presented, leading to varying perspectives on its effectiveness as a characterisation device.

This article seeks to answer the following research question, which is of significant relevance to the study of African-language literature: How does Makuya utilise fictional dialogue as a device for characterisation, with special reference to characters' personality traits and relationships in his anthology of short stories, *A zwi faneli*? To shed light on the interactions between language, identity and cultural representation in Makuya's work, this article will analyse how fictional dialogue assists character development in his narratives. It will examine how characters' conversations and interactions reveal aspects of their personalities and relationships. Through this examination, the article hopes to clarify the importance of fictional dialogue as a literary device and advance knowledge of character development in African language literature.

The selection criteria for this study included the depth of character development revealed through interactions, the variety of speech patterns, and the emotional and cultural contexts that shape identities. By focussing on these specific characters, the article aims to illustrate how dialogue serves

as a crucial tool for characterisation and understanding the complexities of human relationships in Makuya's work. The qualitative research approach and case study design are well-suited for this article as they allow in-depth exploration of the subtle ways dialogue shapes character development in Makuya's short stories. By focussing on a specific text, the case study design enables a detailed examination of the characters' dialogue and interactions, providing rich insights into their personality traits. Textual analysis will be used to analyse the collected textual evidence, involving a detailed examination of the characters' dialogue, idiolects, conversations and interactions with other characters, which assist in shaping their personalities as characters in Makuya's short stories.

This article significantly contributes to the broader field of literary studies, enriching the discourse about characterisation in African language literature. The results could influence future research on character development and fictional dialogue in other African literary works, serving as a reference and shaping the direction of literary studies in this area.

Theoretical framework

The article is situated within the dialogic theoretical framework. This theory is primarily associated with Russian philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin, who developed the concept in the early to mid-20th century, particularly in the 1930s and 1940s. The theory posits that analysing fictional dialogue is a crucial tool for character development in short stories and longer narratives, as it reveals the intricacies of characters' personalities and relationships through verbal exchanges (Bronwen 2012). Readers can glean insights into characters' motivations, emotional states and social dynamics by examining aspects such as speech patterns, turn-taking and the context of conversations. Bronwen (2012) contends that critical indicators of personality traits can be identified through the characters' choice of words, tone, and how they engage with others, allowing for a deeper understanding of their identities.

The dialogic approach is particularly suitable for underpinning the article on character development from Makuya's anthology of short stories, *A zwi faneli*, as it emphasises the relational nature of identity, suggesting that characters are not static but evolve through their interactions. Consequently, fictional dialogue is a rich source of information that enhances the reader's comprehension of character complexity and growth throughout the narrative.

Literary character and characterisation in literary text

Scholars such as Shezi (2001), Nurgiyantoro (2013), and Aminuddin (2013) describe literary characters as human or human-like individuals that represent vehicles (persons, animals or creations) participating in the action of a literary work. Like real people, literary characters display

certain qualities or traits; they develop and change over time and usually have motivations for their behaviour (Shezi 2001). Readers interpret them as having specific moral qualities and tendencies expressed through their speech and actions.

Characterisation refers to the techniques authors use to create characters in their literary texts, involving creating, developing and depicting a clear character image. This process includes how traits are ascribed to a character and the interpretative processes whereby readers form an idea of that character. Shezi (2001:12) defines characterisation as 'the writer's way of delineating people's participation in the story'. Through character depiction, readers can learn what is going on in the characters' minds by observing their actions and responses to situations.

Authors can create characters through direct and indirect methods. In direct characterisation, explicit information about a character's traits, personality or attributes is provided directly to the audience. This technique involves the author or narrator stating facts about a character rather than relying on the audience to infer details through the character's actions, dialogue or thoughts (Hughes 2011). Proper names are generally used as character indicators, often conveying certain traits or themes related to the story.

Conversely, indirect characterisation reveals a character's personality, traits or background through actions, dialogue, thoughts and interactions. This method allows the audience to infer details rather than being told directly. Rimmon-Kenan (1983) notes that indirect characterisation relies on the suggestiveness and indeterminacy of indicators within the discourse, placing more responsibility on the reader to interpret these implied indications.

This article examines the role of fictional dialogue in character development in Makuya's (1972) anthology of short stories, *A zwi faneli*. The fictional dialogue in this article predominantly exemplifies indirect characterisation.

The analysis focusses on how dialogue serves as an indirect means for characters to express their thoughts, emotions and personalities explicitly. When characters engage in conversations that reveal their beliefs, values or social status, they indirectly convey aspects of their character to the reader (Abrams & Harpham 2009; Sibiya & Mtumane 2022). Character communication in Makuya's narratives offers instant insights into their identities and motivations through word choice, tone, and speech patterns. For instance, when characters engage in conversations that reveal their beliefs, values or social status, they indirectly convey aspects of their character to the reader. This form of characterisation allows for an understanding of the complexities of the characters' identities without extensive narrative exposition.

Additionally, dialogue reflects the sociocultural dynamics of the characters' environments, enhancing the portrayal of

their traits and relationships. While dialogue can contribute to indirect characterisation through the reactions of other characters or the context of the interactions (Sibiya & Mtumane 2022), the analysis focusses on how Makuya utilises fictional dialogue to reveal character traits, adopting a form of indirect characterisation.

Fictional dialogue in literature

Fictional dialogue refers to the spoken exchanges between characters within a narrative, serving as a crucial tool for character development and thematic exploration. It is primarily presented in direct speech, where a character's spoken words are explicitly conveyed, typically enclosed in quotation marks, and accompanied by dialogue tags. This format allows readers to quickly identify who is speaking, enhancing the clarity and engagement of the narrative (Bronwen 2012).

This study investigated how Makuya (1972) uses fictional dialogue to develop characters through direct speech and monologues, which can take the form of dramatic monologues or free-speech dialogue. The latter is described by Shezi (2001:32) as 'a silent activity of the mind'. Unlike real-life conversations, fictional dialogue is crafted by authors to serve specific narrative purposes, such as developing characters, advancing the plot and exploring themes. This emphasises that dialogue is rather a product of imagination and artistic expression than a direct transcription of actual speech, allowing for stylisation and manipulation of language to enhance the storytelling experience (Fludernik 1993).

Fictional dialogue is primarily linked to drama, where characters express themselves through direct speech during conversations. However, it also plays a significant role in prose narratives, serving as a crucial tool for presenting characters through their spoken words (Sibiya & Mtumane 2002). Sengani (2022) and Herman (2006) further support this notion, stating that dialogue in novels is vital to uncovering character traits. Therefore, its primary function is to convey character interactions, advance the plot and create a sense of realism within the fictional world. It reflects the characters' personalities, motivations and relationships, contributing to the narrative and character arcs (Koivisto & Nykänen 2016).

The two main approaches to fictional dialogue analysis in literary characterisation are postmodern and modern. This study follows the modern fictional dialogue analysis approach, characterised by its clarity, coherence, and focus on character development and plot advancement. This approach often adheres to traditional narrative structures and reflects realistic interactions that help readers connect with characters and understand their motivations (Bronwen 2012; Zunshine 2003). In contrast, postmodern dialogue embraces fragmentation, ambiguity and playfulness, often challenging conventional narrative forms and questioning the nature of communication itself. This type of dialogue may disrupt linearity and introduce complexities that reflect broader cultural and philosophical shifts.

Dialogue plays a multifaceted role in shaping character identity and depth in literature. One key aspect is the concept of idiolect, which refers to the specific linguistic choices, speech patterns, accents and syntactic structures employed by a character. Critics argue that idiolects function as 'linguistic fingerprints', enabling readers to identify and differentiate characters based on their distinctive speaking methods (Page 1988). This individuality in dialogue illuminates the dynamics of relationships, highlighting social hierarchies, power dynamics or emotional connections. Variations in speech can reflect a character's background, education and social class, enriching the narrative and making characters more relatable and realistic (Sibiya & Mtumane 2002).

Moreover, characters in literature are not static; their identities and personalities evolve through conversations and interactions with others. This interactional approach emphasises that a character's traits, motivations and emotional states are revealed and developed through dialogue and social exchanges (Schiffrin 1990). As characters engage in conversations, they may reveal different aspects of themselves depending on the context and their conversational partners, leading to a deeper understanding of their complexities, such as fears, desires and conflicts.

Interpersonal relationships established through dialogue are essential for understanding character dynamics. Through these exchanges, readers gain insight into the nature of relationships – whether friendly, antagonistic or romantic. How characters communicate, the topics they discuss, and their emotional expressions during these interactions illuminate their motivations and conflicts (Bronwen 2012).

Fictional dialogue is a vital narrative device that advances the plot, deepens character development and enriches thematic exploration. By examining how dialogue shapes and reveals character identities, particularly in Makuya's short stories, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of character dynamics and the unique narrative techniques employed by the author.

Fictional dialogue in Makuya's anthology of short stories

In Tshikhusese Nelson Makuya's 1972 anthology of short stories, *A zwi faneli*, the author employs fictional dialogue as a vital literary device to explore the intricacies of character development and interpersonal relationships. This collection showcases Makuya's storytelling prowess and his ability to reflect the cultural and social dynamics of the Venda people through the lens of dialogue. For textual analysis, three selected short stories from *A zwi faneli* were examined: 'Mhlava na nngwe'; 'Zwa dzikhishini'; and 'Ha Vho-Malima ndi ngafhi?' Each of these stories provides a unique perspective on how dialogue functions to reveal character traits, motivations, and the complexities of relationships among the characters.

In 'Mhlava na nngwe', the dialogue highlights the tensions and conflicts between characters, showcasing their differing perspectives and emotional states. The interactions in this story reveal underlying issues that shape the characters' identities and relationships.

'Zwa dzikhishini' uses dialogue to explore themes of domestic life and social expectations. It allows characters to express their thoughts and feelings in a manner that reflects their cultural context. The conversations in this story illuminate the characters' struggles and aspirations, providing insights into their personalities.

Lastly, 'Ha Vho-Malima ndi ngafhi?' presents a rich tapestry of dialogue that captures the essence of community interactions and the complexities of social hierarchies. Through the characters' exchanges, Makuya reveals the nuances of their relationships and the sociocultural factors that influence their identities.

Through the analysis of these selected short stories, this article seeks to reveal the critical role of fictional dialogue in characterisation within Makuya's work, contributing to a deeper understanding of the narrative techniques employed in African language literature.

Analysis of textual evidence

This section presents a detailed analysis of the textual evidence collected from Makuya's anthology of short stories *A zwi faneli*, focussing on how fictional dialogue serves as a tool for characterisation. This analysis aims to uncover the nuances of their personalities and relationships by examining the characters' dialogues, idiolects and interactions. The findings will illustrate how dialogue reveals individual traits and reflects the broader sociocultural contexts that shape character dynamics within the narratives.

Personality traits

According to Mtumane and Bobelo (2008), personality is an,

umbrella word for traits that determine one's character. These traits manifest in stable and consistent behaviour in different situations and circumstances. They are also used to describe one's character or nature. (p. 117)

Mtumane and Bobelo's explanation of personality implies that personality refers to the unique traits, behaviours, emotions and thoughts that shape a person's response to their environment and circumstances. It influences how individuals perceive themselves and others, and shapes career decisions, family dynamics, romantic relationships and social connections. How people think and feel about themselves and others affects how they relate to others. Derlega, Winstead and Jones (2005) view personality as the system of enduring inner characteristics that contribute to consistency in individuals' thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

In Makuya's short story 'Mhlava na nngwe', there is a speech in which the chief sends strong and brave men to the forest to search for and kill a tiger that has killed the cattle at night in their village. We hear him talking to a man who once killed a mamba by squeezing it and smashing its head against a stone.

The chief's speech clearly depicts his personality traits, as can be deduced from his words:

Luhlime, litshani ndi ni rumele lufumi, iqali no ponya uja nwaha, ri do vhone arali ni tshi do vhuva namusi [Let me send you to death; you have survived death that year. Let me see if you will come back alive this time]. (p. 13)

The chief displays several personality traits in this text, particularly cruelty and indifference. His willingness to send his subjects into a life-threatening situation, knowing the danger of the tiger, reveals a lack of empathy and a callous disregard for their lives. The chief's statement, 'Let me see if you will come back alive this time', suggests a cynical and even sadistic attitude, as he appears to view the peril of his subjects with detachment or as a form of entertainment. Additionally, his tone implies a sense of arrogance and authoritarianism, where the subjects' lives are seen as expendable tools to fulfil his own goals, further emphasising his lack of compassion and abuse of power.

In the chief's speech, dialogue is a powerful literary tool for revealing character traits, vividly displaying his cruelty, indifference and authoritarianism. His words give readers a direct insight into his mindset, allowing them to understand his callous disregard for human life and his arrogant authority. The article, therefore, suggests that dialogue in short stories and other narrative texts effectively develops characters' personality traits. It reveals their attitudes, motivations and emotional responses without the need for descriptive exposition. In this case, the chief's chilling words illuminate his character, highlighting his ruthless leadership style. It further deepens readers' understanding of the characters, making it an essential device for character development. It allows for authentic emotional expression, often showing aspects of personality more vividly than narrative description on its own. Through dialogue, readers engage with the characters more personally, witnessing how their words reflect their inner values and dispositions.

Among the men invited to search for the dangerous tiger was a Mutsonga man called Mhlava. The chief did not want him to go with the others because he thought he would be killed. However, the man insisted, shouting at the chief while brandishing his sword, and referring to the tiger as a 'cat'. This is all captured in Mhlava's dialogue:

'Na mina ndzaya, a na ha Sali'. 'A na ha tshavi shimanga' [I am also going! I am not staying behind; I am not afraid of the cat!]. (p. 14)

Mhlava displays a mix of bravery, determination and defiance in this dialogue. His insistence on joining the search party despite the chief's concerns for his safety highlights his

fearlessness and resolve to face danger head-on. The fact that he shouts at the chief while brandishing his sword shows his boldness and confidence, indicating that he is not afraid of the tiger and unbothered by authority. Referring to the tiger as a 'cat' reflects his tendency to downplay threats, demonstrating a sense of audacity and courage. Mhlava's behaviour depicts a person who is unafraid to take risks and assert his independence, even in life-threatening situations.

With the analysis of Mhlava's dialogue above, the article submits that dialogue is a powerful tool for developing characters' personality traits in literature. It lets readers directly perceive a character's emotions, attitudes and motivations. Through their spoken words, characters reveal their inner qualities and relationships with others, creating a more dynamic and authentic portrayal. Rather than relying on detailed descriptions, it enables characters to express themselves naturally and immediately, allowing readers to infer key personality traits such as bravery, arrogance or defiance. This method effectively enhances character development by providing insight into their behaviour and beliefs through their interactions with and responses to situations.

Similarly, when the chief tries to stop Mhlava from going out to search for the tiger with the other men, the chief displays caution and concern for Mhlava's safety when he tries to prevent Mhlava from joining the other men. His actions suggest a sense of responsibility and protectiveness, as he genuinely worries about Mhlava's well-being. The chief also reveals a paternalistic attitude by attempting to shield him from danger. A paternalistic attitude occurs when someone in a position of authority acts as though they know what is best for others, making decisions on their behalf to protect them, often at the expense of their autonomy (Eysenck & Wilson 1976). In this case, the chief is of the opinion that Mhlava needs protection and, in doing so, limits Mhlava's ability to make his own choices about facing the danger. This attitude stems from the chief's belief that, as a leader, he must safeguard his subjects, even if it means overriding their independence. Additionally, the chief's actions indicate pragmatism or fear as he tries to avoid unnecessary risk and loss of life in a dangerous situation. All these traits paint a picture of a leader who is protective, cautious and mindful of the dangers his people face, but also one who may overstep in his desire to control and protect.

While fictional dialogue is primarily linked to character development in drama, the article posits that dialogue in short stories is a powerful literary tool for revealing characters' personality traits, allowing readers to understand them more deeply through their words and interactions. Through dialogue, characters express emotions, beliefs and motivations that the narrator may not explicitly describe. This technique captures subtle nuances of their behaviour, such as confidence, fear or authority, providing insights into their internal world. Dialogue also enables characters to respond to different situations, revealing how they approach

challenges, relationships and conflicts. Readers can discern their values, strengths, weaknesses and complexities by carefully analysing how characters speak, what they say and their tone.

In the same short story, while the other men were searching for the tiger in the forest, Mhlava was following them from far behind. As he followed them, he happened to see the tiger alone. The moment he saw it, Mhlava threw his sword to the ground. He raised his fists and shouted at the tiger, ready to fight but without the nervousness one may expect. When the other men heard him yelling, they ran toward him. By then the tiger was approaching Mhlava, baring its teeth. Mhlava, unafraid, also moved towards the tiger. The other men overheard Mhlava saying:

'Hehe, hehe, *tana!* [come!]' (p. 14)

Mhlava demonstrates several notable personality traits in this dialogue, particularly fearlessness, boldness and confidence. His decision to throw down his sword and to confront the tiger with his fists rather than using his weapon or fleeing shows extreme courage and bravery. The fact that he shouts at the tiger, urging it to come closer, indicates a sense of defiance and audacity, as he is unafraid to face the dangerous animal head-on. Mhlava's calm demeanour, as he shouts without signs of nervousness, further highlights his composure under pressure and the confidence in his abilities. His willingness to confront the tiger in such a fearless and direct manner suggests a man who is not only brave but also willing to engage with danger in an almost reckless manner, showcasing his determination and resilience.

Mhlava is a Mutsonga man who lives among the Vhavanḁa. When he speaks, he always uses Xitsonga with the Vhavanḁa. He does not code-switch to accommodate speakers of other languages. Even when the tiger was about to kill him, he spoke Xitsonga, held his fists high, ready to fight, saying, 'Hehe, hehe, *tana!* [come]'. *Tana* is a Xitsonga word that means come in English; in Tshivenḁa it is *I ḁa*.

Mhlava displays several distinct personality traits in this dialogue, particularly cultural pride, stubbornness and resilience. By consistently speaking Xitsonga among the Vhavanḁa, even in extreme danger, Mhlava shows a strong sense of identity and pride in his heritage. His refusal to code-switch or accommodate other language speakers suggests firmness and determination in preserving and asserting his linguistic and cultural identity, regardless of the situation. Additionally, in confronting the tiger while maintaining his language and shouting confidently, he demonstrates bravery and fearlessness. His behaviour reflects a man who is unwavering in his beliefs and unafraid to face threats, doing it in a way that remains true to his roots. This combination of traits paints a picture of someone who values authenticity and is not easily swayed by external pressures, showing a deep sense of integrity and courage.

In another short story entitled 'Zwa dzikhishini', which means 'kitchen affairs', Vele, a ticket master at a railway company, recounts to his friends an experience involving his unfaithful girlfriend, Fani, who works as a kitchen girl in town. Vele's 'dialogue', which is in fact a monologue, captures everything:

'Ndo tuwa hefia ḁuwa le mvula ya vha i tshi khou na nda ri ndi yo lala makhishini. Ndo tshaisa ḁaḁi nda fara ḁhireni ya thene ya vhusiku. Mvula yo ḁoḁou mbaisa ngauri ndo vha ndi si na dzhasi. Fhedzi nda si vhilaele nga u ḁivha uri ngei hune nda ya ndi ḁo thakhiwa zwaḁhuḁi. Ndi tshi swika nda wana ijali ho no eḁelwa. Nda livha haningei ḁduni ya Fani. Ndi tshi ombaomba ndi tshi ita na u vhidzelela ndi pfa hu tshi fhindula ipfi ḁa muthu wa munna a ri: 'Ro eḁela'. Heyi nda pfa ndo ḁangana ḁhoho ngauri mvula na yone yo vha i tshi vho hulela. A thi ngo funa u ima fhasi ha vurannḁa ḁa nḁu ya vhasa wa Fani ndi tshi shavha uri u ḁo mmbona a humbula uri ndi tshigevhenga. Ndo ya nda ima fhasi ha muri u re tsini na nḁu ya fani ndi tshi humbula uri ḁhanwe uḁa munna u kha ḁidilugisa u ḁo bva a nḁwisa. Nga mbilu nda sokou ri vha matongoni a vha ḁayedzi. Ndo ima tshifhinga tshilapfu, ndi tshi sokou ri areḁi, ḁamusisi ḁi ḁo tsha ndo ima hanefha.' (p. 23)

[I went that day, despite the heavy rain, wanting to see my girlfriend, Fani, and have a sleepover. I knocked off late and caught a night train at 22:00. The rain nearly overwhelmed me because I did not have my jacket on, but it did not bother me much since I knew I would be well taken care of where I was heading. When I arrived, I found everyone asleep. I went to Fani's room and, while knocking on her door and calling her name, I heard a man's voice answering, 'Ro eḁela', (meaning, 'We are sleeping'). Hearing a man's voice responding made me furious. Meanwhile, the rain was getting worse. I did not want to take shelter under the veranda of Fani's employer, fearing he might think I was a criminal. I stood under a tree next to Fani's room, thinking that maybe the man was still preparing himself to come and fight me. I reassured myself, thinking, 'My ancestors cannot forsake me.' I stood under the tree and told myself the sun would rise while I waited].

Vele depicts several personality traits in this dialogue, particularly determination, resilience and emotional vulnerability. His decision to visit Fani despite the heavy rain, coupled with the fact that he continued his journey without a jacket, shows his determination to be with her, indicating a strong sense of commitment. Additionally, despite facing the worsening rain and being left outside in an uncomfortable situation, he shows resilience by refusing to take shelter under the veranda, and standing under a tree instead. His reluctance to seek cover under the veranda, fearing he might be mistaken for a criminal, also reveals a sense of self-awareness and caution.

At the same time, Vele's reaction to a man's voice answering from inside Fani's room highlights his emotional vulnerability and jealousy. His anger at the situation shows that he values loyalty and feels deeply betrayed. Finally, his reliance on his ancestors for reassurance in this tense moment shows a connection to cultural or spiritual beliefs, which offers him comfort as he faces emotional turmoil. Overall, he is portrayed as someone deeply committed, sensitive to betrayal, and guided by his beliefs in the face of hardship.

Vele's monologue continues, saying:

Ho no vha vhusiku ndi wana vothi li a vuliwa. Kana vhatshada vha ri ndo fuwa wee. Ndi wana muhali ndi u bva nga zwa tsini fhedzi vha khou ya u dithusa. Heyi, baba, ndo gidima hejo dzuwa. Ndo ri u dzhena nda mbo di rembuluwa na khono; thovhele a vho ngo vhuuya vha mmbona. Ndi tshi dzhena fani a tsho o mangala nda ri a so ngo ita phosho kha ri edele, nda dzhena nguwhoni. Nga murahu tsha vha tshi a vhuuya tshivhahala tsha shango, tshi divha uri tsho sia tshi songo hona, na u khokhonya a tshi khokhonyi, ndi muḁi watsho. Muhali vha fara vothi vha edzisa u vula, vothi le vhutoto, vhe 'Fani, vulani ndi nne'. Nne nda amba ndi tshi edzisela zwila zwe mutada ya ambisa zwone nda ri, 'Ro edela'. Ngoho a thi divhi uri muḁhannga o fuwisa hani nahone nga mini ngauri o vha e fhedzi. Zwiambaro zwaawe zwo di vuvu zwi hanefho nduni. (p. 23)

[I saw the door open in the middle of the night. I think they thought I was gone. I saw the man going outside in his underpants to the toilet. Hey! I ran that day. When I entered the room, I immediately locked the door. The man did not see me enter. When I got inside, Fani was still amazed. I told her not to make any noise and to go back to sleep; I got into the blankets. After a short while, the man came back from the toilet. He knew he had not locked the door and did not knock either; it was his home. He tried pushing the door open, but he could not. He called for Fani to open the door. I answered as he had answered me and said, 'Ro edela' [We are sleeping]. I do not know how the man left or what he wore because he only had his underpants on. We woke up with his clothes in the room].

Vele displays a blend of resourcefulness, defiance, persistence and a sense of humour in these parts of the monologue. His quick decision to enter the room and lock the door after the man has stepped out shows his resourcefulness in taking control of the situation. Vele's defiant nature is evident when he mockingly responds to the man with the exact phrase, 'Ro edela' [We are sleeping], turning his words against him. His persistence is highlighted by the fact that, despite discovering his girlfriend's unfaithfulness, Vele chooses to stay in the room and even gets into bed, refusing to let the situation drive him away. Finally, his light-hearted reflection on the man leaving in his underpants and waking up to find his clothes adds a humorous twist to an otherwise tense moment. These traits reveal Vele as someone who maintains control, asserts himself, and finds humour in awkward situations, even in the face of betrayal.

The monologue continues with Vele saying:

'Ni a divha uyu Fani u do vhuuya a mmbulaisa? Ndo fuwa linwe dzuwa hafha nga Mugivhela nga madekwana u mu foleda sa tsheri yanga. Mathina ho no vha na linwe liphannga lo no swikaho phanda hanga. Li tshi swika li wana Fani u kha di shuma. A ri li ye li mu lindele nduni yawe. Nangoho la lindela Fani li ntha ha mmbete li songo funga mavhona. Musi ndi tshi swika, nda vhoḁa Fani a tsho mishumoni nda ri a thi vhuuyi nda mu dina ndi do ya u lindela nduni. Ndi tshi swika nda dzhena, a thi vhuuyi nda funga, nga mbilu hu pfi ndi do tou mu mangadza. Nda mbo di diposa ntha mmbeteni. Liphannga li tshi pfa muthu a tshi dzhena na u khokhonya a sa khokhonyi li ndi Fani o tshaisa, le vukuluku. la nkuvhatedza la ri, 'U feditse mosebetsi wa makgowa, dali?' Li tshi ralo li mpha khisi. Ndo posa feisi ya hone la fuwa la wa na mmbete ngauri wo vha wo vhweta ntha ha zwikofikofi. Buka lo vha li na maanda hejo. Mashudu mmbete u tshi wa wo ita phosho khulwane ye ya pfala na ngei nduni khulwane. Vhothe vha da vha tshi gidima u vhoḁa uri hu khou itea mini?' (p. 24)

[Do you know that Fani will cause me to die someday? I left late on a Saturday to visit her, as she is my girlfriend. I was unaware that another man had gone to see her before me. When he arrived, he found Fani still busy with her room chores. She told him to go and wait for her in the room. He waited for Fani to finish her work, lying on the bed with the lights off. When I arrived, I saw her still busy with work and decided not to disturb her. I entered the room without turning on the lights, hoping to surprise her. I immediately threw myself on the bed. Thinking Fani had finished her chores, the man woke up and embraced me, saying, 'U feditse mosebetsi wa makgowa, dali?' {Did you finish the job for your white employers, darling?} and kissed me. I immediately threw a heavy punch at his face, and he fell with the bed because it was placed on top of the tins. Yoo! The man was strong. Fortunately, when the bed collapsed, it made a noise loud enough to be heard in the main room, and everyone came to the room to see what was happening].

In this part of the monologue, Vele displays impulsiveness, jealousy and possessiveness. His decision to enter the room unannounced and throw himself on the bed without turning on the lights shows impulsive behaviour, driven by his desire to surprise Fani. When the other man mistakenly embraces him, Vele's immediate reaction is fuelled by jealousy, leading him to throw a punch without thoroughly assessing the situation. This quick, physical response also reflects his possessiveness over Fani, as he reacts aggressively to another man in what he perceives as his space. Schiffrin (1990) notes that characters in literature are not static; their identities evolve through interactions, revealing their motivations and emotional states. Despite his emotional outburst, Vele's actions reveal deep-seated insecurities and a tendency to act without considering the broader consequences of the situation.

On the other hand, Fani displays traits of dishonesty, carelessness and manipulation. Inviting another man into her room while still in a relationship with Vele shows a lack of integrity and loyalty. Her decision to tell the man to wait for her in the room while she continues with her chores reflects a certain disregard for the consequences of her actions and how they may affect others. Fani's behaviour suggests a tendency to manipulate situations to her advantage, balancing two relationships while maintaining a façade of innocence. This aligns with the dialogic theoretical framework proposed by Bakhtin (1986), which posits that identity is relational and evolves through interactions. Her casual attitude towards the potential conflict between the two men reflects her lack of foresight and responsibility in managing her relationships.

From Vele's monologue here, the article asserts that dialogue in short stories is crucial for revealing and developing characters' personality traits. As Palmer (2004) highlighted, characters express emotions, intentions and reactions through spoken words that help readers understand their underlying motivations, values and complexities. Dialogue allows characters to naturally show traits like courage, jealousy or dishonesty in response to situations or other characters, making their personalities more dynamic and relatable. By engaging with the dialogue, readers gain

insights into who the characters are, how they think, and how they interact with the world around them, reinforcing the importance of dialogue as a literary device for character development (Bakhtin 1986; Palmer 2004).

Makuya's short story, 'Ha Vho-Malima ndi ngafhi?', depicts three close friends, Mpheni, Thilivhali, and Shandukani, who are from rural villages in Venḁa and work in the urban areas of Johannesburg. They enjoy speaking to one another in their broken English. One day they decided to visit Mr. Malima, an old man from their rural area in Venḁa. They did not have his correct location because, during their last visit, they had gone to his house by car. While on the train to see him, they dressed well and began speaking to one another in English, code-switching with Tshivenḁa. Their conversation is captured in the following dialogue:

Mpheni: 'You know me forgotted him the notebook *mes* at room' [You know I forgot his notebook and a knife in the room]. (p. 28).

Shandukani: '*Zwe nda sa ambe, nḁe saaved* that it will not remind it, so I am speaked the truth' [I have told you, that you will forget it, and I was right]. (p. 28)

Their dialogue continued like this on the train, with them bragging to other passengers.

The dialogue between the three friends, Mpheni, Thilivhali, and Shandukani above displays several personality traits that highlight their friendship and their playful nature. Mpheni, Thilivhali, and Shandukani exhibit camaraderie and closeness, as they feel comfortable enough to joke around and speak in broken English, showing they are relaxed and at ease with one another. Their code-switching between English and Tshivenḁa demonstrates a sense of pride in their bilingual ability, even if their English is not perfect. Additionally, they show playful confidence as they continue to brag to other passengers, indicating a certain level of humour and self-assuredness in their conversations. The fact that they are not concerned about making mistakes and are comfortable with their imperfections points to an easy-going, fun-loving attitude. Their light-hearted banter (playful, friendly, and often teasing conversation or remarks exchanged between people) also reflects an underlying humility, as they do not take themselves too seriously. These traits suggest that they enjoy one another's company and are not afraid to show their playful side, even in public.

Based on the analysis above, this article argues that fictional dialogue in narrative texts or short stories is a powerful tool for revealing characters' personality traits, as evidenced by the interaction between Mpheni, Thilivhali, and Shandukani. This article argues that readers gain valuable insights into the characters' personalities through dialogue, allowing for a deeper understanding of their traits and relationships without requiring extensive narrative description.

When the three friends arrived at Zone 18, where Mr. Malima stayed, they were thirsty and decided to quench their thirst by drinking beer at the shebeen before they searched

for Mr. Malima's location. During that time, they talked in English and code-switched to Afrikaans. The next dialogue between Mpheni and Thivhileli captures their conversion:

Mpheni: '*Jy as shaphu*' [You are correct.] (p. 29)

This was after they all agreed to drink before searching for Mr. Malima's house:

Thivhileli: '*Maar wat maak julle naa?*' [But what are you doing?] (p. 29)

This was when two guys blocked their way late in the dark while searching for Mr. Malima's house. One of the guys drew a gun and pointed it at them. When they saw the gun, they immediately ran away at a high speed (no one was in front of the other) and jumped over a wall to another house. They were terrified. Moreover, they did not know the house they entered was Mr. Malima's.

The dialogue between, the three friends, Mpheni, Thilivhali and Shandukani, displays traits of adaptability and quick thinking as they switch between languages such as English, Afrikaans and Tshivenḁa with ease, showcasing their linguistic versatility. Their decision to drink beer before continuing their search for Mr. Malima demonstrates a carefree and spontaneous nature. However, when faced with danger, mainly when one of the men draws a gun, their instinctive reaction to run in unison and jump over the wall shows their fear and desire for self-preservation, overriding their earlier relaxed and playful demeanour. With the analysis of the dialogue between these friends, this article argues that dialogue plays a crucial role in developing characters' personality traits in short stories. Through their words, actions and language choices, readers get a clear sense of the friends' personalities – ranging from carefree and humorous to fearful and reactive. Dialogue allows the characters' traits to be revealed organically, showing their responses to different situations and creating a deeper connection with the audience.

Dialogue in short stories is vital for showcasing characters' personality traits. Through dialogue between the three friends, their words and interactions, characters naturally reveal their emotions, behaviours and responses to situations, allowing readers to understand their personalities without lengthy descriptions. This method creates a more engaging and dynamic portrayal, as dialogue enables characters to express traits like humour, fear, confidence or adaptability in a way that feels authentic and relatable, deepening the connection between the characters and the audience.

Relationships

The speech of a character can reveal something about their relationships. Sibiya and Mtumane (2022) are of the opinion that characters are often expected to be endowed with human qualities. This article suggests that a character's speech can directly affect how their relationships are perceived. However, this fact must not be overemphasised.

Makuya's short stories 'Mhlava na nngwe' and 'Ha Vho-Malima ndi ngafhi?' discuss the use of dialogue to reveal the characters' relationships.

In Makuya's short story 'Mhlava na nngwe', the chief sends strong and brave men into the forest to search for and kill a tiger that has killed cattle in their village at night. We hear him speaking to Mhlava, who once killed a mamba by squeezing it and smashing its head against a stone.

The chief's speech clearly depicts his relationships, as can be deduced from his words:

'Luhalime, litshani ndi ni rumele lufuni, itali no ponya ufa n'waha, ri do v'hona arali ni tshi do v'huya namusi' [Let me send you to death; you have survived death that year. Let me see if you will come back alive this time]. (p. 13)

The chief's speech in this scenario reveals a complex relationship between him and Luhalime. By addressing Luhalime with a blend of challenge and acknowledgement of his past bravery, the chief demonstrates respect for Luhalime's strength and a sense of authority over him. His statement '*Litshani ndi ni rumele lufuni*' [Let me send you to death] (p. 13) is not only a test for Luhalime's courage but also indicates a relationship where the chief has the authority to command his people to perform perilous tasks. The tone reflects a mix of admiration and expectation as the chief recalls Luhalime's survival of a previous life-threatening situation. The chief's speech also suggests trust in Luhalime's abilities. However, it is couched to emphasise the chief's dominant position in their relationship, showing both reliance on and control over his subjects. Through his words, the chief asserts power while also recognising the unique strength of Luhalime, demonstrating a relationship based on mutual recognition of duty and bravery.

The dialogue between Mpheni, Thilivhali, and Shandukani, in 'Ha Vho-Malima ndi ngafhi?', is a vibrant tapestry that vividly illustrates their close-knit friendship and camaraderie. Their interactions are characterised by a playful and informal tone, evident in their use of broken English interspersed with Tshivenda. This linguistic blend highlights their cultural backgrounds and underscores a shared sense of humour that will entertain and engage the audience.

Code-switching between languages is significant; it reflects their comfort and familiarity with one another, allowing them to express themselves freely without the constraints of formal language. For instance, Mpheni's humorous admission, 'You know me forgotted him the notebook mes at room', followed by Shandukani's playful retort, 'Zwe nda sa ambe, nje sawed that it will not remind it, so I am speaked the truth', showcases their ability to engage in light-hearted banter. This exchange reveals their personalities – Mpheni's forgetfulness and Shandukani's teasing nature – and emphasises the ease with which they communicate. Their dialogue is imbued with a sense of playfulness that suggests a deep-rooted friendship where each person feels safe expressing their flaws and laughing at their mistakes.

The characters' willingness to joke about their shortcomings indicates a level of trust that allows them to be vulnerable with one another. This dynamic is further illustrated by their tendency to brag and share stories confidently, as they do not shy away from showcasing their achievements or humorous mishaps in front of others. Such interactions reinforce their camaraderie and highlight a collective pride in their identities and experiences as friends navigating life together, inspiring the audience to also take pride in their identities and experiences.

Their relaxed and friendly conversations also reflect the broader sociocultural context in which they exist. As individuals from rural Venda now living in an urban environment, their dialogue encapsulates the blending of cultures and the negotiation of identities that often accompanies such transitions. Their playful exchanges serve as a means of maintaining their cultural roots while adapting to new surroundings, thereby reinforcing their shared sense of identity.

Essentially, the dialogue in 'Ha Vho-Malima ndi ngafhi?' is a powerful tool for character development and relationship building. It reveals the depth of Mpheni, Thilivhali, and Shandukani's friendship and illustrates how their interactions are shaped by their cultural background and shared experiences. Through their words, Makuya effectively conveys a relationship built on trust, familiarity, and a profound understanding of one another, making their friendship a central theme in the narrative.

Based on this evidence, the article maintains that dialogue in literary texts is vital for revealing and illustrating the relationships between characters. Readers gain insight into the dynamics of these relationships through the nuances of speech, tone and language choice. A character's way of speaking can indicate authority, respect, camaraderie or trust, showcasing the complexities of their interactions. The fluidity of dialogue allows for exploring shared identities and mutual understanding among characters. Moreover, it captures the emotional undercurrents and power dynamics that shape their connections. By engaging with characters through their dialogue, readers are able to discern the depth of their relationships without requiring extensive narrative exposition. Therefore, this article concludes that dialogue is an essential element in literary texts that naturally and effectively displays the relationships between characters.

Findings and discussion

This article investigates how Makuya (1972) employs fictional dialogue as a literary device for characterisation with special reference to characters' personality traits and relationships in his anthology of short stories, *A zwi faneli*. The article's findings emphasise that fictional dialogue is crucial for revealing characters' personality traits and relationships within literary texts. It highlights that dialogue explicitly allows characters to express their thoughts, emotions and personalities, providing immediate insights into their

identities and motivations. In Makuya's narratives, for instance, the character's speech patterns, tone and choice of words reveal their beliefs and social status, exemplifying direct characterisation. The use of monologues and soliloquies in short stories, as supported by Palmer (2004), offers deeper introspection into the characters' inner thoughts and conflicts, allowing readers to understand their motivations and emotional states more profoundly. These forms of dialogue provide a window into the characters' psyche, showcasing their struggles and desires and enriching the portrayal of their identities.

Furthermore, the article's analysis indicates that dialogue reflects individual character traits and illuminates the nature of relationships between characters. The way characters communicate – whether through heated arguments or tender conversations – can reveal underlying tensions, intimacy and shared experiences, showcasing the complexities of their interactions. This aligns with the dialogic theoretical framework, which posits that identity is relational and evolves through interactions (Bakhtin 1986). The distinct idiolects of characters – unique speech patterns and vocabulary as opined by Page (1988) – play a significant role in character differentiation, highlighting their backgrounds, social status and personal experiences.

Additionally, the article emphasises that fictional dialogue reflects the sociocultural contexts of the characters, enhancing the portrayal of their traits and relationships. This aspect is crucial in understanding how characters navigate their environments and how cultural influences shape their identities. The dialogic theory supports this by suggesting that dialogue is a site of cultural exchange and identity formation (Wegerif et al. 2019).

The findings also suggest readers gain throughout the narrative through dialogue valuable insights into the characters' personalities and development. The dialogic framework posits that characters are not static; they evolve through verbal exchanges, revealing their motivations and emotional states (Bronwen 2012).

Moreover, the nuances of speech, tone and language choices in dialogue provide insights into the dynamics of relationships. A character's way of speaking can indicate authority, respect or camaraderie, showcasing the emotional undercurrents and power dynamics that shape their connections. This aligns with the dialogic approach, emphasising the importance of verbal exchanges in understanding character relationships. In summary, the article underscores the vital role of fictional dialogue in character development and relationship dynamics, supported by the dialogic theoretical framework, which highlights the relational nature of identity and the significance of verbal interactions in literature. The analysis reveals a richer understanding of character complexity and the intricate web of relationships within Makuya's narratives by incorporating various types of dialogue, such as monologues, soliloquies and idiolects.

Conclusion and recommendations

In conclusion, the findings of this article highlight the essential role of fictional dialogue in revealing character traits and the complexities of relationships within Makuya's narratives. The analysis demonstrates that dialogue not only allows characters to articulate their thoughts and emotions but also serves as a direct reflection of their identities, beliefs and social standing. By employing techniques such as monologues and soliloquies, Makuya provides readers with deeper insights into his characters' inner conflicts and motivations, enriching their portrayal. Furthermore, the article emphasises that dialogue is a dynamic tool for illustrating the relational nature of identity as characters evolve through their interactions, revealing the intricacies of their relationships. With the analysis of the given dialogues in this article, this article concludes that Makuya skilfully employed fictional dialogue as a literary device for characterisation with special reference to characters' personality traits and relationships in his anthology of short stories called *A zwi faneli*.

As a recommendation for future research, this article recommends exploring the role of cultural context in shaping dialogue within Makuya's works and other African languages literature. This research can enhance the understanding of how sociocultural factors influence character development and interactions, providing a richer narrative perspective. Researchers can uncover deeper meanings and implications for characterisation and relationship dynamics by examining how cultural nuances are embedded in dialogue.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The author declares that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Author's contribution

M.L.M. is the sole author of this research article.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability

Data were collected from the selected short stories book. No accessible codes were used, and no restrictions are attached to the data of this article.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and are the product of professional research. It does not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated institution, funder, agency or that of the publisher. The author is responsible for this article's results, findings and content.

References

- Abrams, M.H. & Harpham, G.G., 2009, *A glossary of literary terms*, Wadsworth Cengage Learning, Boston.
- Aminuddin, Y., 2013, *Introduction to appreciation of literary works*, Sinar Baru Algensindo, Bandung.
- Bakhtin, M.M., 1981, *The dialogic imagination: Four essays*, University of Texas Press, Austin, TX.
- Bakhtin, M.M., 1986, *Speech genres and other late essays*, University of Texas Press, Austin, TX.
- Bronwen, T., 2012, *Fictional dialogue: Speech and conversation in the modern and postmodern novel*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln.
- Derlega, V.J., Winstead, B.A. & Jones, W.H., 2005, *Personality: Contemporary theory and research*, Thomson Wadsworth, Belmont, CA.
- Eysenck, H.J. & Wilson, G.D., 1976, *A textbook of human psychology*, MTP Press, Lancaster.
- Fludernik, M., 1993, *The fiction of language and the languages of fiction*, Routledge, London.
- Herman, D., 2006, 'Dialogue in a discourse context: Scenes of talk in fictional narrative', *Narrative Inquiry* 16(1), 75–84. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.16.1.11her>
- Hughes, R., 2011, *Teaching and researching speaking*, 2nd edn., Routledge, London.
- Koivisto, A. & Nykänen, E., 2016, 'Introduction: Approaches to fictional dialogue', *International Journal of Literacy* 5(2), 1. <https://doi.org/10.15462/ijll.v5i2.56>
- Mafela, M.J., 2002, *Divhaipfi ya mañwalwa a Lliteretsha a Tshivenḡa*, Kagiso Publishers, Pretoria.
- Makuya, T.N., 1972, *A zwi faneli*, JL Van Schaik, Cape Town.
- Martin, P., 2004, *Characterisation in the novel: An aesthetic of the uncanny*, Dublin City University, Dublin.
- Maslej, M.M., Oatley, K. & Mar, R.A., 2017, 'Creating fictional characters: The role of experience, personality, and social processes', *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts* 11(4), 487–499. <https://doi.org/10.1037/aca0000094>
- Masuku, N., 2005, *Perceived oppression of women in Zulu folklore: A feminist critique*, University of South Africa, Pretoria.
- Mtumane, Z. & Bobelo, N., 2008, 'Nelson Rholihlahla Mandela: Personality traits as depicted in selected isiXhosa poetry', *South African Journal of African Languages* 28(2), 115–125. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02572117.2008.10587307>
- Ndhobela, A.J., 2022, *The role of language and cultural practices in portraying women in selected Vhavenga communities*, University of South Africa, Pretoria.
- Ngozi, A.C., 2009, *The thing around your neck*, Knopf, New York, NY.
- Niall, C., 2022, 'Fictional characters and characterisations', *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 104(2), 348–367. <https://doi.org/10.1111/papq.12426>
- Nurgiyantoro, B., 2013, *Children's literature: An introduction to understanding the world of children*, Gadjah Mada University Press, Yogyakarta.
- Page, R., 1988, 'Idiolect and characterisation in literature', *Language and Literature* 7(1), 23–34.
- Palmer, A., 2004, 'Monologue and characterisation in fiction', *Narrative Theory* 12(3), 67–82.
- Rimmon-Kenan, S., 1983, *Narrative fiction: Contemporary poetics*, Routledge, London.
- Schiffirin, D., 1990, 'The principle of intersubjectivity in communication and conversation', *Semiotica* 80(1–2), 121–151.
- Sengani, T.M., 2022, *Only study guide for VEN1506. Applied African languages literature for home language. Foundation phase Tshivenḡa*, Unisa, Pretoria.
- Shezi, Z.D., 2001, 'The interaction between culture and characterisation in Uthingo Lwenkosazana by DBZ Ntuli with special reference to the short story "Iphasika"', Honours article dissertation, Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education.
- Sibiya, E.D.M. & Mtumane, T., 2002, 'Dialogue as a tool for characterisation in literature', *African Journal of Literary Studies* 10(1), 15–30.
- Sibiya, E.D.M. & Mtumane, Z., 2022, *Trends and tropes: Some aspects of African indigenous literature of South Africa*, UKZN Press, Scottsville.
- Todorov, T., 1977, *The fantastic: A structural approach to a literary genre*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY.
- Wa Thiong'o, N., 1986, *Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African literature*, East African Educational Publishers, Nairobi.
- Wegerif, R., Doney, J., Richards, A., Mansour, N., Larkin, S. & Jamison, I., 2019, 'Exploring the ontological dimension of dialogic education through an evaluation of the impact of internet mediated dialogue across cultural difference', *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction* 20, 80. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2017.10.003>
- Wood, J., 2008, *How fiction works*, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, New York, NY.
- Zunshine, L., 2003, 'Theory of mind and experimental representations of fictional consciousness', *Narrative* 11(3), 270–291. <https://doi.org/10.1353/nar.2003.0018>