

Types of Sentences in Mqapheli Mngadi's Cartoons

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Abstract

This article examines the types of sentences used by Mqapheli Mngadi in his cartoons. This is done as it has been observed that Mngadi

employs different types of sentences, in quite an artistic manner, in his works. The types of sentences to be considered include simple sentences, compound sentences and complex sentences. Each type will be defined and then applied to the relevant cartoons, revealing how it is used. The cartoons to be considered will be provided as part of the discussion, to illustrate where the sentences are found. The different sections of this paper are: Introduction, Simple sentences, Compound sentences and Complex sentences. A concluding remark will be provided towards the end of the article. The concepts of 'cartoon' and 'sentence' will be defined as part of the introductory section of the discourse.

Introduction

Mqapheli Mngadi uses different types of sentences, in an artistic manner, in his cartoons. However, so far, no study has been conducted revealing this aspect of his work. Dlamini (2019), on whose masters study this article is based on, is probably the only scholar who has conducted a study on Mngadi's cartoons. This article then aims at scrutinising and revealing how this cartoonist uses these types of sentences in his cartoon works. As already stated in the abstract, the types of sentences to be considered are simple sentences, compound sentences and complex sentences. The significance of the use of these three types of sentences is also highlighted in the discussion.

A cartoon is generally a humorous or satiric drawing, with or sometime without words written on it, that is used by the artist to address some aspects of life. Hornby (2010: 216) simply defines a cartoon as a humorous drawing that is usually about politics or events. Gerberg, in Huber and Samson (2007: 1), on the other hand, defines cartoons as “drawings in which an action, situations, or person is caricatured or symbolized, often in a satirical manner”. Nilsen and Nilsen, in Huber and Samson (2007: 2), concur with the two definitions above by saying that a cartoon is a drawing or painting that tells a joke and is made up of few characters. The *MacMillan English Dictionary* (2002: 207) similarly states that a cartoon tells a funny story

and often has words written in it. From the insights given by the scholars above, a cartoon can be defined as an artistic drawing or painting that tells a story, often in a humorous or satiric way. This literary form is often characterised by caricature (the exaggeration of features), labelling, and speech bubbles as well as symbols.

A sentence is generally a group of words that are put together, in a grammatical manner, to give meaning. Danesi (2000: 208) defines a sentence as a word or group of words that express a statement, question, command, or exclamation. Eastwood (2002: 2) adds to this view by stating that a sentence generally occurs as a single clause or a combination of two or more clauses. These clauses can be in the negative or positive actuality (*Op cit.*). Huddleston & Pullun (2005: 13) provide a syntactic perspective of a sentence by saying that a sentence is a basic clause with a subject and predict. With the use of the insights above, a sentence can be defined as a word or group of words which express a complete idea. These expressions can appear in the form of

statements, questions, commands or exclamations, denoting either the positive or negative actuality.

Even though Huddleston & Pullun's (*Op cit.*) view holds true to a certain extent, it should be noted that sentences can also occur as single and independent verbs without subjects in sentences. This is made evident in the case of commands, which can maintain the status of being single and independent words in sentences. For instance, the word "*Hamba!*" (Go!), can serve as a single and independent command in a sentence, without a subject. In this instance, a sentence is not necessarily a group of words put together to give meaning, but a word used independently to give meaning. In this study, however, a sentence is viewed only from the perspective of being a word group.

Simple sentences

The concept 'simple sentence' is a combination of two words; the adjective 'simple' and the noun 'sentence'. It is therefore imperative to consider both words in order to understand what the concept means. Pearsall (2001: 1337) views the word 'simple' as referring to something that is "easily understood or done ... plain and uncomplicated in form, nature and design ... composed of a single element". 'Sentence' has been defined earlier in this study and is understood to be a grammatical combination of words in a meaningful manner. Therefore, a simple sentence may generally be understood as referring to a plain and meaningful grammatical combination of words that is easily understood as it has a single element (the verb).

According to Lutrin and Pincus (2002: 6), a simple sentence is one that carries one finite verb and focuses on one idea. Littell (1981: 344), on the other hand, highlights that this type of sentence is made up of only one subject and predicate. Soanes and Stevenson (2008: 1344) similarly state that it is a sentence that comprises only an independent single clause. Drawing from these definitions, a simple sentence can be defined as one that deals with one idea. It is a single independent clause that is not dependent on other clauses. A simple sentence, in its basic form, contains a subject and a predicate and, sometimes, the object.

Huber and Samson (2007: 2) maintain that one of the characteristics of cartoons is simple lines. They are made up of simple lines and sentences

because their nature requires them to be concise. This art of using simple lines and sentences is seen in Mngadi's cartoons. It is analysed from the examples in Cartoons 1, 2, and 3 below. The first example is examined from the conversation between Masaka and his friend, Bhoza, in the following cartoon:



Figure 1 – Cartoon 1

(Mngadi, 2015)

The sentences: “*Ake senze umehluko nje nkunzi yami*” (Let us just make a difference my

friend), “*Singaphuzi ngosuku lukaMandela*” (Let us not drink on Mandela Day) and “*Imali siyiphe ogogo nomkhulu nabaswele*” (And give the money to grandmothers, grandfathers, and those who are in need) from Masaka’s speech, are examples of simple sentences. It should be noticed that they each carry only one finite verb. ‘*Senze*’ (make) is the finite verb of the first sentence, ‘*singaphuzi*’ (we should not drink) for the second sentence, and ‘*siyiphe*’ (we should give) for the last sentence.

The appearance of one finite verb in each of the sentences suggests that the sentences carry single ideas each. In the first sentence, Masaka is highlighting the idea of making a difference; the second one, of not drinking alcohol on Mandela Day; and the third one, of giving the

money to elderly people and those who are in need. These are all independent clauses. Mngadi utilises these sentences to keep the cartoon brief and straight to the point.

The above cartoon is used to highlight the significance of Mandela Day. This is a South African day to honour Nelson Mandela, the late and first South African democratically elected president and icon, by serving people who are in need. Masaka's words in the cartoon support this as they propose to help elderly people instead of buying alcohol during Mandela Day. Mngadi uses this cartoon to teach and demonstrate the spirit that characterises Mandela Day. A message is sent through this cartoon that people ought to prioritise serving those who are in need on the day. In essence,

they are challenged to consider other people's needs more than theirs, to maintain the ideals of Mandela Day. Special reference and recognition in this instance is made to older people, particularly grandmothers and grandfathers, as they are individuals who no longer have the capacity to do activities successfully on their own. Ideally, Mandela Day rekindles the spirit of 'ubuntu' as people are encouraged to share and live in unity and harmony.

The use of simple sentences is also evident in Cartoon 2 below:

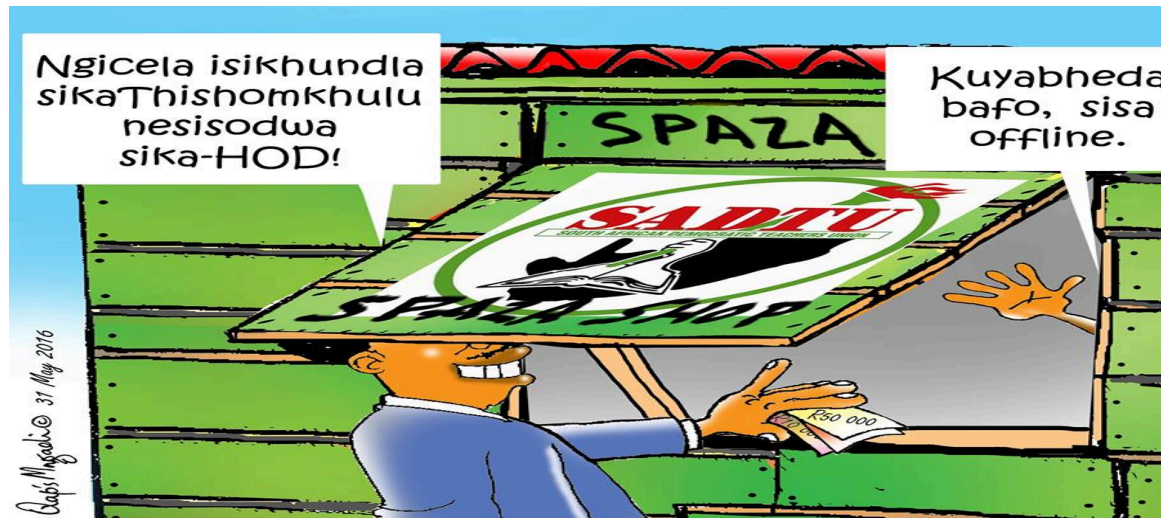


Figure 2 – Cartoon 2

(Mngadi, 2016)

The cartoon illustrates the scenario of a man who is ironically buying posts of school principals and heads of department from the South African Democratic Teacher's Union (SADTU), which in this instance, is

metaphorically portrayed as a 'spaza shop'. Mngadi designed this cartoon based on the accusations levelled against SADTU that it sells posts for principals and heads of departments, instead of following legitimate procedures. SADTU was reported to be offering principal and heads of department posts in return for an amount estimated to be R30 000 (*City Press*, 2014). One can argue that the buying of these posts emanates from greed. The principal and head of department posts pay better salaries as compared to a basic teacher's salary. By buying these posts, individuals may thus be motivated by the desire to earn higher salaries. It is for this reason that greed is generally regarded by many as one of the roots of corruption. Greed does not only result in corruption but can also

lead some people to go as far as committing serious crimes like murder. It is one of the pertinent phenomenon in the post-apartheid South Africa and in different parts of the world.

The use of simple sentences is demonstrated in Figure 2 above. The man's speech: "*Ngicela isikhundla sikaThishomkhulu nesisodwa sika-HOD!*" (May I have the position of the school principal and one of the HOD!) consists of only a single clause, which conveys a single idea. This qualifies it to be a simple sentence. The art of brevity of expression is demonstrated by this simple line or sentence. Mngadi uses this simple sentence and relies on labelling and drawing to assist him to fully express his message. By labelling SADTU as a 'spaza shop', the cartoonist is portraying the union as a selling

institution and this is not expressed in words. The reader is thus engaged to critically analyse the cartoon by reading and observing it.

The last example is taken from Cartoon 3 below. In this cartoon, the Department of Education is visually personified to be condoning matric 2016 learners, as they are seen being pushed to jump over the wall, which symbolises the passing of Grade 12 by being pushed (condoned). The cartoon below illustrates this:

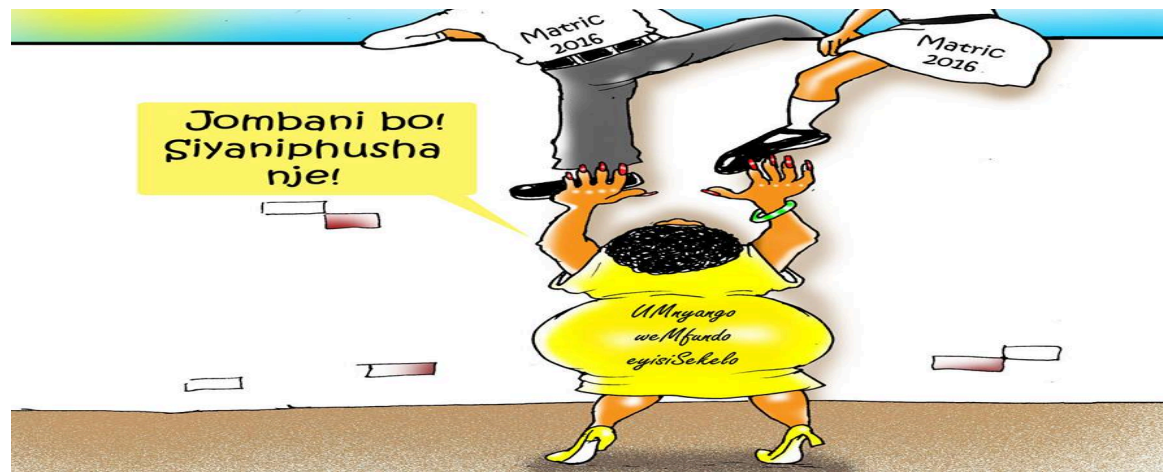


Figure 3 – Cartoon 3

(Mngadi, 2017)

Mngadi designed this cartoon based on the arguments that some of the learners from the matric class of 2016 were condoned by the Department of Education in South Africa. This means that some learners did not deserve to pass, but the department provided a means of

doing that by condoning them to pass their Grade 12. The Department of Education is an entity but in Figure 3, it is depicted as a human body. The word 'body' has multiple meanings. It does not only refer to the physical structure of a person or animal but, also, to a group of people with different and important responsibilities, who work together for an organisation or government (*MacMillan English Dictionary*, 2002: 143). In the cartoon, the Department of Education is thus portrayed as a human body to signify the idea that it is a department that works for the government, consisting of a group of people who are given different and important responsibilities. One of their top responsibilities is to ensure a high or reasonable pass rate for

grade 12s, which they seem to be doing illegitimately, according to the cartoon above.

In the cartoon, the statements: “*Jombani bo! Siyaniphusha nje!*” (Jump over! We are just pushing you!), articulated as learners are pushed to jump over, are examples of two independent clauses. Lutrin and Pincus (2002: 28) argue that a finite verb is independent of auxiliary verbs but must have a subject to make a complete sentence. In the case of Zulu, however, the subject concord may represent the subject in the verb and this suggests that a complete sentence is still constructed even with the omission of the subject.

In the verb ‘*Jombani*’ (Jump over), the last syllable *-ni* actually represents the subject ‘*nina*’

(you – plural), which is the implied pronoun of the second person plural. The last syllable *-ni* is the subject concord of the implied '*nina*' (you – plural). The sentence can thus alternatively be written as '*(Nina) jombani*' (you – plural, jump over!). This is also the case with the verb '*Siyanihusha*' (We are pushing you) in the sentence '*Siyanihusha nje!*' (We are just pushing you!), where *si-* is the subject concord of the implied first person plural pronoun '*thina*' (we). The second person plural pronoun '*nina*' (you – plural), on the other hand, is represented by the object concord *-ni-*. The sentences above are thus also examples of simple sentences as they are independent clauses.

What is happening in the cartoon above suggests that the pupils are condoned, while

they are incompetent. They are unable to achieve academic success on their own and, as a result, need to be pushed as demonstrated in the cartoon. This questions the quality of matriculants produced by the South African education system. As some of these learners end up enrolling at universities, this could be one of the reasons why they struggle to keep up with the standard in these institutions. This can therefore be used to explain the high drop-out rate in higher educational institutions. Learners are condoned while they are incompetent and this catches up with the majority of them when they enrol at universities.

The above examples show that the use of simple sentences is one of the grammatical features of Mngadi's cartoons. Since brevity is

an important requirement in cartoons, the use of simple sentences helps to ensure that this requirement is complemented and met in Mngadi's cartoons. In essence, the use of simple sentences keeps the cartoons short and interesting. Mngadi's style, as a cartoonist, is also revealed by the use of these sentences.

Compound sentences

The adjective 'compound' refers to something that has "two or more separate entities ... (Pearsall, 2001: 293). A compound sentence, therefore may be understood as one that has two elements, which could be clauses or predicates. It is for this reason that Pearsall (*Op cit.*) defines a compound sentence as one "with more than one subject or predicate". According to Laws and Warriner (1973: 133), a compound

sentence is made up of two independent clauses that are joined by conjunctions. Lutrin and Pincus (2002: 6) concur with this view in stating that a compound sentence consists of two or more finite verbs and may be simple sentences that are linked by coordinating conjunctions. Another important point about a compound sentence is highlighted by Barkley and Sandaval (2015: 255) who say: "Since a compound sentence is a group of words that contains two or more clauses, it contains two or more ideas or thoughts. When you compose a compound sentence, you are coordinating at least two ideas".

The above insights highlight that, compared to a simple sentence, a compound sentence contains two or more independent clauses that

are joined by a coordinating conjunction. A conjunction is a type of a word that joins sentences (*MacMillan English Dictionary*, 2002: 292). The coordination of the two clauses, therefore, means that two different ideas or thoughts are combined, even though they are distinct.

The use of compound sentences is evident in Mngadi's cartoons. The first example is found in from Bhoza and Masaka's conversation in Cartoon 4 below:



Figure 4 – Cartoon 4

(Mngadi, 2018)

The sentence: “*Wabanjwa kwi-road block kanti izincwadi ziwumbombayi*” (he was caught at a road block as his driving documents were fake),

from Masaka's speech, is an example of a compound sentence. It is made up of two independent clauses; '*Wabanjwa kwi-road block*' (he was caught at a road block) and '*izincwadi ziwumbombayi*' (driving documents are fake). These clauses are joined by the coordinating conjunction '*kanti*' (as). These two clauses present two different ideas that are joined by this conjunction. In the first clause, Masaka is expressing the idea that Ankeli was caught at the road block. In the second one, he expresses the idea that Ankeli's driving documents were fake.

These words are a warning to people in general that driving without legitimate driving documents has negative consequences. The man spoken about in the cartoon is said to have run away

after being stopped at a road block as his driving documents were fake. The statement: “*wadla phansi ngejubane*” is a Zulu proverb and it means to run away or escape fast. In the cartoon, it means that the driver, who is Ankeli, ran for his life after being stopped at a road block. He would have faced charges if he did not escape since driving with fake documents is unlawful in different parts of the world. Ankeli’s action portrays him as someone who is corrupt and irresponsible. It also portrays him as coward as he failed to face the consequences of his actions.

Another example of a compound sentence is observed in Cartoon 5 below:

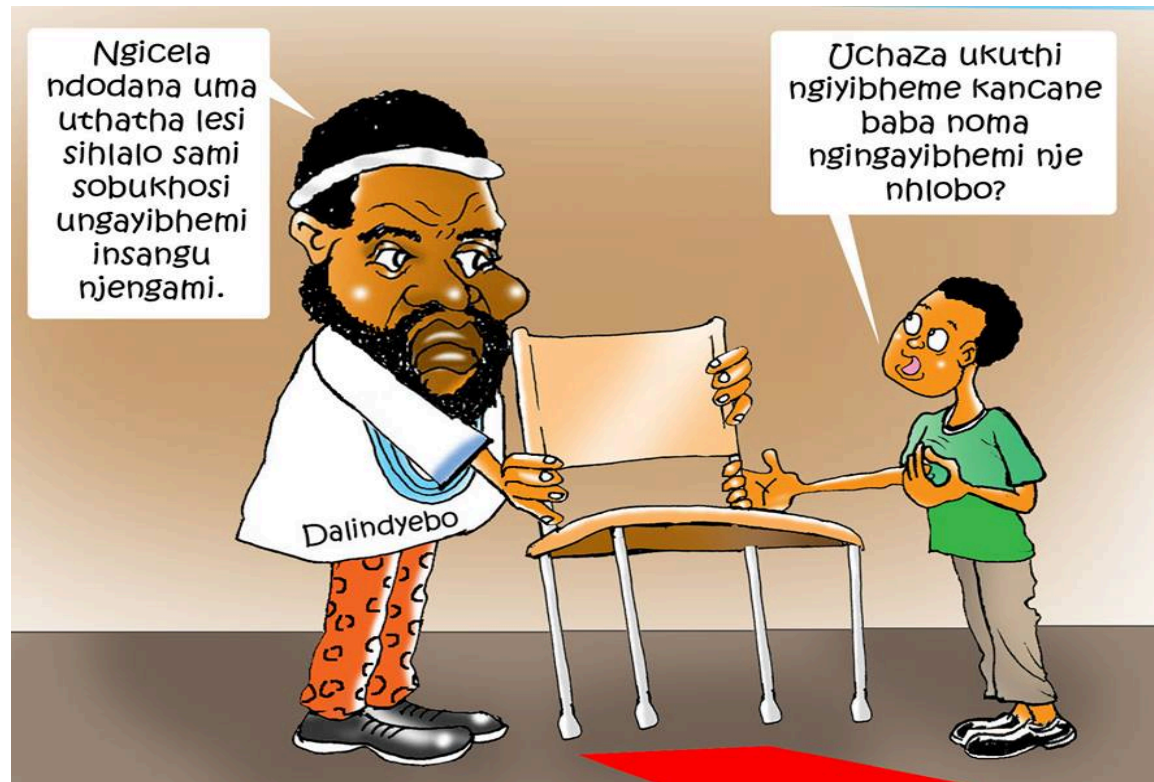


Figure 5 – Cartoon 5

(Mngadi, 2015)

A scenario is presented in the cartoon above between Dalindyebo and his son. Buyelekhaya Dalindyebo is the king of AbaThembu nation found in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. He was arrested and served a sentence for murder and other charges. Before his arrest, he advised his son, who was to take over his throne, not to be involved in substance abuse (*News 24, 2015*). The cartoon was designed based on this real event.

In Figure 5 above, Dalindyebo advises his son not to smoke weed like him and even though his son did not respond in the above way in reality, in the cartoon he responds by asking his father if he should smoke weed minimally or not smoke it at all. The little boy's response is an example of a compound sentence. It has two

independent clauses, namely: "... *Ngiyibheme kancane (insangu) baba*" (... Should I smoke (weed) minimally father) and "*ngingayibhemi nje nhlobo (insangu)?*" (Should I not smoke it at all?), with the omission of '*Uchaza ukuthi*' (You mean that). These independent clauses are joined by the conjunction '*noma*' (or). Two ideas are presented, with the first one being the boy's question if he should smoke weed minimally and the second being if he should not smoke it at all.

It is questionable that Dalindyebo would be involved in substance abuse as a King. Leaders are supposed to lead by example and they cannot do so if their minds are not sober. Substance abuse is known for causing disruption in people's lives as in the case of Dalidyebo who ended up facing criminal

charges, which he believes were a result of substance abuse among other things. This suggests that his leadership was not of merit, in so far as ethical considerations are concerned.

The words of '*Ankeli*' (Uncle) in Cartoon 6 below also demonstrate an example of a compound sentence:



Figure 6 – Cartoon 6

(Mngadi, 2014)

Figure 6 depicts Ankeli who is making a remark that his sister is using his nephews' money to do Brazilian hair. The cartoon presents the idea

that unemployed women use their children's grant money to do Brazilian hair as in the case of Mama kamshana (Mother of nephew) 4, 5 & 6 in the cartoon. Brazilian hair is expensive in general and this suggests that a large amount is used for it instead of supplying children's necessities. In essence, children are robbed of their state-given funds. This is the problem Mngadi is exposing and condemning in this cartoon.

An example of a compound sentence is seen in Ankeli's speech. His first sentence: "*Wenze obrazilian hair kodwa akasebenzi*" (She has done Brazilian hair but she is not working) is a compound sentence. It consists of two independent clauses: '*Wenze obrazilian hair*' (She has done Brazilian hair) and '*akasebenzi*'

(she is not working). These independent clauses present two ideas that are joined by the coordinating conjunction '*kodwa*' (but). The first idea Uncle presents is that his sister has done Brazilian hair and the second one is that she is not working. This implies that he does not expect his sister to do Brazilian hair while she is not employed, as she has no income.

The examples above show that Mngadi not only uses simple sentences in his cartoons but compound sentences as well. Cartoonists always try to present a few ideas to keep their cartoons short. Compound sentences help them to combine these ideas. They do this to ensure that the audience is kept captivated and not bored. The presentation of many ideas may lead

to confusion that would eventually cause boredom.

Complex sentences

Something that is complex is one that has “many different and connected parts” (Pearsall, 2001: 292). In the context of sentences, these parts could be clauses. It is for this reason that Pearsall (*Op cit.*) views a complex sentence as one that contains “a subordinate clause or clauses”. The phrase “subordinate clause or clauses” implies that there are main clauses as well. Barkley and Sandaval (2015: 265) and McArthur and McArthur (1992: 243) maintain that a complex sentence is a sentence that has a main clause and one or more subordinate clauses. Parrot (2010: 442) elaborates on this

by stating: “Complex sentences contain two or more clauses. One of these is the main clause, which is finite and can stand on its own. The other clause or clauses are subordinate to this or in some way or another dependent on it”.

The definitions above distinguish the complex sentence from the simple and compound ones. As stated earlier, a simple sentence contains a single independent clause, and a compound sentence has two or more independent clauses. A complex sentence, on the other hand, has a main independent clause with subordinate clauses. This means that, without the main clause, subordinate clauses cannot stand on their own, as they are dependent on it. A sentence that has more than two independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses is

referred to as compound-complex (Laws & Warriner, 1973: 142).

Mngadi's cartoons are also made up of complex sentences. The first example is considered from Cartoon 7 below:



Figure 7 – Cartoon 7

(Mngadi, 2015)

Figure 7 depicts Reneilwe Letsholonyane, a South African footballer. He is a former Jomo Cosmos, Kaizer Chiefs, SuperSport United, and Bafana Bafana player. Letsholonyane was a Highlands Park player at the writing of this study. In the cartoon, he is complaining about the fact that fans call him Beyonce and urges them to stop using this name in Figure 7. Beyonce is a beautiful popular musician from the United States of America. Letsholonyane does not want this name because he realises that fans use irony when they call him Beyonce. The fans use this name based on the sentiment that Letsholonyane is not as handsome as Beyonce, who is beautiful. In real life, Letsholonyane complained about being called by this name and made a plea to the public to

stop using it (*Sowetan Live*, 2015). He alluded to the fact that his relationship with his fans is affected by this as he does not respond when they call him Beyonce. The majority of fans think he is rude by not responding to their salutation, as a result. Naming is one of the elements of bullying and it affects a lot of people. The cartoon above highlights the irritation and frustration this practice inflicts to those who suffer from it and in this instance, Letsholonyane is one of them.

An example of a complex sentence is evident in Letsolonyane's words in the above cartoon. The first clause: "*Angilifuni okwangempela leli gama likaBeyonce*" (I really do not want the Beyonce name) is independent. On the other hand, the last two: "*abalandeli abangibiza ngalo*" (the

supporters are calling me with) and “*ngoba angazi baqondeni*” (because I do not know what they mean) are dependent on the first one. In the last dependent clause, the coordinating conjunction ‘*ngoba*’ (because) plays a significant role in making the clause to be dependent. Whenever it is used, the clause is usually dependent on the main independent one.

Dalindyebo’s words to his son in Cartoon 5, which was also discussed under earlier in this article, demonstrate Mngadi’s use of complex sentences in his cartoons. This is analysed from Dalindyebo’s speech in the cartoon below:



Figure 8 – Cartoon 5

(Mngadi, 2015)

It was mentioned earlier that this cartoon was designed from a real life event, where Dalindyebo advised his son not to smoke weed as an upcoming king of the AbaThembu to

replace him, as he was to go to jail for illegal activities. The use of a complex sentence is evident from Dalindyebo's words. The statement: "... *ungayibhemi insangu njengami*" (... do not smoke weed like me) is an independent clause and this automatically makes the remaining word group to be dependent. The clause: "*(Ngicela ndodana ...) uma uthatha lesi sihlalo sami sobukhosi*" (I ask my son that ...) when you take over my seat of kingship) cannot stand on its own. Just like in the previous example above, the coordinating conjunction '*uma*' (when) plays an important role in making the clause to be dependent.

Another example is observed from Cartoon 8 below. An analogy of a boxing match between

Shivambu and Blade is portrayed in the cartoon below:



Figure 9 – Cartoon 8

(Mngadi, 2015)

Blade Nzimande is the South African Minister of the Department of Higher Education and Training in South Africa. He is also the General Secretary of the South African Communist Party (SACP). Floyd Shivambu, on the other hand, is a high ranking member of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), a political party in South Africa. The cartoon presents them in a boxing match to show that they had conflicting interests. By drawing the two politicians engaging in a boxing match, the cartoonist presents the idea that there was hostility and verbal conflict between the two individuals and not necessary a physical battle. In real life, Shivambu questioned the role of Nzimande in the struggle for liberation, after Nzimande was reported to have said something negative

against the EFF (*Sunday Independent*, 2015). Mngadi designed this cartoon based on this real life event.

Shivambu's words, in the above cartoon, demonstrate the use of a complex sentence. He is mocking Nzimande about his minimal role in the struggle against apartheid and from his speech the clause: "*ngaphandle kokuthi kuthiwa watelekela ukunambitheka kokudla eNyuvesi*" (except that it is reported that you stroke for the taste of food at university), is dependent. Without the independent clause: "*Asizwa lutho nje kutuswa ubuqhawe bakho!*" (We do not hear any of your heroics being upheld!), the clause cannot stand on its own. The word group: "*ngaphandle kokuthi*" (except that) acts as a conjunction in this instance.

Conclusion

Mngadi uses a variety of sentences to communicate his ideas. This includes simple, compound as well as complex sentences. The use of these varying sentence types enriches his presentation style and makes the cartoons interesting and exciting to read. It helps to avoid repetition of the same style of writing, which would generally bore the reader. The requirement of brevity is also met as a single cartoon does not consist of more than two complex sentences in each character's speech.

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