

**EUPHEMISM, THE ART OF SAYING IT POLITELY:
NORTHERN SOTHO NOVELS IN PERSPECTIVE**

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

One must understand that language makes us human, in order to understand our humanity. Language is the source of human life and power. Language is characterized by various expressions, which are the elements employed in communication. The expressions used should have a message to convey. In successful conversations there should be a mutual understanding between the communicator and the recipient. According to Van Schalkwyk (1986:1):

“Communication in its broadest sense can be seen as the two-way process by which certain information is conveyed or transmitted from a communication source to a receiver who in turn will react to a stimulus”.

People started with spoken language up to the stage when written language was introduced. Our forefathers relied on oral communication to spread the ethics of social living. Oral communication formed the foundation of written communication that appeared much later. The oral literature was the form of literature employed in the past, even in praise poetry. To quote from Fromkin and Rodman (1978:23):

“Parallel view states that language at first consisted of emotional ejaculations of pain, fear, surprise, pleasure, anger and so on”.

Traditionally, our forefathers were reliable storytellers who used their expertise, by conveying messages through the spoken language. They came together with their children and grandchildren around fire places telling their folklore stories. Messages were conveyed on what they experienced in life in order to shape their own children into men and women who could be honest and trustworthy in future. The forefathers were aware that messages require a contact between the addresser and the addressee.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

People make use of the figures of speech with the purpose of enriching language. These figures of speech are employed by various people in different scenarios and should be used tactfully. They have been used by people as a vehicle to convey messages. In alignment with this statement, Boulton (1954:49) defines a figure of speech as “a certain decking of speech whereby the usual and simple is altered and changed to that which is more elegant conceited.”

Truly, figures of speech may serve to explain something which is obscure, to bring comfort to someone in distress or to soften something disagreeable. It is justifiable when it makes the truths straightforward, arouses desirable emotions and helps good purposes. Figures of speech are classified in terms of the meaning that they convey in communication.

There are many things considered to be taboos that cannot be spoken or mentioned directly, in order to express them, people employ palatable lexical items also referred to as substitutions. In these substitutions, the choice of words plays a vital role in the enhancement of social civilisation, speech skill and good interpersonal relationships.

The crux of the problem arises in the use of euphemism as a figure of speech by Northern Sotho authors in their literature. The figure of speech is employed to avoid embarrassment in communication. It arouses desirable emotions in the readers and in the textbooks. This figure of speech is used to educate the nation and the students in various institutions. Northern Sotho authors have a tendency to employ euphemism and its lexical item that was supposed to be avoided, to make the truth more obvious and create the desirable situation, for example, Matsepe (1962:70):

“Mokgekolo yola ke ge a di hlohlora ka moka, mme ke ge Lekoloboto a iša mosadi diatla. Moisa wa lešaedi o kae banna? O ka re o itia mosadi wa mo thula ka hlogo, wa mo thuma le ka matolo? Ke yona mekgwa ya go se hlalefe ...”

Lit. That old lady shakes out all of them, furthermore, Lekoloboto puts his hands on his wife. A slovenly man. How can you beat a woman, knock against her with your head and knees? This is uncivilized behaviour ...

Fig. The old lady reveals the secrets, Lekoloboto beating his wife. How can you beat a woman using head and knees?

The statements cited above indicate that the author intended to euphemize his decision to lessen the brutality of assault. He was trying to avoid the word 'to beat' but ultimately he uses the word. According to euphemism, the embarrassing word should not be used in order to make the author's decision clear and understandable. The use of euphemism and its lexical item seems to be tautology. It is a needless repetition. Employing euphemism in expression is a clear indication in educating other people about a more gentle way of referring to something unpleasant. The author wanted to avoid the word assault or to beat, because he knew that beating a woman is an unacceptable act. Narrating the story should not be like compiling a dictionary, where we do have a source language and a target language. Euphemism in itself is complete. Spoken language is the foundation of writing. When we communicate, we do not utter a word and give its meaning. The recipient is the one who will interpret what the main idea in the sentence is.

Euphemism is the quality of behaving so as to avoid social embarrassment or distress. It is the art of the creation of pleasure in communication. This figure of speech is employed to minimize painful impression. What we utter in communication should correlate with what we convey in writing. The fact of giving a figure of speech and its meaning or the original word could be observed from Sekhukhune (1975:5) when he says:

Ditaba ke dife tšeo ba ka di swarago mola Hlabirwa a be a sa rotha kudumela ya bohloko bja pelo, megokgo, ka pelong ya gagwe?

Lit.: Which issues could they touch when Hlabirwa was still dripping sweat of a painful heart, tears?

Fig.: Which issues could be discussed when Hlabirwa is mourning?

Tears are not acceptable for an adult. The author wanted to indicate that it is a shame to see an adult crying. Firstly, he attempted substitution but later on he named the tears directly. In order to educate others this should not be done. The use of several words explaining one thing only to mention it directly later, should be avoided.

1.3 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to investigate euphemism in Northern Sotho.

To be specific, the study intends to:

- ascertain the incidents of euphemism in Northern Sotho.
- Determine whether or not authors of Northern Sotho works of art employ the technique of euphemism in their literature as in the spoken communication in order for their novels/ideas/writings to be acceptable by the indigenous speakers of the language.
- Establish whether the euphemism in Northern Sotho novels is used in a suitable way.

1.4 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

African languages were not highly regarded during the apartheid era, but they are now proclaimed to be official languages. It is time to uplift the standard of the Northern Sotho language through communication by using figures of speech such as euphemism. A study of this nature should be undertaken because it is based on the development and promotion of Northern Sotho as an indigenous language. The employment of euphemism in spoken and written Northern Sotho language would create pleasure of conversation and promote studies amongst Northern Sotho communities.

The frequent use of this figure of speech in language would entice other official language speakers to use the Northern Sotho language. They would know that it is a suitable and appropriate language that could be employed in any relevant discourse. If euphemism is used correctly, it would be a source of pleasure in writing and speech.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study will contribute towards understanding the appreciation of Northern Sotho language development. It will address the problem of misinterpretation caused by a lack of understanding of the sentences written figuratively or literally. The study will create a sound relationship between authors and readers, speakers and audiences as well as promoting the love of the Northern Sotho language.

The study will develop love and interest in the use of euphemism by speakers and readers in Northern Sotho language. This way, Northern Sotho language will be developed and the culture will be preserved.

1.6 METHODOLOGY

1.6.1 Primary sources

In this study the information will be obtained from language experts such as university lecturers, educators, native speakers of the language and scholars in general. The data for this research study will be collected from knowledgeable respondents who will consist of:

- Two university lecturers in the School of African Languages, University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus).
- Ten secondary school educators from Bochum Circuit in Limpopo Province.
- Ten elderly Northern Sotho speakers from Limpopo Province who will be randomly selected.

Direct and understandable questions will be employed to give the interviewees a chance to express themselves.

1.6.2 **Secondary sources**

The importance of employing this method will be to utilise the sources and information already collected by various writers and scholars to back-up the study. Library books from different authors in Northern Sotho will be used. A search on internet will be conducted to access more information. Research studies such as mini-dissertations will be consulted to gather the data.

1.7 **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Language is a source of social identity. Some of our scholars expressed their views on figures of speech. The figures of speech are based on figurative language, that is, language that cannot be taken literally.

This section will endeavour to highlight the views of some scholars who dealt with euphemism as a figure of speech.

1.7.1 **Taylor & Ogden (2005)**

Taylor and Ogden (2005:321) state that general practitioners (GPs) often use a range of euphemism as a means to facilitate communication in the consultation. Taylor and Ogden were concentrating on euphemisms preferred by the GPs who avoid using the term 'heart failure'. They argue that GPs prefer to use euphemism when dealing with patients' beliefs about the illness. It indicates that the scholars were imitating the use of euphemism by GPs in health. The euphemisms are used to inspire and motivate the patients. Taylor and Ogden furthermore say that the GPs preferred the euphemism 'fluid on your lungs as your heart is not pumping hard enough'.

They (Taylor and Ogden) say that patients who received the condition described as 'heart failure' believed that the illness would have more serious consequences for

their life, that the problem would change over time and that it would last for longer and reported feeling more anxious and depressed than those who had the condition described using euphemism. According to Taylor and Ogden (2005) doctors are encouraged to be open with their patients and to respect their experience. The choice of language, therefore, presents a dilemma for doctors. These authors emphasise that euphemism may be less open but more protective of the patient's experiences. The use of euphemism was caused by the fear of upsetting the patient. The term 'heart failure' was deemed to be an emotive term, which may be avoided in preference to a euphemism.

Taylor and Ogden (2005:322) say that the choice of language used within the consultation sometimes presents a dilemma for doctors as the same term may have a contradictory impact on these aspects of the consultation. Experience suggests that doctors often manage this dilemma by using euphemisms, which may seem more neutral and less emotive. Eight euphemisms were used for the term were: 'heart strain; your heart is not pumping properly; your heart is a bit weaker than it used to be; your heart is not working efficiently; your heart, which is a pump, is not working as well as it should, causing back pressure on the lungs; you have fluid on your lungs, as your heart is not pumping hard enough; your heart is not strong enough; your heart is not as strong as it used to be. The term left ventricular dysfunction was added to the list of euphemisms. This indicates the necessity of employing euphemism everywhere, particularly in the hospitals or health centres.

Taylor and Ogden (2005:323) argue that the most commonly used euphemism was "you have fluid on your lungs as your heart is not pumping hard enough". Euphemism may evoke a less emotive response. Taylor and Ogden (2005:325) state that if however, doctors prioritise openness than a more blunt approach using the harsh language of medicine may be necessary as the cost of the patient's experience. Besides, Hendry, Gardyne and Burger (1994:65) state that euphemism is using a mild, indirect term instead of a blunt one to describe something unpleasant or sensitive. Patients are frightened by the term 'heart failure' because they believe that immediately the heart fails, one will die. Instead of using the emotive term, the mild and indirect one should be used, to encourage and empower the patients.

1.7.2 Gómez (2009)

Gómez based his argument on the definition of euphemism into two classified groups. Those two groups are the extra-linguistic and the strictly linguistic ones. Gómez (2009:725) argues that the definitions which have been made of the phenomenon of euphemism have always been renowned for their restrictive and, above all, their heterogeneous nature. He says that the definition enumerates the elements involved in the process, such as the perspective of the speaker and the hearer or the circumstances of time, place or period, aspects which highlight the social and relative nature of euphemism. He further says that on other occasions some of the linguistic repercussions have been pointed out, such as the modification of a word with regard to its natural phonetic evolution due to interdictive pressures. It could be taken into account that, euphemism in most cases, for reasons of decorum, is used to avoid sin, or ill omens, certain words are changed in a special way, which if they followed their natural evolution, would be presented in a different form.

■ **Extra-linguistic definitions**

Gómez (2009:727) states that these are, basically psychological and they all deal with the causes that produce the euphemism. Euphemism consists of the substitution of an unpleasant word by another, a pleasant one when the first is to be avoided for reasons of religious fear, moral samples or courtesy. From the statement given, we could deduce that euphemism is a figure of speech which is used to disguise unpleasant, hateful or sad ideas. Kany (1960:V) states:

A euphemism is the means by which a disagreeable, offensive or fear-instilling matter is designated with an indirect or softer term. Euphemism satisfies a linguistic need. For his own sake as well as that of his hearers, a speaker constantly resorts to euphemism in order to disguise an unpleasant truth, veil an offense, or palliate indecency.

The definitions cited indicate that euphemism is simply a polite and elegant form of what is called forbidden vocabulary. Euphemism is the result of cleaning up certain areas of life in order to make them more presentable.

Gómez (2009:728) states that in the aforementioned definition the terminology used reveals an extra-linguistic, more psychological, starting-point, which indeed, informs us about the reasons or motivations of euphemism, but not about its linguistic nature.

■ **Linguistic definitions from lexical semantics**

Gómez (2009:728) states that among definitions, those which are based on 'traditional' or 'structural' lexical semantics include that of Bruneau. Bruneau (1952:23) simply points out that, thus, the euphemism consists of a conscious substitution, of a forbidden term or expression, by an indirect expression.

Lamiquiz (1974:415) says that is a lexical substitute which always generalizes, eliminating sememes and giving only the generic term. Gómez says that therefore euphemism will consist, linguistically, of a mutation of the meaning of their word, or an extension of its meaning. Thus, euphemism is defined, *prima facie*, by the tension which exists between the literal meaning of a word and its transferred use.

Gómez (2009:729) argues that in these descriptions there is an evident confusion between the substitute and the process, that is, there is a frequent identification of the euphemism with the euphemistic substitute which consists of using the former, the euphemistic phenomenon, to indicate the term which replaces the forbidden word (the lexical substitute) and not the fact of the lexical substitution itself, or, more precisely, in accordance with the new approach to the treatment of the phenomenon which will be explained, the linguistic manifestation itself.

■ **From the pragmatic standpoint**

From a pragmatic standpoint, Allan and Burridge (1991:11) state:

A euphemism is used as an alternative to an expression that is not preferred, in order to avoid possible loss of face; either one's own face or, through giving offence, that of the audience, or of some third party.

Gómez (2009:733) says that the relevance of this pragmatic and communicative perspective in the study of euphemism is evident in the treatment of the phenomenon in some more up-to-date dictionaries of linguistics. He gave an example of Alcaraz and Martínez (1997:219 – 220) when they argue that euphemism is born from social pressure, sometimes at the cost of clarity of communication. From a communicative point of view, the euphemism forms part of the strategies necessary for the maximum of courtesy, especially out of respect of the right of the hearer not to be offended or upset, provided that neither the intelligibility of the message, nor its sincerity, necessary for the maximum of quality, is lost.

1.7.3 Halmari (2011)

Halmari (2011:828) states that humans have always resorted to euphemisms, vague, and indirect expressions, in their quest to avoid and camouflage life's harsh realities. In the euphemistic use of language, one expression is replaced by another. Halmari says that some major dictionaries of the English language ascribe the following attributes to euphemistic expressions: they are mild, vague, roundabout, indirect, polite, less distasteful, inoffensive, agreeable, tactful, less explicit, and they have comparatively favourable implications or less unpleasant associations, whereas the substituted phrase, or the referent, is characterized as harsh, blunt, direct, distasteful, painful, unpleasant, taboo, indelicate, offensive, or frightening. Halmari said the statement that does not differ from what Allan (2001:148) says in defining euphemism. Allan says euphemism is a word or phrase used as an alternative to an expression that is not preferred. Allan also states that it is polite to avoid 'dysphemistic locution' - language that is perceived as discriminatory against a variety of disadvantaged groups. People hoped that attitudes towards disadvantaged groups will change if language is reformed, euphemisms or neutral locution have come to replace older, dysphemistic terms. Halmari argues that euphemism is the main tool of political correctness.

Halmari decided to make use of the 'people first' approach in euphemism. In this approach premodified nouns (disabled people) were to be replaced by postmodified

nouns (people with disabilities). He said that a human being should be prioritized when dealing with euphemism. The name changes also often illustrate the proliferation of lexical euphemism. The expression, the President's Committee on Mental Retardation has been changed to 'the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities'. The name change exemplifies both a syntactic and lexical change. These organizational name changes reflect a long history of accommodation to either changing societal attitudes, or they can be seen as reflections of the chain reaction caused by the process of euphemism. The word defiance, having acquired too many negative connotations, was replaced by retardation. It indicates that a former euphemism had become a dysphemism. The use of the word retardation is meant to increase sensitivity to the needs of the citizens, or to bring respect and dignity. A desire for euphemism has always been the force behind this change.

The style of communication using 'people first' language, the person is put before the disability – for example, one says 'a person with disability rather than a 'disabled person'. It also avoids the use of words that suggest that people with disability are sick or dependent. From all the changes in euphemism it is clear that if we can fix the language, we can fix the world.

Halmari (2011:837) states that newspaper headlines are notorious in doing away with function words in order to save space. The 'people first' language is not interested in saving space. There is a need for brevity and directness in the headlines for the purpose of the newspaper headlines to sell. Direct headlines sell better than euphemistic ones. Euphemistic headlines cushion the taboo, potentially upsetting referents in the real world, making the understanding of the headlines implications less transparent.

Non-euphemistic language in the headlines indicates that making news is a bigger priority than using the prescribed politically correct language. The 'people first' language is euphemistic therefore it could not be used for newspaper headlines because it lacks brevity and directness.

1.7.4 Rabab'ah and Al-Qarni (2012)

Rabab'ah and Al-Qarni based their argument on euphemism strategies used in Arabia and English. They found that Saudi Arabic language seems to have more ways of expressing euphemisms. According to Rabab'ah and Al-Qarni, euphemistic language, like language in general, is influenced by its users' cultural and religious beliefs, life-styles, and norms.

Rabab'ah and Al-Qarni (2012:730) describe euphemism as a polite or indirect way of saying a tabooed term. This is directed by people of different cultures using euphemism differently. The main purpose being to investigate similarities and differences in language user's attitudes to euphemism for death, lying and bodily functions in Arabic and British English. They would like to find any direct usage of taboo terms, which are very costly because they are offensive to listeners. Rabab'ah and Al-Qarni observed that using a tabooed term is a face-threatening act. The authors state that languages are influenced by nations' cultures, traditions, religions, psychological orientations and other social issues. Languages are the carriers of cultures and at the same time, the accurate record of people's history. Willis and Klammer (1981:192-193) define euphemism as:

A mild or roundabout word or expression used instead of a more direct word or expression to make one's language delicate and inoffensive even to a squeamish person.

From the conviction made by Willis and Klammer, we can deduce that euphemism is the intention of fleeing from the taboo. Rabab'ah and Al-Qarni state that euphemism is considered to be one type of 'amelioration' which mainly focuses on replacing the socially acceptable words or expressions or indirect means to save either their face or their interlocutors' face. Tal (2003:111-112) states that euphemisms, accordingly, can be categorized into two distinguishable types: amplifying and minifying. He says that amplifying euphemisms embellish the euphemized person or object, making them greater and more important than they really are. Minifying euphemisms reduce the degree of sharpness of revulsion and disgust. They conceal the scandalous and unspeakable of which may be baseness or divinity.

Rabab'ah and Al-Qarni state that sources of euphemism could be formal innovation and semantic innovation. Formal innovation includes word formation, compounding and derivation. Semantic innovation includes euphemisms that are figurative in nature, and which result from semantic change. Euphemism as a universal phenomenon exists in all cultures. People of different cultures communicate ideas differently. It is noted that in Chinese, saying 'X aged last night' means 'He/she died' and 'girl' in English means 'cocaine'. Due to the examples given, it is concluded that due to social and cultural differences, the forms of euphemism vary.

Rabab'ah and Al-Qarni concluded that, although there are some similarities, because of different beliefs, customs, life styles and behaviours of the Saudis and the British, each language's euphemism has its own distinguished traits.

1.7.5 **Fernández (2008)**

Fernández (2008) wanted to draw attention to the euphemistic and dysphemistic figurative language used to designate the taboo sex. It usually occurs with most things dangerous or censored, taboos are somehow tempting and fascinating for us. The main factor is to understand first about what a taboo is. Burridge (2004:199) says that what is taboo is revolting, untouchable, filthy, unmentionable, dangerous, disturbing, and thrilling – but above all, powerful. The power of the taboo keeps language users from avoiding the forbidden concept and compels them either to preserve or violate it. The language users resort respectively either to euphemism or to dysphemism. Fernández states that this ambivalence towards taboos seems to be especially noteworthy in the case of sex, an area of interdiction particularly fruitful in lexical generation. Speakers turn to figurative language as a means of coping with the realm of sex. According to Fernández, sex related euphemisms and dysphemisms are based on underlying metaphoric systems within the framework of conceptual metaphor theory. His study is not based on isolated words, but on coherent and contextualized discourses.

Fernández (2008:105) states that otherwise, a literal understanding of metaphors would impede effective communication because, after all, euphemism and dysphemism must necessarily be ambiguous in order to carry out their

communicative functions. In conclusion, Fernández argues that metaphors have the power not only to create a new reality, but also to shape already existing euphemistic and dysphemistic references in their use and interpretation.

1.7.6 Zhao and Dong (2010)

Zhao and Dong (2010) based their views on features of English and political euphemism. It was a good idea to get to political sphere for politics rule the world. Zhao and Dong took political euphemism as a tool for political leaders to control information transmission. As a tool of political leaders, political euphemism plays the role of hiding the truth and legalizing wrong behaviours. It influences people's sense of right and wrong as well as their understanding of the objective world, hence succeeding in persuading them. The statements from Zhao and Dong suggest that language is not only a reflection of the objective world but a process of social construction.

Euphemism has attracted much attention home and abroad. The authors dealt with the two main functions: the disguising or cheating function and the persuasive function. Euphemism could be viewed as a replacement of ordinary expressions with favourable or exaggerated ones. Zhao and Dong (2010:118) state that political euphemism is a tool for political participants to hide scandals, disguise the truth, and guide public thoughts when discussing social issues or events. Euphemism is created by transforming the signifier to enlarge the association distance between the signifier and the signified. From this point of view, it is observed that political euphemism is different from those commonly used euphemistic forms in order to avoid expressions of or references to death and other political phenomena in that it deviates greatly from the meaning expressed by its former signifier, or even a complete distortion. For instance, political participants may name their attack as 'active defense'. Euphemism plays quite an essential role in demystifying the connotation of political discourse when serving political purposes. At times replacing specific meanings with general ones is employed. The atomic bomb might be called 'the gadget' or 'the device'.

Zhao and Dong (2010:119) state that it is said that war has brought about not only death and destruction but new euphemistic expressions because they will make death sound less terrible. Political euphemism is purpose-oriented. Politicians use defensive expressions to hide their illegal attacks on others. Politicians are regarded as euphemism masters because they skilfully deliver their lies with their own language.

The language of the politicians is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable. Political euphemism is similar to propaganda for they are persuading and influencing the public.

1.7.7 Eliason (2010)

Eliason is one of the scholars who attempted to give his views on the issue of euphemism. He also argued that euphemism should be considered in terms of social construction. Euphemisms are regarded as terms that are used to substitute words that are offensive. These lexical items are employed in order to be polite and as a means to soften the impact of words that might be more offensive. Lutz in Eliason (2010:65) argues that language is a tool or weapon that can be used by those in power to achieve their ends at the expense of others. The cited statement is in alignment with the political euphemism as viewed by Zhao and Dong.

Eliason (2010:69) states that some words are stigmatizing, which means that they tend to discredit individuals and pose a barrier to social interaction. Eliason gave an example of euphemisms used for the term 'retard', namely, 'slow' and 'mentally challenged'. It is observed that the word 'retard' is blunt or offensive in the discourse, therefore it was decided to use euphemisms in order to soften the impact of 'retard'.

Eliason further said that involvement in deviant activities as well as the criminal justice system can be stigmatizing. Euphemism is employed to describe some of the activities to make them less stigmatizing. Strip dancing in clubs and bars is referred to as exotic dancing or adult entertainment. In the case of juvenile courts, juveniles

who commit offences are not arrested, they are taken into custody. Eliason attempted to indicate that euphemism can be used in various social reality, situations, bodily processes, government in times of war lastly by bureaucrats and workers in the helping professions.

Ultimately there was a comparison made with reference to politics indicating that, in politics, you can attract more flies with honey than you can with vinegar. Eliason was emphasizing that in politics if you use politeness (honey) you will get more followers and if you employ offensive language (vinegar), people avoid you. Eliason (2010:74) argues that the government, for example, uses euphemisms to keep us from knowing what is really going on.

CHAPTER TWO FIGURES OF SPEECH

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In all languages, in communication when one is talking to people or addressing the audience, there is a tendency to make use of palatable lexical items in order to be socially acceptable. Even in writing, in order to be on good terms with the readers, authors should use words that are acceptable in the society. It is important that there is always a successful conversation between the communicator and the recipient.

Figures of speech are employed in several ways in formal and informal situations where a need arises. In order to express ourselves visually and powerfully, figures of speech are employed to create mind-pictures or images. Languages may be used either in a literal or figurative way for purposes of conveying a meaningful sense.

In Northern Sotho like in other languages, figures of speech are employed to create a friendly relationship among people. Language is used to flavour communication, akin to preparing food when some spices are added to make the meals tasteful. Language without figures of speech will be a boring language. Authors in Northern Sotho language realised that in spoken languages figures of speech are employed, and spoken languages do not differ so much from the written language; therefore figures of speech could be used in both.

Northern Sotho authors are fascinated by words and their ability to express emotions, to describe events, to arouse interests, sympathy, anger or laughter in the reader, to change their views, that is to communicate. Authors are watchers, observers of people's behaviour, are curious and they could analyse motives, and by doing all these, they add vicariously to their own experience. Northern Sotho authors do contribute a lot to the richness of communication in all spheres.

2.2 CLASSIFICATION OF FIGURES OF SPEECH

In a figurative language the actual meaning is not the obvious literal meaning of what is said. In a figure of speech an exaggeration or a comparison is often involved, and the listener must use his/her imagination to understand what is intended by the speaker. It is also the use of words that mean one thing at the literal level, and another in the context of what is being said. A figure of speech usually creates an image for us by saying one thing in terms of another.

Figures of speech can be classified as follows:

2.2.1 Figures of speech based on comparison

2.2.1.1 Simile (*Tshwantšhanyo*)

A simile is a figure of speech employing comparison of two things that differ from each other in every respect.

Eidenmuller (2008:206) states that simile is a figure of explication in which two things that share at least one attribute are explicitly associated with each other; an overt-comparison between the unlike things as though they were similar - usually with the words **like** or **as**.

In Northern Sotho the words *bjalo ka*, are used to bring about this overt-comparison between two unlike things. A sentence such as the following serves as an example:

(a) *Leselo o utswa bjalo ka mpša.*

Lit. He/she steals like a dog.

Fig. He/she is a thief.

In the above sentence two things are compared. An unspecified *Leselo* is likened to a dog which is known for its unbecoming behaviour (not waiting for the owner's permission before eating meals). Like a dog, this man *Leselo* does not need the

permission of anybody, to get what he wants. Without *bjalo ka* simile would not be a real simile.

Kuiper and Allan (1996:174) say:

Similes get one out of falsehood by not saying that something is something that it is not, but rather that it is like something else, leaving the speaker to determine wherein the likeness lies.

Simile is stated in several ways. In Northern Sotho, Nokaneng and Louwrens (2000:234) say:

Tshwantšhanyo ke sekapolelo seo ka sona tšeo di swanago magareng ga dilo tšeo di sa swanego, di tšweletšwago.

2.2.1.2 Metaphor (*Tshwantšhišo*)

A metaphor is a figure of speech more or less similar to simile. Instead of saying one thing is like another, we say one thing is another or has the qualities of another. For example:

(b) *Monna ke tau.*

Lit. A man is a lion.

Fig. A man is brave.

The above example indicates that a man has the qualities of a lion. His movement and strength are those of a lion. According to Nokaneng and Louwrens (2000:234) "*Tshantšhišo ke tshwantšhanyo ye e kopanafaditšwego*".

In Northern Sotho, there are the words that distinguish between metaphor and simile. The words "*bjalo ka*" (**like** or **as**) are used in simile whereas the word *ke* (**is**) is used in metaphor. In Northern Sotho one may say:

- (c) *Ngwana wa gago ke naledi.*
Lit. Your daughter is a star.
Fig. Your daughter is beautiful.

This will give us the impression that the complexion of the daughter has got the quality of a shining star. That is exactly why Kent (1990:289) says that a metaphor is a kind of picture in which you replace the thing you want to describe with another image.

Like Kent, Skwire and Beam (1985:273) also see a metaphor as a way of comparing two things. They have the following to say:

Metaphor is defined as a comparison that does without the like or as, thus establishing a closer connection between the items compared. A word or phrase generally used in one frame of reference that is shifted to another (Skwire and Beam: 1985:273).

These two scholars continue by saying that metaphors enable writers to stimulate and direct the emotions of their readers; to communicate their own emotions with concrete images rather than flat, abstract statements, and thus to develop stylistic colour and excitements.

To add to this, Eidenmuller (2008:205) defines a metaphor as a figure of explication when comparison is made by speaking of one thing in terms of another; an implied comparison between two different things that share at least one attribute in common. On the other hand, Kess (1992:155) says that the nature of metaphors is such that they are literally false and therefore either badly state a literal falsehood, or allow for the metaphor to be paraphrased by a literal falsehood. Incidentally, it is an intellectual path through which we humans explore new paths or analogies in order to better understand unfamiliar concepts.

2.2.1.3 Personification (*Mothofatšo*)

Personification is a figure of speech in which inanimate or abstract things are given the attributes of living beings. In personification, non-living things are mentioned as if they are living. This enhanced Grobler, Kotsane, Makopo, Mamabolo, Matsapola, Moganedi, Mokoko and Phala's observation (1989:501) saying:

*Mo re hwetša dilo tše pedi tše di phelago le tše di sa
phelego di tšeiwa bjalo ka batho ka gore di dirwa
gore di bolele le go ba le maikutlo a motho.*

Lutrin and Pincus (2002:40) say that personification gives human qualities to inanimate objects or abstract ideas.

In Northern Sotho for example, it is said:

(d) *Lefase le itshwere molomo.*

Lit. The world has touched its mouth.

Fig. The people are surprised.

The world has got no mouth and hands, but in this sentence, it is as if the world has hands, just like a person does. This confirms that personification should not be taken literally but figuratively.

Personification in most cases is found in fairy tales. In the past when grandmothers or grandfathers were staying together with their granddaughters or grandsons, they would tell them fairy tales in order to educate them, especially when they were sitting around the fire at night.

Personification like metaphor and simile fall within the same kraal, because they are comparing two things one way or another.

2.2.2 Figures of speech based on contradiction

2.2.2.1 Paradox (*Kgakantšhano*)

Muller and Williams (1995:1113), are of the opinion that a paradox is a statement that seems contradictory but actually points out a truth. It indicates that even if the words could create a contradiction, the truth in them will be revealed. In alignment with Muller and Williams, Hendry, Gardyne and Burger (2006:64) say:

A paradox is a seemingly contradictory statement which, when inspected closely, is found to contain an important truth.

For example, in Northern Sotho one may say:

- (e) *O tla mmolaya ka toka ya gago.*
(You will kill him with your kindness.)

That is to say your kind deeds are doing more harm than good. In line with the above scholars, Grobler *et.al.*, (1989:502) have the following to say:

Kgakantšhano ke pego yeo e lego gore mo ponong ya mehla e bonala e nyatšega goba gona go ikganetša, eupša e lego yeo, ge e hlokomedišišwa, e tšweletša bohlae.

A paradox needs to be assessed in good faith in order to understand it. It uses original words used in our lives, but one should pay attention to it.

2.2.2.2 Irony (*Kgegeo*)

Irony is, according to Green (1979:9):

..., a statement, or presentation of an action or situation, in which the real or intended meaning conveyed to the initiated intentionally diverges from, and is incongruous with, the apparent or pretended meaning presented to the uninitiated.

To further explain what irony is, Nokaneng and Louwrens' (2000:253) words are indispensable:

*Seo se bolelwago ga se seo motho a se nagannego.
Ke sekapolelo sa go tlaetša motho. Se mo fa
tlhompho yeo e sego gona. Ka molomo go ka tsela
ye, fela ka pelong ga go bjalo.*

For example, if one says to a lazy woman:

O setswatswa (You are industrious), ironically the sentence means that the said woman is lazy.

Irony is a form of humour in speech or writing in which what one says is the opposite of what one actually means. In irony there is always a contrast between what the words say and what the author means. Irony like other figures of speech uses active vocabulary.

2.2.2.3 **Sarcasm (Kodutlo)**

Sarcasm is a figure of speech, like irony, which occurs when one thing is said, but something else is intended or understood. It is used with the express purpose of hurting, insulting or humiliating.

Kent (1990:286) summed up sarcasm by saying:

Sarcasm is a form of mockery or humour intended to belittle someone. In a sarcastic remark you often say the opposite of what you mean, in an ironical way.

Often it is one's tone of voice that makes it quite clear that one is not paying someone a compliment. Trying to explain what sarcasm is, Nokaneng and Louwrens (2000:253-254) say:

*Motho o a sotlega. Se nyakile go swana le kgegeo.
Sona ge motho a thoma go kwešiša mantšu a hlaba
e le ruri. Gantši motho o hlagiša kgopolo tše pedi*

goba tše tharo. Kgopolo ya mathomo e thea kodutlo yeo gomme ke e bose, kgopolo ye e latelago ke yona yeo e tlišago kodutlo.

For instance:

- (f) *Mosadi yo ke modumedi wa go hloka Beibele.*
(This woman is a Christian without a Bible).

The example that is cited above indicates that the said woman is a Christian in disguise. She does not follow the commandments, for she does not read or study the Bible. Clouse (1994:176) says that irony is usually more subtle and less biting than sarcasm.

2.2.3 Figures of speech based on exaggeration and understatements

2.2.3.1 Hyperbole (*Pheteletšo*)

In giving light to what hyperbole is, Muller and Williams (1995:1112) say that hyperbole is deliberately overstated, exaggerated figurative language, used either for comic or great emotional effect. It is also as in the irony, a form of humour in speech and writing. It also uses active vocabulary.

Nokaneng and Louwrens (2000:236) say:

Ka sekapolelo se, motho o oketša taba, o a fetiša e le go tiiša seo se bolelwago le gore bogolo bja seo se bolelwago bo bonale gabotse. Ke maaka a a dumeletšwego.

For instance:

- (g) *E be e se batho e le tšie.*
(They were not people, were locusts)

The word *batho*, is emphasised by the use of *tšie* since locusts are always in groups. The figure of speech deals with association and exaggeration. A swarm of locusts is associated with a crowd of people.

To add to that, Grobler *et al.*, (1989:501) say:

*Se ke mokgwa wa go feteletša, lebaka e le go šupa
kgatelelo.*

For example:

- (h) *Moisa yo ga a nwe o a tšhela.*
(This guy is not drinking he is pouring.)

This example places emphasis on the fact that the man is drinking excessively.

2.2.3.2 Litotes (*Laethotese*)

Lutrin and Pincus (2002:42) define litotes as a figure of speech that uses a negative and an opposite to understate what is intended.

The definition we get from the two scholars, is in agreement with what we get from Nokaneng and Louwrens (2000:507):

*Laethotese ke sekapolelo seo se bolelago gannyane
ka taba. Go palelwa ke go bolela mo go feletšego ka
ga selo go ka feta mellwane ya go nagana le ya
kamogelo ya selo. Laethotese ke sekapolelo seo se
šomišago mmolelo wa go ganetša mola mmolelo wa
tumelo e le wona wo o ka bego o tšweletša taba
gabotse thwii le gona ka maatla.*

In Northern Sotho one may say:

- (i) *Ga a mpone (o a nnyatša).*
(He does not see me, he undermines me.)

The importance of litotes is controlled by us only if we have knowledge of what is talked about.

2.2.4 Miscellaneous

2.2.4.1 Synecdoche (*Phetolaina*)

- (j) *Africa-Borwa e thopile sefoka ka kgwele ya Maoto.*
Lit. South-Africa has won the football game.
Fig. It was the team, not the country that won the game.

Nokaneng and Louwrens (2000:507) say:

*Motho ge a bolela o diriša karolo ya selo seo gomme
ra tseba gore o ra selo seo ka moka.*

The scholars say that this figure of speech is found in most cases in idioms. The intention being to remind ourselves of the idioms based on body parts. It is seldom found in poetry.

For instance:

- (k) Lit. *O hloka molomo* (He does not have mouth).
Fig. *O hloka polelo* (He does not have anything to say).
- (l) Lit. *Selepe se remile* (An axe has cut).
Fig. *Kgoši e ahlotše* (The king has passed the judgement).

2.2.5 Conclusion

All the figures of speech mentioned above play a vital role in an economic sense in terms of language. They do not use too many words in their sentences. The figures of speech used in this study do embrace a figure of speech named euphemism. It is the one that will be discussed in details as the mother of those already cited above. Euphemism is an integral part of figurative language.

2.3 EUPHEMISM (*PHEFOLO*)

2.3.1 Euphemism defined

Euphemism is a form of metonymy or metaphor, but the figure of speech is often defined by its purpose rather than by the technique used. This figure of speech is a device of using a substituted expression to disguise some fact or idea that is distressing, offensive or embarrassing. For example, in Northern Sotho, when an elderly person is drunk it is said:

- (m) *O khoše* (He has had his fill) for.
 O tagilwe (He is drunk).

Tagwa is a direct word for being drunk; we do euphemise by saying "*o khoše*", as if the person concerned has eaten sufficiently. Even in English, it is said that, he is juiced for drunk.

It is usually socially desirable to avoid causing pain or using words that hurt, which depict one as silly. Sensible people will be guided by the society they are in. Some expressions may be acceptable in the family circles or private conversations, but not in the public. It is often preferable to use euphemisms that some people do not understand, and so perhaps cause them embarrassment, than to use language that is too crude for the occasion.

In Northern Sotho it is often said of a dead person:

(n) *O tšerwe ke phiri* (Figuratively means he passed on).

instead of saying

O hwile (literally meaning he is dead).

The expression “*o tšerwe ke phiri*” is used to euphemise the word “*go hwa*”. This is done because the hyena is a nocturnal animal, when the message is conveyed, in the presence of the children, they will believe it because they could not see it. In Northern Sotho tradition “*phiri*” (hyena) is associated with “*bolo*” (witchcraft). It is believed that a human being could not just die without being bewitched.

Euphemism is discretion in speech. It is not used to conceal or hide the truth and the fact. It is employed to minimize the painful impression on the listener. It compels us to avoid calling things by their names. This results from various human feelings and emotions which range from religious reverence down to common decency. Euphemism makes us realise that one of the most distinctive features of sophisticated speech, as distinguished from unsophisticated speech in our time, is the absence of squeamishness.

Nokaneng and Louwrens (2000:255) say:

Ka sekapolelo se re šomiša mantšu a borutho le a go rarela bakeng sa mantšu a bogale le a go hlaba. Mo sethong se sengwe le se sengwe polelo e swanetše go hlomphiwa bjalo ka mo setho se hlomphiwago ka gona. Polelo e na le dikeletšo, go na le polelo ya dikoma le ya badimo gomme re swanetše go hlokomela taba ye ge re begela ba bangwe ditaba ...

Nokaneng and Louwrens put it in such a manner that we should take care of the situations, when and where we talk. There should be a difference when one is with children and when one is among adults. In the company of teenagers one may say:

- (o) *Matome o a rota.*
(Matome is urinating).

It will differ when one is in the company of adults, one will say:

- (p) *Matome o fahla magotlo.*
(Matome passes water).

Sentence (o) above is literal, but sentence (p) is figurative. The fact is they mean one and the same thing. Mentioning sentence (o), when one is in the company of adults, will offend them. Mentioning the second sentence, when one is with adults, will minimize the offence.

Grobler, *et al.*, (1989:501) say:

*Mo go phefola re hwetša dilo tše di sa kgahlišego
goba tše di kgopišago, di hlagišwa ka mantšu a a ka
se nyamišego o kaalo.*

In this case one may say:

- (q) *Ngwana o a ponapona.*
(A child is naked).

Rangwane o tlhobotše.
(*Rangwane* is naked).

The word "*popapona*", used in the company of adults may give the impression that the person is crazy whereas the word "*itlhobotše*", is accepted in the formal and informal situations.

One could observe that euphemism as a figure of speech, communicates by analogy. The use of euphemism invites imagination to visualize the similarity and gets the real meaning. Euphemism is employed to suit the situation and the context. It stimulates and directs the emotions of the readers and audience, to

communicate their own emotions with concrete images. This is to develop stylistic colour and excitement.

Buyss and Sheffler (1992:111) state:

Euphemism is the expression of a disagreeable or offensive idea in a more pleasant manner.

In alignment with Buyss and Sheffler, Anderson and Trudgill (1990:56-57) say:

There are some 'unmentionable' bodily functions. The activities are certainly not forbidden, they are absolutely necessary for survival but there are certain appropriate hidden places for them. We do not talk about them. Where we are forced to mention them, we have to obey the rules and choose the proper expressions (urine and faeces rather than piss and shit.)

The idea from Anderson and Trudgill, could also play a part even in Northern Sotho. Some words are taken as taboos. That is why some words are more or less taboos for they are not active words even if they are not forbidden by the society. To emphasise the idea Anderson and Trudgill (1990:55-56) state:

To say a certain area of life is taboo, is to say that it is altogether forbidden but that is regulated by conscious or unconscious rules. It is certainly not forbidden or improper to have sex, given the right time, person and maybe even the right motivation. The partner should be fairly motivated. The partner should be fairly close in many cultures (a certain class, group, colour etc.) but not too close (incests) and should definitely be a human being (not an animal-bestiality).

The taboo word is totally forbidden by the society. In Northern Sotho, there are some words that are ultimately thought of as taboos whereas they are not. They are mentioned when peers are together, especially teenagers. When these words are mentioned one would consider it using vulgarism.

For instance:

- (r) *Go nyela* (Lit. to defecate).
O širela ka seolo (Fig. he relieves himself).

The words *nyela* and *nyoba*, are not used in public and in formal situations. They are not forbidden by the society, but if one mentions them, one starts to think of their functions. Their activities could not be done or practised in public. The words will not be used until they are forgotten and their substitutions will live longer. We should always remember that euphemisms are found in idiom expressions.

Another word that is not always used in public is:

- (s) Lit. *Go pshinya* (to fart).
Fig. *Go potla* (to belch).

People will understand one only when one employs palatable words. By using pleasant expressions when one is amongst his peers and elders, one will earn respect and honour.

For example, in Northern Sotho, when men are with women and one realises that someone's trouser is unbuttoned, one will say to him:

- (t) *Borokgo bo bulegile* (Lit. the trouser is unbuttoned).
Madi phatleng (Fig. your fly is open).

Hendry, Gardyne and Burger (1994:65) define euphemism as, using a mild, indirect term instead of a blunt one to describe something unpleasant or sensitive. The definition given by Hendry et. al., is the same as the one given by Adey, Orr and Swemmer (1989:103) stating that euphemism is the opposite of blunt directness. They continue by saying that an unpleasant idea need not always be cushioned in excess verbiage.

It is clear that Crowley (1997:153) wanted to put emphasis on politeness caused by euphemism in expressions. He says that euphemism is a term that we use to avoid some other terms which have some kind of unpleasant associations, or a term which is completely taboo in some contexts.

Taboo is a word whose use is socially prohibited, but the use of euphemism is the promotion of a mutual relationship. In euphemism people often use roundabout ways of talking about unpleasant things that might hurt others.

O'Grady, Dobrovolsky and Kamba (1987:554) define euphemism as:

The avoidance of words which may be seen as offensive, obscene, or somehow disturbing to listeners or readers.

O'Grady et al. also say that euphemism is a figure of speech that is not complicated. It is employed in speech and writing, in different situations and discussions.

Euphemisms make conversations lively and enjoyable. Euphemisms help us to understand the concepts that cause people, psychological and social discomfort. Through euphemisms, we can make the difference between an informal and a formal situation.

2.3.2 Factors influencing the use of euphemisms

2.3.2.1 Language taboos

Taboos include any prohibition resulting from social or other conversations. Taboos of different sorts are not just isolated facts in a culture but important elements in the structure and social life of a culture. Taboo words are those that are to be avoided entirely or avoided in mixed company or polite company. Language is used sensitively when people are discussing their day to day aspects in life. Ultimately, some words in their utterances tend to be harsh or regarded as taboos. Because of harsh and hurting words, euphemism has been introduced.

2.3.2.2 Sex

Sex is one of the terms that were not used in public. These days, at the age of ten, a child might be conversant with sex. Learners are taught about it at schools and they practise sex at home. In the past it was regarded as taboo to mention the word “sex”.

In Northern Sotho one may say:

Lit. *Kgobe o kga morogo le Raisibe.*

(Kgobe is plucking the vegetable with Raisibe).

Fig. Kgobe makes love to Raisibe.

The expression that the people used in the past was:

Lit. *Go robala* (to sleep).

Fig. To have sexual intercourse.

The word “*robala*” has been used until the people regarded it as an ordinary, not a euphemism. The word that was to be used and is not a euphemism, is included in the unmentionables, the word is “*nyoba*”. It is obvious that when this word is uttered, is painful and too emotionally loaded. The word “*robala*” is substituting it to disguise or hide the true meaning of what is being said.

2.3.2.3 Body parts

Northern Sotho speakers do have an undue respect of the body of a human being. Euphemism may be created by phonetic distortion. In the following examples, phonetic distortion has been employed for euphemism.

Marago → *Mašago* (Buttocks)

Marete → *Mašete* (testes)

These words are some of the unmentionables that are employed when people are in conversation within a formal situation. When one says “*lerago*”, it seems more painful and vulgar than when one says “*lešago*”. The native Northern Sotho speakers tend to make things pleasant by using more acceptable words. *Marago* are now referred to as *madulo* to euphemise them.

The body parts of a human being are the most important items that should be respected. People use English equivalents to mention some of them to make them pleasant. Northern Sotho authors in their genre, avoid vulgarism for they know that whatever annoys a good reader interferes with communication.

2.3.2.4 Death

Death is an unforgettable aspect in life. It is mankind’s desire to forget the process of ageing that leads inevitably to death. Kind words have been coined to make the stages and roles of life seem more bearable. In alignment with the statement, Ball (1928:60-61) says:

Language is clear when it is pathetic. You can, in truth understand a man’s word only by understanding his temper. To teach the meaning of a word thoroughly, is to teach the nature of the spirit that coined it.

In Northern Sotho euphemistic language is still increasing for fear of death. The dead man is portrayed as merely napping, and death is known as a sleep. It is said of a dead person:

O re tlogetše.

Lit. He left us behind.

Fig. He is dead.

This figure of speech is employed about death to diminish or to tone down a painful evocation or to soften tragic or painful responses. Death was taken in ancient religion to be all-pervading and inevitable and emanating from the desires of gods.

In order to comfort the bereaved, the pastor at the cemetery would employ the pleasant words for the deceased. In Northern Sotho, he will always use words such as:

O ile bohunamatolo.

Lit. He went to draw up the knees.

Fig. He is dead.

People are entitled to respect one another. Unfortunately euphemism is also used in languages that are characterised by pretentious vocabulary or meaning.

2.3.2.5 Theft and crime

In theft and crime, euphemism is used negatively. Euphemism is used to make things pleasant and interesting not to hurt people, but when used to refer to theft and crime which are activities are of the embarrassing situations, it is used negatively. Thieves and criminals also added their cants and jargon of every sort to the language. All these people are united in a private language or speech register that is often obscure in its implications. Sometimes prison argot is employed to conceal inmate activity from the guards. It may also be spoken to initiate new prisoners (new fish) into their society to bind them together.

The aristocrats of the criminal world live by their wits, and tongues. This is observed in Tsotsi language, wherein they combine a variety of languages together to form one language. For instance:

My timer o ragile pakete.

Lit. My father kicked the bucket.

Fig. My father has passed away.

In most cases Afrikaans and English are blended. For example:

Daardie old timer ek wil hom notch.

Lit. I want to see that old man.

O thabile.

Lit. He is happy.

Fig. He is drunk.

Drunkenness plays a pivotal role in employing euphemism as the form of respect. Fortunately is used by elderly people for they honour one another.

2.3.2.7 Bodily functions

Words sometimes, in moments of grace, attain the quality of deeds. Words are socially acceptable when they are uttered in a pleasant manner. We say that people are civilized if they are able to differentiate between the good and the bad. Civilization is identified with increased repression. It is now acknowledged that repression is the mother of euphemism. Traditionally, in our culture, words such as sex, ejaculation and menstruation were mentioned euphemistically. They were taboos and unmentionables.

In Northern Sotho when an adult has released a pungent smell, it is said:

Lit. *O potlile*, he belched.

Fig. *O pšhintše*, he has farted.

The people do not want to mention that the old person or an adult has emitted an intestinal gas from the anus because of respect.

When the girls reach the stage of puberty, they start to menstruate. In Northern Sotho, it is said they reached the stage of *lehlapo*, menstruation. This is derived from the verb '*hlapa*', meaning to wash. At times in English the term used is to have one's period. It is euphemised in order to be pleasant when one mentions it, for people do not like to see the blood.

2.4 CONCLUSION

Euphemisms as Trask (1994:42) says “are a polite but roundabout expressions for things which are considered too nasty to talk about directly”.

From the statement stated by Trask, we could deduce that euphemisms are polite substitutes for taboo words. Euphemisms can be classified in a variety of categories. They are used to minimise the pain, to hide the embarrassment and to be acceptable in the company of the family and the society. We should take heed of the factors that influenced the euphemisms. The main purpose of employing euphemism is to convey a message that is palatable and understandable.

CHAPTER THREE

EUPHEMISM AS EMBEDDED IN NORTHERN SOTHO NOVELS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Euphemism is employed in every culture and society. It is regarded as a mirror reflecting society. Its changes are related to the society, times and its forms are different. Euphemisms reflect people's psychological world. People often use indirect politeness to achieve politeness.

In the language, Northern Sotho euphemism should achieve the function of softening, alleviating, concealing or showing politeness. It should be considered to be a kind of rhetorical skill. Euphemism is motivated by the wish to display in-group identity markers and the wish to amuse an audience.

In employing euphemisms, we are to believe that language is a result of human cognition whose structure and function are also based on our experience. Traditionally, Northern Sotho authors learnt euphemism from their elders who employed euphemisms in their communication when they were at meetings. In Northern Sotho when someone is not successful, it is said, *o hlotšwe*, he failed. The direct word is *o paletšwe*. People are afraid to use the direct word, for someone would feel like an idiot. From the cited statement, it is clear that thoughts are imaginative.

Northern Sotho authors in their literature, especially novels, use the words that were to be avoided, together with their euphemisms. The harsh words should not be used together with their indirect lexical items. Euphemisms should be employed, as Brown (1993:226) stated, that euphemisms are words and phrases people use to avoid making a statement that is direct, clear and honest – are often used out of kindness when the direct expression might offend.

The manner in which we address the people should be related to the manner in which we write.

The following paragraphs reveal how authors employ euphemism, in their works of art.

3.2 NORTHERN SOTHO NOVELS IN PERSPECTIVE

Authors through the novels, portray euphemisms in different ways in their scenarios. The following scenarios are introduced in different novels to put forward the euphemism: humour, intoxication, jargon, obituaries and politeness. These scenarios are not the only ones that are portrayed in the novels. There are still some that could be found in the novels.

3.2.1 Humour

De Wet Wellmann and Venter (2007:110) define humour as the quality of being funny. Humour is employed to entertain and amuse people. In the case of euphemism, humour is used to make the situation lively. Humour is not employed to ameliorate the effects of the lexical item used, although it is used to lessen the effects of the words which are not preferred. Houghton-Hawksley (2012:96) states that humour is another frequently-used emotional technique; but advertisers must use it with caution as the readers or viewers may enjoy the humour so much that they forget what is being advertised. Houghton-Hawksley (2012:258) says that humour should be used sparingly but effectively. It is one way of keeping one's audience's attention and of deflecting possible arguments. Humour is the quality of a situation or happening that makes one laugh or smile.

In alignment with what is said, Fletcher and Sceales (1975:274) states that humour may be defined as that quality of action, speech or writing that excites amusement. Humour and wit both have many features in common, but the essential difference is that humour is good-tempered, whereas wit is often malicious. According to the above-mentioned scholars, humour is solely based on amusement.

This could be tracked from a past conflict among chiefs, as evidence in Matsepe's (1962) novel, *Kgoši Letšaga*, *Kgoši Matshelo* and *Kgoši Thibama*. Monoši is the one who caused the conflict. Monoši increased the number of slaves at Kgoši Letšaga's

village, who are from Kgoši Matshelo's tribe. Boditsi, Kgoši Tshetlo's son is taken by Kgoši Matshelo's soldiers. Manthe and her mother-in-law, Kgoši Letšaga's mother, ask Kgoši Letšaga about Monoši. They realise that Monoši is a perpetrator. Thibama's mother is ill. She complains of chest ache and running stomach. Kgoši Thibama blames Kgoši Letšaga, saying that Kgoši Letšaga is the one who wants to kill his mother. There are many ladies at the meeting who started crying, after interpreting his words to mean that kgoši's mother passed away. It is stated that:

Fao, fao gona Thibama a hlakana hlogo. A titimolla lešaba le la ka tsaka a phobetša dihlogo ka petlwa, a gafa bjalo ka tau ye e gobadišwego ke marumo a batsomi (Matsepe, 1962:85).

Literally,

There Thibama became confused, he rose suddenly and killed a group of people with spears, he stabbed and cut with a battle axe, he made impression on the heads with knobkerrie, and he ran mad like an injured lion with hunter's spears.

Figuratively,

Thibama became mentally deranged and killed all the people with spears, battle axe and made impression on their heads.

The narrator did not intend to mention that Thibama became mad; he says that Thibama was frustrated. He wants to euphemise the word, **gafa**, to 'run mad', by saying that he was frustrated. The narrator uses the lexical items in a dramatic way to amuse the readers. It indicates that humour is the quality of being funny. The narrator knows the feelings of somebody, who is mentally disturbed. He employs euphemism, **a hlakana hlogo**, frustrated, together with the direct lexical item that should have been avoided, **gafa**, to run mad. The use of the sentence '**a titimolla lešaba lela ka tsaka a pobetša dihlogo ka petlwa**', is where the dramatic expression lies. The sentence indicates that he suddenly rose and killed a group of people with spears, he stabbed and cut with a battle axe, he made an impression on

Lit.

I did not wait to see what was happening but I had to go to the fence fighting bravely so that if possible, the heel could be broken. I had to touch the fence with two hands and crossed to the side. I got to the passage and ate the ground trying to duck places with too much light - resisted in darkness. My belly was tightened and painful, hot when I was running. It was the whisky I drank.

Fig.

I did not wait to see what was happening, but I had to go to the fence running fast. I had to touch the fence with two hands and cross to the other side. I got to the passage and ran away trying to dodge places with too much light – resisted in darkness. My belly was tightened and painful, hot when I was running. It was the whisky I drank.

The narrator, Nnono Molaba, uses the idiomatic expressions, ***ke ngateditše gore serethe se kgaoge***, running in the fastest way as possible. Nnono was not in need of saying it in the direct manner, in saying “I ran away”, for he wanted to put it in the euphemistic manner to flavour the language or to amuse the people. Ultimately in the same paragraph, the expression, “... ***ge ke kitima***, ... When I run”, is employed and it does not require the use of euphemistic expression because it does not hurt or offend anybody. The euphemistic expression used, is used only for entertainment purposes.

The euphemistic expression is used by the narrator to please the readers in order to arouse a sense of humour. When one imagines someone who is a coward or a thief running away from the police or dogs, one will create a mental picture of the heels or feet of that person moving in the air. The narrator would like to accommodate all the people, in order to have the feeling of pleasure, knowing well that books are written for the young and old people. It is interesting to have novels that entice their readers for having euphemism in them that could make situations lively. Everybody will develop a desire to read them.

Humour could also be depicted by some authors in an amusing or a funny way.

In Sekhukhune's (1975) novel, Mmutle wages a conflict between two families. He impregnated one family's child, he does not accept that he is the one who caused the problem or one who impregnated the girl. Mmutle entered into his mother's cousin whereas he is promised a girl in his uncle's home. This matter has caused envy among both families. The families employ proverbs and idioms in their discussions to soothe themselves. The author states:

Ga go sa etelanwa bjalo ka maabane le maloba. Ba thomile go utswana ka dintlha tša maahlo, ba a kopolana (Sekhukhune, 1975:31).

Lit.

They do not pay a visit to one another anymore like yesterday and the day before yesterday. They started to steal one another with the ends of their eyes; they look into each other's eyes.

Fig.

They do not pay a visit to one another anymore as in the past. They eye one another, they hate one another.

It is not good to look at someone in a manner in which one could realise that one has done something wrong. It is a shame to be looked at in a cunning way. The narrator uses an expression, *go utswana ka dintlha tša maahlo*, to eye one another cunningly as when a boy is looking at the girl he wants to propose love to. According to the employment of euphemism, the expression used does not hurt anybody, but it is used to amuse the people. The narrator is aware that usually when two people meet, who are not on good terms, they look at one another in an unpleasant manner.

The euphemistic expression is supplemented by the expression of the same idea, *ba a kopolana*, eyeing one another cunningly. It does not harm a fly even if it could be employed directly, without euphemistic expression.

Humour is a form of euphemism that is suitable for informal and formal situations. Humour is the quality of being funny. Since it is suitable for informal and formal

situations it could be employed by youngsters and adults. It should be employed by people who are making fun but not the emotional ones for it is good-tempered.

3.2.2 Intoxication

Shadé (1986:2869) describes intoxication as the state in which a person is overtly affected by an excess of a drug or poison. It is often used to describe the psychological effects of drugs and, particularly, alcohol, in which behaviour may become disinhibited, morose or aggressive and in which judgement is impaired.

Intoxication is the state in which one feels excited so that one cannot think clearly. Drinking alcohol is preferred by adults during leisure time. Culturally, in Northern Sotho alcohol should be taken strictly by the adults. Most of the people say it is sweet when people drink in a group. Even if liquor is sour, people disguise their feelings and say it is sweet and causes pleasure. Usually people say that they drink to be cool, to feel clever, because they are sad. Duras (2012:10) states that alcohol does not console, it does not fill up anyone's psychological gaps, and all it replaces is the lack of God. Looking at the statement by Duras, it is observed that, it does not differ so much from Shadé's statement

Euphemism plays a pivotal role in mentioning, drinking a beer or intoxicating liquid. Alcohol provides an escape from reality.

Intoxication form extracted from Mminele's *Ngwana wa Mobu* (1972). Mokhura is Phankga's uncle. He is a chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) at school. Lahlang is the principal of the school named Rethuše. Phankga explains to his uncle on what Lahlang fails to do at school. Phankga speaks ill of Lahlang for he wants to be the principal of Rethuše Secondary School. Mokhura says Phankga should learn to take liquor for most of the people in the village are liquor consumers. Mokhura emphasises that Phankga should buy the liquor for those who do not have money. Phankga pleads to his uncle that Mokhura should teach him to drink liquor. It is on Friday afternoon, Phankga is with his uncle in his uncle's home. Mokhura's wife is an expert in preparing the beer. The party is organised. The author says:

*Phankga o ile a bona gore e tla ba bjoba, ge a ka ithuta **go hupa** gona ka moo. E šetše e le dibekenyana a thomile **go kukela godimo**. Mo Labohlanong le, bo thomile ka go kirinkišana le **moeta wa bjala** bjo ba bo bitšago nkgokolo. Bo filwe leina le ka ge e le bjo bokoto.*

Lit.

Phankga realised that it will be honest, if he could learn to hold something in the mouth there. It is already a number of weeks since he started to lift up. This Friday, they started by wrestling with a small clay-pot of beer known as *nkgokolo*. It is given this name, for it is thick.

Fig.

Phankga observed that it will be honest, if he could learn to drink beer. It is already a number of weeks since he started drinking. This Friday, they started drinking from a small clay-pot of beer known as *nkgokolo*. It is given this name, for it is thick.

The expressions, '*go hupa*', euphemistically to drink, and '*go kukela godimo*', also euphemistically to drink; are used consecutively. In the word, ***hupa***, literally meaning to hold something in the mouth, the author wants to give the difference between drinking a traditional beer and any intoxicating liquid like brandy and whisky. When one drinks a traditional beer, immediately it gets into the mouth, it would take time in the mouth before it could be swallowed for it is not sour, and it is taken in a large quantity. When one drinks whisky or brandy, immediately it gets into the mouth, it will be swallowed before one could get its taste, for it is sour. Most people take a whisky or brandy in a form of a tot, for the fear that it may damage the oesophagus.

On the other hand, the author employs the expression, ***go kukela godimo***, literally, to lift something up. The expression is also used to give the difference between the drinking of the traditional beer and the drinking of whisky and brandy or the modern alcoholic beverages. Traditionally, when the elders were drinking, they used claypots to serve the traditional beer or alternatively used gourds or calabashes.

Clay pots are heavier than the glasses used for whiskies and brandies. The expression, **go kukela godimo**, is associated with the way in which grandmothers and grandfathers used clay pots when they were drinking. They lifted up the small clay pots. This is how and why the author uses both expressions, **go hupa** and **go kukela godimo**.

Ultimately, it is said in a direct way, using the expression, **moeta wa bjala**, small clay pot of beer, whereas at the beginning the speaker was in need of avoiding the word 'bjala', ultimately he uses it.

In the same novel, from Mminele (1972) we get the following: Phankga starts new life. His father reprimands him on his deeds, influencing Batau to evict Lahlang in order to make him, Phankga, a principal. The second issue which he is blamed for, is the way he was drunk at Phakane. His father is furious, he says that he does not know what Phankga's mother could have done if she was still alive. Mr Mootli, Phankga's father, wishes that Phankga's mother could come back on earth, become resurrected. Mr Mootli continues:

*Ngwanaka, ruri o swiswadišše pelo ya ka. O lebantše sethokgwa o pontše. O ikgethetše **mogwera yo mošoro wa go hloka kgaugelo le kwelobohloko - bjala**. Mminele (1972:43).*

Lit.

My child, really you have blackened my heart. You faced the forest with your eyes closed. You have chosen a cruel friend who is without mercy and relentless – beer.

Fig.

My child, really you have disappointed me. You moved aimlessly. You have chosen to drink beer.

The speaker, Mr Mootli feels for the readers, at first, he euphemises the word, 'bjala' beer by saying it is a cruel friend. Mr Mootli mentions that his child has chosen a cruel friend.

It is true that a friend in need is a friend indeed. The one who is mentioned by Mr Mootli seems to be an enemy to his child since he is cruel. No one would like to befriend with a cruel person. The words, cruel and friend are of the opposite in semantics. In conclusion, it is of the opinion of this researcher that Mr Mootli says that his child has chosen an enemy. The speaker realises that the audience or readers might be disappointed, he euphemises the lexical item. Ultimately, he has a compassion to mention directly, which is the manner that should be avoided in order to educate others. The word '*bjala*' should have not been used.

Moloto (1960) presents the following from his novel: Makhina whose real name is Daniel Kgabutli Manamela fought during the 2nd World War, in 1945, as a soldier. After the war, he joined SAPS and later joined the detectives. Criminals were always chasing after him. As a nomadic person, he arrived at Kgoši Nyatsane's homestead, Nyatshenda became an informer for Makhina. He told him about the three men who arrived in the family (*mošate*) the day before. In the royal family Makhina was given meals and water. Makhina thought that he should share the food with others; but Natshenda approached him and ate together with Makhina. Makhina concentrated too much on sour porridge made with milk. The speaker says:

Go theošetša magobe ao, boMakhina ba ile ba fiwa 'teye ya banna', gomme ba ipshina ka yona. Bjala ga bo tswale lefšega (Moloto, 1960:69).

Lit.

To let the porridge go down, Makhina and his friends were given 'men's tea', and they enjoyed it. Beer does not give birth to a coward.

Fig.

To swallow the food, Makhina and his friends were given 'beer' and they enjoyed it.

An expression '*teye ya banna*' is used to indicate satisfaction for beer. A beer is a liquid and tea is a liquid. The author would like to enlighten the inmates that it is not the one that is known by the ordinary people, but it is for men. If he could have said 'tea' without any supplements, it would be referring to the tea leaves. When men get together, they use their own praising language, to indicate that they enjoy what they do. If he were in the public, people would realise that it is special. Because of euphemism they could not understand what was said.

The speaker euphemises the direct lexical item, ***bjala***, in a respectful manner, in portraying intoxication. In contrast, the direct lexical item is employed by the end. The combination of euphemism and the direct word should be avoided.

Euphemism discussed through intoxication, could be suitable for formal situations. Since intoxication is based on adults, it will be worthless to introduce it in the form of euphemism among youngsters. Adults enjoy it when they are together making jokes to while away time. Its wording is of an active vocabulary. It indicates that the wording for euphemism in the state of intoxication is rich for employing active vocabulary.

3.2.3 Jargon

Jargon is the specialised language of a trade or profession. Jargon is necessary for members of the specialisation, to communicate with one another effectively and efficiently. It is euphemism in that, it amuses and is used to hold attention. Jargon is a language containing technical words or expressions that pertain to a particular trade or disciplines.

Newmark (1982:131) says that jargon is variously defined as an idiom peculiar to a trade or profession, an occupational register of language, or asterisk slang unintelligible to the layman. It is realised that jargon is established by any

professional group or any group to its own members to create a sense of belonging among those who know the language. It is difficult for outsiders to know what some of the words mean, because they will be ignorant of the connotations which the words possess.

Yule (1996:255) defines jargon as a special technical vocabulary associated with a special activity or group as part of a register. The statements given make us aware that jargon is the developed secret language, which thieves can talk rapidly and tremulously in the hearing of outsiders without being understood. Thieves for example, employ jargon with an aim to disguise. They use it to deceive the listeners. Jargon is employed as a secret language, readily interpreted by the speaker and his inmates, but only guessed at by outsiders.

Lutrin and Pincus (2002:44) state that jargon is the inside-language of words phrases or expressions used exclusively by a particular group of people or profession. After studying the statements by various scholars, we get to Tsebe (1983)'s novel: *After crossing the Railway line at Mayfair*, Lesibana and his colleagues arrive at Fidase. The Christians and alcoholises come together at Fidase. They enter in the homestead of one of the ladies in Fidase. They introduce Lesibana and his colleagues and say the lady is Manthipe from Mokopane, the village known as Mamašela. The lady knows Lesibana's parents. The main greetings of Fidase is beer. At Fidase if you do not drink you will face hunger. Manthipe gives them a glass of *sekomvana* (*skokiana*). Manthipe's daughter is outside spying the police, Manthipe starts to drink a little bit, she gives the glass to Mpe and Mpe passes it to others, until Lesibana takes it. They are afraid of Jacob and Long Jan, white police. Tholo and his colleagues, drink slowly, whereas Mpe places another one. Lesibana thinks of Mamahlo at home, Mpe tells them about his money at Molepo's village. The authors says:

*Go ba ba fetša sekala seo Mpe a re, 'Na le reng ka tše thata?' Thema a re, aowa, go kaone tšona tše thata ka gobane tšona di tla re phakišetša. Ka go realo o be a re bjona **bjala** bjoo bja sekgowa bo tla phakiša go ya dihlogong tša bona. Mongwe le mongwe a ntšha mašeleng a mabedi gomme gwa rekwa semetlana sa Brandy.*

Lit.

After finishing a glass of beer Mpe said, 'What do you say on those that are hard?' Thema said, no, it is better with those that are hard for they will hasten us. He was saying that it is the beer that will go to their heads very fast. Everybody contributed twenty cents and a nip of Brandy was bought.

Fig.

After finishing a glass of beer Mpe said, 'What do you say on hot stuff?' Thema said, no, it is better with hot stuff for they will intoxicate us fast. By so saying he meant that it is the beer that will intoxicate them fast. Everybody contributed twenty cents, and a nip of Brandy was bought.

Tsebe (1983) employs the words, **tše thata**, whiskies and brandies, in a euphemistic way to introduce jargon, to soften their intoxication. If one is not in the speaker's group, one may think that the discussion is on things that are hard to be broken. It is where imagery is to be identified in euphemism. The author sympathises with people who are not teetotalers, particularly those who drink whiskies and brandies, for they usually suffer from sclerosis. Mpe is the one who uses the words in the form of a question, as a secret language, knowing well that he is with inmates. On the contrary, the author mentions the direct word, Brandy, as if he has forgotten the painful attack caused by strong alcoholic beverages. Traditionally, **bjala bja sekgowa**, hard alcoholic beverages was sold to the Whites only. It is clear that people who were running liquor stores were aware that Blacks would drink excessively and that they could jeopardise themselves.

Traugott and Pratt (1980:122) say jargon, as a rule, is acquired by people as adults, long after the more spontaneous language-learning of childhood is over, and their acquisition is usually part of an effort to gain access to a specialised group or subjects. Collins (2000:226) states that jargon consists of mostly unintelligible words and phrases, used either unthinkingly or to impress and appear smart and up-to-date.

From the statements mentioned above, we come across the related incidents of jargon from Maputla (1991)'s novel: Tshepo speaks to Tsoro with mixed feelings through the telephone. Tsoro is Tshepo's uncle. Tshepo's wife passes on and the

pots are on the stove. Three days past, no one pays a visit to Tshepo's home to console him or for greetings. Tshepo goes to Billy's house. Billy is the one who wrote the love letter. Tshepo tells Billy's wife that he is Billy's friend. Tshepo says he got a job for Billy, in Motimalenyora's Liquor Store. Billy's wife tells Tshepo that it is the second year since Billy passed on. Tshepo moves through Podile road that is not used by the motorists frequently. Tshepo finds a boy leaning against the tree smoking dagga. Tshepo cordially talks to the boy. The name of the boy is Kgwara. Tshepo brandishes a card, the boy says that he does not sell dagga. Tshepo drives with the boy, the boy tells Tshepo that rumours say the lady is killed by a policeman, who is known to the owner of the house. Ultimately Kgwara promises to assist in investigating the case. Tshepo tells Kgwara that, he is Ntshephe who is busy with investigations, and gives him false cell-phone numbers. Tshepo observes that people are moving around saying false information.

The speaker says:

*Se sengwe seo se mo kgahlogo kudu ke gore Kgwara o gweba ka **mohlare o motala** woo o kgonago go tanya dikwefa tše dintši ka go ponya ga leihlo. O tseba gabotse gore lebake le bakela motho bagwera ba bantši bao o ka šitwago ke go ba tseba ka maina ka moka (Maputla, 1991:50).*

Lit

One of those that pleases him too much is that Kgwara trades on green tree that can entice many rogues instantly. He knows very well that dagga makes a person to befriend many friends he cannot count or know them by their names.

Fig.

One of those that pleases him too much is that Kgwara trades dagga that entices many rascals instantly. He knows very well that dagga makes a person to befriend many friends in multitudes.

Jargon is euphemism based on contradiction such as irony. The author speaks of **mohlare o motala**, green tree, which necessitates imagery to get the understanding for it is used figuratively. The word, **mohlare**, a tree, is employed to deceive the

listeners. Instead of using the word, *mahlare*, leaves, the speaker uses the main sources, where the leaves are germinating. Since dagga is made up of a mixture of leaves and small grains, green in colour, but dry, the speaker would like to deceive those who are not in the know by using the tree. The colour green is employed to give the listeners or audience a false perception. Only the inmates of the speaker will grasp what is talked about.

The speaker does not want to use the word, dagga, directly. Its euphemised lexical item is employed by the people who smoke dagga, in order to conceal it from the police for it is not legalised. Ultimately, the word **lebake**, dagga, is used, that should have been avoided in order to teach the readers about euphemism solely.

Jargon is secret language; mostly comprising of unintelligible words and phrases, used either unthinkingly or to impress and appear smart and up-to-date, as Collins (2000:131) states. The view by Collins suggests that because it is used by criminals and other professionals, it should be a secret language. It employs unintelligible words and a phrase, for its purpose is to deceive the outsiders not the inmates. The words and phrases that are used are of standardised language but they are aimed at deceiving the people. Jargon exists by contrast to the spoken norm. Jargon should not be learnt by youngsters for it will breed more criminals. Jargon is not intended to be comprehensible to the non-specialists.

3.2.4 **Obituary**

The term 'obituary' is a euphemism in itself. It comes from Latin *obitus* 'departure', a common euphemistic term to death. The meaning the word has nowadays, a record or announcement of a death or deaths, especially in a newspaper; usually comprises a brief biographical sketch of the deceased.

Fernandez (2006:104) states that obituaries go beyond the limits of a mere announcement of demise; rather, they constitute a proof of mankind's failure to face morality. These funeral notices are far from being homogeneous, and it is precisely in their variety where much of their richness lies.

Fernandez, *ibid.* goes further by saying that there are two types of obituaries, namely:

- a) Those that are more informative and objective, usually limited to the exposition of facts about the death, the deceased or the place and time of the funeral, and
- b) Those that are supposedly more personal and intimate, used with a social or religious purpose, in which the feelings and emotions of the writer play a significant role.

In euphemism of death, no matter what you call a nasty thing, the thing remains nasty and eventually the euphemism becomes as offensive as the word it replaced. A new word must be found. There is deterioration, indicating that euphemism is unstable. For instance, the euphemism, undertakers changed to morticians, morticians to funeral directors and to caring, professionally trained staff. Death has been seen as a master gamesman, whom everyone tried to defeat. When facing death, language users try to soften what they really wish to communicate. There are communicative situations in which one cannot avoid the notions of death. Obituary columns are a breeding ground for euphemistic words and expressions related to the taboo death. On several occasions, the only effective way to reduce the undesirable effect of death is silence. When people announce or report death, usually they euphemise it. They do not want to touch the feelings of their next of kin.

Matlala (1966)'s novel depicts obituary: 'There is a dispute at Kgoši Matlatlaila's meeting place (kgoro). The chief's servants are frustrated. Kgoši Matlatlaila is not feeling well. Someone says they should wait for Makatakele's peer group, to return from the initiation school, the other one says Letšeafera should take the lead because he is initiated. Letšeafera's mother informs Letšeafera about what his father says. Letšeafera replies that he will be killed. His mother says Chief Matlatlaila says, Makatakele is wise and brave. Makatakele says leadership is from birth. Letšeafera's mother says what Makatakele says is trivial. Kgoši wants Letšeafera to learn Makatakele's sagacity. Makatakele says to his mother, "I

understand your talks, but all those things I won't take them. I have already been named a coward". His mother says there is still time. She talks as an adult and a parent, and she shows tears in her eyes. Letšeafera says:

*'Mma, bogoši ke bja ka, fela ge ditaba di ka no fela di boletwa bjalo **ke tla tšeiša Makatakele phiri**. O tla ya **molete-mohlaela thupa**'. Letšeafera a ntšha leo a šetše a eme ka dinao.*

Polelo ya Letšeafera le mmagwe e napile e feletše gona moo. Letšeafera o tšwetše ntle ditaba tša mmagwe di mo tsene mading. O napile o hlafile, gomme go itšhupa ge a ka hwetša sebaka, a tla bolaya Makatakele gore a se hlwe a bitšwa lefšega.

Lit.

'Mother, the chieftainship is mine, but if the news could always be spoken in this way, I will kill Makatakele. He will go to the grave'. Letšeafera said that already standing on his feet. The discussion between Letšeafera and his mother just ended there. Letšeafera went outside and his mother's news went through his blood. He is sad for it indicates that if he could get the opportunity, he will kill Makatakele so that he could not be named a coward.

Fig.

'Mother, the chieftainship is mine, but if the news could be spread in this manner, I will kill Makatakele. He will die. Letšeafera said that already standing on his feet. The discussion between Letšeafera and his mother just ended there. Letšeafera went to the outside, his mother disappointed him. He is sad for it indicates that if he could get the opportunity, he will kill Makatakele so that he could not be named a coward.

Letšeafera is also somebody who fears death. He employs the expression, **ke tla tšeiša Makatakele phiri**, I will kill Makatakele. Letšeafera reports the matter to his mother in a euphemistic manner, knowing well that the report will frighten his mother. The use of the word, **phiri**, hyena, it is a well-known fact that hyenas are nocturnal animals. It is not possible for the youngsters or even some adults to be able to see hyenas. If this type of expressions is used, there will be a conviction that truly

people are taken by the hyenas unless the people could be informed that somebody passed on.

On the other hand, Letšeafela says, **o tla ya molete-mohlaelathupa**, he will die. Letšeafela employs a figurative expression because it is a punishable offence. The speaker does not want to say it directly. The word, **molete-mohlaelathupa**, the grave, is not preferable to be mentioned, since it is associated with death, which is a frightening factor. This shows that traditionally our forefathers were measuring the graves even if they were not using figures; they were employing sticks to measure the depth of the grave. They were not using the measurements.

The two expressions used by Letšeafela are euphemistic expressions, **ke tla tšeiša Makatakele phiri**, to kill, and **o tla ya molete-mohlaelathupa**, to die, are used respectively to lessen the pain for the readers.

Eventually, the direct lexical item is employed, **bolaya**, to kill, which obliterate the purpose of euphemism.

Matlala, (*ibid*), gives another version on obituary:

The sun rises, Makatakele gives his men a job. They should start to build an enclosure made from branches. They are in the forest. Makatakele is educating them on life in the forest. The enclosure should be completed before they drive the cattle.

liii..., Uuuu...! liiiiii... uuuu...! Sebatakomo! Makatakele shouts an exclamation to indicate danger. Seloma is awakened by Makatakele's shouting. Men are killing the animal. Seloma approaches them. He shakes his head three times indicating that he is blaming the men. Seloma blames them and Mantsho members are surprised, for they were not conversant with the forest. Seloma says that they are cowards because they raised an alarm for a donkey. He tells them that the animal is a zebra. Seloma gives Montsho a job to skin the animal. Ramahlale, one of the traditional healers is busy moving up and down with Seloma, searching for the herbs. Suddenly, since they are in the bush, Seloma shouts:

'Ramahlale o lomilwe ke noga, gomme ge re ka se phakiše o tla re tlogela.' Polelo ya Seloma e tsemetše Mantsho e bile bontši bo a itshola. *'Noga, ya ke Makatakele a ka mela diphego. Lehu le ba okame* (Matlala, 1966:30).

Lit.

'Ramahlale is bitten by the snake, if we could not be in hurry he will leave us'. Seloma's talk nauseated Mantsho and most of them regret. 'Snake!' As if Makatakele can develop the wings. Death is looking at them.

Fig.

'Ramahlale is bitten by the snake. If we could not be in a hurry he will die'. Seloma's talk nauseated Mantsho and most of them regret. 'Snake!' As if Makatakele can disappear. They are facing death.

Seloma uses the expression, **o tla re tlogela**, he will die. He mentions the words in a friendly manner even if he is frightened. Seloma does not want to frighten his colleagues, for he has already realised that they are cowards. The fact that they killed a zebra thinking that it might be a dangerous animal, depicts their cowardice. The noise that was made by Seloma when he was shouting indicates that Seloma was sympathising with Ramahlale. He knows that if one of them could pass on, they won't have enough support. Alternatively, Seloma does not mention the word, **go hwa**, to die, in a direct manner since he knows that most of the Mantsho members are not used to being in the forest, they will turn against him and return home before they complete their project.

Unfortunately, the author states the word, **lehu**, death, towards the end, that is in contradiction with the use of euphemism.

The announcements of funeral notices are made in various ways. Experienced senior citizens employ their knowledge in reporting the departure of their colleagues to the youngsters. The reports of funeral notices in a euphemistic manner indicate the sign of respect and moral regeneration in the society. It shows that members of the society have sympathy for one another. A figurative language should be learned by the coming generation to make certain that culture does not degenerate in society in terms of announcing death.

3.2.5 Politeness

Russel (1993:34) states that: politeness means talking in the intimate register of family relationship, addressing others in a formally polite language to get acquainted with them; reply in extremely formal terms to somebody who is talking to you.

Politeness is the recipe of euphemism. It is employed when one wants to win the audience and the readers. Politeness often tends to cause a favourable disposition in the listener. It is employed where in most cases people want to achieve praise and more especially humour. It is frequently employed in formal situations. Politeness is used when one wants to be friendly and when one does not want to be dictatorial in action.

Fairclough (1989:66) says that politeness is based on the recognition of differences of power, degrees of social distance, among others, and oriented to reproducing them without change.

Fairclough (1989:117-118) continues to state that the formality of the situation demands formality of social relations and this is evident in the vocabulary, which consistently opts for more formal choices as opposed to less formal participants for each other's 'face', respect for status and position.

Politeness is used to avoid imposing on others. It is used in the introduction of harmony, when one speaks to his colleagues, one will employ friendly tone. Politeness could be realised in Moloto (1960)'s novel:

It is in Alexandra, one of the townships in Gauteng. It is where Makhina is staying. Makhina is a nickname given to Daniel Kgabutli Manamela. Makhina is the name he is called by his colleagues. He was a soldier during the Second World War, 1945. After the World War, he joins the police force. He proceeded to be a detective. People were spying him, especially the criminals.

Makhina is appointed to become a detective who searches real criminals. The permission to be a detective is granted to him by the Director-General of the detectives, Mr D.P. Hudson. Rufus Legong delivers a letter to Makhina who in turn gives Rufus a tot of beer. Makhina meets Mamohapi, the assistant and spy to Makhina. Most of the people wanted to kill Makhina from the restaurants. Unfortunately they are killed like flies. Knives and chains are broken when the criminals are leaving through the windows and back-doors.

*Go tšwela ka ntle e napile ke **go kgopela thušo maotong**, ka phegelelo ye e tletšego. Mongwe le mongwe o iponela phahla ya gagwe. Ba tla bonana gape matšatšing a a latelago, ya ba gona go botšišana gore: 'na, mokgotse, o **tšhabetše kae tšatši lela?**' (Moloto, 1960:3)*

Lit.

To go outside was to request assistance from the feet, with full purpose. Everybody looks at his luggage. They will see one another the following day, and ask one another, saying: My friend, where did you escape to that day?

Fig.

To go outside was to run away, with real purpose. Everybody will have to search for his space. They will come together in future, and ask one another, saying: my friend, where did you escape to?'

Moloto uses the expression, **go kgopela thušo maotong**, to run away. The expression is employed in a cordial manner, in a figurative way, euphemistically. The expression creates politeness in a respectful manner. We are certain that when one requests for something, one requests for it politely. Even when the author says that one requested it from the feet, it has been done in a polite way. Politeness embraces the whole request, euphemistically. An expression is employed often to soften the painful feeling that could be felt by someone who is told that he ran away. None of us would like to be named a coward.

Ultimately, he points out the direct expression, **go tšhaba**, to run away, as if he falls short of other expressions. The use of the direct lexical item nullifies the purpose of euphemism.

Example from Matsepe (1972)'s novel:

Politeness could be realised from Mothomang's meeting place where there are two old men under *Sclerocarya caffra*, Morula tree. They are talking about general topics. They drink a beer made up of Millet. Lekgaga appears, they give to him what they drink. They give him tidings. The old men talk about an illegitimate child (*tllhaba*) in the royal family. It is at kgoši's village. Kgoši Taudi is frustrated. His family matters are complicated. When he was crowned a king, the whole village was in turmoil. Taudi married the first lady (Mmasetšhaba) from Kgoši Mabothe, his uncle. Kgoši Taudi's mother was born after Kgoši Mabothe's birth.

Khutšišo, Taudi's wife's parents hear the news. Kgoši Mabothe is a bully man.. He murmurs because he is not informed in a proper manner. Khutšišo realises that she causes a conflict between Taudi and his uncle, Kgoši Mabothe. Kgoši Taudi is a child born after its mother had been treated by a doctor (Ngwana-Ngwako). Mphoka was detained. Kgoši Taudi moves alone to Kgoši Mabothe's home/ Kgoši Taudi did not take care of Khutšišo until Mphoka sleeps with her. Kgoši says that he does not have boys and he goes to the traditional healer. A traditional healer comes with Mphoka, they examine Khutšišo. Kgoši Taudi is told that he does not get into Khutšišo's room since two men could not sleep in one room. Mphoka has caused quarrels in many families. Kgoši Taudi is hurt when he was asking for assistance Kgoši Mabothe wants to plead by sending goats and cattle to Kgoši Taudi, for he is heartbroken. Kgoši Mabothe pleads for Khutšišo made a mistake. Mphoka is a member of Mpholo's family. Khutšišo is breast feeding an illegitimate child. Kgoši Mabothe's servant informs Kgoši Taudi and goes back. Kgoši Taudi convenes the meeting and men discuss the matter. The issue wages a war.

Khutšišo's son grew up well, as if the bad luck wished by the mother were blessings. He is named Tšhwahledi. Several years passed, Kgoši Taudi still being away from Khutšišo. His son's real name is Phankga. Later on Khutšišo gives birth to a baby boy. Phankga has a younger brother. The author says:

*Ba bangwe ba thaba ge ngaka e thušitše Taudi yoo bjale a thomilego go atelwa ke **thari e kgolo**, ba thabetše gore le bona ba tla hwetša thušo ya mohuta woo gobane ke mang wo a hloilego **thari ya tšhimane** mole e le mantlhabanedi.* (Matsepe, 1974:47).

Lit.

Some are feeling happy for the doctor helped Taudi who now started to have a numerous big skin for carrying an infant on its mother's back, they are pleased for they will also get the same assistance for who is against the skin for carrying boys as the fullbacks.

Fig.

Some are happy for the traditional healer helped Taudi who now began to give birth to a number of boys. They are happy for they will also get the same assistance for who does not like baby boys for they are fullbacks.

Taudi is a king, politeness is mixed with respect, employed in the expression, **thari ye kgolo**, baby boys. This indicates that in Northern Sotho when one talks about elders and *dikgoši*, politeness should prevail. The author employs a euphemistic expression together with a direct lexical expression, **thari ya tšhimane**. Euphemism should be autonomous. Euphemism should not be forwarded to the readers and audience, and be explained at the same time. When one is educating the other, one does not explain and give the answer to the learner. The one who is learning, should devise means to get the solution for the question, or what has been explained. In politeness there is no need to get a substitute to a direct lexical item for example, the direct lexical item, at times, is inoffensive.

Matabane (1972)'s novel puts forward the following:

Tabudi and his colleagues went to Ntsebišeng's house to drink liquor. After drinking, they drop the grains of maize along the road behind them. They entice a cock to follow them. Ladies who fetch water sees them, but they do not realise on what is going on. Tabudi and his colleagues catch the cock and slaughters it. After eating they think of resuming drinking. They go on with their booze and smoke dagga. They move on.

They arrive at Matlakaneng. Tabudi's uncle, Lesiba Mabothe, realises that Tabudi is moving up and down among his colleagues for he is drunk. Lesiba Mabothe warns them that they are playing with fire. Tabudi's uncle informs Tabudi and his colleagues that they have stolen a beer for rituals at Ntsebišeng's house and they have stolen his cock, to show that they undermine their parents. Lesiba Mabothe says Tabudi is the one who injured his cock. Tabudi does not reply his uncle in a cordial manner. Tabudi and his uncle start to fight. Raesibe, Tabudi's lover watch them. Men run after the boys seeing that Tabudi beats his uncle. The boys take the direction of the Jews. The men ring the phone to invite the police. A police van appears, the boys scatter. The driver of the police is Digareteine (Curtains). The community point their fingers at the boys. The Whites realises that Tabudi and the others are the culprits. The Black police follow them and Tabudi is slapped.

Men gather at the meeting place (*kgoro*). They say Tabudi is going to deal with a court case on Friday, next month. Tabudi's uncle, Lesiba Mabothe is the first witness to give evidence of what happened. The woman who is with Tabudi and others, in the box, is the one who saw the cock's feathers. It is said that after killing the cock, Tabudi and his colleagues, do not eat chicken feet and intestines. They say that the viscera may be poisonous. Tabudi's uncle is beaten because he asks Tabudi about what took place. Tabudi is a giant, which is why he defeated his uncle. Tabudi's uncle says:

*Ke ile ka itamolela ka go **kgopela bonnyane ka dinaong.**
Ke ile ge ke se no hlanola dinao, napa banna ba le ba
bonago ka mo lepokising le nna, **ba nkgata direthe,** ka ge
baisa ba ba be ba šetše ba re tša ja mabele di fetetša tše
dingwe. Ba ile ba re felegetša ka maswika a magakabje **ge
re tšhaba.***

Lit.

I helped myself by requesting from my feet. After running my feet inside out, these men you see in the box with me, they trapped my heels as they were saying after eating the corns they pass on to the others. They accompanied us with pebbles when we were running away.

Fig.

I helped myself by running away. After running away, these men I am charged with, they followed me as these men were saying evil communications corrupt good manners.

Tabudi's uncle states, *ka kgopela bonnyane ka dinaong*, and *ge ke se no hlanola dinao*, I ran away, and after running away. Both expressions indicate that Tabudi's uncle did not wait to see what will happen next. When one needs help, one will request it from somewhere, but one should not make use of force. It should be done politely in a respectful manner. Tabudi's uncle used a request accompanied by a prayer, to move away from the trouble. His feet allowed him to quit, and ultimately he survived, that is why he ended up in court being the first witness. Tabudi's uncle continues by saying, *ba nkgata direthe*, they followed me. All these expressions indicated in Tabudi's narration, are used in euphemistic pattern. They are used in a figurative way in order to bring tranquillity to the hearts of the readers and the listeners, who know the pain of being followed by somebody who is attacking one with weapons. Ultimately he states the expression, *ge re tšhaba*, when we run away. The word, *tšhaba* should have been avoided in order to present the true sense of euphemism.

Politeness is addressed in a formally frank language to get acquainted with others as Russel (1993) stated. It is one of the pillars of Northern Sotho language. Politeness opens the gates for everyone in the discussion, to feel free and acceptable in arguments for professionals, whether in formal or informal situations. Politeness is an euphemism in itself that caters for the youngsters and adults, for it does not have expressions that hurt or are harsh in communication. The novels that have been chosen with their expressions are genuine examples.

3.3 CONCLUSION

It has been shown how the Northern Sotho authors employ euphemism in their novels. The chosen novels make use of figure of speech, especially euphemism with the aim of bringing message to the readers. It is also observed that euphemism could be employed in different scenarios for various purposes.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 CONCLUSION

Euphemisms, according to Trask (1994:42) are polite but roundabout expressions for things which are considered too nasty to talk about directly. From the statement stated by Trask, we deduce that euphemisms are polite substitutes for taboo words. Taboo words are lexical items whose use is socially prohibited. In order to use taboo words, we are likely to use euphemism, for in language taboos spring from some causes, such as those inspired by fear; those dictated by delicacy, and taboo bans may result from a sense of decency and propriety. Fear in social and formal communication breeds euphemism. Euphemism is a word or phrase used as a polite substitute for a more natural but less refined word or phrase. Euphemisms are employed, to minimise the pain, to hide the embarrassment and to be acceptable in the company of the family and the society.

Euphemism is a natural phenomenon in Northern Sotho and it is deeply rooted in every society and in all human interactions. It flavours the Northern Sotho language and is a recipe for success in communication. It is employed to empower the budding Northern Sotho authors in their writings for their books, especially novels, to be read with eagerness and pleasure. Social norms often restrict the use of words designating religious and sexual taboos. Euphemism is employed to avoid embarrassing or taboo words; to prevent offence to others, and to disguise a biased view. It has persuasive value. We have seen how the Northern Sotho authors employ euphemism in their works of art. From the descriptions and explanations of euphemism, some scholars have given their statements as if they have read Northern Sotho novels. Their definitions of euphemism are suitable to what we have come across in the novels of the Northern Sotho language. Odell, Vacca, Hobbs and Warriner (2001:1007) say a euphemism is an indirect, agreeable-sounding word or phrase used in place of direct word or phrase that might offend people. Sometimes euphemisms are actually used to mislead – to hide the truth or misrepresent the facts.

What is observed in the study should not be regarded as a cul-de-sac, some scholars still have an advantage to supplement and unearth that is left in the study. Northern Sotho authors are required to learn and teach the readers on what is said in the study. Euphemism needs to be employed as substitution for an offence or embarrassment of what is regarded as a taboo or a socially unacceptable norm. The mechanism of euphemism lies in diverting the hearer's attention. Euphemism will educate people if one could employ it as euphemism alone. The main purpose of using euphemism is to convey the message that is palatable, enjoyable and understandable.

4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Scholars should take heed of the factors influencing euphemism, if they do not want to deviate from what euphemism is all about.
- Scholars should guard against language taboos in their writings to sustain their reputation.
- Euphemism often should be autonomous; there should be avoidance of employing a euphemistic lexical item together with its direct, original or embarrassing and offensive word. Taboo and euphemism are thus two faces of the same coin.
- In its usage, euphemism if properly employed could enhance the education of the entire society.
- It is used to make the writing more vivid or exciting.

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