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Schematizing Societal Problems in Namibian Novels: The Cases of *The Other Presence* and *The Hopeless Hopes*

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Abstract

The current research presents a cognitive stylistics study of two Namibian novels: Francis Sifiso Nyathi's *The Other Presence* and Salom Shilongo's *The Hopeless Hopes*. These novels were selected because they present societal problems specific to Namibia from two different perspectives. The study also argues that only a few such Namibian novels have been investigated via conceptualising cognitive stylistics. The researchers have raised three fundamental questions: How does cognitive metaphor help explicate psychological hitches as captured creatively in the two novels? What is the mind's contribution in conceptualising and comprehending contextual meanings in the two novels? How does content schema contribute to the understanding of the two novels? It is, therefore, against the backdrop of these three questions that the two novels were purposefully selected and studied. Conceptualising and implementing the cognitive metaphor, the current study also analyses the root causes of societal problems, such as unemployment, unfair treatment of people, HIV/AIDS, and witchcrafts, prevailing in the Namibian social fabric. In *The Other Presence*, it is the HIV/AIDS which is referred to as the other presence. Shilongo's *The Hopeless Hopes* also reveals how Robert and the other fellow Namibian ex-combatants gathered at a Big House in Windhoek to hand over their petition to Honourable Zopa. It indicates clearly that the State House is being contextualised as a Big House in the novel, while the 'Founding Father' and the former president of the country Honourable Sam Nuyoma is referred to as Honourable Zopa. The contextual meaning of the selected novels can thus only be understood if the readers of these novels have a general background knowledge of the Namibian society. Within a cognitive stylistics theoretical framework, the study also follows a schema theory to explain mental problems and contextual meanings. It manifests how a cognitive stylistics approach to Namibian novels can advance the

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literary understanding of the multiplicities of themes, such as culture, taboo, superstition, unemployment, colonialism, corruption, and mental health.

Keywords: cognitive metaphor, cognitive stylistics, content schema, contextual meanings, mental problems, schema theory

Introduction and Background of the Study

Namibian literature in English started to gain recognition after Namibia gained its independence from the colonization. However, there are few literary works which were written before the country gained its independence on the 21st March, 1990. Arich-Gerz (2010), stated that

in March 1990, after the prolonged thirty-year war of liberation against the South African occupiers/colonizers, Namibia became the last country in Africa to achieve independence. The process of decolonization began late in South-West Africa and had severe consequences for art and literary works because of this delay. (p.7)

Krishnamurthy (2012) also stated that “twenty years down the line, poets are comfortable with their new freedom but the issues that concern them are those of poverty, corruption, and discrimination” (p. 151).

In what is a history of 'strong' events, the attempt to give substance to the term Namibian literature presents all the challenges and problems, in a microcosm that would occupy an attempt to delineate the literature of any country in southern Africa. (Chapman, 1995)

A number of literary genres such as novels, poetry, and short stories that were written before the independence of the country were focused on issues of nationalism and liberation of the country.

Neshani Andreas' novel *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* of 2001 is thus not the first literary comment in English prose; yet by appearing in the renowned Heinemann Publishers' "African Writers Series" with its international distribution network it has been (and still is) considerably easier for her to reach a global readership. (Arich-Gerz, 2010)

A large number of Namibian literary works in English have been recently written by native Namibian writers. The list includes Ellen Ndeshi Namhila, Kavevangua Kahengua, Hugh Ellis, Sifiso Nyathi, and Salom Shilongo among others. Such works of literature are based on a variety of

themes such as poverty, unemployment, gender violence, education, HIV/AIDS, and other pressing issues related to the well-being of the Namibian people. Among those writers is Andreas Neshani who wrote the novel called *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu*, which was published in 2001 by the Heinemann African Writers Series. Her book was based on gender issues such as feminism and patriarchy in Namibia, especially in Oshiwambo culture. According to Beukes (2011), the novel expresses a personal account of two dynamic women in the village of Oshaantu in the northern part of Namibia. The novel is set in post-apartheid Namibia with HIV/AIDS still regarded as a myth and domestic violence was represented as a justified act by some like any normal marriage

It is therefore important to note that the selected novels namely: *The Other Presence* and *The Hopeless Hopes* address the same societal issues as addressed by Neshani Andreas in the *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu*. Mlambo and Kandemiri (2015) stated that

through the chosen novel, [their paper] projected the ‘multivoiceness’ of literature in as much as it represents the gamut of HIV/AIDS in conservative communities, the contested terrain of superstition, the supernatural, belief and witchcraft. The ultimate conclusion is that literature is a powerful tool for the articulation of core concerns and issues in contemporary Africa and that Nyathi managed to make visible the qualitative facets of life like pain, bereavement, culture, HIV/AIDS, religion and stigma. (p. 53)

It is further acknowledged that African societies are led by cultural norms and beliefs. Among these beliefs, when someone passes, there is always someone responsible for his/her death even though the deceased has died of a natural death or has died as a result of a certain/chronic disease. This is what happens in *The Other Presence*. Innocent people were accused of bewitching each other within their own clan, a situation which causes hatred and disagreement among the family members. Mlambo and Kandemiri’s (2015) paper explored

the insightful nuances about narratives and contemporary life from the award-winning Namibian writer, Sifiso Nyathi. The paper arose from the realisation of the paucity of literature in Namibia to tackle sensitive issues and the more often peripheral recognition of the

power that fiction has to comment on and bring insight to socio-cultural and economic issues. (p. 53)

Similarly, Salom Shilongo's *The Hopeless Hopes* is about problems experienced by many people within contemporary Namibian societies which includes increases in poverty, unemployment, low income, and a rise in the prices of basic commodities which were skyrocketing on a daily basis.

Cognitive stylistics was mainly developed from the works of Wilson and Sperber (2002). The interpretation chiefly focuses on cognitive elements and concepts such as verbal irony, cognitive metaphor, image-schema, figure and ground, implicature, contextual effects, and relevance. In a nutshell, there is a need for the selected novels to be fully analysed utilising the cognitive stylistics in order to break the research gap observed when it comes to Namibian literature.

Burke (2005) stated that "the broadest view of cognition takes into account all the mental activities associated with tasks such as thinking, knowing, communicating and remembering. As such, despite claims to the contrary, cognition must be deeply embedded in culture" (p. 198). It is, therefore, against this background that the study considered the mental and cultural activities appearing in the two selected novels.

Statement of the Problem

The Other Presence and *The Hopeless Hopes* delineate several societal problems which are persistent and complex in contemporary Namibian society. Problems such as unfair treatment with women, fear of the unknown, trauma, discrimination, unemployment, stigmatisation of HIV/AIDS victims, poor living conditions, poverty, and socio-political and cultural conflicts are integral part of the plot construction in the two novels. These problems as portrayed in *The Other Presence* and *The Hopeless Hopes* took place in Namibia before and after the independence. It is for this reason that the following questions have been considered/undertaken to understand schematized societal problems of the Namibian community. Thus, this study follows a cognitive stylistic framework to interpret *The Other Presence* and *The Hopeless Hopes*.

Research Questions

- 1) How did cognitive metaphors help in explaining mental problems captured creatively in the two novels?

- 2) What was the mind's contribution to the analysis of contextual meanings in the two novels?
- 3) How did content schema contribute to schematizing social problems in the selected texts?

Theoretical Framework

This study followed a cognitive stylistics theoretical framework. Krishnamurthy (2012) stated that:

Cognitive stylistics which has grown as a major sub-discipline in the field of applied linguistics is the interface between linguistics, literary studies, and cognitive science. Subscribing to the explicit, detailed and rigorous framework of stylistic analysis, scholars working in cognitive science extend the boundaries of linguistic analysis of the literature by articulating different theories such as schema theory, cognitive metaphor theory, conceptual metaphor theory, text world theory, blending, mental space theories etc. All theories mentioned provide frameworks for the analysis of literature, also focusing on reading and cognition. The synthesis of cognitive approaches to literature allows for new ways of reading both traditional, literary texts, as well as postmodernist, post-structuralist and I argue, post-colonial texts. (p. 68)

Within this broader perspective of cognitive stylistics theories, this research combines the schema theory and cognitive metaphor to answer the research questions of the current study. The theories have been conceptualized to conduct the analysis of the two novels, design a content-based analysis checklist, and reviewing the related resources.

As argued in the previous section, cognitive stylistics subsumes image schema theory and metaphor theory. Image schema theory as Simpson (2004) observed, appears to be a "significant landmark" in cognitive stylistic study (p.89). It basically focuses on how knowledge is mentally represented in the mind of individuals and used to interpret information (Al-Saeedi, 2016). The schema theory as part and parcel of cognitive stylistics has been used in this study predominantly, to achieve the study objectives. Schema theory is described as "one type of schema, or background knowledge, a reader brings to a text is a content schema, which is knowledge relative to the content domain of the text (Bem, 1981). Furthermore, Burke (2005) states that "the broadest view of schema theory

takes into account all the mental activities associated with tasks such as thinking, knowing, communicating, and remembering. Schema theory must deeply embed in culture” (p. 198). Krishnamurthy (2012) stated that schema theory “premise is that all experiences are stored in the memory and the human mind activates and draws upon this memory in the process of understanding or grappling with new experiences or data” (p. 68). The schema theory focuses on how knowledge is mentally represented in the mind of the individual and used to interpret information. Marszalek (2012) stated that interpreting any kind of literary text depends, to a great extent, on the reader’s background knowledge and prior experiences. That is to say when reading a text, people interpretation relies on their own knowledge of the surrounding world (p. 119).

According to Al-Saeedi (2016) “the idea behind the use of schema theory in the study of literature, is to say, when reading a text, people’s interpretation rests on their own knowledge of the surrounding world” (p. 20).

Comparing and contrasting as in metaphor theory have been used as literary techniques by the author to unlock the current schematized societal problems of Namibian society. Metaphor theory has been used in this study by incorporating the tenets associated with the research questions. Both theories focus on the reader’s background knowledge and experience that a reader brings into his/her mind after reading the texts. Many societal problems appearing in the novels are based on the everyday problems experienced by the people. Despite progresses in the expansion of civil and human rights to different parts of the world, the problems of intergroup discrimination, bigotry, genocide, and the oppression of women and sexual minorities are still present in the world (Pratto et al., 2006). *The Other Presence* focuses on how an uncle is mistreated by the family member after he was accused of being responsible for the death of his own nephew Akapelwa. Although it is known that Akapelwa died of HIV/AIDS. Whereas, in *The Hopeless Hopes*, Robert’s hopes do not produced good results as he thought. He struggled to take care of his family as his parents died because of the war. Robert could not afford a decent house due to his less income as a police officer; hence he opts to stay in a slum with no water and electricity, where people were suffering due to the prevailing poor living conditions caused after the colonization. Considering all these problems, the schema and metaphor theories are employed as a conceptual

framework of this study by considering the circumstance in which they rose in the selected two novels.

A Cognitive Stylistics Study of *The Other Presence* and *The Hopeless Hopes*

Preamble

The Other Presence is a novel that is based on the story of Akapelwa, who died a few weeks after his father and other four children died. Elder Sinvula, Akapelwa's uncle was accused of being responsible for both Akapelwa and his father's deaths. Although it is a fact that Akapelwa's father died in an accident after his new Toyota pickup overturned. The story revealed that the community of Kwena village caused trouble for each other due to their strong beliefs in the supernatural powers. Ma Simanga had been informed about the cause of Akapelwa's death by Dr. Castro; however, Ma Simanga did not believe that her son died because of HIV/AIDS. Elder Sinvula was labelled as a wizard and this accusation against him forces him to go to the hospital in order to ask about the root cause of Akapelwa's death. Due to the tension among the family members, Ma Simanga threatened to embark on a journey to Malawi where she was going to consult a traditional healer, in order to find out who is responsible of her son's death. The story revealed how Dr. Castro informed the mourners about Akapelwa's death. Akapelwa died of HIV/AIDS which Dr. Castro referred to as 'the other presence' in the novel. *The Hopeless Hopes* by Salom Shilongo was based on a story of Robert, who was the main character of the novel. Robert together with his brother Kapenda decided to leave their homestead of Okalongo and go to Otjomuise, which was known as Windhoek, the capital city of Namibia. In search of work and in order to take care of their mother and five siblings, Robert and her brother struggled to earn money. Robert's mother, Naita struggled to raise her children because her husband disappeared after being abducted by the army soldiers and her husband's family members took everything from her leaving her in alone in poverty.

Robert together with his brother used to work at a bakery in Otjomuise where they earned a little amount of money in which they could not even afford to feed their siblings and their mother back in the village. Robert then decided to go and work at a farm belonging to Mr. Smith, a white man, where he was severely abused together with his brother and other co-workers. They worked at the farm without getting a monthly salary for a

period of four years. Robert decided to go into exile in order to go and fight for the liberation of the country. Together with others, they successfully fought for the independence of Namibian community. Finally, in the end he got a job as a police officer where he earned a little amount of money as his monthly salary which was too less to afford the expenses of living for his family. Instead, he preferred to stay in Havana, an informal settlement at the outskirts of Windhoek where there was no water and electricity. In Havana, he used to live in a similar poor condition in which he was living before, which pushed him to use alcohol and he ended up becoming a drunkard. However, he was blamed for not supporting his siblings, yet sadly his efforts to liberate the country do not produced good or productive results, hence all his hopes were sunk when he realised that life before and after independence have not changed at all.

Cognitive Metaphor in The Other Presence

A variety of cognitive metaphors have been used in Sifiso Nyathi's *The Other Presence* which helps to explain the mental problems captured creatively in the novel. First and foremost, the title of the book, *The Other Presence*, is of course metaphoric. The title has been used to talk about something else, which is HIV and AIDS in African societies and most in particular, Namibia. The "Other Presence" refers to other societal issues for instance HIV/AIDS. Throughout the novel, the readers' mind can clearly understand the intended meaning of the author.

In most cases, the author uses metaphors to deliver what he intends to say. For instance, "Other angry women joined in with showers of insults" (Nyathi, 2008). The shower of insults refers to the bad language used by Kachana towards other women as she simply thinks that her cousin Akapelwa was bewitched by Elder Sinvula. Ma Simanga collapsed when she saw Elder Sinvula whom she was suspecting of bewitching her husband who died in a car accident after his new Toyota pickup had overturned. Ma Simanga also accused Elder Sinvula of bewitching her other three children who died after showing similar symptoms. Elder Sinvula, however, indicated that he was not responsible for anyone's death.

Nyathi refers to supernatural activities or witchcraft as matters of darkness. Witchcraft metaphorically referred to as ill things as indicated in the novel "How could you think of so many ill things about me? Replied Neo. You need not pretend that the women's reaction when they saw elder

Sinvula here is anything to take lightly” (Nyathi, [2008](#)). Anything which happens in the novel cannot be ignored or taken lightly. Thus, Sinvula’s presence among women should not be taken as an easy thing. The women do not want to see elder Sinvula due to the fact that they have painted him black, claiming that he is a wizard and is responsible for Akapelwa’s death.

Boiling temper is another metaphors used in *The Other Presence* by Nyathi as she states, “Alright, brother Nico, I hope your boiling temper has now been lowered in temperature by my gum. Now tell me, why do you accuse people of having died of witchcraft when you know very well that they died of HIV/AIDS?” (Nyathi, [2008](#)). Boiling temper refers to Nico’s anger when Thomas announced that Akapelwa died of HIV/AIDS. Nico and Thomas’s conversation turned into a disagreement which eventually lead to critical a fight, “This conversation was sinking deep and deeper into Nico’s emotion. That was the time when Nico referred all the frustrations on his knobkerrie, which he landed heavily on Thomas” (Nyathi, [2008](#)). Thomas was beaten by Nico for disclosing that Akapelwa died of HIV/AIDS.

‘Froze in silence’ is also one of the cognitive metaphors used in the novel. This portrays Kachana’s action when she wanted to fight Nico after beating her cousin Thomas as indicated, “But why did the villagers accuse him of playing God’s role in the passing of his relative” (Nyathi, [2008](#)). This statement can also be considered another metaphor. God’ role is actually the death of Akapelwa whom the villagers claim was supposed to die a natural death rather than being bewitched. Elder Sinvula is blamed and accused for being responsible of MaSimanga’s son through taking the responsibility of God.

Another cognitive metaphor used by Nyathi ([2008](#)) in his novel is, “how could he miss the opportunity of seeing this land that was once a troubled Egypt but now a promised Canaan?” Elder Sinvula was worried about Dr. Castro’s father who assisted him when he was in Cuba during the liberation struggle of Namibian society from the rising colonization. Namibia was once a land with problems during the colonial era this is why Nyathi compared Namibia to Egypt. However, after the independence, the people are now living in peace and harmony thereby, the author compares the situation to promised Canaan, a popular biblical allusion to the Promised Land.

Nyathi (2008) also makes use of a cognitive metaphor when he talks about some people in Kwena village: “You see during the day, they pretend to be sheep but come night time, they are specialists in rumor construction and rumor mongering. Once our people have given you a label, whether true or false, it remains your everlasting trademark”. Elder Sinvula was furious that people labelled him for things which he never committed. Elder Sinvula was the talk of the compound, which means that everyone in the household of the deceased talked about him when he went to the hospital to prove his innocence.

Cognitive metaphors have been employed in *The Other Presence* to explain the mental problems captured creatively in the novel Nyathi has therefore used cognitive metaphors to create a verbal picture that helps the readers imagine a clear picture of Namibian society.

Cognitive Metaphor in The Hopeless Hopes

In *The Hopeless Hope*, Salom Shilongo employs varieties of metaphors in his novel. For instance, “The earth is a cruel, dark cage where man lives with hungry lions, terrible diseases, and venomous snakes” (Shilongo, 2013). It is observed that the earth is presented as something that is full of problems and it is referred to as cruel. The metaphor describes the poverty-stricken situation of shanty town people who sometimes used to sleep empty stomach. The hospitals were not sufficient enough to cater for this huge public, yet the private hospitals were also very expensive for the poor people who cannot even afford to pay for their medication. As a result, different diseases were increasing every day.

In poem written by Robert to his mother, Naita, Shilongo in the narrative used a number of metaphors, “Mom, you were a river of sweet water where I wet my heart when it was dry” (Shilongo, 2013). Robert referred to her mother as a river with fresh water. In fact, he talked about the love and care he used to get from his mother, “You were a tree with good shade where I rested when the sun was burning me. You were the cup of milk that nourished my soul. You were a tractor that could plough, sow and harvest” (Shilongo, 2013). A tree with good shade where everyone wants to rest. As for Robert, his mother was compared to a tree with good shade. It is for this reason that Robert’s love for his mother was unconditional, which cannot be replaced by anyone else in the whole world. Robert’s mother was also described as a person of people. Robert’s mother

was metaphorically referred to as a tractor. This is because she could do everything for her children as a single mother in the absence of her husband, who went missing due to war.

Contextual Meaning in The Other Presence

The title of the book, *The Other Presence* contextualizes HIV/AIDS. Nyathi uses the phrase ‘the other presence’ to talk about HIV/AIDS which killed a lot of people in Kwena village. Instead of accepting the fact that HIV/AIDS is real, the community of Kwena started believing in witchcraft. They did not believe that someone can die from diseases such as HIV/AIDS, cancer, tuberculosis, and malaria (Nyathi, [2008](#))

Contribution of Content Schema in Understanding The Other Presence

The content schema is used as a tool to analyse and understand the text of *The Other Presence*. Societal problems such as HIV/AIDS and immoral activities for instance witchcraft, alcohol, and self-enrichment are analysed for the better understanding of novel.

HIV/AIDS was regarded as something new in the village of Kwena, and the community considers HIV/AIDS as a taboo, therefore, people avoided to talk about it openly. Even though people died after displaying some signs and symptoms of HIV/AIDS, it is believed that death is always associated with witchcraft: “Now tell me, why do you accuse people of having died of witchcraft when you know very well that they died of HIV and AIDS?” (Nyathi, [2008](#)). Nyathi’s *The Other Presence* was written during the time when HIV/AIDS was a predominant issue which was severely killing people.

Witchcraft is one of the content schemas appearing in Nyathi’s *The Other Presence*. Elder Sinvula in the novel was sick and tired of being accused of bewitching his nephew, Akapelwa, Ma Simanga’s husband, and other four children. Ma Simanga’s husband died in a car accident with the Toyota pickup that he had recently bought. “But why would you think a man who died in a car accident was killed by his own brother?” (Nyathi, [2008](#)). Regardless of the fact that Elder Sinvula’s brother died in a car accident, Elder Sinvula was accused of bewitching his own brother. Witchcraft and other supernatural activities have been practiced in many African countries including Namibia. According to Nyathi ([2008](#)), “death was always associated with some kind of spiritual mischief by somebody. There was always a scapegoat” (p. 44).

Discussion

The Other Presence and *The Hopeless Hopes* narrate the societal problems experienced by people in real life. By reading these novels, the readers are taken to a suffering situations in the sense that the characters are made to suffer as a result of fighting for their rights. According to Glotova (2014), the background and environment for characters-formation are important casual-consecutive factors that are needed to be taken into account in regarding the mind styles of suffering individuals (p. 2451). Both characters in *The Other Presence* and *The Hopeless Hopes* were presented as distressed or troubled by the situation they find themselves in. Elder Sinvula was concerned about the painful accusation for being the cause of his nephew, Akapelwa's death, while Robert was concerned about the rising colonial practices around the country, poverty within his family and his brother's death. The content of these novels was based on cognitive stylistics elements and tools in understanding the stories especially when it comes to societal problems encountered in the individuals' daily lives. Intentions, desires, feelings, and emotions were a part of these mental process of a fictional individual.

The Other Presence and *The Hopeless Hopes* were a unique exposition of how regular abuse of human beings can lead to mental suppression. In comparison, both elder Sinvula and Robert were traumatised from life in general. Elder Sinvula's and Robert's "dream world" was difficult and dramatic which eventually made them unhappy. The death of Akapelwa brought tensions within the family. Mlambo and Kandemiri (2015) stated that "in African societies like the Kwena village, death is something that can be dreadful and heart wrenching. Death is everywhere and there is no country without a grave but it becomes an issue for concern if five children from the same family die unceremoniously within a short space of time, with their illnesses marked by the same pattern of symptoms (p. 55). It is important to note that Ma Simanga was refusing to accept the truth. She was adamant that someone is responsible for her children's deaths although she was informed about the cause of Akapelwa's death at the hospital. As mentioned in the novel:

It is painful to lose so many children and Ma Simanga deserves sympathy but to some extent she is to blame, for she represents societies resistant to the truth. Such resistance creates a great wall that obstructs and hinders any efforts in trying to curb and bring the

HIV and AIDS pandemic under control and through fiction, the taboo, and the subdued and silenced realities get coded in a form acceptable to the public sphere. (Mlambo & Kandemiri, [2015](#), p. 56)

HIV/AIDS was real, and one cannot avoid the reality. If the societies are to become resistant to the truth about HIV/AIDS, they would engage in sexual intercourse without any protection such as condoms or abstain from sexual intercourse to curb the spread of HIV and AIDS, due to the fact that they would believe that behind someone's death there is someone responsible for it. The society would not believe that a person can die as a result of a natural death or other diseases such as cancer and tuberculosis. According to Pasi and Mlambo ([2018](#))

This chapter is an exploration of the selected stories from the anthology *We Must Choose Life* which brings out the shocking and extreme violence in various Namibian communities. Thus, the stories indicate how this violence directly or indirectly contributes to children and women being infected with HIV/AIDS.

On the other hand, Omeregbe ([1990](#)) stresses that:

There are mystical or supernatural forces which defy any scientific analysis or explanation. These forces surpass and sometimes counteract physical forces. They can be manipulated by man and employed for both good and evil purposes as protection, prevention of calamities, cure of disease, procreation and bringing about sickness, death and other kinds of misfortunes. (p. 26)

Like Akapelwa, Robert became a victim of HIV/AIDS when he got involved in sexual activities with prostitutes in Havana. Alcohol and poverty made Robert to get indulge in sexual activities without prioritising his own health and care. He spent his little salary on alcohol which he was earning as a government police officer instead of supporting his family. Nyathi and Shilongo two stories worked as a way to raise awareness in the society. Mlambo and Kandemiri ([2015](#)) asserted that:

Nyathi through *The Other Presence* ([2008](#)), thus advocates for society to change their attitudes and accept the presence of the deadly pandemic. The fictionalisation of these “unsayables”, that which societies like the Kwena village is not prepared to dare say, thus get scripted and this opens up avenues for the readers to begin to conceive of meanings that cannot be openly discussed. By

accepting the presence of HIV and AIDS, the society gets to learn about the disease, know how it is spread and ways of preventing and minimising risks of contracting the disease. Society is made to view their current life from a different but positive perspective. That way, humanity can possibly gain absolute control over the pandemic and this pandemic by extension includes other ills and unsaid horrors like xenophobia, corruption, despotism, dictatorship and greed which still remain challenges in Africa (p. 56).

Supernatural powers and superstitious beliefs play a major role in *The Other Presence*. Owls, vultures, the whirlwind, and mating black cats mean a lot in Kwena community. Thereby, the readers mind are stimulated by the supernatural powers that took place at the funeral “On the issue of herbalists, witchdoctors and ancestral spirits, the terms can best be defined depending on the context in which they are being used and on individual beliefs relating to the matter” (Mlambo & Kandemiri, [2015](#), p. 58). Supernatural powers in the novel are therefore, often associated with the herbalists, witchdoctors, and ancestral spirits. This can be proven by the whirlwind, vulture and the owl, where people believed that those natural elements are associated with witchcraft. On the other hand, Shilongo’s *The Hopeless Hopes* reveals how Robert and other fellow ex-combatants gathered in Windhoek to hand over their petition to Honourable Zopa. The President’s house is being contextualised to a Big House, while The Founding Father and the former President of the country Honourable Sam Nuyoma is referred to as Honourable Zopa. The contextual meaning of the selected novels can thus only be understood if the reader of the concerned novel has the general background understanding of the society.

Another significant aspect of *The Other Presence* is Christianity. Mlambo and Kandemiri ([2015](#)) emphasised that Christianity came to Africa with the rise of the colonialism. Therefore, Colonialism became a form of oppression and subjugation like Christianity. Embracing Christianity to some extent indicates the admission toward the dominant religion which considered the African religious institutions inferior to the coloniser’s religion. *The Other Presence* was set in the postcolonial times when Christianity was lingering heavily amongst the African societies. This is the reason why herbalist and witchdoctors were still considered as heathen. In the novel Namukolo was presented as a loyal person toward her religious practices/church, her assigned duty as a deaconess and her comment in

defence of her Christian religion proves that African cultural traditions were inferior. This is so because Christianity like any other form of oppression brainwashed the converts and kills their mental capabilities slowly but effectively. In other words, Christianity destroyed the Africans, just like colonialism, but in subtle ways (pp. 58-59).

During the ritual practices of the deceased, spiritual leaders get opportunities to show case their talent of preaching the words of God. Their aim is usually to comfort the bereaved family with words of God, but for Reverend Guiseb it was a different story. The fact that Reverend Guiseb wanted to get money, goats, and chickens from the mourners, which actually makes their situation worse. His aim at the funerals was to gain personal benefits/advantage from the mourners to drain their wealth.

As presented in *The Other Presence*, colonialism is recreated in *The Hopeless Hopes*. Robert joins the guerrillas or military force to fight against South African colonisers. His father was assassinated by South African army force and Robert with other Namibians went into exile to prepare for the fight for the liberation of the country and its inhabitants. Although Robert successfully liberates the country, he suffered a lot after Namibia gained its independence from the colonisation. He was not recruited for years, and his hopes become null and void even though they had been promised that he would be considered first for any employment opportunity. Before embarking on his journey to Angola, Robert and his brother worked in Otjomuise which is now better known as Windhoek, where they used to work in a bakery. They were forced to resign as they were not getting paid timely by the owner of the bakery. Robert also suffered at the hands of Mr Smith, where he used to work without getting paid. A serious situation that pushed him to kill Mr Smith and to leave the farm was after realising that his own brother Kapenda had died as result of Mr Smith's lack of concern. He was tortured and traumatised by the death of his fellow farm workers as well as his own brother's death. Moreover, it was not easy for people to travel across the country freely. They were forced to carry and show passbooks at a checkpoint which separates Owamboland and commercial areas, which in novel is described as 'the red line'. All these evil practices depict the pedagogy of the oppressor and oppressed which highlight the colonial dominancy over the colonized subjects.

Education is one significant factor that has been emphasised in *The Other Presence*. Mlambo and Kandemiri (2015) stated that Nyathi is

cautioning society to be on the look-out for the type of education that they are acquiring, whether it is education for development or education for destruction. Education for development is education that benefits both the one who is educated and the society in which he lives in. Whereas education for destruction is the excess education that destroys the one who negatively uses it and do nothing for the development of the community. Nyathi therefore narrates the importance of education in the lives of her characters; however, cultural norms should not be seen as something useless as what Thomas thinks of. However, Thomas views about cultural norms did not respect his own culture. He was influenced by American culture where he had been studying for some years. Mlambo and Kandemiri (2015) asserted that:

Instead of Thomas being an educated member in society worthy of emulation and a role model, he turns out to be a laughing stock because he has allowed an alien culture and an alien language to interfere with his own rich African culture and African language. This brings to our attention the notion of mimicry which is the imitation of dress, manners and language of the dominant culture by the oppressed. (p. 60)

It is important for writers to educate societies via different platforms. It is for this reason that Nyathi through his novel, *The Other Presence* reminds society that death is not only caused by HIV and AIDS alone. Therefore the death of Ma Simanga's husband in a road accident and that of Chuma after being severely attacked by a python, make the statement as a reminder to society that death can still occur through other means other than the deadly pandemic (Mlambo & Kandemiri, 2015).

The Hopeless Hopes talks about corruption Salom Shilongo. They are using government cars while their own cars are parked at their mansions, especially the top government officials such as ministers. Some of those top government officials did not suffer while in exile while those who suffered like Robert are becoming more and more poorer. Shilongo informs the readers that the government is being led by greedy people that are aiming for self-enrichment. Robert stays in a slum and he is unable to afford a decent house like other freedom fighters. He is not enjoying the fruits of independence given the fact that he enormously contributed towards the independence of the country. Through reading the novel, it comes to light that the majoring of those that are currently enjoying the benefits of

Namibian independence did not suffer during the fight for the liberation of the country. It is also painful to see that Robert becomes a victim of alcohol and HIV/AIDS as a result of social frustrations.

Gender stereotype plays a vital role in *The Hopeless Hopes*. These stereotypical roles can be traced in the characters of Naita and Ndahafa who were treated badly by their in-laws after their husband were assassinated by South African army. Mbenzi (2018) stated that “gender stereotypical issues in Oshiwambo orature seem to have given rise to sex discrimination among the Aawambo. The Aawambo women are mostly discriminated against by men. The stereotypical issues are observed in folktales, in proverbs, proverbial phrases, lexicon, and morphology” (p.129). Naita and her children were left home without food, because her husband’s family members inherited everything given by the South African army forces after the disappearance of Naita’s husband. This forced Robert and his brother (Kapenda) to go to Otjomuise (Windhoek) in search for a job, for their survival and to support their mother and other siblings.

Mbenzi (2018) further stated that:

Gender stereotypical issues have influenced modern Aawambo writers to be biased against women and in favour of men. As a result of the traditional norms and values which humiliate women, men are not willing to allow women to hold leadership positions. The abuse of women which is reflected in oral literature, is still found in the Aawambo communities. (p. 135)

Based on the analysis of selected Namibian short stories in Elizabeth Khaxas *We Must Choose Life*, Pasi and Mlambo (2018) stressed that:

These narratives reflect the social death and traumatic experiences of many girl children in Namibia. In these stories the women and girls have had the courage to bare their hearts and hurts, and open their deep-seated wounds to the world. The analysis of these narratives clearly shows that there is an urgent need to take further steps to achieve the goal of eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl children. Though progress has been made in different fields, major inequalities persist, including harmful traditional practices, child marriage and sex slavery. There is a need therefore, to examine the cultural practices which do not favour the dignity and respect of women and children (p. 270).

Independence and liberty are an essential topic of study in Namibian writers. Before Namibia gained its independence, men and women flocked to neighbouring countries such as Angola, Zambia, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe just to mention a few to fight against South African army force in order to liberate the country. Robert is among those who sacrifice their time and energy to liberate the country. According to Fulkerson-Dikuua (2018) “approximately 43 000 Namibians went into exile, of which about 20 000 were children who were born in exile in various SWAPO camps” (p. 64). Today these people are suffering even after their independence. They have no better jobs. Their living condition is miserable and most of them are living in slums without water and electricity.

Conclusion

The current research aimed to apply cognitive stylistics and schematize social problems as narrated in the following novels: *The Other Presence* by Francis Sifiso Nyathi and *The Hopeless Hopes* by Salom Shilongo. This research provided a cognitive stylistic analysis to demonstrate textual insights which schematizes societal problems. *The Other Presence* and *The Hopeless Hopes* persistently incorporated varieties of cognitive metaphors, contextual meanings, content schema, and literary devices to schematize the social issues of Namibian Society.

The Other Presence as well as *The Hopeless Hopes* revealed how the authors used contextual meanings to talk about the schematized social problems. Nyathi’s novel title is a symbolic representation of “the presence of other” social problems. The other presence hints at HIV/AIDS which has been enquired as the leading social issue.

The study further revealed that the selected texts comprise of content schema which includes remembering, thinking and having a broader knowledge of culture. It is however important to note that both novels are based on schematized ill-practices in the societies.

The researchers’ findings on how cognitive metaphor explains mental problems captured creatively in the novels, the mind’s contribution to the analysis of contextual meanings and how does content schema contribute to the understanding of the two novels were confirmed. It appears that death is seen as a result of evil powers in most communities regardless of tribes (Kwena and Aawambo). The study also revealed that cognitive metaphor, contextual meaning and content schema usually have negative

consequences to the readers as the readers' mind suffer in understanding societal problems such discriminations, trauma, HIV/AIDS, gender violence, unemployment, corruption, colonialism and unfair treatment of people among other themes based on cognitive stylistics.

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