THE MORPHEME LE IN NORTHERN SOTHO: A LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS.

BY

MAKOMA DONCY SEJAPHALA

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SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR N. A. MILUBI

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DECLARATION

I, MAKOMA DONCY SEJAPHALA, hereby declare that
THE MORPHEME LE IN NORTHERN SOTHO: A LINGUSTIC
ANALYSIS, submitted to the University of Limpopo, has not previously been
submitted for a degree purposes at this or any other university and that it is my own
work in design and in execution. All the reference materials contained herein have
been duly acknowledged.

........................................... ...........................................

STUDENT NUMBER
200729373
DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the following:

My family: Botšhilo Anna Sejaphala (My mother),

Tumelo Mokhanyane Sejaphala,

Miyelani Ingrid Sejaphala and

My late father: Papalala Wilson Sejaphala
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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the morpheme *le* in Northern Sotho. It is sometimes confusing to establish the correct semantic function which the morpheme *le* expresses; and also to classify it into a certain word category. This study suggests the morphological features which the morpheme *le* bears in terms of its word categorization. The morpheme *le* in Northern Sotho can be used as a conjunction, a demonstrative pronoun, an agreement, a preposition, a copulative, an adverb and a complement as well.

It is suggested in this study, ways of identifying the semantic function of the morpheme *le* in various contexts. This study reflects that the morpheme *le* in Northern Sotho can be used to denote: possession, accompaniment, location, additive focus, existentialism and honorifics.
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CHAPTER ONE : INTRODUCTION

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Northern Sotho has a variety of morphemes that can be classified into various word categories. For example, it is possible to classify some morphemes into nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, and conjunctives. However, when it comes to the morpheme le, it is difficult to do so since it can function in various capacities, such as, a preposition, conjunctive, concord, demonstrative, copulative and locative. Semantically, the Northern Sotho morpheme le can denote various meanings such as showing possession, accompaniment, and location.

A study of the morpheme le is therefore crucial in Northern Sotho so as to clarify semantic problems and word categorization to the Northern Sotho language users.

1.2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Louwrens (1994:113) acknowledges the work of Crystal (1991:223) wherein the concept morpheme is defined as:

The minimal distinctive unit of grammar, and the central concern of morphology. Its original motivation was as an alternative to the notion of word which had proved to be difficult to work with in comparing languages. Words, moreover, could be quite complex in structure, and there was a need for a single concept to interrelate such as roots, prefix, compound, etc. The morpheme, accordingly was seen primarily as the smallest functioning unit in the composition of words.

What Louwrens (1994:113) emphasizes in this regard is that a morpheme is the smallest meaningful unit in language. From this definition, it is clear that a morpheme is the smallest unit of language which is meaningful.
1.2.1. Semantic problem of the morpheme *le* in Northern Sotho

The morpheme *le* poses many semantic challenges as it expresses a variety of meanings. For example:

1. a. *Ke na le dijo.*
   (I have food.)

   b. *Ke na le Asthma e sego TB.*
   (I have Asthma not TB.)

   c. *Tate o na le mma.*
   (Daddy is with mummy.)

   d. *Ke be ke le toropong.*
   (I was in town.)

   e. *Ngwana le yena o tla lla.*
   (The child too will cry.)

   f. *Go be go le bose.*
   (It was nice.)

The examples in (1) above appear with *le* which respectively denotes possession, qualification, accompaniment, location, additive focus and existentialism. It is sometimes confusing to establish the correct meaning which *le* expresses on account of its ambiguous nature. A study is therefore necessary to highlight all these issues and, especially, to suggest ways of identifying the correct meaning of *le* in various contexts.
1.2.2. Word categorization of the morpheme *le* in Northern Sotho

Apart from the ambiguity that *le* denotes in terms of semantics, it also causes a lot of difficulties with regards to word categorization. This is the case because *le* does not belong to a single word category as the following examples prove:

2. *Dijo le dino.*
   (Food and drinks.)

   ![Diagram](image)

   In this example, the morpheme *le* is used as a conjunctive between the noun phrases *dijo* (food) and *dino* (drinks).

3. *O tšere le.*
   (He took this one.)

   In this example, the morpheme *le* is used as a demonstrative pronoun of Class 5 (Position 1A).

4. *Letšatši le a hlabas.*
(The sun rises.)

The morpheme *le* in (4) above is used as a concord, Class 5 in this example.

5. *Ngwana o na le dijo.*

(The child has food.)

```
NP                                    VP
N            Infl.      V                              PP
P                        NP

Ngwana  o  na  le  dijo
```

In this example, the morpheme *le* is used as a preposition.


(The watermelon is tasty.)

The morpheme *le* in (6) is used as a descriptive copulative in this example.

7. *O bolokilwe go le (lebitla).*

(He/She is buried in this grave.)

In this example (7) above, the morpheme *le* is used as a locative adverb.
The examples in (2-7) above clearly indicate that the morpheme *le*’s morphological structure is complicated, seeing that it cannot be fully explained on account of a single word category.

1.2.3. **The structural properties of the morpheme *le* in Northern Sotho**

The complex nature of the morpheme *le* cannot be fully accounted for by using its morphological and semantic features only. One needs to take into consideration its syntactic structure as well. In other words, it is important to establish the role of *le* in the formation of Northern Sotho sentences as it appears in the following examples:

8. *Ngwana o dutše kgauswi le mmagwe.*
   
   **NP** **predicate** **locative** **NP**
   
   (The child sat next to its mother.)

In this example (8) above, the morpheme *le* is used as a complement of the NP *mmagwe* (its mother) according to its syntactic position.

9. *Nora o lwle le mošemanne.*
   
   (Nora has fought with the boy.)

The morpheme *le* is used as a complement of the verb in this example (9) above.

The examples in (8-9) above clearly indicate that the structural properties of the Northern Sotho morpheme *le* is complicated. It cannot be fully explained on account of a single word category. In the light of this, it is thus necessary to undertake a study on the Northern Sotho morpheme *le* as this will assist in identifying the semantic role, the morphological structure and the syntactic role of this morpheme.
1.3. **AIM OF THE STUDY**

The aim of this proposed study is to examine the role that the morpheme *le* plays in the Northern Sotho discourse. In order to achieve this aim, the proposed study will need to answer the following questions:

1.3.1. What is the semantic role of the morpheme *le* in Northern Sotho?
1.3.2. To which word category does the Northern Sotho morpheme *le* belong?
1.3.3. What is the syntactic role of the morpheme *le* in Northern Sotho?

1.4. **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of this study are:

1.4.1. To classify the types of meaning that the morpheme *le* denotes in Northern Sotho;
1.4.2. To determine the word category into which the morpheme *le* belongs in Northern Sotho; and
1.4.3. To determine the syntactic position of the morpheme *le* in Northern Sotho.

1.5. **RATIONALE**

The linguistic analysis of the Northern Sotho morpheme *le* aims at assisting Northern Sotho speakers to realize the importance of knowing the word category to which words belong. It is important to know exactly what the Northern Sotho morpheme *le* refers to, as its polysemous nature causes ambiguity and misunderstanding. Lastly, it is important to know the syntactic properties of the morpheme *le* in Northern Sotho as this will assist one to use *le* in its proper context.
1.6. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The linguistic analysis of the Northern Sotho morpheme le will assist Northern Sotho language users to understand and identify the correct word category for the Northern Sotho morpheme le and highlight strategies that one should use in order to interpret the meaning expressed by the morpheme le correctly. This proposed study will be useful to researchers who are interested in this field of study.

1.7. METHODOLOGY

The qualitative research method, underpinned by government and binding theory, will be used in this proposed study as it will give insight to the topic under discussion.

1.8. DATA COLLECTION

In order to gather data about linguistic nature of the Northern Sotho morpheme le, the present researcher intends to use the following methods:

1.8.1. Primary sources

The present researcher intends to obtain firsthand information from the respondents by interviewing, face-to-face, the following people because they are the ones who deal with language issues in their day-to-day lives:

- 6 x Northern Sotho and Linguistics Lecturers;
- 5 x Northern Sotho Language Practitioners;
5 x Lexicographers;
6 x Northern Sotho and Linguistics Students;
5 x Secondary schools Northern Sotho teachers; and
3 x Northern Sotho Curriculum Advisors.

1.8.2. Secondary sources

The present researcher intends to collect information about morphemes by consulting library books, periodicals, dissertations, and searching through the Internet.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Thus far, Northern Sotho language scholars and other scholars have undertaken an in-depth study of the other morphemes with little attention to the morpheme *le*. Among those who have worked on morphemes are, namely: Mogoba (1992); Matsinhe (1993); Mphahlele (2003); Mous & Mreta (2004) and Matlebjane (2006). Other scholars have tried to work on the morpheme *le* of which the present researcher in this proposed work intends to undertake a deeper study to indicate the ambiguity of this morpheme. Among those who have tried to work on the morpheme *le* are, namely: Lombard, Van Wyk and Mokgokong (1985); du Plessis & Visser (1996); Poulos and Louwrens (1994); and Ziervogel, Lombard and Mokgokong (1988).

2.1.1. Nida (1946)

Nida (1946) works on the identification of morphemes, types of morphemes, the distribution of morphemes, the meaning of morphemes and sequence of morphemes.

Like other linguists, he describes morphemes as “the meaningful units which may constitute words or parts of words e.g. *re-*, *de-*, *un-* and *–ish* in the combinations *receive, demand, untie and boyish*”.

On the identification of morphemes he maintains that for linguists to be able to examine a new language with a view to discover and describe its structure, they have to identify the meaningful units of which the language is composed. He
argues that there are six principles which apply in isolating and identifying morphemes. In his principle number six, he states that a morpheme is isolatable if it occurs in isolation condition.

On the basis of this condition, he identifies morphemes such as *boy, jump, up, he,* and *this.* This is one condition which will help in this study to argue that the morpheme *le* in Northern Sotho can be isolatable.

On the types of morphemes, Nida (1946) asserts that the types of morphemes are divided between (1) the internal composition of morphemes and (2) the formal relationships of morphemes to each other. He argues that the formal relationships of morphemes to each other are structural and positional. In my work I will dwell on the formal relationship of the Northern Sotho morpheme *le* to the other morphemes in a sentence, which is positional.

On the distribution of morphemes, Nida (1946) identifies ten groups of the types of morphemes as determined by their distribution. Amongst them he identifies one group “bound vs free morphemes”, which the researcher going to concentrate on.

He argues that bound morphemes never occur in isolation, that is, they are not regularly uttered alone in a normal discourse. Such morphemes include affixes. He further argues that free morphemes are those which may be uttered in isolation, e.g. *boy, girl, this,* and *you.* Based on this argument, I will also argue that the Northern Sotho morpheme *le* can also be used as a free morpheme when uttered alone in a normal discourse.

2.1.2. **Langacker (1968)**

Langacker (1968) defines morphemes as “minimal units of grammatical structure”. He cites an example “unfaithfulness”, where he indicates that the word
“unfaithfulness” has four morphemes, i.e. *un, faith, ful* and *ness*. He argues that a morpheme usually has a fairly clear and constant meaning in all its uses, although it is easy to find exceptions.

Langacker (1968) acknowledges that sometimes linguists distinguish between full morphemes and empty morphemes, between free and bound morphemes, and between roots and affixes. He dwells much on the full morphemes and empty morphemes. Using an example of the sentence “the man chopped some wood with an axe”, he indicates that full morphemes are forms like *man, chop, wood,* and *axe;* while empty morphemes are forms like *the, some, with, an,* and the past tense morpheme-*ed*. He goes further to argue that full morphemes are nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. They have more or less independent meanings, so that one or a series of full forms in isolation can be fairly meaningful.

Langacker (1968) states further that empty morphemes are things like prepositions, article, conjunctions, forms indicating gender, or tense, and so on. He goes on to argue that prepositions are classed as empty morphemes, yet they are not at all empty of semantic content.

He further argues that free morphemes are those that can stand alone as independent words; all others are said to be bound morphemes. *Dog, sad, rapid* and *able* are thus examples of free morphemes while the plural morpheme *s* of dogs, the *ness* of *sadness*, the *ly* of *rapidly*, and the *un* of *unable* exemplify bound morpheme. He also argues that most full morphemes are free (at least in English), and many empty morphemes are bound, as shown in the examples above.

Langacker’s (1968) work will help me in this work to argue that what he classifies as empty morphemes, i.e. prepositions, bears a semantic meaning as will be indicated by the usage of the Northern Sotho morpheme le. This morpheme has more than one semantic meaning and therefore it will be clarified how it can be a semantic problem to linguists.
2.1.3. Hodge (1969)

In his work, Hodge (1969) asserts that “morphs are the smallest meaningful pieces into which we may divide the utterance”. He continues to say that morphs may be roots and affixes. Roots such as *house*, *book* & *boy*, and affixes such as *-s* (in *boys*) and *-let* (in *booklet*).

Hodge (1969) goes on to work on the allomorphs where he cited examples which indicate the past tense. He pays more attention to allomorphs which indicate past tense in different languages. He classifies morphemes according to their shapes, according to the other morphemes with which they combine, and according to the way these combinations are made. He argues that in most languages the possibilities for combination and the order in which the morphemes combine into words are quite restricted. He cite an example in English, that the morphemes composing a word such as *unsuitability* cannot recombine in any other order.

Hodge’s (1969) work indicates that it is mostly based on the bound morphemes. He does not have anything to do with free morphemes. The researcher is going to concentrate on the free morpheme *le* in Northern Sotho and argue that it poses some semantic problems to the Northern Sotho language user.

2.1.4. Lombard, Van Wyk and Mokgokong (1985)

Lombard, Van Wyk and Mokgokong (1985) argue that morphemes can be classified on the grounds of various principles, but their discussion is limited to the classification of morphemes according to the way in which they combine with other word aspects (i.e., roots and other morphemes in words). They concentrate on the affixal morphemes, i.e, the prefixes and the suffixes. In this case, they are dealing with the sub-lexical items. On the lexical item level, they
argue that the conjunctive particle *le* can function as a connective particle, like *le* in: *O sepela le mosadi* (He walks with the woman).

This contribution will help the study to argue further that the morpheme *le* in Northern Sotho can function as a conjunctive particle and, even further than that, so that one can realize the ambiguous nature of this morpheme, especially as a lexical item.

2.1.5. Ziervogel, Lombard and Mokgokong (1988)

Ziervogel, Lombard and Mokgokong (1988) argue that the morpheme *le* expresses the connective form of the noun when it is placed before a noun, for example, *le mosadi* (together with the woman). They argue that the morphemes *le* and *ka* cannot be used independently but must always be used with the other words (*inter alia*, noun).

However, this work will assist the present researcher to argue further that the morpheme *le* can sometimes be used independently, such as when it is used as a demonstrative in the following example: *A nke o mphe le* (Please give me this one).

2.1.6. Jensen (1990)

In his work, Jensen (1990), states that “morphemes are the fundamental units of words; they are primarily structural units which are typically but not necessarily meaningful”. He argues further that a word form may contain only one morpheme, example, *cat*, or it may contain two or more morphemes, example, *cats*, where *–s* is a separate morpheme with the meaning “plural”.
Jensen (1990) clarifies that *cat* is a stem, while *–s* is a suffix in the word form *cats*. He differentiates between free morphemes and bound morphemes. He argues that a free morpheme can stand as a word by itself, example, *cat*. The morpheme *–s* is a bound morpheme since it cannot stand by itself as a word.

Jensen’s (1990) work will assist me in arguing that the Northern Sotho morpheme *le* is a free morpheme and can stand by itself according to its semantic significance and its word categorization. I will further argue that this morpheme poses some semantic problem which I will clarify.

2.1.7. Mogoba (1992)

Mogoba’s (1992) study covers the explanation and definition of various morphemes used in the Northern Sotho word construction. She also examines forms and meanings of various morphemes as appearing in different word categories. Mogoba distinguishes between two types of morphemes, namely, free morphemes and bound morphemes. She pays attention to bound morphemes such as prefixal, suffixal, concordial, negative and imperfect tense morphemes.

Mogoba (1992) did not in her work, pay attention to free morphemes such as the morpheme *le*, of which it is what the present researcher in this proposed work intends to dwell much on.
2.1.8. **Matsinhe (1993)**

Matsinhe (1993) worked on bound morphemes wherein he specifically dwelled much on the verbal affixes in Xitsonga. He pays more attention on the lexical grammar of bound morphemes; individual verb affixes in Xitsonga, especially the applicatives, causatives, neutrostatives, passives, reciprocals and reflexives, since they have an effect on the NP argument structure or the predicate argument structure.

Concatenation of verbal affixes whereby different verbal affixes co-occur in the same verb and the constraints that hold on the concatenation of verbal affixes also received scrutiny from Matsinhe (1993).

Matsinhe’s (1993) work will assist the present researcher in this work to further examine the role that a free morpheme *le* can play in Northern Sotho.

2.1.9. **Poulos and Louwrens (1994)**

Poulos and Louwrens (1994) indicate that the use of the subject concord *le* of Class 5 shows the agreement with the Noun Class 5, for example, *Lerapo le robegile* (The bone is broken). They also demonstrate that the morpheme *le* can be used as an associative adverb prefix to link when we have more than one subject occurring before a verb, e.g., *Mošemane le mosetsana ba hlapa nokeng* (The boy and the girl are washing in the river). The morpheme *le* can also function as the object concord of the object that was earlier referred to in a sentence as in the following example:

10. *Naa o le (lesogana) bone kopanong maabane?*
    (Did you see him (the lad) at the meeting yesterday?)
The morpheme *le* can also be used as the object concord of the second person of Class 2 when one wishes to show respect towards an individual, for example:

11. *Ke tlo le thuša nkgapele (a era hlogo ya sekolo).*

   (I will help you (singular) after a little while (referring to the principal)).

This work will assist the present researcher in this proposed work to argue further that the ambiguity of the morpheme *le* need to be analysed linguistically as the present researcher will be indicating its semantic and syntactic nature in sentences.

2.1.10. **Haegeman (1994a)**

Haegeman (1994a) defines theta theory as “the component of the grammar that regulates the assignment of thematic role.” This definition implies that, in studying the linguistic analysis of the Northern Sotho morpheme *le*, one will be able to establish what its meaning is and the word category to which it belongs.

In Example (1b) above, *Tate o na le mma* (Daddy is with mommy), the two arguments *tate* and *mma* have different relationships with the morpheme *le*. The *NP Tate* (daddy) is the Agent while the *NP mma* (mommy) is the Patient. According to Haegeman (1994a), we have the following tentative types of thematic roles:

**Agent/Actor**: the doer, the one who intentionally initiates the action expressed by the *predicate*.

**Patient/Theme**: one who undergoes the action expressed by the *predicate*.

**Experiencer**: the entity that experiences some psychological state expressed by the *predicate*.
Goal : the entity towards which the activity expressed by the predicate is directed.

Source : the entity from which something is moved as a result of the activity expressed by the predicate.

Location : the place in which the action or the state expressed by the predicate is situated.

2.1.11. Du Plessis and Visser (1996)

Du Plessis and Visser (1996) argue about the copulative construction wherein, amongst others, they indicate that the associative relation is recognized through the presence of the preposition *le* in the complement, for example, *monna yo o na le thipa* (this man has a knife), which clearly indicates that the relation is possessive. They acknowledge the work of the Greek Philosopher, Aristotle, who is of the opinion that the copulative has as many senses as there are categories, i.e., there are ten different senses of the copulative, namely: substance, quantity, place, time, quality, relation, contrast, condition, activity and passivity.

This work will assist the present researcher in this proposed work to be able to argue further by clarifying the ambiguity of the semantic nature of the morpheme *le* in Northern Sotho.


Mphahlele (2003) has, in his work, indicated that lexicographers have ignored to lemmatize sub-lexical items in the macrostructure of the Northern Sotho monolingual dictionaries. Having realized this problem, Mphahlele (2003)
came up with suggestions that would help lexicographers to compile a user-friendly dictionary that will include sub-lexical and multi-lexical dictionary, which will assist the Northern Sotho monolingual dictionary users to retrieve information successfully.

Mphahlele dwells on sub-lexical items, which include the prefixal and suffixal morphemes. He also touched on the treatment of the sub-item le- and the lexical item le which could pose problems for the Lexicographer. Mphahlele only clarified that the lexical item le can function as a concord of Noun Class 5, a conjunctive and a demonstrative pronoun of Noun Class 5.

Mphahlele did not, in his work, indicate that the Northern Sotho lexical item le can also function as a locative, preposition and a copulative; which the present researcher in this proposed work is intending to clarify.


Mous and Mreta (2004) gave a sound account of the communicative/conjunctive preposition na in Chathu (Pare), a Bantu Language in Tanzania. They presented an overview of the meaning and functions of the morpheme na in Chathu (Pare) that the morpheme na is a preposition. Mous and Mreta further discuss whether the preposition na is a conjunctive or not.

Mous and Mreta’s work will assist the present researcher in this proposed work to argue about the ambiguity of the Northern Sotho morpheme le in terms of its word category.

Pretorius and Berg (2004) propose and demonstrate, in their work, a method for the morphological analysis of Setswana nouns. They refer to morphological structure of a noun as different morphemes of which the noun consists and their arrangement. They acknowledge the work of Kruger (1994:17) where he describes a morpheme as “a meaningful part of a word expressed by form and which exist as an integral part of the word meaning and word form”.

Pretorius and Berg (2004) argue that the Setswana noun may include morphemes such as grammatical morphemes (prefixes and suffixes), roots and stems. They dwell much on the grammatical morphemes of the Setswana noun. They indicate that semantically, grammatical morphemes indicate a certain category such as number, dimunitive, locative, et cetera; which are word bound in form and meaning: mo- and

-ING, for example, are the grammatical morphemes in motseng (village – locality) and se- and –nyana are the grammatical morphemes in setlhakonyana (small shoe).

They further classify morphemes according to their positions in a word, i.e. categories of prefixes and suffixes, for example, in mothwana (small person) mo- is the prefix and the –ana is the suffix; and in the word setlhakonyana (small shoe) se- is the prefix and –nyana is the suffix.

Pretorius and Berg (2004), like some other linguists, dwell much on bound morphemes. Their work will help me argue that free morphemes can also be a concern to linguists. I will argue on the semantic and the grammatical status of the Northern Sotho morpheme le as a problem to the linguists.
2.1.15. **Kosch (2005)**

Kosch (2005) works on discontinuous elements in the morphology of some African languages, Northern Sotho in particular. He concentrates on the two principles, namely: the principle of invariance of morphemes and the principle of a “one-form-one meaning” between a form and a meaning. He argues that some of the African languages, including Northern Sotho, display deviation from these principles. His work is based specifically on deviations which display elements which could be regarded as “discontinuous” or “interrupted”.

On the principle of invariance of morphemes, also termed the ‘no alteration at morpheme boundary’ by Hagège (1990:297), Kosch (2005) argues about the violation of this principle with reference to the realizations of the perfect tense suffix in Northern Sotho: -lê, -itšê, -mê, -nê or the shortened version form -ê, example:

- leka : -lekîlê (tried)
- lesa : -lesitšê (left)
- rêma : -rêmîmê (chopped) (also -rêmîlê)
- gana : -gannê (refused)
- bona : -bonê (saw)

Kosch (2005) argues that these -îlê, -itšê, -mê, -nê, and the shortened version -ê are the allomorphs of the perfect tense suffix.

On the second principle, the principle of “one-form-one meaning”, Kosch (2005) argues that it specifies that each morpheme, be uniquely paired with exactly one grammatical function or meaning and vice versa, that each function or meaning be expressed by a separate morph. He acknowledges the work of Spencer (1991:125/6) who says “…the most natural type of morphology is fully ‘transparent’, in the sense that every morpheme has one form and one meaning, and
every meaning (or grammatical category) corresponds to exactly one form. This relationship is called biuniqueness.”

This research will argue with the deviation of this principle where I will indicate that the Northern Sotho morpheme le can semantically have more than one meaning, i.e. something like ‘one-form-more meanings’ principle.

Kosch (2005) further works on extended exponence as a deviation on the “one-form-one meaning” principle. He argues that the extended exponence describes the situation in which a single grammatical function or meaning is expressed by two or more morphological markers; has discontinuous representation, i.e. its realization shows up in more than one place. For example, a single grammatical function such as ‘negative form’. The negative form may be marked by at least two non-continuous morphs, namely by negative prefix and a simultaneous modification of the final vowel of the verb stem, e.g. Northern Sotho go se rütê ‘not to teach’ (positive form: go ruta ‘to teach’)

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
go & se & rütê \\
\text{infinitive} & \text{negative} & \text{verbal suffix} \\
\text{suffix} & \text{marker} & \text{negative marker} \\
\end{array}
\]

Kosch (2005) goes on to argue about circumfixation where the simultaneous affixation of a prefix and a suffix to a base, express a single meaning, category or process. He illustrates by the use of examples that a single category may have a discontinuous representation in the form of two disjoined morphs. For example, in Northern Sotho, the double marking in items such as colour terms is used to indicate female animals:

tsando (black bull) - naswana (black cow)
kholong (red bull) - nakhulwana (red cow)
As a deviation to the “one-form-one meaning” principle, the researcher will argue that the Northern Sotho morpheme *le* can indicate more than one semantic meaning and more than one word category.

2.1.16. **Hendrikse and Poulos (2006)**

Hendrikse and Poulos (2006) assert that the classification of word categories in African languages has been modeled on Western European languages without taking cognizance of the fact that the European languages and the African languages belong to different language types. They argue that these historical factors have had adverse implications for the various word categories which have been distinguished in the African languages. They critically explore these issues and propose a rather revolutionary framework for the treatment of word categorization in African languages.

They acknowledge the work of Sapir who distinguishes four types of degree of alliteration of morphemes, namely: isolating (no affixation), agglutinative (simple affixation), fusional (considerable morphophonemic alteration) and symbolic (suppletive). Hendrikse and Poilos’ (2006) distinguish in their work, between two types, namely: an isolating morphological type and agglutinative morphological type.

Hendrikse and Poulos (2006) further state that with regard to word categorization, in an isolating type of language, no word category is dependent on any affixation in order to acquire categorical status. This means that in an isolating language, words and word categories are essentially free morphemes.

They further argue that in an agglutinating language, there is no free morphemes in the lexicon; only bound morphemes. An agglutinative language may have words
such as interjections that are free morphemes without any dependency on affixation in order to function as words.

The two linguists worked on the two types of languages, namely: isolating and agglutinative languages, which will help me in this work to argue that in Northern Sotho (an agglutinative language) we also have free morphemes such as the morpheme le. This study will further argue that this morpheme poses a problem in terms of its word categorization, its semantic significance and its syntactic status, which this study will further clarify.


Matlebjane (2006) gives an account of aspect morphemes as word categories that cannot occur in isolation from other word categories. She argues that aspect morphemes may be used in various tense forms with the ultimate effect of changing the overall meaning. She further analyses the Northern Sotho aspect morphemes from a syntactic perspective. Matlebjane specifically analyses the aspect morphemes: sa, hlwa, šetše, and fo, especially when they occur in simple and complex sentences. She also endeavours to analyse the semantic significance of aspect morphemes in Northern Sotho, where syntax has a bearing as it interacts with semantics. On this significance, she pays special attention to the morphemes: sa, no, fela and šetše.

Matlebjane (2006) did not concentrate on the Northern Sotho morpheme le which is another morpheme that gives some problems with regard to its word categorization, meaning and its syntactic properties. The present researcher in this work is going to clarify those problems relating to the morpheme le.
2.2. CONCLUSION

This chapter investigates morphemes and the role which they can play in a language. Other linguists’ works have been consulted where it was discovered that in their works, they generally have a common understanding that morphemes are the smallest functional units of words.

Different linguists worked on the types of morphemes, but not all of them dwell on both the two types of morphemes, namely: bound morphemes and free morphemes. Most of the linguists have their works based on bound morphemes because they argue that morphemes are units of words which cannot occur in isolation, that is, they pay attention to affixes which are sub-lexical items. It is further discovered in these linguists’ works that Northern Sotho linguists and other scholars have their works on Northern Sotho morphemes, but it is only a few who worked on free morphemes, that is, morphemes which are lexical items; especially on the morpheme le.
CHAPTER THREE

THE MORPHOLOGICAL FEATURES OF THE NORTHERN SOTHO MORPHEME LE

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Louwrens (1994:115) says morphology is a term referring to the scientific/linguistic study of morphemes and their variants/allomorphs, and the way they function in the formation of words. The aim of this chapter is to examine the morphological features of the Northern Sotho morpheme le. Why do we say le is a morpheme in Northern Sotho? In terms of morphology, the Northern Sotho morpheme le can be used as a conjunction and a complementizer, demonstrative pronoun, agreement (concord), preposition, and also as a descriptive copulative.

3.2. THE NORTHERN SOTHO MORPHEME LE AS A CONJUNCTION

3.2.1. DEFINITION

A conjunction is a word which is used to join phrases or clauses which are of the same value, i.e. main clauses only. Richards, Platt and Weber (1985:58) say a conjunction, also a connective, is a word which joins words, phrases or clauses together such; as but, and, when. Units larger than words which function as conjunctions are sometimes known as conjunctives, for example so that, as long as, as if. They go further to give the two types conjunctions as follows:

Co-ordination, through the use of co-ordinating conjunctions such as; and, or, but. These join linguistic units which are equivalent or of the same rank.
Subordination, through the use of subordinating conjunctions such as because, when, unless, that. These join an independent clause and a dependent clause.
In Northern Sotho, the conjunctions *gore, fela, gomme, le*, can be used to join two main clauses of a sentence. The following discussion give examples where the morpheme *le* is used to join clauses of the same value.

### 3.2.2. THE MORPHEME *LE* CAN APPEAR BETWEEN NOUNS

10. *a Dijo le dino.*

   (Food and drinks).

The noun phrase “*Dijo*” (Food) and the noun phrase “*dino*” (drinks) are joined by the use of the conjunction “*le*” (and).

![Diagram of N le dino](image)

b. *Pene le letlakala.*

   (A pen and a paper).

![Diagram of Pene le letlakala](image)

c. *Motswadi le ngwana.*

   (A parent and a child).
3.2.3. **THE MORPHEME LE CAN APPEAR BETWEEN PRONOUNS.**

11. a. *Nna le wena.*

(Me and you (singular)).

The pronominal phrase “Nna” (Me) and the pronominal phrase “wena” (you) are joined by the use of the conjunction “le”.

b. *Rena le lena.*

(We and you (plural)).
3.2.4. THE MORPHEME *LE* CAN APPEAR BETWEEN ADVERBS

12.  

   a. *Mo le kua.*
   
      (Here and there).
   
   The adverbial phrase “*Mo*” (Here) and the adverbial phrase “*kua*” (there) are joined by the use of the conjunction “*le*”.
   
   b. *Mamohla le gosasa.*
   
      (Today and tomorrow).
   
   ![Diagram](attachment:image.png)

   c. *Legodimong le lefaseng.*
   
      (In heaven and on earth).
   
   ![Diagram](attachment:image.png)
d. *Ka boleta le ka boikobetšo.*

(With politeness and submissiveness.)

3.2.5. THE MORPHEME *LE* CAN APPEAR BETWEEN A PRONOUN AND A NOUN

13. a. *Nna le basetsana.*

(Me and the girls).

b. *Sona(sešebo) le bogobe.*

(It and the porridge).

c. *Thapelo le yona(kopelo).*

(A prayer and it(hymn)).

d. *Tlala le wona(mokhoro).*

(Hunger and it(satation))
3.2.6. THE MORPHEME LE CAN APPEAR BETWEEN ADJECTIVES

14. a. (Ntlo) Ye kgoło le ye nnyane.
   (A big one and a small one (house)).

   b. (Dikgomo) Tše diso le tše ditšhweu.
   (The black ones and the white ones (cattles)).

   c. (Batho) Ba batelele le ba bakopana.
   (The tall ones and the short ones (people)).

   d. (Mohlare) Wo mokoto le wo mosese.
   (A thick and a thin (tree)).

3.3. THE MORPHEME LE AS A DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUN

3.3.1. DEFINITION

According to Richards, Platt and Weber (1985:75), a demonstrative is a word which refers to something in terms of whether it is near or distant from the speaker. Poulos and Louwrens (1999:81) say that the demonstrative has two basic functions. In the first instance, it may be used in discourse to indicate the actual position which some or other referent occupies. In the second instance, it may be used with what may be called a secondary function, i.e. to refer back to the antecedent.

Louwrens (1994:48) says that a demonstrative is a term used to refer to a word which is used to indicate the position of a person or object relative to
the positions of the speaker and the addressee… The demonstrative is
classified into different positions and sub-positions depending on the
demonstrative suffix which is used, and these positions can be roughly
translated into English with “this (one here)”, “that (one there)” and “that
(one yonder)”. In Table 1 below Northern Sotho demonstratives are shown
according to noun classes and positions:

Table 1: Northern Sotho Demonstratives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOUN CLASSES</th>
<th>DEMONSTRATIVES ACCORDING TO POSITIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>POSITION 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>POS. 1 A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Mo-</td>
<td>yo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ba-</td>
<td>ba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Mo-</td>
<td>wo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Me-</td>
<td>ye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Le-</td>
<td>le</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Ma-</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Se-</td>
<td>se</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Di-</td>
<td>tše</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. N-</td>
<td>ye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Di-</td>
<td>tše</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Bo-</td>
<td>bjo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Go-</td>
<td>mo /go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. fa-</td>
<td>mo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. go-</td>
<td>mo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. mo-</td>
<td>mo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Northern Sotho, the morpheme *le* can be used as a demonstrative pronoun of
noun Class 5 (Position 1A). This can be seen in the following examples.
In the examples 15. (a-b) below, the demonstrative pronoun *le* appears at the end of the sentences.

15.  
   a. *O tšere le.*  
       (He took this one).

   b. *Ba mphile le.*  
       (They gave me this one).

In the example 15. (c-d) below, the demonstrative pronoun appear somewhere in the middle of the sentence.

   c. *Tšea le o sepele.*  
       (Take this one and go).

   d. *Ngwala le o romele.*  
       (Write this one and send.)

In the example 15. (e-f) below, the demonstrative pronoun appear at the beginning of the sentence.

   e. *Le le a fiša.*  
       (This one is hot).

   f. *Le ke a le rata.*  
       (This one, I like.)
3.4. THE MORPHEME LE AS AN AGREEMENT/CONCORD

3.4.1. DEFINITION

Richards, Platt and Weber (1985:56) say a concord, also agreement, is a type of grammatical relationship between two or more elements in a sentence, in which both or all elements show a particular feature. Du Plessis and Madadzhe (1999:199) put it clear that in Venda, the form of AgrS morpheme is determined by the noun with which it appears. They go further to indicate that nouns can be divided into strong and weak noun classes according to their AgrS. They even go to an extent of indicating on a table the strong classes and weak classes in Venda.

In Northern Sotho, like in other languages, we have strong subjectival agreements and also weak subjectival agreements according to noun classes. The form of AgrS (Subjectival Agreement) morpheme in Northern Sotho is determined by the nouns with which it appears. Strong agreement is realized when the concord looks exactly the same as the prefix of the noun; while the weak agreement is realized when the concord does not look like the prefix of the nouns as indicated in the following tables:

\[Table 2: Northern Sotho - Strong Subjectival Agreement\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRONG CLASSES</th>
<th>PREFIX</th>
<th>EXAMPLE OF A NOUN</th>
<th>AgrS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Ba-</td>
<td>batho(people)</td>
<td>ba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Le-</td>
<td>leoto(leg)</td>
<td>le</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Se-</td>
<td>seeta(shoe)</td>
<td>se</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Di-</td>
<td>dieta(shoes)</td>
<td>di</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Di-</td>
<td>dimpša(dogs)</td>
<td>di</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Bo-</td>
<td>borotho(bread)</td>
<td>bo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prefix</td>
<td>Example of a Noun</td>
<td>AgrS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Mo-</td>
<td>motho(person)</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Mo-</td>
<td>mohlare(tree)</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Me-</td>
<td>mehlare(trees)</td>
<td>e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Ma-</td>
<td>maoto(legs)</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>mpša(dog)</td>
<td>e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>fa-</td>
<td>fase(down)</td>
<td>go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>mo-</td>
<td>morago(back)</td>
<td>go</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Northern Sotho – Weak Subjectival Agreement

The Northern Sotho morpheme *le* can be used as a strong subjectival agreement of noun Class 5 as in the following examples:

16. a. *Letšatši le a hlabā.*  
(The sun rises.)
b. *Leihlo le rurugile.*

(The eye is swollen).

```
AgrS
  NP agr VP
  Leihlo le rurug – ile
  Cl. 5 Cl. 5
```

c. *Lefšega le a kitima.*

(The coward runs.)

```
AgrS
  NP agr VP
  Lefšega le a kitim - a
  Cl. 5 Cl. 5
```

Sometimes the Northern Sotho morpheme *le* can be used as a weak subjectival agreement of noun Class 5 where the noun prefix is hidden as shown in examples 16. (d-f) below:

d. *(Le)sogana le sepetše.*

(The lad is gone).
e. *(Le)rato la motswadi le boholkwa kudu.*
   (The love of a parent is very important).

f. *(Le)tšoba la gagwe le botse.*
   (His flower is beautiful.)

3.5. **THE MORPHEME LE AS A PREPOSITION**

3.5.1. **DEFINITION**

Richards, Platt and Weber (1985:227) assert that a preposition is a word used with nouns, pronouns and gerunds, to link them grammatically to other words. Prepositions may express such meanings as possession (e.g. the leg *of* the table), direction (e.g. *to* the bank), place (e.g. *at* the corner), time (e.g. *before* now).

According to Louwrens (1994:149) a preposition is a term which is not used in the grammatical description of Northern Sotho, since it is maintained that Bantu languages do not have prepositions. He goes further to indicate that this term (preposition) has, however, been employed on a very limited basis to refer to the prefixal elements, “*ka, kua, ga, go* and *mo*”, which occur in locative structures such as:

- *ka kamoreng* - in the room
- *mo tafoleng* - on the table

Louwrens (1994:149) again indicates that the term preposition is rather replaced by particle in some sources, and by prefix in others. He further clarifies that if the definitions which are given for the concept preposition by authoritative sources on linguistic terminology are analyzed, what are regarded as particles in Northern Sotho seem to qualify equally as prepositions.
In addition to the prepositions mentioned above, the Northern Sotho morpheme *le* can also be used as a preposition as indicated in the following examples:

17. a. *Ngwana o na le dijo.*

(The child has food.)

b. *Dinonyana di na le mafosa.*

(Birds have feathers.)

When the sentence changes into the negative form the morpheme *le* does not change its form, as it appears in the following examples:
c. *Ngwana ga a na le dijo.*

(The child does not have food.)

```
S
  NP  Neg. marker  Infl.
     V                  PP
       NP
Ngwana    ga     a   na  le  dijo
```

d. *Dinonyana ga di na le mafosa.*

(Birds do not have feathers.)

```
S
  NP  Neg. marker  Infl
     V                  PP
       V                  NP
          PP
Dinonyana  ga    di  na  le  mafosa
```
3.6. THE MORPHEME \textit{LE} AS A COPULATIVE

3.6.1. DEFINITION

Louwrens (1994:40-42) says a copulative is a term used to refer to structures which incorporate a variety of prefixes (called particles in some grammatical descriptions of Northern Sotho) of which some resemble the subject concord (e.g. \textit{o bohlale}, \textit{le bohlale}, \textit{e bohlale}, etc. ‘he/it is clever’), whereas others have a unique form like \textit{ke} (\textit{ke monna} ‘he is a man’) and \textit{ga se monna} ‘it is not a man’, as well as a series of verb forms with the copulative verb stems \textit{–be} (e.g. … \textit{gore a be bohlale} ‘so that he may become clever’), \textit{–ba} (e.g. … \textit{a ba bohlale} ‘and then he became clever’), \textit{–le} (e.g. … \textit{ge a le bohlale} ‘if he is clever’), \textit{–se} (e.g. … \textit{ge a se bohlale} ‘if he is not clever’) and \textit{–na} (e.g. \textit{o na lehufa} ‘she/he is jealous’). The copulative expresses the English verb ‘to be’, and is therefore translated with ‘is’, ‘was’, ‘will be’, ‘has been’, etc.

Poulos and Louwrens (1994:290) clarifies that copulatives may be assigned different names, depending on the type of information that they convey. If the information helps to identify the referent, then the copulative is referred to as an identifying copulative. If the information given describes the referent in one way or the other, then it is a descriptive copulative. If the information expresses some form of ownership or association; or if it translates the English verb “to have”, then it is an associative copulative. If the information refers to some or other locality or place where the referent is, then we speak of a locational copulative.

There are four types of copulatives that can be recognized in Northern Sotho, namely:

The identifying copulative

39
The descriptive copulative

The associative copulative

The locational copulative

Copulatives can appear in different tense constructions, positive and negative forms such as indicative form, potential form, etc, like it is reflected in the following examples:

In Northern Sotho, the morpheme *le* can be used as a copulative as reflected in the following examples:

3.6.2. THE MORPHEME *LE* AS AN IDENTIFYING COPULATIVE

- PRESENT TENSE - POSITIVE FORM

18. a. *Lena le baetapele.*

   (You are the leaders.)

   b. *Le sa le baeng.*

   (You are still visitors.)

   c. *Lena le ditau.*

   (You are the lions.)

   d. *Lena le bokamoso bja rena.*

   (You are our future.)
3.6.3. THE MORPHEME LE AS AN IDENTIFYING

COPULATIVE - PRESENT TENSE - NEGATIVE FORM

19.  a.  Lena ga le baetapele.

      (You are not leaders.)

   b.  Ga le sa le baeng.

      (You are not visitors anymore.)

   c.  Lena ga le ditau.

      (You are not the lions.)

   d.  Lena ga le bokamoso bja rena.

      (You are not our future.)

In the future tense negative form and the past tense negative form, the Northern Sotho identifying copulative “le” changes to “se”.

3.6.4. THE MORPHEME LE AS A DESCRIPTIVE

COPULATIVE - PRESENT TENSE - POSITIVE

20.  a.  Lehodu le bohlale.

      (The thief is clever.)

   b.  Legapu le bose.

      (The watermelon is tasty.)
c.  *Lerato le bohlokwa.*

(Love is important.)

d.  *Lesogana le bogale.*

(The lad is brave.)

3.6.5. THE MORPHEME *LE* AS A DESCRIPTIVE

COPULATIVE - PRESENT TENSE - NEGATIVE FORM

21.  a.  *Lehodu ga le bohlale.*

(The thief is not clever.)

b.  *Legapu ga le bose.*

(The watermelon is not tasty.)

c.  *Lerato ga le bohlokwa.*

(Love is not important.)

d.  *Lesogana ga le bogale.*

(The lad is not brave.)
3.6.6. THE MORPHEME *LE* AS AN ASSOCIATIVE COPULATIVE - PRESENT TENSE - POSITIVE FORM

22. a. *Ke na le dijo.*

(I have food.)

b. *Ngwana o na le bagwera ba gagwe.*

(The child is with its friends.)

c. *Re be re na le baeng.*

(We were with the visitors.)

3.6.7. THE MORPHEME *LE* AS AN ASSOCIATIVE COPULATIVE - PRESENT TENSE - NEGATIVE FORM

23. a. *Ga ke na (le) dijo.*

(I do not have food.)

b. *Ngwana ga a na (le) bagwera ba gagwe.*

( The child is not with its friends.)

c. *Ga re na (le) baeng*

(We are not with the visitors.)

d. *Batho ga ba na (le) mathata.*
(People do not have problems.)

In the past tense negative form, the morpheme *le* might hide as it is reflected in the examples 23(a-d) above.

### 3.6.8. THE MORPHEME *LE* AS LOCATIONAL

**COPULATIVE - PAST TENSE - POSITIVE FORM**

24. a. *Re be re le kopanong maabane.*

(We were at a meeting yesterday.)

b. *Re tlo ba re le Gauteng gosasa.*

(We will be in Gauteng tomorrow.)

c. *Hlapi e be e le ka meetseng.*

(The fish was in the water.)

d. *Ba be ba le yunibesithi ngwagola.*

(They were at the university last year.)

In the present tense negative form and also in the future tense negative form, the Northern Sotho morpheme *le* changes to the morpheme *se*.
3.7. THE MORPHEME LE AS AN ADVERB

3.7.1. DEFINITION

Richards, Platt and Weber (1985:6) say that an adverb is a word that describes or adds to the meaning of a verb, an adjective, another adverb, or a sentence, and which answers such questions as how?, where?, or when?. They classify three types of adverbs, namely, adverbs of manner, e.g. carefully, slowly; adverbs of place, e.g. here, there and adverbs of time, e.g. now and hourly.

Louwrens (1994:5-6) also shares the same sentiments when he says an adverb is a word which is used to modify the meaning of a verb, i.e. which adds more information to the meaning which is contained in the verb itself. A distinction is normally drawn between basic adverbs and derived adverbs.

Poulos and Louwrens (1994:327) assert that adverbs in general provide more information about the actual performance or carrying out of an action or state. They may indicate, inter alia, how, when, where and why an action or state is performed. They further state clearly that the adverb as a word category in Northern Sotho can be seen as much of a mixed bag, involving numerous types. Adverbs in Northern Sotho are, generally speaking, derived from other word categories, like nouns, pronouns, demonstratives, qualificatives, etc.

We identify the following types of adverbs in Northern Sotho:

Adverbs of manner,

Adverbs of place and

Adverbs of time.
3.7.2. THE MORPHEME *le* AS AN ADVERB OF PLACE

The Northern Sotho morpheme le can also be used as an adverb of place in the form of a demonstrative pronoun (Position 1A) of the noun Class 5. It can be used in the present tense, future tense and past tense; and also in the positive or negative forms. The following examples are used to support this idea.

3.7.2.1. THE MORPHEME *le* AS AN ADVERB OF PLACE - PRESENT TENSE - POSITIVE FORM

25. a. *Re phela go le* (*lefashe*).

   (We live on this (world).)

   b. *Ngwalela ka go le* (*letlakala*).

   (Write on this page.)

   c. *Tate o bolokwa ka go le* (*lebitla*).

   (My father is being buried in this (grave).)

   d. *Re lota makhura ka go le* (*lebotlelo*).

   (We keep fats in this (bottle).)
3.7.2.2. THE MORPHEME LE AS AN ADVERB OF PLACE

- PRESENT TENSE - NEGATIVE

26. a. *Ga re phele go le (lefase).*

(We are not living on this (world).)

b. *O se ngwalele ka go le (letlakala).*

(Do not write on this (page).)

c. *Tate ga a bolokwe ka go le (lebitla).*

(My father is not being buried in this (grave).)

d. *Ga re lote makhura ka go le (lebotlelo).*

(We do not keep fats in this (bottle).)

3.7.2.3. THE MORPHEME LE AS AN ADVERB OF PLACE - FUTURE TENSE - POSITIVE FORM

27. a. *Re tla phela go le (lefase).*

(We will live on this (world).)

b. *O tla ngwalela go le (letlakala).*

(You will write on this (page).)

c. *Tate o tla bolokwa ka go le (lebitla).*
3.7.2.4. THE MORPHEME LE AS AN ADVERB OF PLACE

- FUTURE TENSE - NEGATIVE FORM

28. a. Re ka se phele go le (lefase).
   (We will not live on this (world).)

   b. O tla se ngwalele go le (letlakala).
   (You will not write on this (page).)

   c. Tate o tla se bolokwe ka go le (lebitla).
   (My father will not be buried in this (grave).)

   d. Re tla se lote makhura ka go le (lebotlelo).
   (We will not keep fats in this (bottle).)
3.7.2.5. THE MORPHEME LE AS AN ADVERB OF PLACE -

PAST TENSE - POSITIVE FORM

29. a. Re phetšë go le (lefase).
    (We lived on this (world).)

    b. O ngwaletšë go le (letlakala).
        (You wrote on this (page).)

    c. Tate o bolokilwe go le (lebitla).
        (My father was buried in this (grave).)

    d. Re lotîle makhura ka go le (lebotlelo).
        (We kept fats in this (bottle).)

3.7.2.6. THE MORPHEME LE AS AN ADVERB OF PLACE -

PAST TENSE - NEGATIVE FORM

30. a. Ga se ra phela go le (lefase).
    (We did not live on this (world).)

    b. Ga se wa ngwalela go le (letlakala).
        (You did not write on this (page).)
3.8. THE MORPHEME *LE* USED AS A COMPLEMENT

3.8.1. DEFINITION

Richards, Platt & Weber (1985:52) say that a complement is that part of the sentence which follows the verb and thus completes the sentence. They go further to give types of complements as follows:

- subject complement,
- object complement,
- adjective complement and
- prepositional complement.

In Northern Sotho, the morpheme *le* can be used as a complement of the noun phrase and also as a complement of the verb according to its syntactic position.

The Northern Sotho morpheme *le* does not change when it is used to answer the question ‘where?’ (*kae?*) in the present tense, future tense and the past tense; and also in the positive and the negative forms.
3.8.2. THE MORPHEME *LE* AS A COMPLEMENT OF THE NOUN PHRASE

The following examples serve to indicate the morpheme *le* used as a complement of the noun phrase:

31. a. *Ngwana o dutše kgauswi le mmagwe.*

   (The child sat next to its mother.)

   ![Diagram of sentence structure]

   b. *Re tla aga kgole le mohlare.*

   (We will build far from the tree.)
c. *Ba e robile malebana le moedi.*  
(They broke it by the river valley.)

### 3.8.3. THE MORPHEME *LE* AS A COMPLEMENT OF THE VERB

The following examples serve to indicate the morpheme *le* used as a complement of the verb:

32. a. *Nora o lwele le mošemane.*  
(Nora fought with the boy.)

b. *Mošemane o sepetše le mmagwe.*  
(The boy left with his mother.)

c. *Ka moka ba dutše le bašomi.*  
(All of them stayed with the workers.)
3.9. CONCLUSION

Morphology is the scientific study of morphemes. In terms of morphology, the Northern Sotho morpheme *le* can be used as different types of word categories. It can be used as follows:

as a conjunction to join clauses which are of the same value,

as a demonstrative pronoun of noun Cl. 5,

as an/a agreement/concord of the noun Cl. 5,

as a preposition,

as an identifying copulative, a descriptive copulative an associative copulative and a locational copulative,

and also as an adverb of place.

One cannot quickly classify the Northern Sotho morpheme *le* into word categories without first looking into its syntactic position in the sentence together with its semantic function.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE SEMANTIC FUNCTION OF THE NORTHERN SOTHO MORPHEME LE

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The term semantics is defined by Richards, Platt Weber (1985:254) as the study of meaning. They go further to clarify as follows: There are many different approaches to the way in which meaning in language is studied. Philosophers, for instance, have investigated the relation between linguistic expressions such as the words of a language, and persons, things and events in the world to which these words refer. Linguists have investigated, for example, the way in which meaning in a language is structured; and have distinguished between different types of meanings. There have also been studies of the semantic structure of sentences.

Saeed (1998:1) also says semantics is the study of meaning communicated through language. Palmer (1996:1) also shares the same view and puts it simply by saying semantics is the technical term used to refer to the study of meaning.

The aim of this chapter is to examine and clarify the semantic function of the Northern Sotho morpheme le according to the linguistic point of view. It is sometimes confusing to establish the correct meaning that the morpheme le expresses on account of its ambiguous nature. In terms of its semantic function, the Northern Sotho morpheme le can express a variety of meanings, such as possession, accompaniment, location, additive focus and existentialism.

The following discussion serves to highlight and suggest ways of identifying the correct meaning of the Northern Sotho morpheme le.
4.2. **THE MORPHEME LE CAN BE USED TO DENOTE POSSESSION**

4.2.1. **DEFINITION**

Richards, Platt and Weber (1985:223) define the noun possessive as a word or part of a word which is used to show ownership or possession. They go further to clarify that in English, there are many kinds of possessives, for example, possessive pronouns, ‘s and the “of” construction.

Louwrens (1994:145) shares the same view with Richards, et al (1985:223) when he says that possessive is a term which is used to refer to those grammatical constructions which expresses ownership, e.g. *dipuku tša baithuti* (the students’ books). He goes on further to clarify that, that which is owned, is commonly referred to as the possession, whereas the owner is called the possessee or possessor… A distinction which is commonly drawn with regard to possessives, is that amongst direct possessives, descriptive possessives; communal possessives; alienable possessives and inalienable possessives.

In Northern Sotho, the morpheme *le* can be used to denote the following kinds of possessives, which will also be presented in different tense.
4.2.2. THE NORTHERN SOTHO MORPHEME LE DENOTING DIRECT POSSESSIVE

4.2.2.1. DIRECT POSSESSIVE - PRESENT TENSE - POSITIVE

33. a. *Rita o na le diaparo.*
   (Rita has clothes.)

   b. *Nna ke na le morwalalo.*
   (I have a luggage.)

   c. *Thabo o na le motswala.*
   (Thabo has a cousin.)

   d. *Moithuti o na le dipuku.*
   (The student has books.)

The examples 33 (a-d) express the idea that Rita, “Nna” (I), Thabo and “moithuti” (student), directly own the possessions “diaparo” (clothes), “morwalalo” (luggage), “motswala” (cousin) and “dipuku” (books) respectively.

4.2.2.2. DIRECT POSSESSIVE - PRESENT TENSE - NEGATIVE

In the present tense negative form, the morpheme *le* may hide as it is reflected in the following examples:

34. a. *Rita ga a na (le) diaparo.*
   (Rita has got no clothes.)
b. *Ga ke na (le) morwalo.*
   (I do not have any luggage.)

c. *Thabo ga a na (le) motswala.*
   (Thabo does not have a cousin.)

d. *Moithuti ga a na (le) dipuku.*
   (The student does not have books.)

4.2.2.3. **DIRECT POSSESSIVE - FUTURE TENSE - POSITIVE**

35  a. *Rita o tla ba le diaparo.*
   (Rita will have clothes.)

   b. *Nna ke tla ba le morwalo.*
   (I will have a luggage.)

   c. *Thabo o tla ba le motswala.*
   (Thabo will have a cousin.)

   d. *Moithuti o tla ba le dipuku.*
   (The student will have books.)

The examples 35 (a-d) above express the idea that Rita, “Nna” (I), Thabo and “moithuti” (student), will in the future own the following possessions respectively: “diaparo” (clothes), “morwalo” (luggage), “motswala” (cousin) and “dipuku” (books).
4.2.2.4. DIRECT POSSESSIVE - FUTURE TENSE - NEGATIVE

Unlike in the present tense negative, the morpheme le will always show up in the future tense negative, as it is shown in these examples:

36.  

a. *Rita a ka se be le diaparo.*  
   (Rita will not have clothes.)

b. *Nna nka se be le morwalɔ.*  
   (I will not have any luggage.)

c. *Thabo a ka se be le motswala.*  
   (Thabo will not have a cousin.)

d. *Moithuti a ka se be le dipuku.*  
   (The student will not have books.)

4.2.2.5. DIRECT POSSESSIVE - PAST TENSE - POSITIVE

37  

a. *Rita o bile le diaparo.*  
   (Rita had clothes.)

b. *Nna ke bile le morwalɔ.*  
   (I had a luggage.)

c. *Thabo o bile le motswala.*  
   (Thabo had a cousin.)

d. *Moithuti o bile le dipuku.*  
   (The student had books.)
The examples 37 (a-d) above express the ideas that Rita, “Nna” (I), Thabo and “moithuti” (student), had previously been of the owners of “diaparo” (clothes), “morwalo” (luggage), “motswala” (cousin) and “dipuku” (books), respectively.

4.2.2.6. DIRECT POSSESSIVE - PAST TENSE - NEGATIVE

In the past tense negative form, the Northern Sotho morpheme le does not change; it will always show up as in the following examples:

38. a. *Rita ga se a ba le diaparo.*
   (Rita did not have clothes.)

   b. *Nna ga se ka ba le morwalo.*
   (I did not have any luggage.)

   c. *Thabo ga se a ba le motswala.*
   (Thabo did not have a cousin.)

   d. *Moithuti ga se a ba le dipuku.*
   (The student did not have books.)
4.2.3. **THE NORTHERN SOTHO MORPHEME LE DENOTING COMMUNAL POSSESSIVES**

4.2.3.1. **COMMUNAL POSSESSIVE - PRESENT TENSE - POSITIVE**

39. a. *Setšhaba se na le bothata.*
   (The community has a problem.)

   b. *Bathobaso ba na le naga.*
   (The Black people have a land.)

   c. *Sekolo se se na le tšhelete.*
   (This school has money.)

   d. *MaAfrika Borwa ba na le dijo.*
   (The South Africans have food.)

The examples 39 (a-d) denote that “*setšhaba*” (the community) is jointly having “*bothata*” (a problem), “*bathobaso*” (the Black people) are jointly possessing “*naga*” (land), “*sekolo*” (school) is jointly possessing “*tšhelete*” (money) and lastly “*maAfrika Borwa*” (South Africans) are communally possessing “*dijo*” (food).

4.2.3.2. **COMMUNAL POSSESSIVE - PRESENT TENSE - NEGATIVE**

In the past tense negative form, the Northern Sotho morpheme *le* may hide as it is reflected in the examples 40 (a-d) below:
40  a. *Setšhaba ga se na (le) bothata.*
   (The community does not have any problem.)

   b. *Bathobaso ga ba na (le) naga.*
   (The Black people do not have land.)

   c. *Sekolo se ga se na (le) tšhelete.*
   (This school does not have money.)

   d. *MaAfrika Borwa ga ba na (le) dijo.*
   (The South Africans do not have food.)

4.2.3.3. **COMMUNAL POSSESSIVE - FUTURE TENSE - POSITIVE**

41.  a. *Setšhaba se tla ba le bothata.*
   (The community will have a problem.)

   b. *Bathobaso ba tla ba le naga.*
   (The Black people will have land.)

   c. *Sekolo se se tla ba le tšhelete.*
   (This school will have money.)

   d. *MaAfrika Borwa a tla ba le dijo.*
   (The South Africans will have food.)

The examples 41 (a-d) above denote that in the future, “*setšhaba*” (the community) will jointly have “*bothata*” (problem), “*Bathobaso*” (the Blacks) will jointly possess
“naga” (land), “sekolo” (school) will communally possess “tšhelete” (money) while “maAfrika Borwa” (South Africans) will communally possess “dijo” (food).

4.2.3.4. COMMUNAL POSSESSIVE - FUTURE TENSE - NEGATIVE

In the future tense negative form, the Northern Sotho morpheme le will always be reflected as it is in the following examples:

42. a. Setšhaba se ka se be le bothata.
   (The community will not have any problem.)

   b. Bathobaso ba ka se be le naga.
   (The Balck people will not have land.)

   c. Sekolo se se ka se be le tšhelete.
   (This school will not have money.)

   d. MaAfrika Borwa a ka se be le dijo.
   (The South Africans will not have food.)

4.2.3.5. COMMUNAL POSSESSIVE - PAST TENSE - POSITIVE

43. a. Setšhaba se bile le bothata.
   (The community had a problem.)

   b. Bathobaso ba bile le naga.
   (The Black people had land.)
c. *Sekolo se se bile le tšhelete.*  
   (This school had money.)

d. *MaAfrika Borwa ba bile le dijo.*  
   (The South Africans had food.)

The examples 43 (a-d) above indicate that “*setšhaba*” (community) has previously had “*bothata*” (problem), “*bathobaso*” (Black people) owned “*naga*” (land) previously, “*sekolo*” (school) has in the past possessed “*tšhelete*” (money) and lastly, “*maAfrika Borwa*” (South Africans) have owned “*dijo*” (food) in the past.

4.2.3.6. COMMUNAL POSSESSIVE - PAST TENSE - NEGATIVE

In the past tense negative form, the Northern Sotho morpheme *le* will always show up as it is reflected in the following examples:

44. a. *Setšhaba ga se sa ba le bothata.*  
   (The community did not have any problem.)

   b. *Bathobaso ga se ba ba le naga.*  
   (The Black people did not have land.)

   c. *Sekolo se ga se sa ba le tšhelete.*  
   (This school did not have money.)

   d. *MaAfrika Borwa ga se ba ba le dijo.*  
   (The South Africans did not have food.)
4.2.4. THE NORTHERN SOTHO MORPHEME LE DENOTING ALIENABLE POSSESSIVES

4.2.4.1. ALIENABLE POSSESSIVE - PRESENT TENSE - POSITIVE

45. a. Ke na le dijo.
   (I have food.)

   b. Tate o na le tšhelete.
   (My father has money.)

   c. Fana o na le sefatanaga.
   (Fana has a car.)

   d. Ana o na le mogwera.
   (Ana has a friend.)

The examples 45 (a-d) above implies that the ownership of “dijo” (food) by “nna/ke” (I), “tšhelete” (money) by “tate” (father), “sefatanaga” (car) by Fana and “mogwera” (friend) by Ana, are in such a way that they can be terminated or discontinued any time.

4.2.4.2. ALIENABLE POSSESSIVE - PRESENT TENSE - NEGATIVE

In the present tense negative form, the Northern Sotho morpheme le may hide as it appears in the following examples:
46. a. *Ga ke na (le) dijo.*
   (I do not have food.)

   b. *Tate ga a na (le) tšhelete.*
   (My father does not have money.)

   c. *Fana ga a na (le) sefatanaga.*
   (Fana does not have a car.)

   d. *Ana ga a na (le) mogwera.*
   (Ana does not have a friend.)

4.2.4.3. ALIENABLE POSSESSIVE - FUTURE TENSE - POSITIVE

47. a. *Ke tla ba le dijo.*
   (I will have food.)

   b. *Tate o tla ba le tšhelete.*
   (My father will have money.)

   c. *Fana o tla ba le sefatanaga.*
   (Fana will have a car.)

   d. *Ana o tla ba le mogwera.*
   (Ana will have a friend.)

   The examples 47 (a-d) clearly indicates that in future, “nna/ke” (I), “tate” (father), Fana and Ana will be having ownership of “dijo” (food), “tšhelete” (money),
“sefatanaga” (car) and “mogwera” (friend) respectively. The type of ownership that they have is such that it can be terminated at any time.

4.2.4.4. ALIENABLE POSSESSIVE - FUTURE TENSE - NEGATIVE

In the future tense negative, the Northern Sotho morpheme le does not change or hide, it will always show up as it is shown in the following examples:

48.  a. *Nka se be le dijo.*  
     (I will not have food.)

c. *Tate a ka se be le tšhelete.*  
     (My father will not have money.)

d. *Fana a ka se be le sefatanaga.*  
     (Fana will not have a car.)

e. *Ana a ka se be le mogwera.*  
     (Ana will not have a friend.)

4.2.4.5. ALIENABLE POSSESSIVE - PAST TENSE - POSITIVE

49.  a. *Ke bile le dijo.*  
     (I had food.)

b. *Tate o bile le tšhelete.*  
     (My father had money.)

c. *Fana o bile le sefatanaga.*
(Fana had a car.)

d. Ana o bile le mogwera.
(Ana had a friend.)

The examples 49 (a-d) denote that in the past “nna/ke” (I), “tate” (father), Fana and Ana had ownership of “dijo” (food), “tšhelete” (money), “sefatanaga” (car) and “mogwera” (friend), respectively; which could be terminated any time.

4.2.4.6. ALIENABLE POSSESSIVE - PAST TENSE - NEGATIVE

In the past tense negative, the Northern Sotho morpheme le will always appear to denote alienable possession as it is indicated in the following examples:

50. a. Nna ga se ka ba le dijo.
(I did not have food.)

b. Tate ga se a ba le tšhelete.
(My father did not have money.)

c. Fana ga se a ba le sefatanaga.
(Fana did not have a car.)

d. Ana ga se a ba le mogwera.
(Ana did not have a friend.)
4.2.5. THE NORTHERN SOTHO MORPHEME *LE* DENOTING INALIENABLE POSSESSION

4.2.5.1. INALIENABLE POSSESSIVE - PRESENT TENSE - POSITIVE

The following examples imply that under normal circumstances, the ownership of the possessions cannot be terminated.

51. a. *Kgomo e na le leihlo.*

(The cattle has an eye.)

b. *Neo o na le hlogo.*

( Neo has a head.)

c. *Ngwana o na le diatla.*

(The baby has hands.)

d. *Mpša e na le mosela.*

(The dog has a tail.)

The relationship between the possessors “*kgomo*” (cattle), Neo, “*ngwana*” (the baby), “*mpša*” (the dog); and their possessions “*leihlo*” (eye), “*hlogo*” (head), “*diatla*” (hands) and “*mosela*” (tail), cannot be discontinued under normal circumstances.
4.2.5.2. INALIENABLE POSSESSIVE - PRESENT TENSE - NEGATIVE

In the present tense negative form, the Northern Sotho morpheme *le* may hide. The relationship of the possessors and their possessions can only be discontinued under abnormal conditions as it appears in the following examples:

52.  a. *Kgomo ga e na (le) leihlo.*
    (The cattle does not have an eye.)

      b. *Neo ga a na (le) hlogo.*
      (Neo does not have a head.)

      c. *Ngwana ga a na (le) diatla.*
      (The child does not have hands.)

      d. *Mpša ga e na (le) mosela.*
      (The dog does not have a tail.)

4.2.5.3. ALIENABLE POSSESSIVE - PAST TENSE - POSITIVE

53.  a. *Kgomo e bile le leihlo.*
    (The cattle had an eye.)

      b. *Neo o bile le hlogo.*
      (Neo had a head.)

      c. *Ngwana o bile le diatla.*
      (The baby had hands.)
4.2.5.4. **INALIENABLE POSSESSIVE - FUTURE TENSE - POSITIVE**

54.  
   a. *Kgomo e tla ba le leihlo.*
       (The cattle will have an eye.)
   
   b. *Neo o tla ba le hlogo.*
       (Neo will have a head.)
   
   c. *Ngwana o tla ba le diatla.*
       (The baby will have hands.)
   
   d. *Mpša e tla ba le mosela.*
       (The dog will have a tail.)

4.2.5.5. **INALIENABLE POSSESSIVE - FUTURE TENSE - NEGATIVE**

In the future tense negative the sentences will appear as follows:

55.  
   a. *Kgomo e ka se be le leihlo.*
       (The cattle will not have an eye.)
   
   b. *Neo a ka se be le hlogo.*
       (Neo will not have a head.)
   
   c. *Ngwana a ka se be le diatla.*
(The baby will not have hands.)

d. *Mpša e ka se be le mosela.*
(The dog will not have a tail.)

It should be pointed out that the literal change in meaning from the present tense to the future tense in the examples 53 (a-d) to 55 (a-d) can lead to a doubtful deeper meaning of the inalienable relationship which is realized between the possessors and their possessions.

4.3. THE NORTHERN SOTHO MORPHEME *LE* CAN BE USED TO DENOTE ACCOMPANIMENT

4.3.1. DEFINITION

Allen(1990:8) says that an accompaniment is an accompanying thing; an appendage.
In Northern Sotho, the morpheme *le* can be used to indicate that a person or object is accompanied by another person or object. It indicates that one is not alone but is having the company of some other people or things. The following examples are showing that the subjects in each sentence has got company of other people or things.

4.3.2. ACCOMPANIMENT - PRESENT TENSE - POSITIVE

56.a. *Tate o na le mma ka ntlong.*
(Daddy is with mummy in the house.)
This example indicates that “tate” (daddy) is not alone in the house at the moment, he is accompanied by “mma”(mummy).

b. Nelly o na le baeng.
   (Nelly is with the visitors.)

This sentence implies that Nelly is in the accompaniment of some other people, i.e. “baeng” (visitors); she is not by herself.

c. Bašemane ba na le basetsana.
   (The boys are with the girls.)

This example denote that “bašemane” (boys) are not alone, they are accompanied by “basetsana” (girls). The boys are not separated from the girls, they have got company of the girls; i.e. amongst “bašemane” (boys), there are “basetsana” (girls).

d. Motsomi o na le dimpša tša gagwe.
   (The hunter is with his dogs.)

The idea which is expressed in this example is that “motsomi” (the hunter) is not alone at this moment, he is with his “dimpša” (dogs). The hunter is accompanied by his dogs.

4.3.3. ACCOMPANIMENT - PRESENT TENSE - NEGATIVE

The Northern Sotho morpheme le may hide in the present tense negative form to denote accompaniment as it is reflected in the following sentences:

57. a. Tate ga a na (le) mma ka ntlong.
   (Daddy is not with mummy in the house.)
b. *Nelly ga a na (le) baeng.*
   (Nelly is not with the visitors.)

c. *Bašemane ga b a na (le) basetsana.*
   (The boys are not with the girls.)

d. *Motsomi ga a na (le) dimpša tša gagwe.*
   (The hunter is not with his dogs.)

4.3.4. ACCOMPANIMENT - FUTURE TENSE - POSITIVE

58. a. *Tate o tla ba le mma ka ntlong.*
   (Daddy will be with mummy in the house.)

   The idea in this sentence is that “tate” (daddy) will in the next moment, in future, not be alone in the house, but he will be with mummy. He will have the company of “mma” (mummy).

   b. *Nelly o tla ba le baeng.*
   (Nelly will be with the visitors.)

   The implication in this example is that Nelly will not be alone in the next moment, in future, she will be accompanied by “baeng” (visitors).

c. *Bašemane ba tla ba le basetsana.*
   (The boys will be with the girls.)

   This example denote that in future, “bašemane” (boys) will not be alone, they will have company of “basetsana” (girls)
d. *Motsomi o tla ba le dimpša tša gagwe.*
   (The hunter will be with his dogs.)

The idea which is expressed in this sentence is that “*motsomi*” (the hunter) will not be by himself, he will be accompanied by “*dimpša*” (dogs).

### 4.3.5. ACCOMPANIMENT - FUTURE TENSE - NEGATIVE

The morpheme *le* will always denote accompaniment also in the future tense negative form as it appears in the following sentences:

59. a. *Tate a ka se be le mma ka ntlong.*
    (Daddy will not be with mummy in the house.)

b. *Nelly a ka se be le baeng.*
    (Nelly will not be with the visitors.)

c. *Bašemane ba ka se be le basetsana.*
    (The boys will not be with the girls.)

d. *Motsomi a ka se be le dimpša tša gagwe.*
    (The hunter will not be with his dogs.)

### 4.3.6. ACCOMPANIMENT - PAST TENSE - POSITIVE

In the past tense positive form, the morpheme *le* will still denote accompaniment. The following examples support this idea:
60.  
a.  *Tate o bile le mma ka ntlong.*  
(Daddy was with mummy in the house.)  

This example expresses the idea that “*tate*” (daddy) was previously not alone in the house, but he was accompanied by “*mma*” (mummy).  

b.  *Nelly o bile le baeng.*  
(Nelly was with the visitors.)  

The idea which is expressed in this example is that Nelly did not stay alone previously, she was accompanied by “*baeng*” (visitors).  

c.  *Bašemane ba bile le basetsana.*  
(The boys were with the girls.)  

This example expresses the idea that “*bašemane*” (boys) did not stay alone or were not separated from the “*basetsana*” (girls), they were together.  

4.3.7.  ACCOMPANIMENT - PAST TENSE - NEGATIVE  

The Northern Sotho morpheme *le* will also show accompaniment in the past tense negative form, as it is reflected in the following examples:  

61.  
a.  *Tate ga se a ba le mma ka ntlong.*  
(Daddy was not with mummy in the house.)  

b.  *Nelly ga se a ba le baeng.*  
(Nelly was not with the visitors.)  

c.  *Bašemane ga se ba ba le basetsana.*
(The boys were not with the girls.)

d. Motsomi ga se a ba le dimpša tša gagwe.
(The hunter was not with his dogs.)

4.3.8. THE MORPHEME LE WITHOUT THE USE OF THE COPULATIVE PREFIX AND THE COPULATIVE BASE TO DENOTE ACCOMPANIMENT

Sometimes the Northern Sotho morpheme le can denote accompaniment without being used with the copulative prefix, e.g. “o” for noun Cl. 1, and the copulative base “na” (with). The following examples proof this:

4.3.8.1. ACCOMPANIMENT WITHOUT A COPULATIVE PREFIX - PRESENT TENSE - POSITIVE

62. a. Ke ja le bana.
(I eat with the children.)

b. Morutiši le morutwana ba a rerišana.
(The teacher and the learner are discussing.)

c. Re sepela le yo.
(We go with this one.)

d. Bana ba raloka le wa ka.
(The children are playing with that of mine.)
4.3.8.2. ACCOMPANIMENT WITHOUT A COPULATIVE PREFIX -
PRESENT TENSE - NEGATIVE

63. a. *Ga ke je le bana.*
   (I do not eat with the children.)

   b. *Morutiši le morutwana ga ba rerišane.*
   (The teacher and the learner are not discussing.)

   c. *Ga re sepele le yo.*
   (We are not going with this one.)

   d. *Bana ga ba raloke le wa ka.*
   (The children are not playing with that of mine.)

4.3.8.3. ACCOMPANIMENT WITHOUT A COPULATIVE PREFIX -
FUTURE TENSE - POSITIVE

64. a. *Ke tla ja le bana.*
   (I will eat with the children.)

   b. *Morutiši le morutwana ba tla rerišana.*
   (The teacher and the learner will discuss.)

   c. *Re tla sepela le yo.*
   (We will go with this one.)

   d. *Bana ba tla raloka le wa ka.*
   (The children will play with that of mine.)
4.3.8.4. ACCOMPANIMENT WITHOUT THE COPULATIVE PREFIX
- FUTURE TENSE - NEGATIVE

65. a. *Nka se je le bana.*
   (I will not eat with the children.)

   b. *Morutiši le morutwana ba ka se rerišane.*
   (The teacher and the learner will not discuss.)

   c. *Re ka se sepele le yo.*
   (We will not go with this one.)

   d. *Bana ba ka se raloke le wa ka.*
   (The children will not play with that of mine.)

4.3.8.5. ACCOMPANIMENT WITHOUT THE COPULATIVE
PREFIX - PAST TENSE - POSITIVE

66. a. *Ke jele le bana.*
   (I ate with the children.)

   b. *Morutiši le morutwana ba rerišane.*
   (The teacher and the learner have discussed.)

   c. *Re sepetše le yo.*
   (We went with this one.)

   d. *Bana ba ralokile le wa ka.*
(The children played with that of mine.)

4.3.8.6. ACCOMPANIMENT WITHOUT THE COPULATIVE BASE - PAST TENSE - NEGATIVE

67. a. *Ga se ka ja le bana.*
   (I did not eat with the children.)

   b. *Morutšiši le bana ga se ba rerišana.*
   (The teacher and the learners did not discuss.)

   c. *Ga se ra sepela le yo.*
   (We did not go with this one.)

   d. *Bana ga se ba raloka le wa ka.*
   (The children did not play with that of mine.)

4.4. THE NORTHERN SOTHO MORPHEME *LE* CAN BE USED TO DENOTE LOCATION

4.4.1. DEFINITION

Allen (1990:695) define location as a noun which refers to the place or position in which a person or thing is. In Northern Sotho we have words which are used to indicate location and they are referred to as adverbs of place.

Poulos and Louwrens (1994:327) clarify that adverbs in Northern Sotho derive from other word categories; and this process of derivation takes on different forms.
Some adverbs are being formed by the addition of prefixes, while others use suffixes.

Richards, Platt and Weber (1985:6) define an adverb as a word that describes or adds to the meaning of a verb, an adjective, another adverb, or a sentence, and which answers such questions as how?, where?, or when an action or state is performed.

Answers to these questions lead us to types of adverbs; which are: adverb of manner, adverb of place and adverb of time. The discussion below is going to focus on the use of the morpheme *le* to denote location.

### 4.4.2. LOCATION BY USING THE NORTHERN SOTHO MORPHEME *LE*

In Northern Sotho, the morpheme *le* can be used to denote location where the activity is performed. This can be shown in the past tense positive form and the future tense positive form.

#### 4.4.2.1. LOCATION - PAST TENSE - POSITIVE

68  a. *Ke be ke le Durban ngwagola.*
   (I was in Durban last year.)

   b. *Mosadi o be a le ka gae ge re fihla.*
   (The woman was at home when we arrived.)

   c. *Dikgomo di be di le ka šakeng.*
   (The cattles were in the kraal.)
d. *Dijo di be di le tafoleng.*
   (Food were on the table.)

When we change the above examples into negative form, the morpheme “le” will change into the negative morpheme “se”. In other words, the negative morpheme “se” is used to negate the location where the activity is performed.

### 4.4.2.2 LOCATION - FUTURE TENSE - POSITIVE

69. a. *Re tla ba re le kgole kudu.*
   (We will be too far.)

   b. *Bana ba tla ba ba le sekolong.*
   (The children will be at school.)

   b. *Lehodu le tla ba le le kgolegong.*
   (The thieve will be in jail.)

   c. *Hlapi e tla ba e le ka nokeng.*
   (The fish will be in the river.)
4.5. THE NORTHERN SOTHO MORPHEME LE CAN BE USED TO DENOTE ADDITIVE FOCUS

4.5.1. DEFINITION

Allen (1990:14) says additive is an adjective which refers to being characterized by addition or be added to. In Northern Sotho the morpheme le can be used to denote additive focus. The following discussion support view:

70. a. *Ngwana le yena o tla lla.*
    (The child too will cry.)

The idea which is expressed in this sentence is that “ngwana” (the child) is not left out in carrying out the activity “lla” (cry); the child is added to those who are executing the activity.

    b. *Dipapadi le tšona di bohlokwa.*
    (Games too are important.)

This example express the idea that there is a list of things which are important; on the list provided there is an addition of “dipapadi” (games).

    b. *Ba swanetše go rwala le dijo.*
    (They must carry food too.)

The idea which is expressed in this example is that there are some things which need to be carried and amongst those things, there must also be “dijo” (food).

    c. *Le ba bagolo ba a e tseba taba ye.*
(Even the elderlies know this issue too.)

This sentence gives the idea that there is knowledge about an issue. Amongst the people who have knowledge about it, the are “ba bagolo” (elderlies). It is not known by young people only.

4.6. THE NORTHERN SOTHO MORPHEME LE CAN BE USED TO DENOTE EXISTENTIALISM

4.6.1. DEFINITION

Richards, Platt and Weber (1985:99) say “existential” describes a particular type of sentence which often expresses the existence or location of persons, animals, things, or ideas. In Northern Sotho the morpheme le can also be used to denote the existence of persons, animals, things or ideas. The following discussion support this idea:

4.6.2. THE EXISTENCE OF PERSONS BY USING THE MORPHEME LE

71. a. Go be go le moruti ka kerekeng.
(There was a priest in church.)

b. Ga ke tshepe go le baeng ka gae.
(I don’t believe there are visitors at home.)

b. Sekolong go be go le barutwana feela.
(At school there were learners only.)
c. Go be go le Anita ge ke fihla.
(There was Anita when I arrive.)

4.6.3. THE EXISTENCE OF ANIMALS BY USING THE MORPHEME LE

72. a. Ga ke tsene ka ge go le ditau.
(I cannot enter as there are lions.)

b. Ge go le dimpša gona go bolokegile.
(If there are dogs then it is safe.)

c. Ba tšhabile ka gobane go le ditlou.
(They ran away because there are elephants.)

d. Go ka ba go le dikwena ka nokeng.
(There might be crocodiles in the river.)

4.6.4. THE EXISTENCE OF THINGS BY USING THE MORPHEME LE

73. a. O tla bona manong ge go le setopo.
(You will see eagles if there is a caucus.)

b. Ge go le selo ka thoko yeo o tla mpotša.
(If there is something that side you will tell me.)

c. O e tšere go le diaparo feela.
(He took it whilst there were clothes only.)
d. *O ithutile ka ge go le dipuku.*
   (He studied because there are books.)

4.6.5. THE EXISTENCE OF IDEAS BY USING THE MORPHEME *LE*

74. a. *Go be go le bose moketeng.*
   (It was nice at the party.)

   b. *Ge go le bodutu ke tla mmitša.*
   (If there is loneliness I will call him.)

   c. *Ga ke lokologe ge go le poifo go nna.*
   (I do not feel free when there is fear in me.)

   d. *O thušitše le ge go le dipelaelo.*
   (He helped though there are complaints.)

4.7. THE NORTHERN SOTHO MORPHEME *LE* CAN BE USED TO DENOTE HONORIFICS

4.7.1. DEFINITION

Richards, Platt and Weber (1985:131) state that honorifics is a noun which refers to politeness formulas in a particular language which may be specific affixes, words, or sentence structures. They go further to indicate that languages which have a
complex system of honorifics are, for instance, Japanese, Madurese, and Hindi. They also say that English has no complex system of honorifics.

Northern Sotho as a language, also has its own system of honorifics. There are specific prefixes e.g. “bo-“, suffixes e.g. “-ng”, words e.g. “morena”; which are formulas which show politeness in Northern Sotho

4.7.2. THE MORPHEME LE USED AS A CONCORD TO DENOTE HONORIFICS

The Northern Sotho morpheme le can also be used to denote honorific as it is used in the following discussion:

4.7.2.1. THE MORPHEME LE AS A SUBJECT CONCORD TO DENOTE HONORIFICS

75. a. *Mma le rapetše naa?*  
(Mother did you(singular) pray?)

b. *Rakgadi le hlokomele bana.*  
(Aunt take care of the children.)

c. *Malome le ba bone kae batho?*  
(Uncle where did you(singular) see the people?)

d. *Koko le tla ja le rena lehono.*  
(Granny you (singular) will eat with us today.)
4.7.2.2. THE MORPHEME LE AS AN OBJECT CONCORD TO DENOTE HONORIFICS

76.  a.  Ke tla le thuša tate.
     (I will help you(singular) father.

     b.  O a le rata ruri.
     (He loves you(singular) really.)

     c.  Ngwana o le boditše bothata bjo.
     (The child told you(singular) about this problem.)

     d.  Ba le agela ntlo ye kgolo mma.
     (They are building a big house for you(singular) mother.)

4.8. CONCLUSION

Semantically the Northern Sotho morpheme le can give different meanings which can sometimes be confusing due to its ambiguous nature. Its correct meaning can only be clarified when it is used in various contexts to clarify its ambiguity. The morpheme le can be used in Northern Sotho to denote possession, accompaniment, location, additive focus, existentialism and honorifics.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

5.1. CONCLUSION

The aim of this study is to examine the role that the morpheme *le* plays in the Northern Sotho discourse. The linguistic analysis of this morpheme will assist the speakers and users of Northern Sotho to realize the importance of knowing the word category to which the morpheme *le* belongs. This study also serves to highlight strategies which one should use in order to interpret the meaning expressed by the morpheme *le* correctly.

CHAPTER ONE serves as the introduction to this study which reveals the background to the problem that the ambiguous nature of the Northern Sotho morpheme *le* poses with regard to its semantic function as well as its word categorization. The linguistic analysis of this morpheme will assist Northern Sotho language users to understand and identify the correct word category and the semantic function the Northern Sotho morpheme *le*. The qualitative research methodology is used in this study to give insight to the topic under discussion.

CHAPTER TWO deals with literature review which reflects the work of other scholars who have undertaken an in-depth study of the other morphemes but with little attention to the Northern Sotho morpheme *le*. It is acknowledged that, amongst other scholars and linguists, Mogoba (1992), Matsinhe (1993), Mphahlele (2003), Lombard, Van Wyk and Mokgokong (1985), Ziervogel, Lombard and Mokgokong (1988), Poulos and Louwrens (1994) worked on morphemes. Most of them worked on bound morphemes while a few of them worked on free morphemes like the morpheme *le*, but on a lighter note.

CHAPTER THREE deals with the morphological features of the Northern Sotho morpheme *le*. Morphology is defined in this chapter as the scientific study of morphemes. It is indicated in this chapter that the Northern Sotho morpheme *le* can
be categorized into many word categories, it will depend on the morphological function it carries in that particular context. The Northern Sotho morpheme *le* can be categorized in Northern Sotho as follows:

- As a conjunctive, for example: *Dijo le dino.*
  (Food and drinks.)
- As a demonstrative pronoun of noun Cl. 5, for example: *Ba mphile le.*
  (They gave me this one.)
- As an agreement of noun Cl. 5, for example: *Letšatši le a hlaba.*
  (The sun rises.)
- As a preposition, for example: *Dinonyana di na le mafopa.*
  (Birds have feathers.)
- As a copulative, for example: *Lena le baetapele.*
  (You are the leaders.)
- As an adverb, for example: *Re phela go le (lefase).*
  (We live on this (world).)
- And also as a complement, for example: *Nora o lwele le mošemane.*
  (Nora has fought with the boy.)

Categorizing the Northern Sotho morpheme *le* into different word categories is clarified by its use in sentences uttered in a specific context to clarify its ambiguity.

**CHAPTER FOUR** concerns the semantic function of the Northern Sotho morpheme *le.* Semantic is explained in this chapter as the study of meaning. This chapter suggested ways of identifying the correct meaning of the morpheme *le.* In terms of its semantic function, the Northern Sotho morpheme *le* can be used to denote different things which will depend on the context in which it is used. Semantically the morpheme *le* can be used in Northern Sotho to denote the following:
The morpheme *le* is used in sentences which are uttered in different contexts which clarify the correct meaning which it denotes.

**CHAPTER FIVE** is the conclusion of this research work, and it summarizes all its chapters.

**5.2. FINDINGS**

This study has made the following findings:

- More literature has been done on bound morphemes than it is on free morphemes.

- The morpheme *le* in Northern Sotho cannot function as a complementizer, it can only function as a conjunctive.
When used as an identifying copulative, the morpheme *le* in Northern Sotho changes to *se* in the future tense negative and the past tense negative forms, e.g.

*Ke tlo ba ke se moithuti išago.*
(I will not be a student next year.)

*Ke be ke se moswa kerekeng.*
(I was not youth in church.)

When used to denote location, the Northern Sotho morpheme *le* changes to *se* in the negative form, e.g.

*Ke be ke se Durban ngwagola.*
(I was not in Durban last year.)

The difficulty in establishing the correct meaning of the morpheme *le* in Northern Sotho, together with its word categorization, can only be clarified by its use in sentences uttered in different contexts.

5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that an in-depth study of the Northern Sotho free morphemes is necessary because most linguists are focusing on working on bound morphemes rather than free morphemes.

An in-depth study of the syntactic structure of the Northern Sotho morpheme *le* is necessary to clarify its function as it is used in a particular discourse.
An in-depth study of the phonological features of the Northern Sotho morpheme *le* is necessary to establish its phonological status as it is used in a particular context.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


