

Short Story Sentence Types and Complexity: Analysis of Magogodi Makhene's 'The Virus' and Arinze Ifeakandu's 'God's Children Are Little Broken Things'

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Abstract

This study performed a textual linguistics analysis of two literary works: "The Virus" (The VR) by Magogodi Makhene and "God's Children are Little Broken Things" (GCLBT) by Arinze Ifeakadu. The texts were intentionally chosen based on the authors' gender. The analysis followed Michael Halliday's (1985) language model. Each text was carefully read, with sentences isolated and recorded in an Excel sheet. These sentences were then classified according to Quirk et al.'s (1999) typology. Overall, the results show that, in terms of length, "GCLBT" was longer than "The VR". GCLBT used more declarative sentences, while The VR featured more sentence fragments. Imperative sentences, mainly in The VR, were also prominent. Both texts contained complex interrogative sentences, with a higher frequency, whereas exclamative sentences were infrequent. The findings suggest that the authors' gender influenced both text length and sentence variation, with the male author's work being longer and more structurally diverse. Conversely, the female author used more sentence fragments and imperatives.

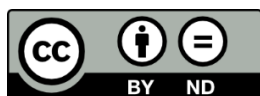
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Introduction

Language use in literary texts is said to be highly 'estranged' or defamiliarised in the sense of being counter-norm or rebellious to the conventional use of language. Fabb (2002, p. 47) and Clay (2005, p. 87) argue that a complex narrative text holds the literary form in a variety of inherently complex ways. This complexity is sometimes straightforwardly detected and described in the case of non-projection. However, another kind of complexity would be less transparent and less



readily revealed and explained, as it is projected, i.e., purposefully planned. As far as stylistics deals with the variation of style in use, the impact of complexity, whether predictable or not, increases in this regard. Complexity may reveal a great deal by implicating, sometimes the nature of the characters or hinting at the intended themes, at other times. Fabb (2002, p. 212) accordingly suggests that literary texts have two types of form: explicit and implicit, or generated form. The first type is represented in the explicit meaning of the narrative framework. At the same time, the second is defined by the meaning generated by the form of the literary work, which the reader must identify. Stylistic complexity, as found mainly in the second type, manifests in various shapes that often form hierarchical relationships.

There have been attempts to argue that a whole narrative is like an entire sentence and has the same kind of form as a sentence (Fabb 2002, p. 212), meaning narrative oneness resulting from the unifying effect of a narrative's structure, plot, characters, themes, and other elements, creating a cohesive and meaningful whole. However, in this article, the story is presented as constructed of many sentences, a type that can be formally detected. It manifests itself in sentence structure and sentence length, i.e. it works in tandem with the syntactic structure and the number of words in each sentence. Bellard (1992, p. 18) asserts that sentence structure is a very 'revealing aspect of life' since knowing about the structure of the sentence helps in describing a particular author's style; to recognise a character's behaviour; to determine whether this style is formal or informal; and so on. He further opines that when there is an explicit relation between the stylistic structure and plot, it requires less interference than when there is a contrastive relation between them, leading to a sudden type of complexity. Similarly, Jucker (1992, p. 99) believes that stylistic complexity may result from sentence length, which in turn stems from pre- and post-modifications represented in the form of noun phrases. He suggests that such a type of complexity requires a kind of inference behind the author's purpose.

According to Damova (2007), the grammatical constructions of English are as distinctive as those of lexis, and the complexity of sentences, which may result from long sentences, embedded clauses, or unusual word order, contributes to the meaning of the text. Wales (2011: 207) and Furlong (2014, p. 78) also support that stylistic complexity is an essential factor that gives rise to implicature about the sophistication in the author's thoughts, and the variation in syntactic structure can suggest and/or reflect the real

associations in the literary work. Sentence complexity is frequently a sign of mental complexity.

As for Sentence length, Gass (1985) asserts that there is a soul in the sentence and length is one of its manifestations. He comments that sentence length is one aspect of style that reflects how a language lives on printed pages. Hismanoglu (2005) highlights the importance of sentence length in literary works, stating that long sentences contribute to perception and interpretation in a way that enhances the suspense factor. Olson et al (1985) state that in English grammar, sentence length refers to the number of words in a sentence. Similarly, Nakagawa and Oquendo (2013) believe that sentence complexity is based on quantity insofar as it affects quality. They also suggest that sentence length, which is measured by the number of its words, is one face of a multi-layered complexity in stylistics. Whereas Patton and Meara (1987, p. 286), on the other hand, suggest that sentence length is one way of measuring stylistic complexity, which is done by considering the number of minor clauses about the number of main clauses. In this work, the first view is adopted.

Although literary writing is indeed a unitary, tailored linguistic construction, heightened by the imaginative experiences of authors and the craftsmanship of literary devices, it is also true that each construction bears its uniqueness. The uniqueness may be due to the political, social, cultural and religious schema of the individual authors. The quest for this study is to find out if linguistic stringing of literary works in terms of sentence types and complexity is determined by the gender of the authors, following Argamon, Fine and Shimoni's (2003) observation that the differences between female and male language use appear to be centred on the interaction between the linguistic actor and their linguistic context.

Empirical studies

In the content area of linguo-stylistics, specifically sentence-level analysis, a considerable number of studies have been conducted, most notably in the aspects of sentence type and complexity. The review below highlights some of the studies that were deemed most insightful to the current research. Abdurrahman (2016) analysed "A Rose for Emily," by William Faulkner (1897-1962), adopting Halliday's (1985) approach to analysing complexity in sentence structure and Lauer et al.'s (2008) approach to analysing narrative from a macro perspective, focusing on the story's acts. He noted that complexity manifested itself in the story's folds in many forms,

primarily in sentence structure and the overall structure of the acts. By applying Halliday's (1985) approach, he concluded that it is a workable approach for analysing sentence complexity, as complex sentences often carry the major themes triggered by the author. Most specifically, complex sentences (hypotactic & paratactic) accompany the speech and the actions of the main character in the story, Miss Emily, reflecting her complex character, complex thinking, and the complex life she leads.

Albayati and Hani's (2020) stylistic analysis of Hemingway's "Old Man at the Bridge" also focused on sentence length and sentence complexity. They adopted Halliday's (1985) model. It was revealed that the variation in sentence length and complexity helps elucidate the central ideas hidden in the story. It was demonstrated that linguistic structures are closely tied to the message conveyed in the short story. They provided an example of a sentence, number 20, which was the longest, with 52 words. The text analysis demonstrated that paratactic relations are 19 in number, the precise examination of which manifested that they participated in the slowness of the happenings involved in the short story. As for hypotaxis, the analysis revealed five instances, which served to increase the complexity of the situation at the bridge.

Prasanwon and Snodin (2016) explored Hemingway's "Big Two-Hearted River" based on a stylistic approach. They noted that the author deviates from certain norms of language and therefore established his own norms to enhance the reader's reading experience. It was established that Hemingway breached the grammatical standards of English and established his own norms of writing to enhance the aesthetic value of his works. The sentences were significantly shorter than the norm and are non-descriptive. Long, ungrammatical sentences were noted to depict only actions, while non-descriptive sentences conveyed the immediacy of the situation.

Puspita (2018) explored the types of sentences used in fairy tales and the dominant type of sentence used in these tales. The research method employed was qualitative analysis. The collected sentences were selected from fairy tales and then categorised based on their structure. The types of sentences were analysed using Noam Chomsky's theory, which was elaborated upon in a table and a tree diagram to illustrate the structure. The result of this research shows that twenty-five data points were collected from the fairy tales. The collected data show three types of sentences, which

are mostly found based on the table and tree diagram. The table and the tree diagram process prove that the meaning of the sentences can be easier to understand, and the content of the story is delivered successfully to the listener.

Muntamah (2008) analysed adjectival clauses in Hans Christian Andersen's "Fairy Tales". She found that: 1) there are 19 types of forms of adjectival clause constructions with the introductory words, relative pronouns, functioning as subject, 14 types of forms of adjectival clause constructions with the introductory words, relative pronouns and relative adverbs, functioning as object of verb, and one type of form of adjective clause construction with introductory word, relative pronoun, functioning as object of preposition; 2) the types of adjectival clause patterns are similar with the forms, because the patterns are described based on those forms; 3) there are 19 types of meaning of adjectival clauses with the introductory words functioning as subject, 11 types of meaning of adjectival clauses with introductory words functioning as object of verb, and one type of meaning of adjectival clause with the introductory word functioning as object preposition.

Ginting (2009) analysed sentence structure in Tennessee Williams' "A Streetcar Named Desire". He found that the play has four types of sentences: simple sentences, compound sentences, complex sentences, and compound-complex sentences. Tennessee Williams was found to have employed a variety of sentence types to make the play more interesting and easier to understand, thereby engaging readers. Elinaili (2013) analysed lexical features of language used by Libyan short story writers, focusing on adjectives. The researcher categorised the adjectives into various groups: adjectives of colour, physical adjectives, personal adjectives, emotional adjectives, adjectives of nationality, and others. Additionally, the study examined how the denotative and connotative meanings of the adjectives reflect cultural concepts in Libyan society and the authors' perspectives. Data revealed that Libyan authors rely heavily on adjectives to present both positive and negative images, as well as empowering and disempowering characters in their stories. Data analysis also revealed specific patterns in style, such as the use of colours black and white to create negative and positive atmospheres, and to demonise and romanticise characters.

Chandio et al. (2017) analysed Ahmed Ali's short story "Our Lane", focusing on how the author has used linguistic features like nouns,

adjectives, conjunctions, sentence complexity to portray the social, political, economic, religious, psychological and cultural conditions of the colonized natives of the Indian subcontinent in the wake of the British colonial rule. The story portrays how the colonial rule has deteriorated the people socially, economically, politically and psychologically. Ahmed Ali's use of adjectives was found to align with the established norm of using seven to eight per cent of the total text. In contrast, the median of 343 sentences is 13, which is shorter than the length of an average modern sentence, which, according to Ellegard, is 17.8 words. While rebutting the colonial narrative, he deviates from the standards of the English Language: excessive use of coordinating conjunctions and ' is evidence of it. Most adjectives of positive characteristics qualify for the past, whereas the adjectives referring to the present are either of negative or neutral traits. Thus, the writer recognises the glory of the past and condemns the disintegrating present and uncertain future in the colonised land.

The review of literature shows that sentence analysis in literary work has been extensively done. However, the studies were more synchronic in the sense of seeking to establish single-text peculiarities in the use of sentences or word classes, such that every text is seen as a unitary case study, an independent unit of analysis. This approach may not capture the richness in contrastive analysis of either texts or genres by a single author, or, better still, how two authors differ in the linguistic craftsmanship required for producing texts within the same genre. Therefore, the objective of this study was to determine whether the linguistic structure of literary works, in terms of sentence types and complexity, is influenced by the gender of the authors. It thus made a contrastive analysis of short stories by two authors, one from each sex.

Theoretical Framework

The current study was guided by the theory of Literary linguistics, which, according to Fabb & Halle (2008), is concerned with understanding how literary texts use language, focusing on the formal aspects of literary texts and their relationship to the formal features of language. Language is the medium of literary texts, and the formal elements of these texts - such as metre or genre - are in part enabled by using this medium. To understand regularities in the formal aspects of literary texts, literary linguistics research examines regularities in linguistic form and how literary form utilises linguistic form. It has thus been successful in accounting for kinds

of verbal art that belong to specific traditions and are strongly regulated. For example, metrical verse has been explored by generative phonological theory, with regularities across traditions and languages accounted for in terms of linguistic theory.

According to Sivapurapu and Madhavi (2018), when considering the components that make up literature, it can be viewed as an artistic creation; this is why it is sometimes referred to as a form of verbal art. Like how a picture is made up of many colours and contours, literary discourse is made up of several linguistic components. Just like a picture consists of many colours and contours, literary discourse is composed of various linguistic aspects.

When narrowed down to the way an author arranges words and phrases to create sentences and paragraphs, shaping the overall rhythm and tone of the writing, scholars refer to it as literary syntax. The structure of the language used to convey meaning can significantly impact the reader's experience and understanding of the text. The key aspects of syntax in literature include i) Sentence structure, which encompasses the different types of sentences a writer uses, such as simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex, and how they are combined, and ii) Word order, which is the arrangement of words within a sentence, which can be varied for emphasis, rhythm, or to create specific effects.

Analysing syntax allows readers to understand the more profound meaning and impact of a text, revealing how the author's choices in language contribute to their overall message and style. The syntax is, therefore, the most critical aspect of linguistic form to the creative use of language, so it may lead us to a safe assumption that it has a vital part to play in linguistic studies of literature (Leláková & Belúchová 2020). Thus, structures in English (extraposition, existential sentences, pseudo-cleft sentences, passive, cleft sentences) are not at random because those structures have specific communicative implications.

Materials and Methods

The study was a textual linguistics appraisal of two literary works: "The virus" by Magogodi Makhene (a female writer from South Africa), published in 2016 and "God's Children are Little Broken Things" by Arinze Ifeakadu (a male author from Nigeria), published in 2024. The texts are both

short stories, and they were chosen purposely. The criteria for the choice were a quest for comparativeness in the authorship of texts, which involves gender differences. Each text was read through, and sentences were isolated and posted to an Excel sheet. Having done this, the sentences were assigned their respective type category using the typology of Quirk et al. (1999). Having been sorted into their respective formal categories, a re-analysis was conducted of sentence complexity within each category. Frequencies of occurrence were computed as well as their percentage equivalences. The results were then summarised in tables.

Findings

The findings are organised in two sections. The first section is an overall description, followed by a comparative analysis of sentence types and their respective complexity levels.

Table 1: Overall Description

	The VR	GCLBT	Total
Word Count	5,876	7,549	13,425
Sentences Analysed	586	635	1,221

The overall findings show that in terms of text length, “The Virus” (henceforth, VR) had 586 words while “God’s Children are Little Broken Things” (henceforth, GCLBT) had 635 sentences. Hence, the total number of sentences that were analysed is 1,221. This is indicative of authorial verbosity being perceived as a male trait when compared to women, as GCLBT, authored by a male storyteller, outnumbered VR by a female writer by 50 sentences. This concurs with Poynter’s (2018) findings, which showed that. In contrast, folk linguistics would suggest that females are more verbose than males; however, authors born in the nineteenth century showed the opposite, with male authors' fictional texts being more verbose than those of their female counterparts.

A similar study was by Jurnal (2013) on sentence length and complexity in selected short stories of Virginia Woolf and Katherine Mansfield. It was noted that the story consists of sentences of varying lengths. The shortest sentence consists of 1 lexical item, and the longest contains 96 lexical items. The entire story comprises 2,743 lexical items. Out of the total of 91 sentences, twenty-six sentences have a range of 1 – 9 lexical items only,

comprising 136 of the whole text. Significantly, twenty-six of these sentences are either direct or indirect speech. This suggests that speech presentation in this story is particularly expressed via the shortest sentences. The remaining short sentences are either descriptive or narrator comments. It was also revealed that 17 sentences are the longest in the text, comprising 720 lexical items out of the entire text. One sentence contains more than 100 lexical items. The remaining medium-sized sentences – those consisting of 10-48 lexical items each – comprise the greater portion of the text. Similarly, Karya and Mahardika. (2019) studied how long and short sentences show the story's pacing in Anthony Horowitz's "Raven's Gate." They noted that long and short sentences affect the reader's pace of reading a story, as they must contend with the complexity of the sentences and words used.

Use of Declarative Sentences

Defined as sentences that make a statement, provide a fact, offer an explanation, or convey information, declarative sentences were used variously as shown in Table 2:

Table 2: Comparative Distribution of Declarative Sentences Used

Complexity Types	The VR	GCLBT	Total
Simple Sentences	106	157	263
Compound sentences	9	34	43
Complex sentences	34	204	238
Super complex sentences	34	2	36
Total	283	398	681

Data from Table 1 show that there are 681 declarative sentences in total, with VR accounting for 398 (58.4%) of them. Complex sentences were used most prominently, accounting for almost 40% of all declarative sentences in both texts. However, the majority (204, equivalent to 86%) are from GCLBT, compared to 34 (14%) from the VR. Ranking second is the simple sentence category, with a total of 263 (38.6%) out of the total 681 sentences. In contrast, GCLBT took the lead with 157 (57%) simple sentences, compared to 106 (43%) from VR. The category of super complex sentences was the least used, with only 36 (5.3%) of the total of all declarative sentences. It is in this category only when the VR had more prominence in the use of super

complex sentences 34 (94%) as contrasted to the GCLBT, which has only 4 (6%) instances of use.

Generally, GCLBT was far more prominent with the use of declarative sentences than VR. Examples are:

- *The serpent's seed also spawned from the beginning, but from disgrace, which still marks the bobbejaan making themselves Baas nowadays* (VR)
- *Fingers wagged* (VR).
- *The water swam off with her mother* (VR)
- *He called you, twice, first to know how your day had been* (GCLBT)
- *I'm rehearsing my exam pieces* (GCLBT)
- *I hope I didn't disturb you.*(GCLBT)

Related studies include Saadia, Bano, and Tabassum (2015), who conducted a stylistic analysis of the short story "The Happy Prince." They found that the author of the short story used a rich array of sentences, predominantly declarative sentences and thus made the short story rich in terms of syntactic features. Examples of such sentences are: "He is as beautiful as a weathercock", "The happy prince never dreams of crying for anything", and "I am going to the house of Death; death is the brother of sleep". Similarly, Hartini (2012) conducted a syntactic analysis of Alphonse Daudet's short story "The Last Lesson," focusing on its sentence structure and sentence construction. The aim was to analyse every sentence in The Last Lesson story syntactically and determine which types of sentence structure were most dominant in the story. It was found that the kinds of sentence structures used in the short story were simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences. However, the most dominant sentence structure was a simple sentence as its percentage of occurrence was 41.48 per cent. This aligns with Hasan (2024), who asserts that in English literature, language not only conveys ideas but also exerts influence over emotions, identities, and cultural perspectives. In other words, the use of syntax in literature (sentence types included) can help to establish a particular style or voice. It can shape the reader's experience of the text by influencing their interpretation and emotional response¹.

The conclusion we can draw here is that the male writer favoured the use of declarative sentences more than the female one, in line with Naomi Wolf's (Baranauskienė & Adminienė 2012) observation of college student

¹ <https://literary-devices.com/syntax/>

writers that even the most brilliant women tended to avoid bold declarative sentences and organised their arguments less forcefully than men.

Exclamative Sentences

Defined as a sentence that is used to emphasise an idea dramatically and thus expresses the speaker's thought in a more emphatic way (Leverkuhn n.d.), the exclamative sentence was not widely used in the short stories, as shown in Table 3:

Table 3: Distribution of Exclamative Sentences across the two Short Stories

Complexity types	The VR	GCLBT	Total
Simple sentences	1	1	2
Compound sentences	0	0	0
Complex sentences	0	2	2
Super complex sentences	0	0	0
Total	1	3	4

As Table 2 illustrates, exclamative sentences were remarkably few, with only four (0.06%), three of which (75%) are from GCLBT, and only one (25%) is from the VR. As for the complexity types of subcategory, 50 per cent is a simple sentence type (25% in each book), while the remaining two (50%) were of complex sentence type, both occurring in GCLBT, suggesting little difference between the two authors. Examples from VR:

- *Jirre-God! I bite my tongue.*

Examples from CGLBT:

- *Come on!.*
- *How her voice sounded nasal, tired, and shaky.*

Rarity of exclamative sentences in prose is manifest in Omatese's (2012) syntactic analysis of George Orwell's *Animal Farm* to which, out of 11 excerpts that they provided, only 2 were exclamative sentences. These served pragmatic functions of communicating the characters' strong feelings, surprise, anger and disgust on the part of the animals that saw

Boxer being taken away in a slaughter van. However, some studies show the opposite. For example, Saragih et al. (2023) examined the types of English sentences based on function, including declarative sentences, interrogative sentences, exclamatory sentences, and imperative sentences, in the folklore of "Jack and the Beanstalk." He found that 73 per cent of the sentences were declarative sentences, 21 per cent were exclamatory sentences, and interrogative and imperative sentences each accounted for 3 per cent.

Sentence Fragments

These, according to Nordquist (2019), refer to a group of words that begin with a capital letter and end with a period, question mark, or exclamation point but are grammatically incomplete. When used rhetorically, they become acceptable as serve such functions as emphasizing a fundamental idea the author wants to get across to the audience by eliminating most words except the ones that carry the most essential meaning; catching the audience's attention and making an idea more memorable; and slowing down the pace of the writing by creating additional pausing with punctuation. These were widely used across the sentence complexity types, being at the heart of syntactic estrangement in literary writing, as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 4: Authors' Use of Sentence Fragments in the Two Short Stories

Complexity Types	The VR	GCLBT	Total
Clausal Type	117	74	191
Nominal Type	32	5	37
Prepositional type	18	0	18
Total	170	79	249

As Table 4 shows, sentence fragments were 249 (36.6%) of all sentences in both texts. The majority (170, 68.3 %) are from the VR, and the remaining 79 (31.7%) are from GCLBT. A clausal subtype of sentence fragment was most frequently used, as there were 191 clausal types in both texts combined, similar to 76.7 per cent. Out of these 117 (61.3%) were from the VR. Ranking second is the prepositional type, with a total of 38 occurrences, similar to 15.3 per cent, with the grand majority (32, 86.5%) occurring again in the VR. The prepositional type was the least occurring, as it was used 18 times (7.2%), and all in one text, the VR. In a nutshell, sentence fragments were

used most prominently in The VR when compared with GCLBT. Examples from VR:

- *Watching.*
- *Wearing that pale green pinafore with frilly shoulders, deep pockets. Stroking Pa's neck.*
- *Welcoming tits in my face.*
- *With the cheeky prices?*
- *Yes, my friend.*
- *Some Australians.*

Examples from GCBLT:

- *But he was so small, so fragile, you were dead sure he had never kicked a football.*
- *But the truth was, your heartbeat too fast when his head rested on your chest.*
- *Or like nothing.*
- *Little-little things.*

Similar studies include Nurhusna (2012) who analysed sentence fragments in the narration of the first novel of the young-adult science-fiction trilogy "The Hunger Games" written by Suzanne Collins. Specifically, she sought to investigate the types of fragments employed in the novel and their classification based on syntactic structure in the form of dependent-clause fragments and phrase fragments. The sentence fragments were further analysed for their use based on the context of their preceding sentences. The use of sentence fragments in the novel was noted to serve the function of creating emphasis or stressing essential points in the story. Earlier, Schuster (2006) examined the fifty essays in two volumes of *The Best American Essays* (published in 2001 and 2003, respectively) to investigate the use of sentence fragments by professional writers in their essays. To identify the fragments, he did not count any sentence fragments that occur in dialogue and did not consider imperative sentences, which are grammatically incomplete because they lack a subject, as fragments. After examining the contexts in which the writers use fragments, Schuster stated that there are a few rules for effective fragment use that these writers employ in their writing. Because of the effectiveness that the fragments create, he concluded that the value of sentence fragments should have a place and not be avoided in writing, as it could be a good writing technique to create emphasis. The use of phrase fragments in the novel's narration serves to emphasise

essential points in the story or create emphasis on a particular point, idea, or information that the narrator considers necessary or critical to the reader to know or pay attention to (Nurhusna 2012).

Noteworthy is the fact that GCBLT, written by a female author, had far more sentence fragments than the VR, in line with Baranauskienė and Adminienė's (2012) study of gender differences in the language of E. Hemingway's Fiction. These scholars affirm that women, much more often than men, break off without finishing their sentences because they start talking without having thought out what they are going to say. However, as Gallan (2020) cautions, there's no universal agreement that female authors inherently use more fragments and that some female authors, particularly those writing in certain genres or exploring specific themes, may incorporate fragments more frequently.

Imperative Sentences

Defined by Downing and Philip (2006, p. 190), as a sentence type that consists of the base form of the verb alone, without modals, tense, or aspect and which includes expression of command, invitation, suggestion, advice and prohibition, imperative sentences were variously in the two texts, as summarised in Table 5:

Table 5: Distribution of Imperative Sentences in the Two Texts

Complexity Types	The VR	GCLBT	Total
Simple sentences	6	4	10
Compound sentences	0	0	0
Complex sentences	3	1	4
Super complex sentences	1	0	1
Total	10	5	15

Imperative sentences are used 15 times in both texts combined. This is merely 2.2 per cent of all sentences, the majority of which are in the VR. Simple sentence types are the majority in the complexity subtypes of imperative sentences, as they occurred 10 times, accounting for 60 per cent in The VR and 40 per cent in GCBLT. The VR also had more sentences of complex subtypes, which were three (75%) as contrasted to a single

occurrence in GCLBT. There is no compound sentence in either text. Examples from GCLBT:

- *Don't conclude so quickly, he said.*
- *Give it some time, he said.*

Examples from VR:

- *Shoot him!*
- *Shut my ears, face in elbows.*
- *Tell him I'll write.*
- *Smell the cinnamon under her nails, lingering in her pores from the melkkos on the table.*
- *Turn around.*

In a study by Dudi (2015) on the use of imperative sentences in *Dead Poets Society*, it was noted that imperatives serve multiple functions, such as expressing command, invitation, suggestion, advice, and prohibition. Furthermore, imperative sentences demonstrate the speaker's power because when the speaker sends a message to the listener, the listener does something; for example, Keating's character commands his students to tear the book, and his students follow his command. Earlier, Kurniawati (2013) conducted a contrastive analysis of imperative sentences between English and the Javanese Language. She discovered that there are both differences and similarities between English and Banggai, specifically in terms of sentence structure and sentence patterns themselves. Imperative sentences in Banggai are generally more flexible in use; a predicate and an object precede some, while others are preceded by a subject, predicate, and object, and then end with a period and an exclamation mark.

Generally, Magogodi Makhene, a female writer in her VR, has used far more imperative sentences compared to GCLBT, a male writer. This use, as evidenced in the examples above, shows that the imperatives are more tailored as pieces of advice, requests and promises than commands. Gavenila, Arsa and Pasaribu (2019) observe that while some studies suggest female authors may be more likely to use interrogative or declarative forms for directive messages, framing them as less direct and more polite, others indicate that imperative sentences are used for various strategic purposes, including engaging the reader or achieving text economy.

Interrogative Sentences

The use of interrogatives, which generally serves an information-seeking strategy, was employed variously across complexity types in the two texts, as shown in Table 3.6 below.

Table 3.6: Comparative use of Interrogative Sentences in the two texts

Complexity Types	The VR	GCLBT	Total
Simple sentences	13	2	15
Compound sentences	0	0	0
Complex sentences	13	19	32
Super complex sentences	2	0	2
Total	28	21	49

Complex interrogative sentences are the most recurring type in both texts. In general, there were 32 complex interrogatives, which account for 65.3 per cent of the 49 interrogative sentences. Out of these 19 (59.4%) and 13 (40.6%) were from 'VR' and 'GCLBT', respectively. Examples are simple sentences that were interrogatives, ranked second, with 15 (30.6%) occurrences. 'VR' took the lead in the category, with 13 (86.7%) occurrences, as contrasted with 'GCLBT', which had only 2 (13.3%) occurrences. Examples from VR are:

- *What is that?*
- *What new direction is the government pissing in these days?*
- *Which Springbok is gonna moer what's left of the All Blacks?*
- *Who else counted for a Terminator?*
- *Who was them?*

From GCLBT:

- *Who was it?*
- *Why couldn't he dress in front of you?*
- *Does my story make you horny?*

In summary, while not statistically significant, VR by a female writer showed a greater prevalence and richness in the use of interrogative sentences. Examples show that VR has more exploratory questions while GCLBT has a mix of 'why' and exploratory ones. A study by Rayson et al. (2001) found that women writers use more interrogatives and emotionally

charged language, which may reflect different narrative aims or character-building strategies. Fludernik (1993) argues that interrogatives in fiction serve both mimetic (realistic) and rhetorical (reader-involving) functions and that gender may shape how authors balance these. In addition, Toolan (1992) noted that female authors may employ more interrogatives in dialogue, especially in character-to-character communication, possibly to reflect conversational norms associated with real-world gendered interactions.

Conclusion

The overall results show that GCLBT was longer than “The VR” in terms of text length. GCLBT also used significantly more declarative sentences compared to VR. Sentence fragments appeared most frequently in The VR. Both texts contained 15 imperative sentences, mostly in the VR, but neither included compound imperative sentences. Complex interrogative sentences were the most common type in both texts, especially in the VR, and neither text included compound interrogative sentences. Exclamative sentences were sporadic, with only four instances (0.06%), all in GCLBT, and just one (25%) in the VR. Overall, the author's gender affected both text length and sentence type variability. The male author created longer texts with more diverse sentence structures and a higher proportion of declaratives, while the female author used more sentence fragments and imperative sentences. There was no significant difference in the use of exclamative and interrogative sentences.

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