



# Metaphor patterns in Sesotho fiction: The case of the novel *Chaka*

Ntšoeu Seephephe & Makhetsi Makha-Ntlaloe

## Metaphor patterns in Sesotho fiction: The case of the novel *Chaka*

In this study, we examine the nature, distribution, and stylistic effect of metaphors used in the Sesotho novel *Chaka*. Previous studies have discussed the metaphoric language in Thomas Mofolo's work, revealing that, among others, Mofolo uses metaphors to articulate his themes and for stylistic effect. We begin our analysis by identifying and listing all the linguistic and underlying conceptual metaphors used in our sample data. We then analyse the linguistic and conceptual metaphors in terms of whether they are conventional or novel and whether they are creatively employed or not. We also explore the distribution of linguistic metaphors across word classes. Lastly, we explore the stylistic effects of these metaphors. The metaphor patterns in *Chaka* reflect a strong influence of Sesotho cultural and cognitive structures, including orature. The majority of the linguistic metaphors in the novel are the conventional and non-creative ones whose metaphorical meanings are found in Sesotho dictionaries and whose function is to create a text that can resonate with early 20<sup>th</sup> century Basotho. Our analysis shows that, to a lesser extent, the metaphors were used to create a text similar to Western literary texts and to promote Christianity. Seemingly, it is this attribute of having a deep relationship with other Sesotho texts and cultural practices, including Sesotho orature, that led to the delay in the publication of the novel after it had been completed.

**Keywords:** *Chaka*, continuity, discontinuity, fiction, literature, metaphor.


## Introduction

In this study we aim to reveal the nature, frequency, and stylistic effect of the metaphors in the novel *Chaka* by Thomas Mofolo (1876–1948). *Chaka* is a mythological tale of the rise and fall of the 19th-century king, King Chaka/Shaka (Maake 67). The novel traces Chaka's life from his conception, which is portrayed as one of the factors that are attributed to his rise and fall and death. The novel was published in 1925, more than ten years after it was written, during an era of Sesotho literature that has been referred to as the missionary period (Zulu 77). The literary works produced during this period concerned themselves with religion, customs, and moral issues. In terms of structure, style, and the use of language, they show an influence of Sesotho texts that were produced in the pre-literary period (Zulu 77–8) and western canons, particularly the English canon and Judea-Christianity. Past studies have shown that one of the areas in which these works have been influenced by the pre-literary tradition is in the use of metaphors, especially warrior metaphors that are usually used in warrior poetry (Kunene 16; Chaka 80).

Similar to the other novels produced during the missionary period, *Chaka* gives some attention to moral issues. One of these issues is the conception of the protagonist, Chaka. The narrator labels the birth of Chaka, which came about as a result of an extramarital affair between his parents, as “the result of sin”, and portrays it as a major factor that led to the friction between Chaka and his father, which in turn affected Chaka's psychological development (Kunene 16). The novel portrays Chaka as an ambitious and brutal king and traces this to the tough upbringing he had following his father's rejection.


Ntšoeu Seephephe is senior lecturer in the Department of English, Faculty of Humanities, National University of Lesotho, Maseru, Lesotho.

Email: nr.seephephe@nul.ls

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5435-0549>

Makhetsi Makha-Ntlaloe is lecturer in the Department of African Languages and Literature, Faculty of Humanities, National University of Lesotho, Maseru, Lesotho.

Email: me.makha-ntlaloe@nul.ls

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-7546-4288>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17159/tl.v6i12.15821>

### DATES:

Submitted: 20 March 2023; Accepted: 29 May 2024; Published: 28 October 2024

However, it has been postulated that, in comparison to other Sesotho literary texts published during the missionary period, including Mofolo's other works, *Chaka* shows a greater influence of Sesotho culture and orature and was less influenced by Christianity (Kunene 16). Kunene observes that, while there are instances where "the author sermonizes and moralizes" in *Chaka*, "there is much less of it here than in Mofolo's other novels" (16–7). This has been cited as the major factor that led to the delay in the publication of the novel. Krog shows that even after its publication, some missionaries still criticised *Chaka* for being "nothing but an apology for pagan superstitions" (87).

Previous studies have shown that metaphors serve a significant role in Mofolo's work. The literature shows that Mofolo uses a variety of metaphors in his work for a variety of functions that include the articulation of his themes (Tekateka 14, 91; Vassilatos 42, 50). Additionally, previous studies have revealed that Mofolo uses metaphors for stylistic effect and that the analysis of metaphors in Mofolo's work can reveal the traditions that have influenced his works (Tekateka 91; Vassilatos 169; Makamane 105–6, 198). However, as far as we can ascertain, no study has focused on how metaphors are employed as a tool for stylistic effect in *Chaka*. This type of research as it can provide insights on the style used in *Chaka*, including how the style has been influenced by other literary traditions. In this study we set out to examine this issue and employ Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) (Kövecses 4–6) as the framework of our study.

As far as we are aware, no study has been carried out that uses CMT to explore the stylistic effect of metaphors in *Chaka*. This has created a gap that has to be filled, especially since, as indicated, the research on both the African continent and outside the continent reveals that the deployment of metaphors in literature is influenced by context, including the cultural context. It is the need to fill this gap and provide information about the ways in which Sesotho literary texts use metaphors that has led to the undertaking of the current study. The overall goal of the study is to reveal the use of metaphors in the Sesotho novel *Chaka* and to provide answers to the following questions: What is the frequency of linguistic metaphors in *Chaka*? How are the linguistic metaphors distributed across word classes in the novel? Which of the linguistic metaphors and the underlying conceptual metaphors are conventional and which of these metaphors are novel? What is the stylistic effect of the metaphors?

First, we provide a background of *Chaka*, with a focus on the second chapter, which is used in the analysis. This is followed by a review of the literature, with a focus on studies that explore metaphors in literary texts. The analysis part outlines the methods used and shows the analysis of metaphors in the novel. Finally, we present the findings of the study based on the analysis.

## Background

When he wrote *Chaka*, Mofolo, who had been educated by missionaries and subscribed to Christianity, was working at the Morija Book Depot, where his employers were the missionaries of the Paris Evangelical Mission (PEMS). Working at the Morija Book Depot exposed Mofolo to Christian texts and the Western literary canon (Gill 32). It is generally agreed that, in addition to his background as a Mosotho who lived among Basotho and knew their cultural practices, Mofolo's worldview and writings were greatly shaped by his Christian faith and his exposure to the Western literary canon (*Chaka* 64; Krog 87–9).

*Chaka* was the third of Mofolo's works. Before the publication thereof, Mofolo published two other novels, *Moeti oa Bochabela* (A Traveller to the East) (1907) and *Pitseng* (1910) (*Chaka* 64). While Mofolo's novels are similar in some aspects such as their themes and style, *Chaka* is unique in that its protagonist is based on a historical figure, King Shaka kaSenzangakhona. *Chaka* has also been outstanding considering the number of accolades it has won, not only among Mofolo's works, but among works written in Southern Bantu languages. The novel was included in the list of "100 Best Books" ever written on the African continent and in the list of 12 Best African Novels (Maake 67). Considered a masterpiece, *Chaka* has been translated and adapted into multiple languages (Vassilatos 167). Maake remarks that "the novels *Chaka* and *Monono ke Muowane* [...] are arguably the highest watermarks in Sesotho literature, especially in terms of their narrative technique, mesmerising style and creative capabilities" (67).

Data used in this study were obtained from the hard copy of the novel *Chaka*. Due to considerations of space, we used Chapter 2 of the novel as the sample chapter. Chapter 2 was purposively selected on the fact that it would give us the required data, namely the linguistic metaphors and underlying conceptual metaphors

While Chapter 1 of *Chaka* narrates the events that led to his birth, including the extramarital affair his parents had that led to his conception and his parent's hasty marriage (which was intended to hide the scandal), Chapter 2

focuses on the events that took place just after his birth. The main focus of this chapter is his father's rejection. The chapter shows that, soon after Chaka's birth, his father's other wives (Chaka's father, Sensangakhona, already had several wives when he married Chaka's mother, Nandi) gave birth to other male children. This situation altered matters for Chaka, as the new mothers now perceived him as a threat to their sons' inheritance, particularly because he was the first male child born to Sensangakhona and was therefore favoured by the primogeniture system that prevailed at that time.

To prevent this from happening, these women forced Sensangakhona to reject the boy and his mother and expel them from his kingdom. To achieve this, the women resorted to blackmail, threatening to reveal the circumstances that led to Chaka's conception to the public if King Sensangakhona did not accede to their demands. Since the punishment for extramarital affairs was death, King Sensangakhona decided to do as his wives demanded. He rejected Chaka and his mother, expelling the two from his kingdom. The chapter ends with their expulsion from the village.

### **Metaphors in literary texts**

The term "metaphor" is used to refer to the representation of one concept by another (Kövecses 4). Previous research on metaphors, especially research using CMT as the framework, has revealed that these representations have levels which lead to different types of metaphors (Kövecses 4). Previous studies have revealed that, as proposed by CMT, the primary metaphor is the conceptual one. A conceptual metaphor refers to a representation that occurs at the cognitive level when one domain of experience is viewed in terms of another (Seephephe 97). For instance, the conceptual metaphor, "Argument is war", is employed when an argument is viewed as war (Kövecses 6).

Another type of metaphor is a linguistic one. A linguistic metaphor involves a representation of a concept by a linguistic expression that usually represents another concept (Steen *et al.* 32). Research using CMT has demonstrated that these other types of metaphors are influenced by underlying conceptual metaphors and are reflections of cross-mappings between domains (Kövecses 4). Metaphors, including conceptual metaphors, can be categorized on the basis of their conventionality. Metaphors are regarded as conventional if they are entrenched in a particular culture and can be used in everyday interactions (Seephephe 67). In contrast, unconventional, or novel metaphors, are not used in everyday language but usually appear as part of figurative structures (Kövecses 35).

The study of metaphors in literary texts goes back to the times of Aristotle. There are numerous records of Aristotle devoting space to the discussion of metaphors in literary texts (Kövecses XII). Since the introduction of the cognitive-based approach towards metaphor in the early 1980s, a number of studies have used CMT as a framework (Kövecses 49). These studies have used CMT to explore the use of metaphors for stylistic effect and for theme promotion (Maledo and Emama 169; Ononye and Chiluwuwa 275). One of the studies was carried out by Dorst (49) who explored the use of metaphors in fiction produced in Western Europe and found that the style of the fiction written in this part of the world involves a high frequency of conventional linguistic metaphors that appear in everyday interactions and are based on culturally shared conceptual metaphors. Similarly, a study carried out by Lapasau found that the style of Indonesian literary texts involves a high frequency of conventional metaphors that are based on conventional conceptual metaphors that are reflective of the Indonesian culture and language (335). What is significant about the results of these studies is that they show that the use of metaphors is influenced by the context in which the literary text is produced.

Similar findings have been reported by scholars who focused on the African continent (Hermanson 4; Maledo and Emama 169; Ononye and Chiluwuwa 275). The results of these studies, too, support the notion that the use of metaphors in literary texts is influenced by context. Ononye and Chiluwuwa found that the linguistic and conceptual metaphors used in literary texts produced in West Africa promote various themes about this region and are based on West African cultures and experiences (275). This includes the use of novel metaphors (Ononye and Chiluwuwa 275). Hermanson's study of metaphors used in isiZulu literary texts has revealed that isiZulu literature abounds with conventional linguistic metaphors that appear in everyday interactions between isiZulu speakers and are based on conceptual metaphors that are part of isiZulu and other Southern African cultures (41).

Two traditions dominate the research on metaphors in literary texts, namely, the tradition that views metaphors as an ordinary element of language that appears in everyday discourse, and tradition that has been influenced by the classical view of metaphors as an extraordinary use of language that is mastered by great poets—

this is the more prominent of the two approaches (Dorst 79). Researchers in this tradition see a “discontinuity” between literature and other genres in their use of metaphors (Dorst 79).

The trend in the discontinuity approach is to treat metaphors in the same way as tropes such as irony and hyperbole; in this line of research, the discussion of metaphors in literary texts is only introduced when the discussion is on figurative language. It is within this framework that metaphors in Sesotho literature, including metaphors found in *Chaka*, has mainly been examined (Kunene 16; Tšiu 35; Chaka 74, 75, 80, 81). Kunene analyses the warrior and sin metaphors in *Chaka*, focusing on how the novel employs figurative expression to promote certain themes (16).

The “continuity approach, which is closely related to [CMT], sees metaphors in ordinary language as primary and considers metaphors in literature to be creative elaborations and extensions” (Dorst 82). This research tradition aligns with the proposal of cognitive frameworks such as CMT that view metaphors as something that pervades human thinking, behaviour, and language (Seephephe 67).

It is the scholars who subscribe to the continuity approach who have explored the conventionality and the distribution of metaphors. Researchers employing the continuity approach have revealed that, despite its tendency to use novel and creative linguistic metaphors, literature does not differ from other genres regarding conceptual metaphors (Dorst 82). Previous studies have reported the existence of linguistic metaphors in literature that are based on well-documented conceptual metaphors such as “Death is sleep” (Kövecses 53). The findings reveal that the majority of linguistic metaphors are conventional. Additionally, the research using the discontinuity approach shows that even the novel linguistic metaphors are based on existing conceptual metaphors (Lakoff and Tuner 1989). The research reports four techniques that are used in the creation of original, creative metaphors that may be found in literature. These are “extension”, “elaboration”, “questioning”, and “composition” of conceptual metaphors (Kövecses 53–5).

Similar findings are reported by research on Bantu languages. For instance, Hermanson’s study, which explored the linguistic and conceptual metaphors in isiZulu texts, shows that isiZulu literature is filled with conventional linguistic metaphors that are based on conceptual metaphors that seem to be shared by isiZulu speakers. The use of the names of ferocious, big animals such as *ingonyama* (lion) and *indlovu* (elephant) as address terms for Zulu kings and the use of animal names such as ‘dogs’ to denote an inferior status of the referents are some examples (41–4). As observed by Hermanson (41), this group of linguistic metaphors reflects the conceptual metaphor, “People are animals”.

Qualitative research supports the notion that there are numerous cases of overlap between literature and other genres regarding the use of metaphors, and that literary texts contain more conventional metaphors than the novel, creative ones (Kövecses 53–5; Seephephe 109). An example is Dorst’s study, which explored the frequency of linguistic metaphors in British English fiction, their distribution across word classes, and their conventionality (102). Dorst used the data provided by four-million-word BNC-Baby, which is the sub-corpus of the hundred-million British National Corpus (BNC) (102). The results show that 11.4% of the words in British English fiction are metaphorically used and majority of linguistic metaphors are verbs (29.4%), followed by prepositions (26.7%) and nouns (19.2%).

These findings were compared with those reported for other genres (Seephephe 109). For instance, studies that have used CMT to explore metaphors in Sesotho literary texts, including in *Chaka*, show that there is still a lack of research that used CMT to explore the conventionality and frequency of metaphors and how this has contributed to the style of a literary text (Seephephe and Makha-Ntlaloe 68). Seephephe’s study used both CMT and frequency patterns to observe metaphors in Sesotho in newspaper discourse (108). Similar to studies exploring newspaper communication in other languages, the study reports a high proliferation of conventional metaphors (Seephephe 108–10). Additionally, the study reports a metaphor incidence of 8.4% and has shown that majority of metaphors in Sesotho newspapers are nouns.

The lack of research that uses CMT and frequency patterns to explore the conventionality and distribution of metaphors in Sesotho literary texts necessitates studies such as the current one. Previous studies have shown that there are some language-specific elements of Sesotho that can affect the use and analysis of metaphors in literary texts (Seephephe, Ekanjume-Ilongo, and Thuube 69). Some of these elements are the Sesotho word classes which differ, for instance, from languages such as English. Seephephe has proposed that one of the major reasons why Sesotho newspaper discourse has lower metaphor frequency than English discourse is because Sesotho has a high number of function words in a sentence, which are brought about by the use of agreement markers (also



referred to as concords) in Sesotho sentences (108). Since the function of markers is purely grammatical, they are not candidates for metaphorical representation (Seephephe 108).

Sesotho also uses a disjunctive writing system that separates items that are usually regarded as elements of one orthographic word in some Bantu languages (Seephephe, Ekanjume-Ilongo, and Thuube 274). This situation may increase the number of metaphors in Sesotho. It has also been revealed that Sesotho literary texts draw on Sesotho oral literature such as oral poetry (Franz 1). This aspect has the potential to affect the nature of literary texts, including their use of metaphors.

In this study we have employed the continuity approach and used CMT as its framework. A major strength of CMT is that it categorises metaphors into types such as conceptual and linguistic metaphors, thus enabling the researcher to examine metaphors at different levels (Dorst 31). One of the limitations of CMT is that it puts emphasis on conceptual structures at the expense of linguistic metaphors and metaphors in discourse (Dorst 49). To counter this problem, we have employed tools offered by descriptive statistics, using frequencies to examine metaphor patterns in the novel.

### **Analysis of *Chaka***

Research that involves the examination of linguistic metaphors has emphasised the importance of the use of a transparent procedure for metaphor identification that can be replicated and tested for statistical significance (Seephephe 102). It has been observed that, without a set of guidelines provided by a clear procedure, researchers tend to be subjective and biased in deciding on which words qualify as linguistic metaphors, with different researchers coming up with different results despite using the same data (Dorst 345).

We used the Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit (MIPVU), a development and expansion of the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) (Seephephe 98). The procedure examines metaphors at the level of a word, although multiple-word expressions that are regarded as single units by dictionaries, such as compounds and phrasal verbs, are treated as single entities (Steen *et al.* 23–38). An expression is regarded as a metaphor if the meaning it has in context contrasts with its more basic meaning and can be understood in comparison with it. To check the more basic meanings of words, a dictionary should be used. MIPVU provides tools for analysing similes, which are referred to as direct metaphors (Seephephe 68). One can also use metaphor flags—words that flag a comparison of one concept with another—to identify the direct metaphors (i.e. similes).

The use of a clear procedure is very important for a study such as ours which examines the frequencies of metaphors. It is important, in such research, to employ a method of metaphor identification that is not only reliable but can be easily replicated (Seephephe 101). Therefore, before analysing the data, we annotated the data for metaphors using the procedure that has been adjusted for Sesotho by Seephephe, Ekanjume-Ilongo, and Thuube (268–87). This procedure proposes the use of the *Sesuto-English Dictionary*.

After identifying linguistic metaphors from Chapter 2 of *Chaka*, we checked their word classes and used this to group them. We then examined the frequency of metaphors in each word class and explored the conventionality and creative nature of each metaphor by checking if their metaphoric senses are reported in the dictionary. Lastly, we worked out the conceptual metaphors represented by each linguistic metaphor. To determine this, we relied on the repository of conceptual metaphors provided by previous works. In some works, these metaphors appear twice, during the discussions of metaphors and in the lists of conceptual metaphors usually provided at the end. For instance, after discussing different types of metaphors, Kövecses provides an index of conceptual metaphors and metonymies (369–75). We used works such as Kövecses's (369–75) as our reference for determining the conceptual metaphors underlying each linguistic metaphor.

Fifty-five words are metaphorically used in Chapter 2 of *Chaka*. This means that 5.2% of the words in the corpus are metaphorically used.

### ***Metaphorically used nouns***

Out of the 55 words that are metaphorically used, 11 are nouns. Two of these expressions are direct metaphors (i.e. linguistic metaphors that are highlighted by the use of simile). This means that nouns account for 20% of the metaphors found in the corpus. Table one presents examples of nouns that have been metaphorically used.

Metaphorically used expression	Contextual meaning	Conventionality	Underlying conceptual metaphor
<i>Lelinyane la tau</i> (young one of a lion)	A brave person	Novel; creatively used	People are animals
<i>Taoana</i> (cub)	A brave son of a chief	Novel; creatively used	People are animals
<i>Ntja</i> (dog)	A person of inferior status	Novel; creatively used	People are animals
<i>Mofumahali</i> (queen)	Precious person	Conventional; creatively used	Being treated well is being a monarch
<i>Tholoana</i> (fruit)	Consequence	Conventional; used in a non-creative way	Life is a farm

Table 1: Metaphorically used nouns

The most frequent conceptual metaphor underlying the metaphorically used nouns and noun phrases in Chapter 2 of *Chaka* is “People are animals”, which is reflected six times. This metaphor involves a cross-domain mapping in which the elements of the domain ‘animal’ are projected onto the elements of the domain ‘human being’ (Hermanson 41). An example of a text that features nouns or noun phrases that are based on the conceptual metaphor “People are animals” is given below (Mofolo 11):

*Ke lelinyane la tau*  
*ke mmootloana oa sebata*  
*ke taoana e ncha*

He young-one of lion  
He puppy of beast  
He cub it new

‘He is *the young one of a lion*  
He is *the puppy of a beast*  
He is *the new cub*.’

This extract features three metaphorically used noun phrases which have a similar message and play a similar role; the expressions *lelinyane la tau* (the young one of a lion), *mootloana oa sebata* (the puppy of a beast), and *taoana e ncha* (the new cub) liken the protagonist, Chaka, to the ‘young one’ of revered wild animal as a way of highlighting his bravery and the nobility of his birth. These expressions project the attributes of the source domain, ‘animal’, onto Chaka.

The style seen in the above extract, where similar expressions with similar meanings are placed alongside each other, is very common in Sesotho oral poetry (Tšiu 74, 82). Adopting this style creates a hybrid text that has some elements of Sesotho oral poetry. With the exception of two cases, all the linguistic metaphors based on the metaphor “People are animals” fall under the class of indirect metaphors (metaphors which are similar to the metaphors given in the extract above).

One example of a direct metaphor that involves the use of a noun phrase is given here, where the metaphor flag *joale ka* (similar to) is used as a clue for a comparison/simile (Mofolo 17):

*A utloe a thaba, a khathaloha hamonate, joale ka noha e mahloko.*

He feel happy, he rejuvenate nicely, similar to snake with venom.

‘Then, like *a snake with venom*, he would usually feel very happy, and much rejuvenated.’

Other conceptual metaphors that involve the use of nouns and noun phrases are: “Life is a farm”, “Life is a journey”, “Good life is royalty”, and “Status is size”. The metaphoric use of ‘fruit’ to represent a consequence of an action is the following (Mofolo 16):

*E bohloko hakaakang tholoana ea sebe*

The fruit of sinning is pain.

‘Sinning leads to death.’

Here, the author used ‘fruit’ to refer to the consequences of the actions of the protagonist’s parents. The parents of the protagonist had an extramarital affair, which the author, seemingly influenced by Christian beliefs, disapproves of and labels a ‘sin’. The author views the hardships that the protagonist suffered, framed as ‘death’, as nothing but the negative ‘consequence’ of his parents’ actions. The use of the sin metaphor gives the novel the sermonising element, as highlighted by Kunene (16–7).

The metaphors involving the use of nouns are predominantly unconventional, with their metaphoric meanings not registered in Sesotho dictionaries.

### **Metaphorically used verbs**

Verbs account for 31 or 56.3% of the linguistic metaphors in the chapter. Table 2 presents some examples of the verbs that are metaphorically used.

Metaphorically used expression	Contextual meaning	Conventionality	Underlying conceptual metaphor
<i>Hlabeha</i> (pierced by a sharp object)	Emotionally hurt	Conventional; non-creative	Emotional pain is a sharp object/emotions are surfaces
<i>Kopa</i> (hold within one’s hand/ embrace)	Defeat/manage	Conventional; non-creative	To have power over something is to hold it
<i>Tiisa</i> (to pull/hold tightly)	To say something with sincerity	Conventional; non-creative	Sincerity is holding/pulling tightly
<i>Lella</i> (cry for something)	Yearn for something	Conventional; non-creative	The heart is the seat of emotions

Table 2: Metaphorically used verbs

The analysis of the data shows that verbs account for more than ten types of conceptual metaphors. The most frequent of these metaphors is “The mind is the body” which is realised when aspects of the source domain, the mind, are used to represent aspects of the body (the source domain). Linguistic metaphors that are based on this conceptual metaphor include those that reflect the specific-level metaphor “Thinking about something is looking at it”. An example is given below, where ‘to focus’ on someone is metaphorically structured as ‘to direct eyes’ towards them (Mofolo 12):

*Mafumahali a lebisa mahlo ho bana ba tsoetsoeng morao.*

Wives-of-the-chief they direct eyes to children they born behind.

‘The wives of the chief *turned their eyes* to those who were born behind/after.’

The metaphor given here and others that are based on the conceptual metaphor “Thinking about something is looking at it” are conventional and appear in Sesotho dictionaries such as *Sesuto-English Dictionary* (Mabille and Dieterlen 163). Additionally, all these metaphors appear to have been used in non-creative ways.

Other conceptual metaphors that involve the use of verbs are: “Life is a journey”; “Time is a distance”; “Time is a movement”; “The heart is the seat of emotions”; “Emotions are human beings”; “Living is eating”; “Anger is a sharp surface/emotions are surfaces and emotions are wounds”.

The citation below is an example of a linguistic metaphor that is based on the two metaphors, “The heart is the seat of emotions” and “Thinking about something is looking at it”. The heart is used to represent the emotions of love and the process of the heart ‘turning away’ to represent a situation in which a person is rejected (Mofolo 12):

*Ea reteletsa pelo ea Senzangakhona ho Nandi.*

He turned-away heart of Senzangakhona to Nandi.

‘He turned Senzangakhona’s heart away from Nandi.’

The heart is framed as a place where emotions such as love reside. The heart seems to have eyes, which it can direct towards individuals. As evidenced by its presence in Sesotho dictionaries (Mabille and Dieterlen 383), the metaphoric use of *reteleha* (turn away) to represent rejection is conventional.

The following extract is an example of a linguistic metaphor that is based on the metaphor “Anger is a sharp surface”, which, at the generic level, is based on the metaphor “Emotions are surfaces”. The sentence likens ‘being angry’ to being ‘pierced by a sharp object’. The sentence uses the conventional metaphor ‘to be pierced’ to represent the emotion of anger that the other wives of the protagonist’s father (the chief) felt when the protagonist was treated well (Mofolo 13):

*Mafumahali a hlabeha.*

Chieftainesses they pierce.

‘The wives of the chief got angry.’

The linguistic metaphor used here is conventional and the sense given therein is recorded in Sesotho dictionaries (Mabille and Dieterlen 76).

Other verbs are those that are based on the following conceptual metaphors: “Wounds are animals”; “Being surrounded by people is the same as being helped to dress by them”; “Control is a container”; “A situation is a location”; “A bad reputation is a stain and kingdom is a cloth.” All the verbs that are based on these conceptual metaphors, similar to the conceptual metaphors themselves, are conventional and are used in non-creative ways. The use of these metaphors creates a text that has a style that is like that of other Sesotho texts and to that of texts written in the West (Dorst 222).

### ***Metaphorically used adjectives***

While the word ‘adjective’ is restricted to a specific type of qualificative in some Sesotho manuals, its use in this article covers all expressions that are employed to qualify a noun/noun phrase. Adjectives account for 9 or 16.3% of the metaphorically used expressions in the chapter. Examples used are given in Table 3.



Metaphorically used expression	Contextual meaning	Conventionality	Underlying conceptual metaphor
<i>E telele</i> (long) (of time)	A lot (of time)	Conventional; non-creative	Time is distance
<i>Boima</i> (heavy)	Difficult (of affairs)	Conventional; non-creative	Difficulties are burdens
<i>Kholo</i> (big)	Important	Conventional; non-creative	Status is size
<i>lehlo</i> (big)	Intense (of emotion)	Conventional.	Intensity is size
<i>Bohale</i> (sharp)	Prone to anger	Conventional; non-creative	Anger is a sharp surface/ emotions are surfaces

Table 3: Metaphorically used adjectives

One of the metaphors involving the use of adjectives is given below in which the expression *kholo* (big) is used to show the importance or high status of something or someone. As evidenced by its appearance in Sesotho dictionaries (Mabille and Dieterlen 142), the use of *kholo* to denote “high status” is conventional (Mofolo 12).

*Nandi e ne e le ntho e kholo Nombaba.*

Nandi she she thing big Nombaba.

‘Nandi was a very big person/object Nombaba.’

The use of *kholo* to represent abstract concepts such as ‘status’ appears to be influenced by the conceptual metaphor “Status is size”.

The other conceptual metaphor that involves the use of adverbs is “Anger is a sharp object”. This metaphor is reflected by words such as *bohale* (sharp) which, as can be seen in in the following extract, is used to describe the quality of being prone to anger and having a desire for fighting (Mofolo 17):

*E la e etsa hore a be bohale, a lakatse ntoa.*

It do that he be sharp, he desire fighting.

‘It turned him into a sharp person that has a strong desire for fighting.’

The use of *bohale* to denote being angry is listed in Sesotho dictionaries (Mabille and Dieterlen 15). This serves as an indication that the metaphor used in the extract above is conventional. Lastly, the use of the word *boima* (heavy) in reference to the difficulties that the protagonist is projected to encounter in his life is given here:

*Litaba tsa ngoana e noa li kholo haholo, mme li boima.*

Affairs of child he this they big very, and they heavy.

‘The affairs surrounding the life of this child are big, and are heavy matters.’

The conceptual metaphor reflected in the above extract is “Difficulties are burdens”. This metaphoric meaning of *boima* as ‘heaviness’ and ‘difficulty’ is given in Sesotho dictionaries (Mabille and Dieterlen 21).

Like metaphorically used verbs, the metaphorically used adjectives create a text that shows the style of both Sesotho literary texts and that of Western literature.

### Metaphorically used adverbs

Only 4, or 7% of the linguistic metaphors are adverbs. These metaphors are presented in Table 4 below.

Metaphorically used expression	Contextual meaning	Conventionality	Underlying conceptual metaphor
<i>Morao</i> (behind)	Earlier	Conventional; non-creative	Time is distance
<i>Ha lelele</i> (for long)	Spanning many minutes (of time)	Conventional; non-creative	Time is distance
<i>Bohloko boo a bo utluileng pelong</i> (the pain he that he felt in his heart)	Emotional pain experienced	Conventional; non-creative	The heart is the seat of emotions
<i>Ka ng'a e ngoe</i> (on the other side)	However	Conventional; non-creative	Discussion is physical space

Table 4: Metaphorically used adverbs

As can be seen from table four, two of the metaphorically used adverbs are employed to describe time. Both linguistic metaphors appear to be based on the “Time is a distance” conceptual metaphor. One of these linguistic metaphors, ‘behind’, does this by depicting an earlier period as a place that one has left behind. The other metaphor, ‘for long’, does this by depicting duration of time as distance. The two metaphors are conventional, and their meanings are given in Sesotho dictionaries (Mabille and Dieterlen 72, 289).

The use of the metaphors identified in this section reflects the influence of Sesotho culture and cognitive structures. Additionally, the high frequency of conventional metaphors exhibits the influence of the Western canon, which past research has shown predominantly uses conventional metaphors (Dorst 222).

### Findings

Our findings show that 55 of the 3,005 words used in Chapter 2 of the novel are linguistic metaphors. This means that linguistic metaphors account for 5.2% of the words used in Chapter 2. This figure is not very different from the one Seephephe has provided as the frequency of metaphors in Sesotho newspaper discourse (108). Seephephe shows that 8.4% of words used in Sesotho newspapers discourse on HIV and AIDS are metaphoric expressions (108). The similarities between the two genres regarding the linguistic metaphor frequencies suggest that Sesotho fiction uses metaphors in a similar way to other genres. This finding adds further weight to the argument that there are more similarities than there are differences in the use of linguistic metaphors between literary works and non-literary genres (Kövecses 35, 53). Additionally, the pattern reported above serves as evidence that Mofolo was influenced by Sesotho cultural structures in writing *Chaka*.

Furthermore, our findings show that the majority of linguistic metaphors in Chapter 2 of *Chaka* are verbs. Of the 55 metaphorically used expressions, 31 (56.3%) are verbs, 11 (20%) are nouns, 9 (16.3%) are adjectives, and 4 (7%) are adverbs. These patterns almost match those found in English literature, where the highest frequencies of linguistic metaphors involve the use of verbs, nouns, and prepositions (Dorst 164–222). Seemingly, in writing the novel, and specifically in his use of metaphors, Mofolo was also influenced by the English canon that he was exposed to.

Regarding the conventionality of the metaphors, our findings show that majority of the linguistic metaphors are highly conventionalised, and are used in non-creative, everyday ways. This is particularly true with the metaphorically used verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. The majority of the metaphorically used verbs, adjective, and adverbs can be regarded as ‘dead’ metaphors whose metaphoricity is no longer visible to the speakers of the language (Kövecses 35). The conventionality of these metaphoric meanings is attested by their presence in Sesotho dictionaries. A few of the metaphors show the influence of Christianity.

With regards to the conceptual metaphors underlying the linguistic metaphors, the study reveals that all of them are conventional. Majority of these conceptual metaphors have been documented in the literature. Quite significantly, some of the conceptual metaphors appear to be universal, appearing in languages other than Sesotho. For instance, the findings reveal that the use of several expressions that are based on the metaphors “People are

animals”; “The body is the mind”; and “Difficulties are burdens”—all of which have been observed to be productive in languages such as isiZulu and English (Hermanson 41, 71; Kövecses 257).

The metaphor patterns observed in the study support the proposal made by some scholars (see Kunene 16; Krog 87) that one of the major factors that led to *Chaka* being delayed is that it drew more from Sesotho cultural and cognitive structures than it did from Christianity and Western literature.

## Conclusion

The analysis we carried out in this study has revealed that the frequency of metaphors in the novel *Chaka* is around 5%, which is similar to the frequency of metaphors in other Sesotho texts. Furthermore, the study has shown that, despite some cases of unique metaphorical structures, *Chaka* is characterised by conventional linguistic metaphors that have been used in non-creative ways. These linguistic metaphors are based on conventional conceptual metaphors found among the Basotho and other people. The use of the metaphors shows a strong influence of Sesotho cultural and cognitive structures. The metaphor patterns also show that the author of *Chaka* was influenced by the Western canon and Christianity to some extent.

## Works cited

- Chaka, Limakatso. “Land, botho and identity in Thomas Mofolo’s novels.” *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde* vol. 53, no. 2, 2016, pp. 63–86. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17159/tvl.v.53i2.5>.
- Dorst, Aletta. *Metaphor in Fiction: Linguistic Forms, Conceptual Structures, and Cognitive Representations*. LOT Dissertation Series, 2011.
- Franz, Gottfried Heinrich. *The Literature of Lesotho*. U of Witwatersrand P, 1930.
- Gill, Stephen. “Thomas Mofolo: The man, the writer and his contexts.” *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde* vol. 53, no. 2, 2016, pp. 15–38. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17159/tvl.v.53i2.2>.
- Hermanson, Eric Alfred. *Metaphor in Zulu: Problems in the Translation of Biblical Metaphor in the Book of Amos*. Sun, 2006.
- Kövecses, Zoltan. *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*. Oxford U P, 2010.
- Krog, Antjie. “oi, oi! ... you must go by the right path: Mofolo’s *Chaka* revisited via the original text.” *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde* vol. 53, no. 2, 2016, pp. 87–97. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17159/2309-9070/tvl.v.53i2.1466>.
- Kunene, Daniel Pule. *The Works of Thomas Mofolo: Summaries and Critiques*. U of California, 1970.
- Lapasau, Merry, et al. “Conceptual metaphors in modern Indonesian literature and their implication in language learning.” *Proceedings of the 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Folklore, Language, Education and Exhibition*. Atlantis, 2019, pp. 235–40.
- Lenake, Johan. “Southern Sotho Literature Part II: The development between 1960 and 1990.” *Comparative literature and African literature*. Eds. Albert Stanislaus Gerard & Chris Swanepoel. Via Afrika, 1993, pp. 129–54.
- Maake, Nhlanhla. “Watermarks in the Sesotho Novels of the Twentieth Century.” *Research in African Literatures* vol. 37, no. 3, 2006, pp. 65–82.
- Mabille, Adolphe & Hermann Dieterlen. *Sesuto-English Dictionary*. Morija Sesuto Book Depot, 2011.
- Makamane, Rets’epile. “Aesthetics of Sesotho Literature: The fiction of Thomas Molo, the novelists who came after him.” Diss. U London, 2023. <https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/39624/>.
- Maledo, Richard & Emmanuel Emama. “Metaphorising the Nigerian Space: A Critical Stylistic Study of Stephen Kekeghe’s *Rumbling Sky*.” *3L: Language, Linguistics, Literature. The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies* vol. 28, no. 4, 2022, pp. 169–83. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.17576/3L-2022-2804-12>.
- Mofolo, Thomas. *Chaka*. Morija Sesuto Book Depot, 1980.
- Ononye, Chuka Fred & Innocent Chiluwa. “There’s still something positive about the Niger Delta ecology: Metaphor and ideology in the Niger Delta poetic discourse.” *Language and Literature* vol. 32, no. 3, 2023, pp. 275–96. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/096394702311586>.
- Seephephe, Ntšoeu. “Metaphor Frequency and Distribution in Three Sesotho Newspapers’ Coverage of HIV and AIDS.” *Language Matters* vol. 52, no. 3, 2021, pp. 94–113. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10228195.2021.1963812>.
- Seephephe, Ntšoeu & Makhetsi Makha-Ntlaloe. “The discourse-based approach towards the translation of metaphors: ‘Journey’, ‘movement’, and ‘body metaphors’ in translation of the Sesotho novel *Chaka*.” *JULACE: Journal of the University of Namibia Language Centre* vol. 5, no. 2, 2021, pp. 67–77. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32642/julace.v5i2.1511>.
- Seephephe, Ntšoeu, Beatrice Ekanjume-Ilongo & Raphael Thuube. “Linguistic Metaphor Identification in Sesotho.” *Metaphor Identification in Multiple Languages: MIPVU Around the World*, edited by Susan Nacey, et al. John Benjamins, 2019, pp. 268–87.
- Steen, Gerald, et al. “Method for Linguistic Metaphor Identification.” *Metaphor Identification in Multiple Languages: MIPVU around the World*, edited by Susan Nacey, et al. John Benjamins, 2019, pp. 23–40.
- Tekateka, Johannes Molupe Mokoena. “A Critical Literary Survey of Thomas Mofolo’s Writings.” Diss. U South Africa, 1967.
- Tšiu, William Moruti. “Basotho oral poetry at the beginning of the 21st century.” Diss. U South Africa, 2008. <https://uir.unisa.ac.za/handle/10500/1362>.
- Vassilatos, Alexia. “The Transculturation of Thomas Mofolo’s *Chaka*.” Diss. U Witwatersrand, 2008.
- Zulu, Nkosana. “The literary history of Sesotho literature in social transition: a survey of prominent themes and trends after 1990.” *South African Journal of African Languages* vol. 23, no. 2, 2003, pp. 77–94. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02572117.2003.10587208>.