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## Sesotho Personal Names as Quantitative and as Numerative: A Systemic Functional Linguistics Approach

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### ABSTRACT

This study examined how the quantitative and the numerative features of the nominal group described by Systemic Functional Linguistics theory characterized independent clause Sesotho personal names. They were presented as quantitative and numerative dichotomies with distinct features noted by both areas in the nominal group. Their semantics of interaction displayed speech roles such as statements, demands and commands, and as questions (cf. Eggins, 1996, p 149-150). An additional new feature superficially mentioned by Halliday (2001) extends to exclamatives (p. 45). The aim was to explore how these personal names structured with features of these speech roles are described as enacted messages that exchange information; give the name awarder's evaluation of the situation (modality) and express experiences encountered at the child's birth. Enacted messages negotiate attitudes (Martin and Rose 2007, p. 8) and through this art modality is highly incorporated. Data was collected from national examinations pass lists, admission, Telephone directories, Media and employment roll lists from Public, Private, Tertiary, Orphanage institutions. This article extends SFL-Onomastica relation and literature. The contribution gained from this study is 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.

**Keywords:** Numerative, Quantitative, Modality, Attitude, Interpersonal function, Sesotho Personal Names

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### 1. Introduction

Personal names or onomastica belong to the nominal group. The names described in this article are expressed as either quantitative or numerative in their form. In Eggins (1996) words, they function as propositions that say 'something is or is not' (p. 177). They negotiate attitudes as

well and they enfold modality. Modality in SFL reflects how awarders evaluate the contexts in which these names were awarded and such were discussed in this article. The Quantitative and the Numerative share sisterhood with the deictic and epithet forms in the nominal group.

### 1.1 The SFL Quantitative

Halliday (2001) claims that the quantifying numeratives (or quantitative) specify either an exact number through cardinals or inexact numbers through indefinite quantitative. (p.183). These have a non-singular feature like the non-singular deictic and they are inexact in function.

## 2 Sesotho Personal Names as Quantitative

Systemic grammar notes that in the nominal group, along with the deictic and epithet adjectives, there are quantifying numeratives (or quantitative) that specify exact or inexact number. (Halliday 2001, p, 183) Though systemic grammar merges the two it is interesting to find that Sesotho names prove the functions and significance about the Quantitative separately from the Numeratives. Such names are:

- 1) *Botsangbohle* 'ask all'
- 2) *Kenangbohle* 'come one come all'
- 3) *Khesangbohle*. 'segregate all'.

Note that their structures resemble the deictic demonstratives such as:

- 4) *Lebuaajoang* 'what [kind of] talk is this?'
- and diminutive epithets such as:

- 5) *Letuma* + *nyane* 'you are slightly famous'

and the finite-predicators being *bua* 'talk/speak' and *tuma* 'become famous'. This says these quantifiers can be classified with the other members of the nominal group.

Their difference is that the quantitative finite-predicators lack SC Subject but end with a plural marker though this may not be deemed a general rule because in personal naming the awarders can be highly dynamic in structure formation. The names are built from a non-specific form *hle* which means 'all' and it has a non-specific deictic feature as well because it 'refers to those within the proximity'. Guma (1971) presents it as a

quantitative stem (p. 124). Note that it expresses members of a group in totality but it does not specify the required number. It is inexact, therefore. In its use in Sesotho it forms a quantitative when it is attached to a concord that is class, number and person specific. An example is the second person, plural number quantitative:

- 6) *bo* + *hle* = *bohle* 'all' [pl] HL.

In Guma's (1971) words, the quantitative "signifies all, the whole" and this marks inexactness of number (p.124). In Sesotho grammar the quantitative is expected to be preceded by noun in the singular or plural number because its function is to describe that noun. Thus Quantitative normally functions as nominal complement. However, a new note is that this quantifier can be preceded by a finite-predicator as evident from the names above whereas the preceding norm is a noun. In the cited examples we find as the finite-predicators:

- 7) *Botsa* 'ask' HL
- 8) *Kena* 'come in' HL
- 9) *Khesa*. 'segregate' LH

It is interesting that even these finite-predicators are both identified as personal names on their own though not of the quantitative nature. The resulting structures are:

- 8) *Botsangbohle* 'ask all'
- 9) *Kenangbohle* 'come one come all'
- 10) *Khesangbohle*. 'segregate all'.

In these there is a double effect of expressing the non-specific plurality. This is by *ng* and the quantifier *bohle*. The quantifier reflects the double effect plurality but in different persons. *Bohle* refers to a third person referent and *-ng* denotes second person plural. The implicit intention is to be numerical so that the non-specific quantifier has an element of numerating. This feature confirms Halliday's (2001) view that quantitatives are quantifying numeratives



and they specify either an exact number (cardinal numerals like ‘two’) or an inexact number such as ‘many’, ‘lots of’) (p.183). These confirm this claim because they are more directed to ‘lots of/many’. This view is shared by the analysts of Sesotho as noted about Guma (1971, p. 124) earlier. However, the solicited function so far, only ascribes this quantitative to the nouns and pronouns because they confine the function of quantifiers as modifiers to nouns and pronouns.

What is interesting is that though built from the finite-predicators these names inflected with *bohle* still maintain the meaning of ‘all’. The finite-predicators substitute the nouns and pronouns within the MOOD box and the quantifiers function as nominal complements which refer to unexpressed persons. This means that the quantifiers assume their role as nominal complements either with nouns/pronouns or with the finite-predicators in the MOOD box. Note that when *bohle* functions with nouns/pronouns it denotes a declarative function but with the finite-predicators it denotes them as imperatives that give a polite command expressed as a direct command. Emotions reflect because these names are vocatively expressed.

These names have an interpersonal function for they serve as invitations to an act. *Khesangbohle* portrays a negative emotion displayed by the finite-predicator. Thus it makes the name reveal hatred and discomfort with other people, related and otherwise. The awarder displays anger with other relatives and counters in relation to the baby’s birth. Reasons attached are idiosyncratic. *Khesangbohle* is actually a denial in the affirming structure because it says “Do not accept all”. The awarder double crosses modality by being positive and negative simultaneously. This reflects

in reality as interpersonal function. It is a new observation in these findings.

Note, furthermore, that in the case of *Khesangbohle* ‘sideline all’ (pl) the meaning behind is that of “an inexact quantifier being exact in context” (Halliday 2001, p.184) because the awarder declares a sweeping attitude directed at all who bother him/her about the baby or related matters. In *Botsangbohle* ‘ask all’ (pl) an element of cynic underlies because the command is not possible in actual practice. The awarder is hitting back at the counter audience. When Basotho are fed up with someone, they normally have a cynical statement that says: ‘*Tsamaea u nts’u botsa*’ ‘go around asking [anyone]’ (literally) and this means ‘suit yourself’. The interpersonal relation here depicts the awarders’ modality being to harbor massive in-depth anger and brewing frustration because of past experiences relating to the baby.

It is further noted that *Kenangbohle* ‘come one come all’(pl) is a label for prostitutes and prostitution is a social problem. The structure seems superficially attractive with appreciation to welcome all by the speaker but it embodies an insult. The name is indicative of the biological mother’s behavior which results in out of wedlock babies. The biological daddy cannot be directly identified because the mother cannot present him. This behavior is aligned with prostitution. These names bear a subjective and attitudinal reaction that displays a positive attitude on the surface in *Kenangbohle* and a direct explicit negative attitude in *Khesangbohle* and *Botsangbohle*. But all these names bear a negative attitude. The affirmation and denial are embedded in the finite-predicators who are actually the referents. The referents are implicit as these bear the speech role of commands. They bear the Imperative Mood.

Further, they sound complete in structure and meaning thus displaying their character of form-meaning relation. This completeness complements the presented structure of the Qualificative in Sesotho which is basically phrasal. An example is *Bana bohle* ‘all children’ with a

noun + quantitative structure. Not only is it phrasal but it also displays a stronger element of ellipsis than the finite-predicator [pl] + quantitative names *Botsangbohle*, *Khesangbohle*, *Kenangbohle* in discussion because it sounds like a response understood by the second participant engaged in a discourse. I say it is ‘stronger’ because ellipsis can be tapped in both structures but at different intensities. This is yet an additional new observation not mentioned by systemic and formalists in relation to the Quantitative.

Another new observation is that some names use this quantifier *-hle* ‘all’ to complement the infinitive structure which is *Ho+verb*. The equivalent in English is ‘to + verb’. This form has used the quantifier to build a name expressed with a Name-Surname form. Eggins (2004) refers to such a form as a clause complex (p. 57).

The ‘ho + verb’ personal name is noted in:

11) *Hotseba* ‘to know’

and it has as its surname, a complement expressed as a quantitative:

12) *Tsohle* ‘all’.

This is a new finding because infinitive in Sesotho language, according to Guma (1971) is confined to forming non-finites that use noun as complement and not the Quantitative (p.159). The name in full is:

13) *Hotseba | Tsohle* ‘to know | all’. This name has coined a new clause label namely declarative-infinitive clause complex because it displays a declarative speech role. Thus a further new note is that

a quantifier can be used to qualify infinitives as in *Ho-tseba | Tsohle* in addition to finite-predicators. This is a hypo-tactic clause complex because *Tsohle* clarifies and completes the discourse initiated by the infinitive. The surname *Tsohle* is a complement. According to Eggins (2004) a hypotactic clause complex has the subsequent clause functioning as a complement that completes meaning of the initial clause (p.157).

However, note an additional interesting identification of the name:

14) *Hofelile | Tsohle* ‘finished | is all’ meaning ‘all is finished’

in which the original infinitive here is *ho-fela* ‘to get finished’. It is interesting because the exposed version in the perfect makes it behave like a response to a WH-form ‘what is finished?’ yet it actually arose from an infinitive ‘to get finished’. It causes a misconception at face value and makes one argue that it is not an infinitive. The interesting issue here is that it requires the analyst to identify origin *ho-fela* ‘to get finished’ in order to make an informed decision. Such informed decision is that the origin of *Hofelile* ‘it is finished’ is *ho fela* ‘to get finished’ and this original verb is a base form. Note that the element that makes it lose conditioned classification is the perfect form ending and it has not been catered for in the explanation of conditions and features that form an infinitive. It is a new observation because the infinitive is normally confined to base verbs and not the perfect forms. This form bears syntactic and morphological features of the infinitive that are mentioned by Guma (1971, p.161). The surname *Tsohle* is a complement. The issue of infinitives taking complements is yet another observation not mentioned by Sesotho grammarians and therefore it is a new observation as well.



It is further interesting to note that these clause complex names have a collocational feature. This means that the initial clause and the subsequent clause are in acceptable order as found in daily discourse. The messages expresses the airing of the awarder's view [in an ellipsed way] that 'to know | all' has an effect implicitly understood by the addressee based n the context in which the discourse takes place. With *Hofelile Tsohle* 'all is finished' [literally – it is finished | all] the statement is a direct clear report or reporting answer about the condition that the speaker had to assess. This occurs in daily discourse.

Note again that the use of a finite-predicators *tseba* 'know' as well as *felile* meaning 'finished or nothing' fortifies the new view that quantifiers numerate in an inexact way based on the verbal group. Thus it can be concluded that quantifiers are not exclusive to the nominal group but they reciprocate it with the verbal group. They use finites as well as non-finites in forming and using quantitative. The finite-predicators used here are *tseba*, *botsang*, *khesang*, *kenang* and *felile*. They are all non-specific because they cannot give a definite count. The complement *Tsohle* conforms to the observed note of *-hle* being non-specific and that it forms the quantitative by being inflected with concords that denote the Subject. (*Tso* is a concord found in Meinhof's classification of Bantu languages and Guma co-opted it into his analysis of Sesotho).

Even *Hofelile Tsohle* maintains the non-specific numerative feature because 'all' that is finished cannot be calculated in exact numerative terms. This leads us to find out if the names with the numerative feature in the Sesotho names can be identified.

### 3 The SFL Numerative Feature

According to Halliday (2001) quantifying markers are found as elements of the Numerative (p.185). They are sisters to deictic and epithet features. These numeratives, as he claims, are part of nominal group described by SFL theory. He directly notes that "the Numerative element indicates some numerical feature of the subset: either quantity or order, either exact or inexact". Table 1 displays Halliday's distribution of the Numerative.

*Table 1: Items functioning as Numerative (Halliday, 2001, p.183)*

|              | Definite   | Indefinite   |
|--------------|--|--|
| Quantitative | one, two, three, etc.<br>[a couple of], etc.<br>[a quarter of], etc. | few, little, [a bit of], etc.<br>several, [a number of], etc.<br>many, much, [a lot of], etc.<br>fewer, less, more<br>[the same amount of], etc. |
| Ordinative   | first, second, third, etc.<br>next, last, etc.                       | preceding, subsequent, etc.  |

### 4 Sesotho Personal Names as Numerative

The Numerative or enumerative marker (as used in Sesotho grammar analysis) used is a terminal *-fe* which denotes 'what?' or 'which?' This Numerative does not express exact quantity and is therefore non-specific. Based on Halliday's table given the examples of Sesotho personal names with the feature of inexact quantity are noted as:

15) *Letlakalife* 'what or which information or news do you bring?'/ 'what [news/information]

do you bring with you?'

16) *Lebuakalife* 'what or which are you talking about?'

The *-fe* part is inexact because the speaker cannot give a definite amount or size or quantity of information expected. The numerative in Sesotho equates Halliday's (2001) indication of Numeratives that specify inexact number which are exemplified as "lots of..."



(p.183) as in the names above. It can be added that the *-fe* actually quantifies non-specifically because it seeks information about news and they can be quantified with indefinite quantitative that denotes either 'few, little, several, much' (Halliday 2001, p.183) in the possible responses. The *-fe* can be noted as the question marker that elicits numerative content based in the indefinite quantitative numeratives. These would serve as response moves to the initiating move by *-fe* that elicits information. This is a new finding about numeratives because an initiating role has not been established in the previous analyses but Sesotho names reflect it. They are structured with the enumerative marker to make them enumerative clauses.

The *-fe* in the names *Letlakalife* and *Lebuakalife* reflects a WH- interrogative feature in their structures and it occurs terminally. Its position and function are claimed by Doke and Mofokeng (1967) who label it as an interrogative enumerative *-fe* that means 'which?'" (p. 435) and Guma, (1971) on the other hand, notes it as part of the Qualificative phrases despite its interrogative feature, thus, he does not mention the interrogative Mood (p. 104). The interrogative feature can be a new addition to the functions entailed to quantitative and ordinate subsets in the grammar of Sesotho. This function is a new observation in systemic grammar as well.

The interpersonal function is propelled by the second person plural Subject and the interrogative form. The negative attitude is embedded in the interrogative form and it is strengthened by the finite-predicator because it implicitly reflects the manner of approach by the addressed. Such modality reflects an implicit negative attitude of the awarder in eliciting information. This is evident in *Letlakalife* because the finite-predicator *tla*

'come' suggests that the awarder is tired and fed up with information normally brought by these implicit addressees. It is as if the information is non-specific or inexact or both. He/She sounds prepared to listen but with prejudice because his/her assessment is that the information is not worthy to be given attention. The awarders of these names display a cynical judgmental attitude.

A further note is that from the grammatical view, the Sesotho numerative names are interrogatives that fit into the MOOD/RESIDUE as *Le-tla + ka life* does. Their MOOD becomes Subject-Finite which is exemplified as:

17) *Le + tla* 'you come...'

Their RESIDUE encompasses:

18) *ka life* 'with what?'

as the complement.

This feature contradicts the systemic grammar analysis because the Sesotho numerative occurs terminally in the RESIDUE whereas systemic grammar presents it as resuming the structure as in 'what (news) do you come with or bring?' This is new observation. Here, analysis of *Letlakalife* resumes with a WH-complement RESIDUE and it is followed by 'do you' that forms Finite+ Subject to make MOOD. The last element would be 'bring?' which is a Predicator that forms RESIDUE.

In Eggins (1996) terms, the WH-interrogative in this structure conflates with the complement (p.:1175) because the WH- marker is in close proximity with the complement in the Sesotho name. Nonetheless, it is interesting that despite the distinctive observation just noted, the conflation of the WH- with the complement reflects in both languages. In the Sesotho version *-fe* is adjacent to the concord for 'news' that being *li* [di] and in English the



*li* [di] complement is the bracketed ‘news’ which is adjacent to the WH- marker.

Note again that though the finite-predicator *tla* presents this structure as being in the simple present tense because the news is being brought as and when the speaker utters the name there is an embedded future in the finite-predicator because the addressees are still to present their information. They have not said anything at the time when the awarder poses the question. The explicit and embedded tenses allow *tla* to be noted as finite-predicator and reflect Eggins (1996) view that when the lexical occurs immediately after the Subject it is both finite and lexical, that is, it functions as a complement (p.161). The position of *tla* of being a predicator gives it ‘authority’ to allow enumerative to be a complement that follows the finite-predicator. *tla* functions as a predicator along with *ka life?* and both form RESIDUE.

Another interesting observation is that though the English version of *Letlakalife* matches Eggin's (1996, p.175) analysis of the WH-interrogative, there is a slight difference in the Sesotho version in that the Complement 'news' or 'information' is actually mentioned by the use of a concord *li* [di] in the name and Eggins' description lags this concord. The original form of this structure is *Le-tla-ka-litaba-life?* and *li* [di] is a concord for *litaba* ‘news’. This is a new observation that proposes that in other languages such as Sesotho a concord can be used in anaphoric reference as *li* refers to ellipsed *Litaba* ‘news’ and place such reference in the RESIDUE of the numerative nominal group. *Li* as an objectival predicative concord still substitutes the object noun *litaba*. This *li* quantifies non-specifically because this news cannot be specified numerically.

With the name such as:

19) *Lebuakalife* ‘what are you talking about?’

The structural form is the same as *Letlakalife* ‘what or which information or news do you bring?’/ ‘what [information or news] do you bring with you?’ However, in this name the awarder is already listening, may be to the counter family talking about events around the baby but he/she may pretend to misunderstand the information hence this name. This displays negative interpersonal relations between families of the newly born. The name reflects an attitude posed as though the awarder says ‘I can hear you are talking but what is your talking all about?’ Sarcasm is embedded in the ellipsis noted in *ka-life*. The complement is intentionally omitted to display that sarcasm. In both names argument is strengthened by the question form because as a nub the numerative element probes for discrete information. Both names are attitudinal and they reflect an interpersonal function marked by the second person Subject *Le* ‘you’ (pl) referred to as addressees in the exchange.

The awarders’ prejudice and misunderstanding from each name rotate on the finite-predicators and this means the awarders use the finite-predicators to initiate modality of these propositions which are completed with an enumerative RESIDUE. That sense of non-specific quantifier similarly reflects in the enumerative *life* of *Lebuakalife* because the content and amount of information discussed cannot be numerically measured. Even if the content can be estimated or presented the amount is a personal judgment of whether it is small, enough or too much (cf. Halliday (2001, p.183) and the note about personal decision in this matter is new to systemic linguistics and grammar because Halliday did not bring it

up in his description. Despite the new view it is undisputable that *-fe* as an enumerative be considered quantifying.

### 5 Conclusion

These names have proved Halliday's (2001) claim that "An inexact Numerative expression may be exact in the context" (p. 184) correct because such news is expected to be confined to a specific target aim and not be haphazard and such is noted with the marker *-fe* 'which?'.

Furthermore, the explored names confirm observation by Leedy and Ormrod (1981) that through qualitative methodology researchers "construct a rich meaningful picture of a complex multi-faceted situation" (p.147).

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