AOSIS

From deep reading to linguistic vitality

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Author:
Phil van Schalkwyk[1] ⊙

Affiliation:
[1]School of Languages, Faculty of Humanities, North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa

Corresponding author:
Phil van Schalkwyk, phil.vanschalkwyk@nwu.ac.za

In recent contributions to *Literator*, the literary articles bring to the fore questions of imagination, representation and the shaping of social reality. One strand explores the environment and the nonhuman, where rain, water, and other natural forces are not passive backdrops but agents of change and meaning (see Hooper & Rawlins 2025). Another strand consists of the mapping of space and the body in contexts of racial and gendered exclusion (see Mavengano 2025).

Alongside these thematic explorations, attention turns to literary technique. In African-language short stories, fictional dialogue emerges as a crucial device for building character and revealing identity, underscoring how the dynamics of voice and idiolect shape cultural representation (see Mudau 2025). In children's literature, monsters emerge not only as figures of fear but also as sources of kindness and inclusion (see Zeilinga, Robinson & Koekemoer 2025).

The canon remains present too: Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* is revisited by demonstrating how attentive engagement with entomology can refine interpretive debates and counter readings that diminish the novel's moral and artistic complexity (Terblanche 2025). As Bloom (2001) puts it memorably in *How to Read and Why*:

> We read deeply for varied reasons, most of them familiar: that we cannot know enough people profoundly enough; that we need to know ourselves better; that we require knowledge, not just of self and others, but of the way things are. Yet the strongest, most authentic motive for deep reading [...] is the search for a difficult pleasure. (pp. 28–29)

The varied literary inquiries suggest both the persistence of canonical engagement and the widening of the African literary archive through ecocritical, spatial, stylistic, and cultural readings.

The linguistics articles, equally varied, converge on the vitality of South Africa's multilingual landscape. An important theme is human language technology and the possibilities it opens. Tools such as morphological analysers, part-of-speech taggers, and online platforms reveal not only the potential of digital support for indigenous languages but also the gap created by underuse and a lack of awareness (Mlambo & Matfunjwa 2025). The politics of naming also receives attention: the renaming of places in isiZulu demonstrates how communities inscribe memory and belonging in the post-apartheid era, while also exposing tensions in processes of consultation (Ntshangase 2025).

Morphological studies highlight the interplay between structure and meaning (Mlambo, Matfunjwa & Skosana 2025). Research on Xitsonga compounding examines the role of nominal prefixes and headedness (Mlambo & Matfunjwa 2025), while the analysis of Northern Sotho plant names uncovers word formation strategies that link language to ethnobotanical knowledge (Tembane 2025). Comparative perspectives show how false friends between isiZulu and isiXhosa complicate mutual intelligibility (Malindisa, Mandende & Cekiso 2025), while universal quantifiers in isiZulu and Xitsonga reveal both shared Bantu patterns and distinct morphosyntactic rules (Masonto & Mncwango 2025). Research on the reading practices of first-year students reveals a gap between prescribed materials and a wider culture of reading, raising urgent pedagogical concerns (Cekiso, Boakye & Olifant 2025).

Creative work also finds its place this year. One contribution offers a travelogue of encounters between Afrikaans poets in Europe (Van der Walt 2025), while another pays tribute to the often-overlooked creatures of the bush (Botha 2025).

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