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Sesotho Personal Names as Epithets: A Systemic Functional Linguistics Approach

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how the epithet feature of the nominal group described by Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory characterized independent clause Sesotho personal names. These names were described as authentic social discourse that exchanges information. Their semantics of interaction displayed speech roles such as statements, demands and commands, as questions and as the exclamative. The aim was to explore how these epithet personal names structured with features of these speech roles give the name awardee's evaluation of the situation (modality) and context in which the child was born. They function as enacted messages pointing in various ways because these speech roles enfold the art of negotiating attitudes and through this art modality is highly incorporated. Data was collected from national examinations pass lists, admissions, telephone directories, media and employment roll lists from Public, Private, Tertiary and Orphanage institutions. Methodology is qualitative and it allows the researcher to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of meanings that people bring to them. It explores and describes the names within a specific context of Basotho and thus attempts to make meanings from the language users' view, not fabricated views. In this way it displays modality and the negotiated attitudes. These help investigate the "why" and the "how" of the people's decision making. The contribution by this article extends SFL-Onomastica relation and literature and opens up grammatical description functionally using material resourced from the speakers' creative potential. *It ensures contextual functionality of language use.*

Keywords: Epithet Feature, Nominal Group, Experiential And Interpersonal Meaning, Modality, Negotiating Attitudes

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1. Introduction

Personal names or onomastica belong to the nominal group because they are proper nouns and furthermore, they denote people. As it is the case with all personal names of Basotho, these names structured as Epithets draw their structure and function from the general basis of encountered experiences of Basotho adults. The adults, normally the grandparents express their experiences concerning the events around each baby's birth using any form and epithet formed names add to the groups identified and still to be presented. Further, they are, as with other names, based on resemblance of the ancestors and they are also clan based or depicting (though the clans and their totems shall not be discussed in this paper). It is worthy to note that the SFL epithet feature on Sesotho names does not seem to have been recorded in the literature of the nominal group and therefore there has not been any previous literature to base this study on. This is why the description provided is taken to be a renaissance.

Nonetheless, these epithet structured names are significant because they allow yet another interdependence of functional linguistics and onomastica already identified in deictic quantitative and numerative forms, they also display an added tributary flow of form-meaning approach using onomastica, social functions are explicated and thus the long-lived culture of (unschooled) Basotho is viewed from a different and probably new angle. The lexico-grammatical feature displayed provides creative potential to extend experience and history based language. They create what Eggins (1996, p.119) refers to as "a new sign, an arbitrary pairing of content and expression" This says these names are a semiotic expression. Personal names of Basotho are intended to deliver messages, normally, to the counter families (patri-lineal) particularly in the event of dispute or pain caused by the patrilineal family to the matrilineal family – for instance, with an out of wedlock baby or lack of observation on the rituals for the matrilineal family or the baby. Basotho



sometimes use personal names to share, with the present and remote future public their attitude and experience(s) about the patrilineal family's treatment to them. Since a personal name is a deeply inscribed message, the message is permanent even after the name owner's death because as Madibuile (1995) asserts, "a man's name is his possession until his dying day". Epithet names, as with other forms of names, reflect the attitude of the grandparent as the awarder since the biological parents name with the volition of the grandparents or when the grand parents have passed on. This is the cultural practice though it is currently compromised as parents choose to name their offspring and grandparents become spectators when the decisions are made by biological parents. The objective is to establish that Sesotho names bear the features of SFL epithet nominal group. The nominal feature of epithet Sesotho personal names is actually based on the logical structure of the nominal group which uses the head noun as its determiner. The names described in this article are expressed as epithets in their form. They function as propositions that say 'something is or is not' (Eggs 1996:177). They negotiate attitudes and enfold modality. Modality in SFL reflects how awarders evaluate the contexts in which these names were awarded and such are discussed in this article. Epithets share sisterhood with the deictic form and both are found in the nominal group.

2. The SFL Epithet Feature

An epithet is presented by Halliday (2001, p.184) as some quality of either an objective property of the thing itself or an expression of the speaker's subjective attitude towards the 'Thing'. Halliday (2001, p.184) explains that in Systemic Functional Linguistics 'Thing' may represent a 'noun, a phrase or a clause'. It belongs to the nominal group. Objectivity marks experiential function or meaning whereas subjectivity takes the interpersonal meaning. Experiential function is also noted as ideational and these are noted as meta-functions by Halliday.

Halliday (2001, p.xv) suggests that "all languages are organized around the ideational or reflective and interpersonal or active kinds of meaning or meta-functions." He clarifies that meta-functions are manifestations in the linguistic system of three very general purposes which underlie all uses of language. He further presents that the experiential or ideational function is an experience. The Interpersonal function, on

the other hand, takes care of the social interaction between speakers within the same speech community with all the general features of the language in question – sounds, words, phrases, sentences, utterances, pragmatic entities observed and considered from the same view point by participants and observers. As participants interact, interpersonal function is inevitable.

In relation to interpersonal epithets Halliday explains that most of them "are adjectives of size, quality and age" and with such, it is newly observed that this feature is found in the personal names of Basotho as will be discussed. It was observed that these epithet characteristics are noted in the description of the Adjective by the formalist analysts of Sesotho grammar (cf. Guma 1971, p.101-104) and it is interesting that the grammar of Sesotho has features that can also be described from the SFL view.

A further note to make is that SFL epithets are non-finite or verbless because they do not have an active verb in their structure and they are also non-specific. This verbless feature is also shared by Sesotho grammarians such as Guma (1971, p.160), Doke and Mofokeng, (1967, p.328) and Makara and Mokhathi (1992, p.45) as well as the subsequent authors who have actually rewritten Guma's version using Sesotho language. That is to say that presentations of the grammar of Sesotho by the subsequent writers, is more of a translation of Guma's work with some modifications not so significant than a new contributions. They continue a de-contextual description of Sesotho grammar despite Eggs, (1996, p.177) explanation that epithets in SFL indicate quality of information and attitude. This feature was noted in the function of these Sesotho names as propositions that may be affirmed or denied. Propositions are defined by Eggs (1996, p.177) as "something that can be argued in a particular way and it can be affirmed or denied". Added to Eggs note is a further note by Martin and Rose (2007, p.15) who claim that epithets further negotiate either positive or negative attitudes. The attitudes display the name awarder's evaluation of the birth situation and such is noted as modality. In this article, modality comprises the context in which the child was born as it has been used to investigate the "why" and the "how" of the awarder's decision making. It tells the story of the actual and possible socio-culturally enfolded experiences of the awarder in relation to the child's birth. The names display an independent clause feature

and therefore forward completeness of form and meaning. Halliday (2001, p.184) allots that epithets that mark size, quality and age are interpersonal epithets. This view was confirmed by these names because they are used by awarders to express information about people they are related with. This explanation is a new dispensation of SFL epithet feature in relation to the Sesotho names to be described in this article.

3. Sesotho Personal Names with Epithet Feature

In the analysis of Sesotho personal names with an independent clause structure, Mokhathi-Mbhele (2014, p.110) discusses Sesotho names with the epithet feature. These epithets describe the Subject in the nominal group. They bear the features of a descriptive word class, that being the Adjective. Such Sesotho personal names bear a non-finite or verbless structure, and such are non-specific propositions. Eggins (2004, p.271) explains that verbless structures do not contain a verb of 'saying or 'doing'. In this way they are non-specific thus the action depicted is 'infused'.

An example is the name:

1. *Tabalingata* [tabadiŋata] 'there is too much/a lot of information'.

The Subject is *Taba* 'news or information' and it is the contracted form of *Litaba* 'news or information' and *ngata* 'too much' or 'a lot of or 'too many' reflects non-specific size or amount. The accurate translation in this case is 'too much'. The name *Tabalingata* is an affirmed proposition that has objectively expressed judgment of the awarder and it is a non-finite because it does not have a sign of a verb in its structure. The awarder is objective because as this statement portrays evaluation of matters, it is dependent on context.

This non-specific feature advocates that the structure is an infused form. Eggins (2004:271) explains that infused forms occur in the case when speakers use a clause that does not contain a verb of saying or thinking, in the logico-semantics of quoting and reporting speech and thoughts. Such logico-semantics use any of their many synonyms to solicit a projection relationship. This observation unearths Dahl's preferred style of dialogue, (in Eggins 2004:274) in which he prefers not to use the simple verb 'say' but to infuse the projecting verb with meanings about the manner in which something is said or discussed and oral discussion is Basotho's main delivery route of information of the issues around the newly born babies. Eggins clarifies that the

use of infused forms is Dahl's strategy to assist inexperienced readers to decode the attitudes and emotions of characters correctly as it happens with these epithet names.

It was further noted that it is an infused form that contains the logico-semantics of quoting and reporting speech and thoughts, the verbless *ngata* enfolds the explicit clause of 'talking' or 'speaking' noted as 'say' or 'think' as information is normally 'spoken' or 'thought' about. The name is a report of information 'heard' or 'thought about' and thus it qualifies to be an epithet.

This name *Tabalingata* 'a lot of or too much information' also reflects the subjective attitude of the awarder because in his/her view information that he/she did not anticipate would come out has leaked. He/she is concerned and worried that more than expected is in the public yet it was not the awarder's intention. Identification of attitude in this name suggests that Sesotho names expressed as epithets negotiate attitudes. Martin and Rose (2007, p.8) subdivide attitude into positive and negative attitude. They further present that there is specific attitude and there is non-specific attitude. As noted that *Tabalingata* is verbless, it is interesting that though verbless feature may be non-specific, the objective property and the subjective attitude in this name are context specific. This observation confirms the systemic view that "grammar is non-arbitrary" (Halliday 2001:xii). The observation reflects in this name as a declarative independent clause used with a specific meaning within a specific context.

The information is subjectively affirmed as 'too much' because the awarder did not want information that goes beyond his/her determination. His/her judgment says the information (known) at hand about the baby has surpassed his/her measurement or limits probably because he/she lacked specific facts about the actual amount of information. The awarder is concerned and worried about these limits but is not able to pin-point the specific facts that lead to this decision. The lack may result from the massive quantity of points which the awarder prefers to present in non-specific terms. The awarder is actually reporting or tabling his or her view about the discussed information in the community.

The epithet *ngata* 'a lot' or 'too much' is the guiding and determining element into the meaning of the name structure in



context. It indicates quality of information and attitude assumed by the awarder. It is non-specific because it cannot be specifically rated. This name submits to Halliday's (2001:184) view that the objectivity marks experiential function whereas the subjectivity takes the interpersonal meaning because the awarder experiences the happenings objectively but her decision that the news is 'too much' expresses his/her feeling, emotions and therefore, his/her subjective powers. The objective and subjective functions interact in this name and such an interaction says Sesotho structure allows an interaction of the experiential and interpersonal functions of a single structure in context. The interaction occurs between the awarder and the audience as well as within the structure itself. Halliday and Hasan (1987, p.4) note that when there is interaction that displays com[lateness within a structure such an interaction is deduced as cohesion and it reflects in different ways.

As noted that according to Halliday and Hasan (1987, p.4) completeness of meaning is attained through cohesion it produces unity in a structure and they say that speakers of a language can decide, on hearing or reading a structure, "whether it forms a whole or is just a collection of unrelated sentences". They claim that the concept of cohesion is basically semantic because it has that semantic relation between an element in the text and some other element that is crucial to its interpretation. This other element must be found in the text to show the relationship of the presupposing and the presupposed. It may refer, may be understood in absence or when omitted, and may be replaced by another word. Such elements function as cohesive ties. In *Tabalingata* these features reflect as it is observed that there is reference of the contracted or omitted concord Subject *Li* [di] of *LiTaba* [ditaba] 'news/information' which duplicates between the noun *Taba* 'news or information' and the epithet *ngata* 'too much'. In *Tabalingata*, *li* functions as an anaphoric reference of *Litaba*. This kind of clipping is normal in the Sesotho language and Sesotho analysts subscribe to this fact with many examples in the nominal and verbal groups. In this name is also identified the features of either intra-personal communication because the speaker may be whining or quietly talking to self or it may be interpersonal communication because the speaker is engaged in a conversation with an audience

other than self. This view says interpersonal function refers in Sesotho names as epithets. This is a new observation to formalist analysts.

The name also bears ellipsis as a cohesive marker. The elliptic character of this epithet name presents that there is ellipsis of the contents that are said to be 'too much'. This ellipsis marks the interpersonal function because they relate the awarder directly to the news but indirectly to all who know the hidden news about the newly born as names are awarded when a baby is born. As Halliday (2001, p.xv) explains, interpersonal function deals with participants and non-participants, their statuses and their roles, their power relations. As this name is a comment, it reports the awarder's concern and the awarder seems to have the power to decide on the amount of information to be known to all. As a comment it is declarative and it thus advocates that SFL epithets display mood. The awarder is quietly interjecting to self and this leads us to another mood displayed as the exclamative. The name forms the declarative-exclamative mood and it supports Halliday's (2001, p.45) view that exclamative is found in declarative. Some elliptic names are enumerative as in:

2. (*U*) *Nthoesele* [(ōnt^həesele) ' (You are) rubbish'
or exclamative copulative:
3. *Lenna* [lenna] 'and me too' or 'and I'
or WH- interrogative possessive built with MOOD Subject presented as a Concord – possessive as in:
4. *Lebamang* [lebamaŋ] 'to whom do you belong?'
descriptive with Subject Noun-possessive WH- interrogative adjunct such as:
5. *Ngoan'amang* [ŋwanamaŋ] 'the child of who?' > 'whose child?'
6. *Mor'amang* [mōramaŋ] 'the son of who?' > 'whose son?'
or descriptive with Subject concord-possessive WH- adjunct as in:
7. *Kemang* [ke maŋ] 'I am who?' which is 'who am I?'
8. *Umang* [ōmaŋ] 'you are who?' which is 'who are you?'
9. *Ke'ng* [ke:ŋ] 'it is what?' which is 'what am I? LLH or 'what is it?' HHL
or exclamative locative such as:
10. Tšoenetooe 'you monkey!'
or exclamative derogation such as:
11. Kobothisupeng 'stick on blanket'
or declarative response as in:
12. Kemong [kemōŋ] 'I am alone'

13. *Esaleeena* [esalejéna] ‘it remains the same’ or literally ‘still the same’

14. *Haseletho* [haselet^ho] ‘there is nothing wrong’ ie ‘there is no reason’ or ‘it is nothing’ LHHH;

All the exemplified names are verbless and they denote quality and thus they qualify to be epithets of quality. They have unearthed a new observation for both the formalists and systemic linguists that the SFL epithet can build various mood systems, form non-finite structures using the WH-interrogative, locative circumstantial, mingle declarative with exclamative mood, display verbless negative polarity as in *Haseletho*, and they can use the pronoun as a nominal complement as in *Esaleeena* where *eena* ‘him/her’ is the pronoun complement. The bracketed ‘you are’ in (*U*) *Nthoesele* is ellipsed and this feature confirms that ellipsis as a cohesive device occurs in epithet Sesotho names. This ellipsis indicates annoyance portrayed by the speaker who in this case is the name awarder. There is also ellipsed information in *Lenna* which describes the inclusion of the speaker in relation to the matter in discussion which is not spelled out but understood by the target audience. It has ‘I’ as the nominal complement. Guma (1971, p. 54) notes that such a structure is termed a Copulative formed from a subject concord followed by a verbless base which in this case is a pronoun *nna* ‘I’. The structure is that of Conjunction-Complement > *Le-nna*. This structure is a new observation in the description of Sesotho grammar because Guma (1971, p.56) uses the conjunction *le* to form an Associative Copulative but a new observation is that the conjunction *Le* ‘and’ can form SFL epithets. SFL unearths its capability as a Conjunctive adjunct. In SFL, as presented by Eggins (1996, p. 169) a Conjunctive Adjunct is a textual adjunct “expressed by conjunctions, (that) functions to provide linking relations between one clause and another”. The forms related in this name include the ellipsed first speaker and *nna* ‘I’, a pronoun which functions on behalf of the second speaker noun.

An interesting explanation of SFL which concurs with that of Sesotho grammar is that conjunctive adjuncts “...typically occur at the beginning of the clause but they can occur at other points” (Eggins, 1996, p.169) and Sesotho grammar clarifies the middle as that other point. A directly corresponding note from Eggins (1996, p.169) about conjunctive adjuncts is that they express the logical meanings of

elaboration, extension and enhancement...”. *Lenna* is actually an elaboration or extension of the second speaker that agrees with the first speaker’s ellipsed information in discourse. The second speaker who responds by saying *Lenna* presents a response that completes the message initiated by the first speaker.

The name *Lenna* ‘me too’ or ‘and I’ is a text that completes meaning with “a unified whole” sense and it is contextual in the discourse going on. It indicates that the awarder is conversing with the audience may be proudly that he or she has finally got his or her desire – the baby - and he or she has the reason to be positive and jubilate. This is because normally this clause is uttered with excitement regardless of whether the awarder’s modality or evaluation expressed says ‘something is or something is not’. The name is a response that confirms a co-textual declarative. A new observation not shared earlier is that the pronoun functions as a nominal complement in the formation of SFL epithets of quality that expresses the function of excitement.

Esaleeena ‘still the same one’ as an additional epithet that ends with a pronoun as nominal complement denotes repetition of the aforementioned person whose sex has been duplicated in this family. *Eena* ‘him/her/one’ introduces another cohesive tie known as substitution. In this tie a pronoun replaces the original noun and in this name *eena* has replaced an unspecified person. It expresses the quality referred to in context. As the baby is the same sex as that already experienced, the awarder is ‘fed up’ as this same sex of the newly born stretches that of elders and not the expected different one. *Eena* is an unspecified but understood substitute of the noun.

In the case of the name *Keeena* [keyéna] (LLH) ‘I am the one or him/her’ or [kéyéna] ‘it is him/her’(HHL); there is an observation that tone, which Guma (1971, p.23) claims is a crucial element in Sesotho as an African language is evident even in epithets. This is a new observation in the description of SFL epithets. The initial tone displays pride of the speaker and such is actually the name awarder who presents his/her pride as if it is the baby who swanks. Eggins (2004, p. 274) notes that this feature is a ‘tint’ and it refers to the speaker presenting information as though it is the presented by the indicated baby.

The LLH toneme set has an objective character of assessment of events. This toneme displays quality epithet name as it is



an assessment of events. The awarder's evaluation here says the counters undermine him/her and therefore he/she wants to prove to him or herself a sense of autonomy and confidence in self. There is an element of emphasis implicit in the articulation and this affirms that the awarder is actually the one speaking as though he/she is the name owner yet the name belongs to the baby. This act reveals that the awarder's major intention is to make sure that the counters refrain from their demeaning attitude and deter others from undermining him/her. He/she affirms that 'something is' and that 'something' is the baby. These names have the various syntactic categories as their complements and these are additional to the claimed nominal complement presented in SFL discussions. The new observation is that the non-finite can function in an epithet as a complement.

Furthermore, it is worthy to remember that every name has a surname and Mokhathi-Mbhele (2014, p.99) discovered that a surname may be a complement in the name-surname pattern. Eggins (1996, p.163) defines a Complement as a non-essential participant in the clause that is somehow put to effect by the main argument of the proposition. She continues that it "typically" belongs to the nominal group. Complement is noted by Eggins (1996, p.164) as being in different forms. It is interesting that Sesotho personal name epithets can take the nominal complements as surnames as its sister, deictic does, and even extend their number as in the example:

15. *Keeena Phahamane* 'I am | the topmost' LLH | HHHH

It is he/she | the topmost' HHH | HHHH

Complement in this name comprises the noun *Phahamane* which means 'the senior or socially high status person'. It shows social status. This reflects Eggins' (1996, p.163) view that a complement may be a nominal. The name in full means 'I am | the lifted one or the boss'. There is emphasis of the social status in which the awarder boasts. It enfolds an element of conflict that can be tapped and such would normally be caused by a jeer from the counters which cynically labeled the awarder "the lifted" one. With this name, the awarder returns the sarcasm fearlessly by confirming the sarcasm using the confirmation structure *Keeena* 'I am'. Actually, it functions as a second complement to the non-finite complement, *eena* 'him/her' already discussed. Tone may differentiate meaning

because LLH marks the declarative and it provides information whereas the question HHL would elicit information. Thus the name can either be a declarative or an interrogative though still an epithet. Whether declarative or interrogative, the name-surname pair marks a haughty character of the awarder. A new observation in systemic and formalist descriptions that brings up mood, in the form of declarative and interrogative, into the epithet feature is presented by this description.

The complements *letho*, *mang*, *'ng* and *esele* are directly non-specific as they cannot be measured distinctively. However, *nna* 'I' and *eena* 'he or she' are specific on their own as the first and third person singular respectively. A new observation is that they introduce us to the feature of number and person in the SFL epithets as non-finite or verbless name structures. This observation suggests new information to SFL that epithets, with their verbless character can also be built from specific quality bases. This says quality epithets can be both non-specific and specific. All these epithets bring up a further new observation in the description of Sesotho linguistics that these names are interpersonal epithets expressed as adjectives of quality and are derived from various syntactic categories.

With *Lebamang* the possessive is expressed as a WH- adjunct. Sesotho analysts present such a structure as a qualificative and it is marked in *bamang* 'whose?' *mang* 'who?' and *'ng* 'what?' It enquires information about the quality of people aligned with those asked, it is verbless and non-specific as *mang* 'who?' seeks enlightenment though in the direction of humanity. A name such as *Ngoanamang* 'whose child' is another new note that says epithets can enjoy the liberty to project a message with either a noun as in *ngoana* 'child', *Tšoene* 'monkey' as in *Tšoenetooe* 'you monkey!', a subject concord SC 'you(singular and plural respectively, I' as in *U* from *Umang* 'who are you?', *Le* in *Lebamang* 'whose are you?', *Ke* in *Kemang* 'who am I?'. The SCs form the MOOD-Subjects and they function as the nub of the message to the audience. A further new observation for description of Sesotho is that some of the WH-adjunct quality epithet names can form a pattern. Examples comprise the WH- pattern such as:

16. *Umang* [Umang] 'who are you?'

75. *Kemang* [Kemang] 'who am I?'

18. *Lebamang* [Lebamang] 'to whom do you belong?'

19. *Rebamang* [Rebamang] ‘to whom do we belong?’

where the structures are initiated with a subject concord (SC). Others even present consecutive SCs in one structure as in *Le-ba* found in *Lebamang?* and *Re-ba* as in *Rebamang?* The SCs are person-number specific but they produce non-specific meanings because though *Le* ‘you (pl)’ and *Re* ‘we’ specifically denote second person plural and first person plural respectively, they do not give a specific limit of the number of elements referred to. The understanding portrayed says ‘more than one’ and it is therefore, non-specific.

The discussions above make us realize a further observation that epithets, verbless as they are, display the character of number. This is because the LLH presents the awarder (in the place of the baby) as referring to self as first person singular *Ke* whereas HHL would refer to the awarder (as though it is the baby) as third person singular. Both reflect as affirming propositions but LLH is positive and the HHL, expressed as an interrogative has a negative impact of an insult or ridicule. It would be a response move based on heated emotions between the awarder and the counters. The awarder would be responding to a ‘middle man’ not the direct addressees. Halliday (2001, p.185 and p.214) refers to epithets that use the ‘middle man’ as epithet adjectives because they are derived basically from the family of adjectives. They are descriptive as adjectives are but as noted Sesotho grammarians refer to this character as Copulatives. A new observation in this case is directed to the grammar of Sesotho which does not view structures such as *Keeena* as an epithet as SFL does. To both SFL and the formalist grammars it is a new observation that pronoun can form an epithet in the field of onomastica because it has not been raised earlier in relation to Sesotho language.

An additional feature that is new with epithets comprises verbless interrogatives that commence with ‘Thing’ as a noun such as:

20. *Mothomang* ‘what (kind of a) person?’,

21. *Ngoanamang* ‘whose child?’,

22. *Moramang* ‘whose son?’ and

23. *Morenakemang* ‘who is the chief?’.

These names add to the WH- adjunct structures noted earlier but they project messages with a noun not a SC. With *Morenakemang* there is a concomitant co-occurrence of a noun *Morena* and a SC *ke*. The name displays an independent clause

and the view that Sesotho names can reflect as independent clauses was initially presented by Mokhathi-Mbhele (2014). The nouns are bolded. More comprise structures that bear the structure of the direct possessive to reflect quality. Other patterns comprise the noun *Ntho* ‘Thing’ followed by a specific syntactic category and the noun identified denotes ‘Thing’. *Ntho* is a personal as well as a family name among Basotho. As noted by Halliday (2001, p.184) ‘Thing’ may be a noun. Examples are the exclamatives that use a noun thematically as in:

24. *Ntho’amehla* [nt^hwameɫa] > [nt^hɔjamɫa] ‘as usual’

25. *Ntho’ateng* [nt^hwatɛŋ] > [nt^hɔjatɛŋ] ‘as it always happens’

26. *Ntho’feela* [nt^hɔfɛɛla] ‘just a thing’

27. *Nthoana* [nt^hwana] ‘small thing’

28. *Nthontho* [nt^hɔnt^hɔ] ‘dainty thing’.

These names are verbless and they form a pattern. Their basis is ‘Thing’ expected to be found in epithets. *Ntho’amehla* and *Ntho’ateng* end with the locative and temporal circumstantial adjuncts respectively. They denote “the usual” and normally this usual” would refer to the same sex born one after another. Both are of a possessive nature and that is marked by the ‘a, which is the clip for *ea* ‘of’. *Ntho’feela* is enumerative and derogatory and *Nthoana* is aesthetic and intimate relation based. Denotatively it marks small size but it used in this part to show the pattern formed by *Ntho* ‘thing’. *Nthontho* is a reduplicated form and it portrays a cohesive feature of reduplication. A reduplicated form denoted a repetition of a morpheme and it is a common feature in Sesotho language. These names are verbless and this qualifies them to be quality epithets as they denote the quality of ‘Thing’ from various perspectives. The possessive feature of these non-finite or verbless epithets is also found in:

29. *Mothooamorena* that being:

. *motho* + *oa* + *morena* ‘a person who belongs to the chief’.

In this name *Motho* ‘person’ is the Subject and he possessive is *oa morena* ‘of the chief’. The descriptive possessive feature is found in:

. 30. *Thakabanna* ‘an equal to men’.

This name is an ellipsed structure because in full it should be *Thakaeabanna* and the possessive marker is *ea* ‘of’. *Thaka* ‘person’ is the Subject and *ea banna* ‘of men’ is the complement. Names with the ‘of...’ structure confirm Halliday’s (2001, p.



) claim that the epithet is a sister to the deictic form of 'Thing' as this possessive feature is mainly found in the deictic form of the nominal group.

These are new observations that reflect the epithet feature of quality as *ngata* described quality in terms of amount, *nna* and *eena* in terms of one who qualifies to be part of the identified quality and *bamang* as the quality that indicates their origin, *letho* as the quality of non-existence, *thupeng* as locative quality, *tooe* as an insult or derogation and *esele* as a quality marker of difference or distinction. These features have not been presented in the description of epithets in SFL and thus they are a new finding even in the formalist view of Sesotho description because they are not described as epithets. As they reflect an interaction between participants they solicit an interpersonal function. *Haseletho* 'there or it is nothing' introduces us to another new feature of the negative polarity in epithets. In this structure the initial *Hase* [hase] is a negative polarity marker and it denotes non-existence. It reflects as a new view because such a structure is not commonly known and used among Basotho as a personal name.

More epithet names discovered and tabled below also display 'quality' because they state the condition of matters around the births of babies in concern. They are tabled in figure 1 thus:

Epithet	Meaning	Derived from	Example
31. <i>Likotsi</i>	They are dangerous	Noun	<i>Kotsi</i> > danger
32. <i>Lethata</i>	You are difficult	Adjective	<i>Thata</i> > hard
35. <i>Keeena</i>	'I am him/her'	Pronoun	<i>Eena</i> > third person singular
34. <i>Lintle</i>	They are beautiful	Adjective	<i>Ntle</i> > beautiful
35. <i>Lisele</i>	Different ones	Enumerative	<i>Sele</i> > different

Figure 1: Sesotho names as quality epithets

The names in Figure 1 bear the concord Subjects *Li*, *Le*, *Ke*, *Li*, *Li*. All are specific and with the exception of *Ke* they are in the plural number and this displays a new observation in SFL that Sesotho names with an epithet feature explicate both non-specific as well as a specific but verbless feature. These concord Subjects represent the noun Subjects possible in each case. A general observation, therefore, is that number plays a significant role in the expression of the epithet feature described by SFL theory. These names extend that new observation not mentioned in SFL in the description that epithet names display the quality feature.

The concord Subjects (presented as the first two letters) are elaborated on by the non-finite structures from various word classes (named in the third column of figure 1) and such are referred to as epithets. This

new observation introduces readers to the fact that the Subject and the non-finite feature can form an acceptable structure referred to as an epithet in SFL. Sesotho grammarians refer to such structures as Copulatives or non-verbal predicates. They are non-specific as well because the quality of the expressed conditions of being 'dangerous', 'hard', 'beautiful', 'different', 'the one' do not specify the degree of their expression. They also reflect cohesion because even though non-specific, speakers interpret what they hear or read from them meaning that reflects a 'unified whole'. A condition can be deduced meaningfully.

An extended new observation is that these names are all response moves that complete the discourse by reflecting the awardees' subjective decision making. They respond to an ellipsed initial move but they are acceptable as such responses occur in a discourse. This is because in Halliday's terms (2001:93) "ellipsis is presupposed from preceding discourse" and this is evident in these names as response moves. They connect an unheard discourse with the present dialogue. These names are a continuity of a discourse for they are responding to a former ellipsed explanation about a situation. In this case it is about conditions around the baby. They add to the declarative feature noted because they just provide information, may be, some of it or all was not known. In this way the names perform an interpersonal function because they bear a sense of a warning or creating awareness about issues pertaining to the babies. Such raised awareness is not specific but understood by the addressees who may be the biological parents or extended family. *Likotsi*[dikotsi] and *Lethata* have the function of warning the addressees in relation to the happenings around the baby. *Lintle* [dintlɛ] 'they are beautiful' is aesthetic and *Lisele* [disele] 'they are different' is only indication of a situation. These explanations serve as features that add to the functions of quality epithets that are describable using SFL theory. Generally speaking, structures noted as copulatives in Sesotho grammar function as SFL epithets. Epithets, therefore, can function as cohesive response moves to form a 'unified whole'.

Other name epithets use the locative as their base or complement and such include:

37. *Lethoko* 'you are distant' LHL

38. *Keteng* 'I am here' LLL.

These have an embedded meaning of a locative circumstantial but I place them with epithets because they share the form with the

epithet adjectives. The locative bases have added as new elements to those that form epithets. These names are non-finite clauses derived from a locative circumstantial *thoko* which means ‘distant’ and *teng* which shows the close proximity or deixis. Both are propositions that affirm that ‘something is’ because the awarders explicitly direct the message that ‘they are distant’ and ‘he/she is here’ to the addressees. The awarders experience the happenings objectively in distance because that distance is presented as “some quality of an objective property of the thing itself” (Halliday 2001, p.184). Their decisions that the addressees are ‘not felt’ in *Lethoko* and the speaker bringing attention of the presence of self in *Keteng* express their feelings, emotions and subjective powers. *Keteng* is a subtle invitation by the awarder that he/she is ready for anything, positive or negative. Basotho use *Keteng* in their discourse to confirm presence and assurance especially when matters are challenging to those addressed. Sometimes it is a response move in phatic communication as a greeting at any time of the day. These objective and subjective functions interact in this name. The awarder is confirming presence and readiness to combat any challenge on behalf of the baby. This name even has *Metsing* ‘at the water’ as its surname which functions as a locative circumstantial. It intensifies the function of challenge posted by the awarder. The name in full is a declarative:

39. *Keteng Metsing* ‘I am present | at the waters’

It is noted that the interpersonal function still reflects in these names because in *Lethoko*, these addressees are identified as *Le* ‘you’ (pl) form second person plural. The awarder presents *Le* ‘you (pl) at the baby’s birth because this is the time when he/she needs support of the next of kin. The addressees are distant probably even physically. The name is a non-specific decision because this distance cannot be specifically measured. Further, the awarder declares this observation with a whine to the addressees because he/she cannot communicate with the counters comfortably about the baby. The whine gives the quality of the awarder’s attitude. This name bears a negative attitude of discontentment by the awarder. It is noted, therefore, from the above discussion that non-specific epithets may be presented as quality and size in the form of amount as was sourced from the name *Tabalingata* ‘information or news is too much or immense’. This is a new

observation for SFL and the formalist grammars. However, there are specific size epithets.

Specific size epithets are formed from two main Sesotho adjective stems *holo* which means ‘big’ and *nyenyane* or *nyane* meaning ‘small’. *Holo* augments size and it is found in:

40. *Liholo* ‘big (things)’ LHH

which should be [dikhōlō].

41. *Baholo* ‘older generation’

42. *Moholo* ‘elder’.

‘Things’ here range from objects and statuses to events. *Liholo* is an affirming proposition and it is awarded mainly to express a wish, in this case, of the awarder in relation to the baby. It may also express ridicule to the addressee on the choices of acquaintance that he/she has or makes. Another name that marks specific size is noted as:

43. *Moholoholo* ‘ancient person’ or ‘ancestors’.

Despite expression of size, this name reflects a cohesive tie referred to as reduplication and it has reduplicated the size marker *holo* ‘big’. The name is a derivation from reduplicated adjective of ‘big’ size to a noun by being prefixed with the personal marker *Mo-*. The meaning displayed is that of a big size that goes beyond the expected limits. However, the direct meaning of the word denotes a person of the old times. The structure refers to a revered person, actually, the ancestor of a family or community. Such a reference is made to mark an enfolded indication that the person referred to had desired, revered attributes that need to be continued. In this way, the name is intended to summarize the valued, desired attributes possessed by the original name owner and this desire is to resuscitate the attribute the character of the original owner of the name. The name also displays the tradition of respect by Basotho women to their fathers-in-law. They are not expected to call their in-laws by personal names and this tradition allows them to devise a name that is close to the in-law’s real name. This could be why the awarder decided to name the baby with the position of the name owner.

Another marker of augmented size in Sesotho is *hali* [hadi] ‘enormous’ and it has formed verbless names such as:

44. *Ntjahali* [tjahadi] ‘big dog’

45. *Tauhali* [tauahadi] ‘lioness’

46. *Koelahali* [kwénahadi] ‘female crocodile’



Basotho use *hali* to perform a double function that either denotes a big or large size or feminine gender. The former reference is denotative but the latter is connotative and it enfolds the pride of the awarder in the character wished upon the baby. Even if the name is directly an ancestral resemblance this feature remains. The names bear the feminine attribute even though some, such as *Tauhali* belong to males. The awarders give them to display their pride in the babies. They display the adoration of their vision about the future character of the babies. They metaphorically compare the babies with ravenous, fierce animals such as a dog (hunter), a lion and a crocodile. These metaphors say the awarders see the babies powerful beings to overcome and succeed in life, they can combat any challenge or trespass for they deemed as those who will conquer impossible missions in life. It is born to protect what seems to be beyond the power of parents. Such overcome will be patiently awaited as the baby grows. The basic social function is pride.

With the name *Ntjahali* an interesting observation is that in daily discourse when Basotho call each other *ntja* that is it is a sign of intimate friendship, they appreciate each other and are proud of each other's capability, especially to face a challenge they encounter. The expression used as name by Basotho is actually used by current speakers who relate intimately but colloquially as "dawgs". However, lately it is used to denote just friends and it is also used as the most effective means to beg for favour or help. Negatively *ntja* is an insult. It can be used with this negative meaning to coin a name. Another form of verbless quality epithet name from *ntja* could be *Ntjanne* whose meaning depicts that the baby was born after a number of those who passed away at babyhood stage. It also refers, generally, to a child who was born after the death of an elder sibling and it can also be *Ntjantja* to mark two elder deceased ones. In this name there is an additional function of marking the specific number of those who preceded the currently named baby. Their stem is *ntja* 'dog' and they form a pattern that depicts a specific number of babies who died before the current baby. Their pattern is displayed thus:

47. *Ntja* is born after the death of **one** baby

48. *Ntjantja* is born after the death of **two** babies

49. *Ntjanne* is born after the deaths of more than **two** or **three** babies.

Ntjanne is a combination of *ntja* + *nne* 'dog + four' though this meaning is subsumed by articulation effect because it is articulated as [ntjanne] whereas without articulation effect it should be [ntlanné]. Tonemes remain LHHH, For the specific small size, name forms are borne from the 'clipping process/ and they include:

50. *Nyenyane* [ɲɛpɛnɛ] 'small' HLL

51. *Nnyane*. [ɲɛnɛ] 'small' LHL

The latter name is a clip of the former as the *e* has been deleted. The process can also be noted as a deletion process. These name forms refer to a small scale or being small in size. Sesotho grammar labels this *nyane* feature as diminutive and confines its description to nouns only. Note that as a name the /n/ is doubled but the meaning is maintained. *Nyane* is sometimes used as a terminal clip of *nyenyane* to express a small scale. Note again that Sesotho grammar does not correlate *nyane* with *Nyenyane* yet they denote the same character. *Nyenyane* is used as a direct adjective stem that denotes size and it is used to modify nouns. It is used to denote body size and these still refer to these references when used as personal names. In speech it may be clipped to the *nyane* form but it retains the function of an epithet. *Nnyane* also has an aesthetic connotation that may display some level of intimacy. When articulated, it sounds like the speaker entices the addressee to relate in favour of the speaker. As a personal name the awarder uses the name to build a stronger social tie with the speaker. It sets out an interpersonal function that ties speaker and audience together.

However, this discussion has brought a new observation that both forms function as diminutive epithets. The awarders use these names to affirm that the named babies have small bodies and such develop to be personal names. They function as descriptive epithets because they describe the size of the name owner. Note again that both epithets give size from the awarders' viewpoints but they are dependent on the situation. Drawing from my experience, I noted that *Nyenyane* refers to small size because I have a cousin who has always looked tinier than his siblings who have gigantic anatomy. *Nnyane* assumes the speciality of being a name when marked with L toneme in the last syllable. As names *Nyenyane* is HLL and *Nnyane* is LHL. Another example is noted as:

52. *Monyane* 'small one'

and a new observation in this case is that it depicts both the diminutive size

judgment simultaneously with the demeaning quality and both features mark the epithet. The name adds that fused feature of quality and size epithets noted with the non-specific names. This feature is just taken for granted as an ancestral resemblance yet from the name can be deduced the meaning of appreciation or ridicule. Another new observation is that the name has undergone derivational morphology because from the adjectival size marker *nyane* 'small' to developing into a noun formed by prefixing it with the personal noun prefix *Mo-* which denotes a person. This name is used as a response move in discourse where information about the elder and younger is in a family line. The respondent normally answers *Ke monyane* [ke mōjane] 'I am the younger. It functions as a comparative marker. It is interesting in this context that the *nyane* 'small' is specific in function yet as an epithet it is expected to be non-specific.

Ha may be prefixed to *nyenyane* to form *Hanyenyane* 'at a small pace/quantity' and it is used to form personal names in various ways. In one case it drops off *nye* and maintains other sounds to form:

53. *Hanyane* 'just a little' HHH.

Hanyane is commonly known and used as a personal name and it is either barely or never considered as an epithet. This may be because speakers believe that it is colloquial and prefer it to *hanyenyane* in formal use. The other reason may be that speakers divorce this form unaware, from the original form of the word. The clipping is implicit. Further, the divorce problem is due to the effect of tone because as an epithet, it uses HHH while as a personal name it reads as LLL.

It bears all the characteristics of the size epithets described as *holo* 'big / large' and *nyane* 'small' and one wishes to know the real context that led to this tonal change because it has hidden the real meaning. This structure is found in discourse as a response move that marks amount. It is still non-specific as no numeric mark can substantiate *hanyane* HHL. It is determined by context.

It should be noted, however, that this structure with LLH may be confused with the word not drawn from the size marker but which could be interpreted as a reciprocal verb from the verb stem *hanya* [haja] 'block, refuse'. The reciprocal form would be *hanyane* 'blocked each other'. This form does not refer in this description. It is worthy to present a new note that though not

mentioned by systemic grammar, tone causes a tonemic change in diminutives when used as names. The original forms generally bear H toneme but as names. They take L tonemes.

In Halliday's words, size epithet is not only an epithet adjective but also an attitudinal epithet and this is because it identifies a particular element by contrast with others. It is interesting that Halliday's observation is actualized with Sesotho names because the attitude of the awarder says the size is either big or small with connotations. The augments may be counted as blessings but diminutives may be complaints or may indicate derogation in discourse. The awarder decides that the referent is 'small' in size and this contrasts it with other elements. This attitude is identifiable in the epithet despite its non-specific character. It is non-specific because nothing in the word 'small' gives us the exact measurement or size. Note that besides physical size, the decision about size may result from discontentment of the awarder about an issue related to the baby's birth. It is important again to note that *nyane* as a common terminal in names that express a diminutive feature of the noun is inflected onto common nouns which function as MOOD-Subject. Examples include:

54. *Monna* + *nyane* 'small man' / 'baby boy' LHH + HL

55. *Mosali* + *nyane*. 'small woman' / 'baby girl' LHH + HL

These normally begin as nicknames based on the small size bodies of the babies but they would develop a reference to express pride about their being. At times, the awarders would be expressing how they feel and anticipate for the babies' future. The awarders may also be expressing a feeling of achievement for themselves by being blessed with the sexes they wanted. This is why the names express an exclamative mood in them. In other cases the diminutive marker is directly placed on the common noun made a proper noun such as:

56. *Thabo* + *nyane* 'small joy'

57. *Lebelo* + *nyane* 'light athlete'.

which would be awarded to twin boys. The diminutive is not condescending but marking the position of the twin in relation to the other twin. Normally it is the one born second or last of the two. The small size is explicitly presented in the epithet adjective *nyane*. In this epithet *nyane* 'small' is the awarders' demeaning judgment embedded hence the forms are attitudinal. It is important, therefore, to note that even the



diminutive expresses the interpersonal function and it is attitudinal as well. In cases where there are bitter relations between the mother and daughter-in-law the small size epithets denote derogation. Another new observation is encountered in the name:

58. *Kholoanyane* 'bigger' formed from *Kholo* + *hanyenyane*

Kholo 'big' is derived from *holo* and the 'h' has undergone what Guma (1971, p. 29) refers to a morphophonemic process. He explains that it refers to changes that occur in sounds of morphemes when other morphemes are added to them. In this change of 'h' to 'kh' the change is called strengthening. He clarifies that this strengthening may occur in the formation of noun diminutives with suffix *ana*. *Kholoanyane* bears in its structure, a simultaneous occurrence of the big and small sizes and in the description of SFL epithets and the grammar of Sesotho this is a new observation. Furthermore, while the other names are formed from nouns, *Kholoanyane* is formed from an adjective stem *-holo* 'big' and a small size epithet *-nyane*.

In other cases the small size epithet *nyenyane* is clipped to *nyana* in complementary distribution with *nyane*. An example of such a name is:

59. *Mothonyana* 'small person' from *motho* + *nyana*

This name is actually used in life to refer to a baby to show affection with the baby in its position. Parents use it to show concern and strengthen that concern with the possessive *oa ka* 'mine'. A name such as:

60. *Nthonyana* 'small thing' from *Ntho* + *nyana*

confirms Halliday's; (2001, p.184) claim that "An epithet is presented as some quality of either an objective property of the thing itself or an expression of the speaker's subjective attitude towards the 'Thing'. Basotho have 'Thing' as a personal name thus confirming Halliday's (2001, p.184) claim that "in Systemic Functional Linguistics 'Thing' may represent a 'noun, a phrase or a clause'. These words are further confirmed by the phrase names *Mantho* 'mother of a thing', *Rantho* 'father of a thing' which have been built with 'mother/father of + thing'. The name *Ntho* can also be reduplicated into *Nthontho* to express appreciation used in charming a baby. This is a new observation related to Sesotho names as well as to the formalist and systemic grammar. These features qualify these names as epithets formed from

noun in their MOOD-RESIDUE as the epithets form complements within the RESIDUE. One can draw a further new note from the description that these epithets do not only describe but they also measure in order to quantify either a noun or an adjective such as *Kholo* 'big' in a non-specific way as *hanyenyane* and its variants do.

Another new observation is that *ana* is a variant of *nyenyane* or *nyane* or *nyana* and it also forms names such as:

61. *Ph.oloana* 'caifer' from *Pholo* + *nyana*

62. *Tsejana* 'small ear' from *tsebe* + *nyana*

63. *Patana* 'small road' from *pata* + *nyana*.

The bolded morpheme denotes small size in structure and meaning. It also forms non-finite epithets of size as it is verbless. The size epithets generally mark diminutive but they function as epithets because they are verbless. In the case of names such as:

64. *Kotsoana*

65. *Téehlana* 'yellowish colour'

66. *Téooana* 'whitish colour'

67. *Téoana* 'blackish colour'

The *ana* variant still forms epithets but as a new observation and an additional function for SFL it marks feminine gender. However, though they refer to feminine gender they are functionally surnames in their lineage generationally and this means that they cover males as well in their umbrella function. We therefore establish that epithets can denote gender. They function as unisex markers. The names are formed from the adjectives of colour and they are made aesthetic and decorative as size epithets. The new observation for SFL and Sesotho grammarians is that size epithets enfold the aesthetic value in their interpersonal function. The enfolded meaning indicates the positive, appreciative elegant temperament of the awardees when presenting this interpersonal function because they make the names 'look' feminine and decorative as feminine are noted for their love for and beauty in decoration. The names confirm Halliday's claim that epithets have the character of adjectives. In these epithets there is a concomitant co-occurrence of size and quality again because *-ana* denotes small size that is expressed with an aesthetic attribute. The names still upholds that non-finite feature as well as their membership to the nominal group.

Another variant of *nyenyane* 'small/few' is *-ane* [ane] and it functions in complementary distribution with *-ana*. It

resembles the terminal elements of *nyrnyane*. Examples include:

68. *Leetoane* [leétwane] ‘small journey’ *tsela*

+ *e nyenyane*

69. *Pulane* [pulane] ‘small rain’ *pula*

+ *e nyenyane*

70. *Thejane* [t^hédzane] ‘small shield’
thebe + *e nyenyane*

71. *Tselane* [tselane] ‘one who likes to be in the way in small journeys – darts from close-by places’ from *tsela* + *e nyenyane*.

A deletion process has been applied because *e nyenyane* has been deleted in the final name structure.

These names directly deduce a small size and parents normally award them to female twins whose counter twins are males. This feature extends the denoted gender feature in quality epithets to size epithets. They are formed with a verbless feature. Note further that though they are taken to denote females they are surnames that cover generational lineages. In this way they cover both forms of gender.

However, *Leetoane*, *Pulane*, *Tselane* are feminine gender specific though with a small size marker. These feminine gender forms have corresponding masculine forms which pattern with them thus:

72. *Leeto* > *Leetoane*

73. *Pula (e)* > *Pulane*

74. *Tsela* > *Tselane*

Thebe and *Thejane* are both male directed so the *-ane* bears the small size feature in full as they mark position in birth as twins. *Thebe* is the twin born first and *Thejane* is the twin who came last at their birth. The interpersonal function displayed of the size epithets in this case is that size epithets may mark order of existence as these names mark the chronological order of the babies.

For the character of age, we have an example of unspecified past period *khale*’ which means ‘old’ in:

75. *Khale* ‘in the past’ or ‘old times’

76. *Rakhale* ‘father of old times’

77. *Thebeeakhale* ‘old shield’.

Khale ‘old’ or ‘ancient’ or ‘past’ mainly refers to a period unspecified but determined in relation to the past. This name may be assumed to be the awardee’s expression of something he/she foresaw coming but probably not exciting. It expresses some ‘bottled’ anxiety in the speaker because the encountered result referred to may have been long anticipated. Normally, Basotho use *khale* to indicate that they have been anticipating the current action which has a negative whim. In full, it

means ‘it happened as was anticipated long back’.

However, in this case there is a possibility of a lengthy anticipation of the baby the family is blessed with and the awardee’s anxiety may have turned into excitement. This is more of an exclamation and it presents the exclamatory speech function expressed as a response move. Thus an epithet can function with an exclamative mood. An interesting view here is that in the analysis of Sesotho structure, *khale* functions as a temporal circumstantial and not an epithet and this introduces systemic analysis to a new version for African languages.

The excitement is further expressed with a prefixed gender marker *Ra* ‘father of’ maybe to show that the boy is long awaited to take and carry the extended family responsibilities when time is ripe. The awardee was definitely worried in the direction of a male baby. The prefix *Ra* ‘father of’ according to Guma (1971:) refers to as a Compound or Complex noun which is formed by prefixing this masculine marker or feminine marker ‘*M’a* ‘mother of’. In such a name can be detected excitement of the same hope as that of *Khale*.

In full, *Thebeeakhale* is ‘an old shield’. In the analysis of Sesotho grammar it is classified under Possessive Qualificative and this is noted as *ea khale* ‘of old’. This marker tells us more about the period of the existence of the noun, which is *Thebe* ‘shield’ in this context. The name fits well as a response for the temporal circumstantial probe ‘when?’ It is difficult to place it as a move because it can be as initial as when someone uses it vocatively to draw attention in a greeting or be a response when one reacts to what has been said. It is an affirming proposition that denotes the addressee with his age, that says the ‘addressee is an old man’. It is sex specific.

The structure is an epithet because it comprises a noun *Thebe* and a possessive *ea khale*. It is both a deictic and an epithet because as a deictic it denotes the period of existence expressed as a possessive in ‘a shield – of or from - the old times’. This is its original interpretation. In function it is an epithet because it describes the relation of the referent with the period based on physical description and age. This is a new observation. Since possessive is classified as part of the qualificatives with adjectives by



the Sesotho grammar analysts this name should be referred to as an epithet adjective.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Previous studies on the topic have shed lights on various aspects of Sesotho personal names. Mokhathi-Mbhele (2016) examined how the quantitative and the numerative features of the nominal group described by Systemic Functional Linguistics theory characterized independent clause Sesotho personal names. It concluded that language users can use personal names to identify discourse elements, present grammar issues, disclose meanings beyond the clause and display attitude as a speech variety through [SFL] modality. In another study by Mokhathi-Mbhele (2020), it was concluded that “Thing” reflects the interpersonal function in the field of onomastica and thus extends and strengthens the newly observed intimacy of SFL-Onomastica relationship. In another related study, Letsoela (2015) examined the names of bus stops in Lesotho with a view to unveiling the factors that could have motivated the awarding of such names. Findings indicated that the names could be classified into descriptive, metaphorical, experiential and mythological. The study concluded that through the names of bus stops, Basotho narrate their experiences, emotions and belief systems, among other things. The findings of this study are also much in the line of these studies.

The features marked in these epithet names in the present study with their verbless character have a function exclusive to adjectives. This study has introduced us to the epithets in the nominal group and it is a new trend of describing and relating personal names with SFL. The findings confirm that quantifiers relate to Sesotho names as propositions in the nominal group.

This study extends the recently discovered SFL-Onomastica relation and literature. Recommended further research is directed to using SFL to describe personal names from other perspectives. Description of Sesotho names as epithets has brought up a new relationship of personal names or onomasrica and the SFL epithet feature, a relationship not presented earlier, even in the formalist description of personal names.

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