SEHONYETSO Significance of Onset Diacritic Apostrophe as Distinctive/Contrastive Marker in Written Sesotho

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Abstract:- The purpose of this paper is to present that the onset diacritic apostrophe on some Sesotho words initiated with nasal sounds is compulsory. This description is underpinned by Integrated Multiple Patterns (IMP) (of spelling) theory. The design is qualitative as description depends on the rules of Sesotho and the speakers' perspective of the use of the onset diacritic apostrophe. The description alleviates compromise of accurate form-meanings of words anchored by assumption. Population encompasses sixty-eight words and all this data is used for purposive random sampling. Participant observation is the instrument for this written data collection. The seventeen observations categorized as Findings draw structural and functional contrasts on these nasals initiated Sesotho words. The findings project obligation of explicit onset apostrophe in writing some Sesotho words beginning with nasals for it successfully attains form-meaning distinction or contrast. Integration of Phonetics, Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, Semantics and Sociolinguistics disciplines cannot be overemphasized. Recommendation proposes obligatory explicit onset diacritic apostrophe where applicable on handwritten and computer typed Sesotho nasals to ascertain and facilitate for accurate and appropriate spelling for effective and productive communication and rid the meaning-assumption problem.

Keywords:- Onset, diacritic, apostrophe, nasals, integration.

I. INTRODUCTION

Writing as a skill to achieve communicative purposes is an art that requires discreetness employed to foster accuracy and appropriateness of word usage. Such discreetness is ascertained by accuracy in spelling in order to achieve required form-meaning appropriateness. This paper presents the background on spelling and diacritics, provides literature review, describes findings analysis and the related discussion and also concludes on the description.

II. BACKGROUND

Spelling, as the sequential order of letters based on the phonology or sound system of a language is a valuable asset that facilitates for a successful, functional, purposeful communication in the spoken or written mediums. The written medium requires more detailed discreetness as it comprises marks on paper that carry the required accuracy and appropriateness of the intended discourses. Thus, writers of a language need to be concise with their spelling skill. Studies on writing incorporate spelling development with focus on alphabet writing systems and relevant theories are consulted. The types of spelling are three andthey comprise phonetic because symbols or letters are selected to represent the sound pronunciation; it may be ideographicas it reflects ideas but lack pronunciation and the last is a mix of the first and the second types. Crammer (1998) adds thatmay be pre-phonetic and phonetic areessential patterns within words syllable juncture and meaning derivation.Spelling knowledge is noted with four forms that include phonological (sound patterning), visual (visible), morphemic (word based) and etymological (origin) knowledge. Stages of spelling development are generally noted to be five despite academia differencesbut Frith (1985) lists three stages noted as logographic, alphabetic and orthographic which he argues are an interconnected process with reading and are empowered by writers' knowledge aboutspelling. Crammer (1998) adds that each stage is characteristics specific.The spelling development has underpinning theories and such include dual-route theories, stage and phase theories, constructivist theory and Integration of Multiple Patterns theories. Treiman (2017) explains that researchers who opt for constructivist theory argue that writers (children as the focus) build their own hypotheses about how writing works. The letter in printed words represent syllables in spoken language. Further, written words should represent properties of referent objects. Treiman (ibid) in conformity with Ehri, (2000), Frith, (1985), Gentry, (1982) further notes that the Stage and phase theories focus on the empowered ability to map sounds to letters.

This theory has confirmed that learners have displayed their phonological knowledge capability (as a very crucial tool) in spelling. She further clarifies that the stage and phase theory describes English as well as other alphabetic writing systems. Treiman (2017) explains that dual-route theories are accomplished by linking phonemes to graphemes as individual or group letters uttered as single phonemes. She further describes, in conformity with Barry (1994), Kreiner & Gough (1990)'s postulation that the dual-route theories are accomplished by linking phonemes to graphemes as individual or group letters uttered as single phonemes. She clarifies that the dual-route theories - both the lexical and non-lexical routes - support accurate spelling. Treiman (2017:9) claims that "phonology is important in spelling as dual-route theories suggest… Graphotatics and morphology play important roles in spelling, and these roles are [sic] not adequately acknowledged by dual-route theories." This is to say that spelling explicates phonology and morphology in writing as spelled words must employ the directly accurate lexicons.

Nonetheless, Treiman and Kessler (2014) complement the noted theories and contributethe Integration of Multiple Patterns (IMP) theory designed to describe spelling development.IMP identifies two spelling patterns in which one integrates written symbols within a language system noted as "writing's inner pattern" and refers to the other pattern as the "writing's outer pattern". This complement magnifies Treiman's (2017:9) view that, "Links between written symbols and linguistic units may involve phonology, but they may involve morphology and other aspects of linguistic structure as well." She comments that this IMP framework extends spelling role to 'non-phonological knowledge' beyond the stage and phase theories and these theories are employed to develop spelling for required form-meaning accuracy and appropriateness in communication. Based on the view that phonology and morphology and other linguistic aspects actively facilitate for spelling accuracy-appropriateness, this paper explores the discourse of the onset diacritic apostrophe in the writing of Sesotho words (as Sesotho is an alphabet language), and emphasizes the obligation of the onset apostrophe diacritic prior to the nasal consonants in some Sesotho words to attain accurate and appropriate meanings of such words to ascertain the targeted communicative purposes. What is a diacritic?

III. DEFINING THE TERM 'DIACRITIC'

A diacritic as described by Zelazko (2023) is a mark near or through an alphabetic character to represent a pronunciation different from that of the unmarked character. Zelazko (ibid) clarifies that the represented sounds may be 'phonemes' or 'phonetic units' not occurring in the written or read script. She clarifies that these unavailable word units were in an unwavering sense, "adaptations of the Latin alphabet and they required a means of representing sounds that do not occur in Latin." (Zelazko, (2023,p.1). The major concern about these adaptations was the representation variations decided upon as in some cases there would be placement of the marks at initial or mid or terminal positions. In other cases, monophthong sounds would consensually be combined to form graphemes as /s/ and /h/ forms /sh/ [ʃ] in English and [ʃ] is realized as /sz/ in Polish and /sj/ in Dutch and /sch/ in German. Sesotho and some of the African languages also refer to /sh/in the English version. In other cases, the solution to the adaptations' concern was to make marks below or above some letters or on the lateral left or right, especially in relation to vowels in order to differentiate their form and meaning. Zelazko (2023) notes examples of Latin Slavic alphabets that include Polish, Czech, Croatian with letters such as /š/, /ã/, /ʐ/,/ć/, /ś/,/α/. The Latin Turkish alphabet which was incepted 1928 and covered Turkey by 1930 contained 29 alphabets inclusive of five with diacritic marks – two vowels ő, ü and three consonants /ş/, /ğ/, /ç/. Inclusive, the /i/ letter without the top dot to form [ı] that functioned as a new sound.

Zelazko (2023) further clarifies that in languages that include Arabic, Hebrew and other Semitic languages, vowels lacked diacritical marks but later they were introduced to make distinct representation of vowels and consonants. These diacritics occurred either above or below the consonant preceding the vowel and the absence of a

relevant sound was indicated with a *sükun*or *sukoon,* an Arabic word that means 'a sigh of relief' or 'rest'. *sükun* is described as a circle at the top of a vowel, the diacritic that marks the end of a syllable. The consonant follows the vowel but it is not followed by a vowel. Hallberg (2022) notes that in Arabic languages diacritics on the vowels bear a gradient than a binary function, differentiates genres based on their number on each vowel, add various forms dependent on their prioritized conventional order. They give orthographic variation noted in reading exercises.

Diacritics form part of the punctuation marks and it also coexists with them in writing to differentiate meanings of words that employ them. For instance, in English, when an apostrophe occurs in a word regardless of its position, its impact is that it replaces the letters and sounds which have been intentionally omitted (ellipted). Inits ellipsis, it enfolds the number aspect as in *students' books* which refers to books of more than one student yet for those of one student would read as *a student's book.* The diacritics employed by the exemplified languages confirm that diacritics are punctuation marks in different places and they bear consensually agreed meanings by speakers and writing system designers to achieve various but crucial functions that ensure writing accuracy and reading appropriateness.

As known, the use of diacritics is tradition in written communication and the academic sphere has its own designs of diacritics application. As known, the use of diacritics is tradition in written communication and the academic sphere has its own designs of diacritics application. Diacritics' basic function is to represent sounds that are intentionally omitted but essential and still maintaining the original meaning of the word. This view insinuates that diacritics embed ellipsis. This view introduces the major function performed by diacriticsas being to represent sounds intentionally ellipsed,(made unavailable) but represented by the diacriticand the commonly used in the English and Sesotho languages is the apostrophe. Among these diacritic marks noted as those occurring above and below and on the sides of the vowels and consonants some languages that include Sesotho use the apostrophe and it forms part of the Sesotho writing system. It functions as an onset marker or mid marker or terminal marker in various languages and in Sesotho the apostrophe exclusively occurs initially and in mid position of words. In this study, the discourse of the apostrophe as the diacritic in the initial position of the collected Sesotho words is the focal concern.

Allen, et.al (1987) describe an apostrophe with a dual feature of being a punctuation mark and sometimes a diacritical mark and highlights that this feature occurs with languages(such as English)that use Latin alphabet and some other alphabets. The process that embraces use of apostropheis deletion or omission of letters or sounds.(…) claims that "Omission can also be called deletion. It is the [intentional] missing of one or more items that must exist in a sentence or utterance." The general function is to contract a full word or clause hence the apostrophe would be labelled a contractor. When applied,long words are contracted as the Englishcannot is contracted to *can't*; still maintaining the original meaning or reference. A further function pertains to

deletion of sounds or letters in the temporal or spoken medium as in *until* being pronounced or written as *'till.*

Another function notes a simultaneous deletion of theinitial sound, mid-sound and terminal sound which could occur in a structure as in`*Tis true he isn't comin'* which arises from *It is true he is not coming.*In another case, *This is me* may result in *T'is me*as the letters not boldedin*"this"*are deleted and the bolded "T" remains with "is" verb, both of which are combined to form the new word "*T'is*". Mid-word impact of diacritic apostrophe is noted in *even* which become*e'en* when the consonant 'v' is replacedwith the diacritic. The terminal deletion is noted in *doing* which changes to *doin'*and a repetitive mid-terminal deletion may occur in *c'm'on*from *come on*. Additional function of the apostrophe diacritic is to serve as a possession marker based on the number aspect (singularity and plurality) as in *dog's tail* (singular) and *dogs' tails*(plural).In all these cases above, the apostrophe is crucial to maintain the meanings of the original expressions. These functions are very essential especially in lectures' note-taking when one tries to accumulate sizeable, useful content in a Listening-Writing context.

It is acceptable to use diacritics and their appropriate application is a dire need for clarity in writing. Zelazko (2023) notes that it is not that necessary in Arabic whereas in Japanese it is essential for the Japan eseemploy it to differentiate the sounds for clear meaning. In linguistics it is crucial to decide on whether or not to employ diacritics in language as a common usage and it is further crucial to determine the location of diacritics to display the latitude in content and usage, accuracy, common sense that allows intelligent choice of place for a diacritic. Such a decision would explicate the intended meaning, readership or type of publication, as the publication would register sensitive (formal or informal).

The noted functions of the diacritic reflect inO'Grady et.al's (1997) view that diacritics may occur as initial, mid or terminal elements. When the diacritic occurs initially it is said to function as an onset diacritic and therefore, in their description, it functions as a proclitic marker. **Proclitic** occurs at the **initial position** (at the beginning) of the word.English language uses the proclitic marker selected as an apostrophe. An example is noted in the contraction of the clause *It is*which can be presented as '*Tis* form as in: *`Tis essential to spell carefully in tests;* in **until** which takes the form of *`Till, `neath* is the contraction of *beneath.* The proclitic marker is sometimes referred to as an onset diacritic. As a terminal element it functions as an enclitic marker and English as well as Sesotho use the enclitic markers in various ways. Guma (1971) attests to the fact that Sesotho possesses the proclitics which could be equated to the functions of English auxiliary verbs for they magnify explication and he also presents enclitics in Sesotho.

Application of diacritics is advantageous in that they complement some word combinations as they specify word references and economize space as noted in *This is* restructuring to *`Tis* and in *It is* which takes the form of *It's* and *will not* changing to *won't;* they differentiate the

number aspects of *student's* versus *students'* which mark singular and plural possession respectively. Articulation and stress and tone challenges are also combated as the diacritic would be best placed to illuminate the desired and required meaning. The noted processes occur in various ways in some African languages with Sesotho inclusive, hence the author of this paper decided to describe the significance of the onset diacritic apostrophe on Sesotho words in this paper to emphasize its requirement, alleviate the challenge of its use, overcome its marginalization and incompetence which is justified by assumptive preference of accessing meaning in context as this poses a serious threat on the accurate writing and appropriateness of Sesotho.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent studies conducted on diacritics include Chetail and Boursain (2018) who wanted to establish if there are shared or separated representations for letters with diacritics in order to identify the processes by which letters in the front end of visual word recognition. Kinoshita, et.al. (2021) study on letter identity and visual similarity in the processing of diacritic letters which focused on the processing of orthographic representations. Their intent was to establish if diacritics are variants of base letters. Hallberg (2022) worked on principles of variation in the use of diacritics (*taškil)* in Arabic books and observed that the number of diacritics makes genres differ. These studies are rather focused on issues other than the intent for this study which wants to establish the significance and impact of the onset diacritic apostrophe on the spelling of Sesotho words to enhance accuracy and appropriateness in form-meaning of Sesotho words and evade the practice of assuming meanings of words that require explicit onset diacritic apostrophe to explicate this demand.

To be precise, the major **problem** that led to this study arises from misinterpretation and anomaly of written Sesotho words which demand but suffer the onset diacritic apostrophe. This misinterpretation is propelled by context based assumption of word-meanings. That assumption dominantly perpetuates compromise of words such as `*m'e* [mmέ] 'mother' which is normally typed /*mme/*. The correct articulation of this /*mme*/ spelling is [mme] 'therefore' and it is a conjunction. This omission of the diacritic apostrophe is an incompetency and an oversight for it requires accurate use of the onset diacritic to breed that obligatory meaning contrastive significance. The **aim** of this paper is to present linguistic occurrences which create awareness that onset apostrophe diacritic in the writing of Sesotho language is compulsory as it has distinctive or contrastive impact on the form-meaning of those specific Sesotho words and reverence to its physical presence in written Sesotho is compulsory. A further intent is for the writer to select conventions that are consensually and strictly observed and this idea implores the current author to produce convincing arguments that support the functional context suitability of the onset diacritic apostrophe and its skillful balance to scholarship. The **objective** is to present the functions embraced by the physical presence of the onset apostrophe diacritic in the writing of Sesotho as a guide to writers to

evade the assumptive practice which distorts the accuracy and appropriateness of written Sesotho.

V. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Integration of Multiple Patterns (IMP) **spellingtheory** is the underpinning theory to scrutinize the cross-linguistic description of the Sesotho words obliged to employ the physical presence of the onset diacritic apostrophe and ascertain accurate-appropriate form-meaning of words in writing. As Treiman (2017:9) claims, with IMP, "Links between written symbols and linguistic units may involve phonology, but they may involve morphology and other aspects of linguistic structure as well" and this view serves as the framework of the description observed in the analysis of the collected data. Her comment that this IMP framework extends spelling role to 'non-phonological knowledge', includes the morphological character of words to distinguish meaning enfolded in the words that bear the diacritic versus those void of the diacritic.

VI. METHODOLOGY

This study employs qualitative **design** that describes form-meaning of these words and emphasizes the essence of the physical inscription of the onset apostrophe diacritic in written Sesotho. The study's **population**reflected as the number of collected words noted as **data** counts to fifty-seven words. This **data** was **collected** from formal and informal written interaction in various scenarios that require the typing of Sesotho. All the data was used as a purposive random **sample** due to its small size and it was collected using the participatory observation **instrument** as speakers write as well as type the words particularly using computers. The **research question** addressed notes, To confirm that the onset apostrophe diacritic in the written Sesotho is significant, in which linguistic contexts is the onset apostrophe diacritic obligatory and what is its impact? This question reveals the **research gap** which establishes the significant discourse of the onset apostrophe diacritic on Sesotho words, a description to be displayed by this study. **Data analysis** unravels the linguistic quality of the Sesotho words and the findings counting to seventeen observations are elaborated in the **discussion** with structural and functional observations.

VII. DATA ANALYSIS

Seventeen observations have been recorded and discussed in this analysis and the major note is that the described features and functions are generally taken for granted and assumed hence the oversight of the essence to physically present the apostrophe diacritic when writing the relevant Sesotho words. The overarching explicit use of the onset apostrophe diacritic on written Sesotho words selected as obligatory datareveals that the apostrophe diacritic occurs prior to nasals and its absence renders meaning anomalies and inaccuracies and inappropriateness. The various functions of the diacritic listed in the background are complemented with this new view from the use of the onset diacritic in Sesotho and this new view that displays the onset apostrophe diacritic that precedes nasals is presented with seventeen observations.

The first specific observation is that the onset diacritic apostrophe on Sesotho words renders focus to the Phonetic and Phonology contexts as it exclusively precedesvarious places of articulation (a Phonetics concept) and such being initial to bilabial, velar, alveolar and palatal nasals places of articulation. On these places the apostrophe diacritic occurs at the initial position of the Sesotho words without an option of being omitted or replaced as the Phonological rules of Sesotho structure in word order demand. This onset position is compulsory in the noted data as its absence redesigns word meaning discretely differently. This is to say that phonetics and phonology serve as the bases for significance of the onset diacritic apostrophe in the spelling of these collected Sesotho words. The onset diacritic apostrophe is obliged to precede the nasalizedplaces of articulation that include the bilabial /m/, the alveolar /n/, the palatal /ny/ and the velar /ng/ and its occurrence causes form-meaning contrast. As explained the apostrophe diacritic represents the initial nasal and it is preferred to repeating that nasal. Thus, these places of articulation comprise but are not limited to:

A. *Bilabial*
   mala [mala] 'intestines' vs `*mala* [mmala] 'colour';

   mane ma:ne] 'yonder' vs `*mane* [mmane] 'lightening',
   mela [mela] 'lines' vs `*mela*[mmela] 'grew on me';
   mena [mena] 'fold' vs `*mena*[mmena] 'played tricks on me (with words)' or 'entice me'
   metsa [metsa] 'swallow as a whole' vs `*metsa* [mmetsa] 'throw (something at…]' or swallow me';

B. *Alveolar*
   nete [netɛ] 'smear'*vs* `*nete*[nnete] 'truth'

C. *Palatal*
   nyarela [ɲarɛla] 'peep into a place' *vs* `*nyarela*[ɲɲarɛ́la] 'peep at me'

D. *Velar*
   ngotla [ŋɔtla] 'hide' *vs* `*ngotla*[ŋŋɔtla] 'hit me (dialectal)';

and these exemplify the obligatory essence of the onset apostrophe diacritic as its absence results in inaccurate and inappropriate meanings. That obligation is meaning discrete or distinctive or contrastive as translated.

The second observation is that the onset apostrophe diacritic denotes the deictic form of females and the function observed is meaning distinctive. The onset apostrophe cannot be compromised to evade misrepresentation of the intended meaning of the word.The structure of the initial letters demand the explicit presence of the onset diacritic apostrophe /'/ which should appear in the expression *mme oa* [mmɛ́ wa] 'mother of' before the name beginning with the bilabial nasal. This expression is rewritten as `*m'a* [mma] which is further rewritten as '`*Ma-* [mma] when used in a personal name. The names use the onset diacritic apostrophe to precede the nasals that begin the rest of the name known as the stem. It is noteworthy that among Basotho, women names, at birth and at marital rites are constructed with the onset diacritic apostrophe and they denote 'mother of…' At birth, the names are normally an

ancestral resemblance but at marital rite they may express the wish or desire or the expectation of the extended family concerning the conduct of the bride being welcomed into the in-law family, considered the mother of the family. They may contrast female vs common nouns as in the **Bilabial** initiated names `*Mafatše* [mmafatsʰe] 'mother of the ground or floor' vs *mafatše* [mafatsʰe] 'worlds';`*Motseng* [mmōtsɛ́ŋ] 'ask him/her (plural)' vs *motseng* [mōtseŋ] 'at/in the village' which are common nouns and the cause of the contrast is the onset diacritic apostrophe. Nonetheless, it is worthy to note that if the name such as `*Mantle* [mmantlɛ́] 'mother of the beautiful' can be spelled without the onset diacritic apostrophe, it deduces an insult *mantle* [mantlɛ́] 'faeces' and in the Basotho culture it is detestable to be given such a name unless it is a family name such as *Masepatsana*.[masepatsana] 'stools'.

In addition to the bilabial articulation, the **Alveolar** articulation female name may be `*Neileng* [nnɛ́ilɛ́ŋ] 'gave me what?' and`*Neheng* [nnɛ́hɛ́ŋ] 'give to me(pl)' and in the **Palatal**articulation the female name may be `*Nyalleng*[ɲɲallɛ́ŋ] 'marry for me (pay bride price for me)' occurs.`*Ngoae* [ŋŋwajɛ́] 'scratch me' is the **velar** nasal initiated family name. The forms of the same words without the onset diacritic apostrophe would be verbs that require a concord to precede them to present acceptable form-meaning so that there is *Ba mo neileng?* [ba mō nɛ́ilɛ́ŋ] 'what have they given him/her?' and *ba neheng…* [ba nɛ́hɛ́ŋ…] 'give to them …'; *mo nyalleng* [mō ɲallɛ́ŋ] 'pay him/her daughter's brideprice' and *mo ngoae* [mō ŋwaje] 'scratch him/her'.The verbs are *neile* 'given', *nehe* 'give', *nyalle* 'pay brideprice', *ngoae* 'scratch'.

Additional observation is that the onset diacritic apostrophe on female names commonly forms the structures that denote 'mother of', and such are bolded in **mme oa**[mmɛ́ wa].The onset diacritic apostrophe replaces the bolded /m/ and the impact is that the bolded vowels also experience replacement with a mid-word diacritic apostrophe thus producing the prefix `*ma-* [mma]. There has been ellipsis in these names.According to Baharaz (2016) ellipsis occurs where some words are omitted but still maintaining the basic meaning of a structure. Halliday and Hasan (1978) describe ellipsis as a Semantic process and Mokhathi-Mbhele (2014) observed that Basotho employed this semantic effect of ellipsis on the independent clause Sesotho names as texts in context to distinguish the names' form-meanings. The apostrophe fills in that ellipsis.

The third observation is that the form-meaning contrasted words bear distinctive graphemes feature. Harley (2007,p.1) explains, that a grapheme is "the letter or combination of letters that represents a phoneme." Mokhathi-Mbhele (2023a) clarifies that a grapheme bears a pseudo phoneme as all letters of the two compared words are identical except for only one contrastive or distinctive pair or group of letters that represent a sound. The pair or group of letters is the differentiating segment that occurs in the same position in the two words. In these examples initiated by onset diacritic the pairs*matla* [matla] 'strength' vs `*matla* [mmatla] 'seek him/her', *mapa* [mapa] 'catch around waist' *vs* `*mapa*[mmapa] 'map'the graphemes are

formed by the contrast of [m] vs [mm].In*nganga* [ŋaŋa] 'be stubborn' *vs* `*nganga*[[ŋŋaŋa] 'stretched my legs apart', the graphemes are [ŋ] vs [ŋŋ]. In *nyokola* [ɲōkōla] 'begin to rot' *vs* `*nyokola*[ɲɲōkōla] 'chase me away', *nyanya* [ɲaɲa] 'breastfeed' or 'verbally soil one' *vs* `*nyanya*[ɲɲaɲa] 'sweet talk to get required information'or 'speak ill of me', the graphemes are [ɲ] vs [ɲɲ].

The fourth observation is that, in some cases, a feature that is more inclined to functioning as phonemes reflects. A phoneme, as Mokhathi-Mbhele (2018) simplifies, is observed where an identical pair of words differs with one letter that occurs in the same position within the pair and it contrasts the forms and meanings of the pair. An example is *tola* [tɔla] 'bathe' vs *tula* [tula] 'pulp'. The form-meaning contrast brought by the onset diacritic apostrophe in examples such as *metso* [metsō] 'roots' vs `*metso* [mmetsɔ] 'throat' and *nete* [netɛ́] 'smear' *vs* `*nete* [nnete] pairs occurs at the initial and terminal positions of bilabial nasals, velar nasals, alveolar nasalsand palatal places of articulation. The noted examples are as follows:

E. Bilabial nasals
  mala [mala] 'intestines' or 'stomach ache' *vs* `*mala*[mmala] 'colour'
  malana [malana] 'tripe' *vs* `*malana* [mmalana] 'colour-ish'
  mane mane] 'there' or 'yonder' *vs* `*mane* [mmane] 'lightening'
  mapa [mapa] 'catch around waist' *vs* `*mapa*[mmapa] 'map'
  mela [mela] 'lines' *vs* `*mela*[mmela] 'grew on me' or 'beer malt'
  mena [mena] 'fold' *vs* `*mena*[mmena] 'played tricks on me (with words)
  metla [mɛtla] 'run stupidly to unaccommodating someone' *vs* `*metla*[mmɛtla] 'sharpened someone's (skills)'
  metso [metsō] 'roots' *vs* `*metso* [mmetsɔ] 'throat'
  motseng [mōtseŋ] 'in the village' vs `*motseng* [mmōtsɛ́ŋ] 'ask him/her' and the latter may function as a female's name.

F. Velar nasals
  nganga [ŋaŋa] 'be stubborn' *vs* `*ngaga*[[ŋŋaŋa] 'stretched my legs apart'
  ngotla [ŋɔtla] 'hide' *vs* `*ngotla*[ŋŋɔtla] 'hit me (dialectal)'

G. Alveolar nasals
  noto [nɔtɔ] 'hammer' vs `*noto*[nɔtɔ]
  noha [nōha] 'snake' or 'guess' vs `*noha*[nnōha] 'guessed me'
  nete [netɛ] 'smear'*vs* `*nete*[nnete] 'truth'
  noka [nōka] 'river' or 'season a cooked dish' *vs* `*noka*[nnōka] 'season me' or 'whip me'
  nona [nɔna] 'gain weight' *vs* `*nona*[nnōna] '…'

H. Palatal affricatives
  nyarela [ɲarela] 'uneasy peep into a place' *vs* `*nyarela*[ɲɲarɛ́la] 'peep at me'
  nyoka [ɲɔka] 'uneven' *vs* `*nyoka*[ɲɲōka] 'beat me thoroughly'

nyokola [ɲōkōla] begin to rot' *vs* `*nyokola*[ŋɲōkōla] 'chase me away'

nyopa [ɲōpa] 'barren person' *vs* `*nyopa*[ŋɲōpa] 'trouble me'

nyanya [ɲaɲa] 'breastfeed' or 'verbally soil one' *vs* `*nyanya*[ŋɲaɲa] 'sweet talk to get required information'or 'speak ill of me'.

The fifth impact of the onset diacritic apostrophe depicts the meaning of 'do unto me' and the complement predicative concord 'me' is presented as the initial element of the word in the form of the contrastive onset diacritic.A nominal complement in Eggin's (1996:163) words is "a non-essential participant in the clause that is somehow put to effect by the main argument of the proposition."Mokhathi-Mbhele (2014:90) notes that this nominal complement 'me' "introduces the discourse" contained in the structures. She claims that this function makes a complement a legitimate member of the nominal group as it occupies the Subject position.Such classification bearing the**Predicative Object'me' as nominal complement**distinctively deduces the meaning of *"do unto me"* which reflects in:

Nonosa [nōnōsa] 'inflict fear' *vs* `*nonosa*[nnōnōsa] 'entice' or 'inflict **me** with fear'

Nena [nena] 'loathe' *vs* `*nena*[nnena] 'loathe **me**'

Ngoapa [ŋwapa] 'make a scratch' *vs* `*ngoapa*[nŋwapa] 'make a scratch on **me**'.

The complement 'me' is the main contrastive element represented by the onset diacritic apostrophe. Guma (1971) explains that of the predicative concords, the Object concord denotes the speaker who is actually the object of the action or verb selected. With the onset apostrophe it occursinitially in the words that arearticulated at the bilabial, alveolar, velar, palatal places. For instance, there isthe bilabial nasal /m-/ in [**m**mapa] "get me by the waist"; alveolar nasal /n-/ in [**n**nena] 'loathe **me**'; velar nasal /ng-/ in [ŋŋwapa] 'make a scratch on me'; palatal nasal /ny-/ in [ŋɲōkōla] 'chase me away'. All these examples are deduced as "do unto me".

The sixth impact is that the onset diacritic apostrophe reflects the double form of the initial letter of the wordas noted in the predicative object nominal complement function and it further proceeds to replace that initial letter. This use of onset apostrophe complementsthe nasal duplicationin the phonetic transcription of the word. An example may comprise the locative *mona* [mɔna] 'here' vs `*mona* [**m**mɔna] 'see him/her'. The significance displayed is that the onset diacritic apostropheis both essential and obligatory to maintain accuracy in these word spellings and meaning distinctions. Absence of the onset diacritic apostrophe compromises structural accuracy and explicates semantic appropriateness anomaly.

The seventh impact of the onset diacritic apostrophe presents that some disyllabic words that begin with a nasal employ the onset diacritic apostrophe. They are at times prefixed with /ha-/[ha]*, /se-/* [se]*, /bo-/*[bō]that denote 'characterized by' and the employment of these prefixes replaces that onset diacritic apostrophe and duplicate the existing initial nasal in the word. That means for instance, the onset apostrophe in `*moho* takes the form of the initial

nasal /-m-/ to form /-mm-/. The word changes to *mmoho*[mmɔhɔ] 'together' as the onset apostrophe takes the form of the already existing nasal and duplicates it to form a doubled nasal. *mmoho* is then prefixed with /ha-/ to form *hammoho* [hammɔhɔ] 'together'. That doubled nasal occurs in the middle of the word as an infix when that disyllabic word /mmoho/ is prefixed. As noted, the other prefixed include /se-/ and /bo-/. Examples include:

`*moho* [mmɔhɔ] 'together' vs *ham**m**oho*[hammɔhɔ] 'together' (complementary distribution'

`*muso* [mmusɔ] 'government' vs *se**mmu**so* [semmusɔ] 'officially'

`*ngoe* [ŋŋwe] 'one (number)' vs *bon**n**goe*[bōŋŋwe] 'unity'

The doubling functions as an infix between the new prefixes /ha-/, /se-/and /bo-/ and the terminal elements /-ho/, /-ngoe/ and/-so/.

The eighth observation reflects that the absence as well as the occurrence of the onset diacritic apostrophe on Sesotho words employ the Semantic concept known as the Homonym feature whereby one word with the same spelling and same articulation bears more than one meaning. Examples comprise:

I. *Bilabial*
    mala [mala] 'intestines' or 'stomach ache' or 'tattered clothes'
    `*mapa*[mmapa] 'map' or 'catch me around the waist'

J. *Alveolar*
    noha [nōha] 'snake' or 'guess'
    `*nonosa* [[nnōnōsa] 'entice' or 'inflict me with fear'.

The ninth impact is that in these examples tone is of utmost significance as it distinguishes some of the homonyms noted. Such tone is marked by tonemes. Guma (1971) explains that African languages are tone languages and they express their tone feature with tonemes noted as Low (L) and High (H). Thus,*noha* [nōha] 'snake' bears the tonemes HL whereas 'guess' figures in LL. But with the onset diacritic apostrophe, [nōha]forms `*noha* [nnōha] 'guess me' which has a person specific distinctive meaning from [nōha] 'snake' or 'guess'. This Tone feature adds to the impact of onset diacritic apostrophe on Phonetics discipline.

The tenth observed note is that the onset diacritic apostrophe permits Reduplication, the Morphology concept which duplicates the same word or morpheme (part of a word) to derive a new form. Urbanczyk (2017) explains that in reduplication two considerations that comprise form and meaning arise as crucial issues. This view pairs with Halliday and Hasan's (1978) view that reduplication is a semantic unit in language as it produces new words with different meanings and/or specifications. Urbanczyk (2017) further notes that reduplication engages with a number of properties associated with word-formation hence the view that it occurs in Morphology. Ghomesh (2004,p.309) clarifies that reduplication is "the doubling up of words in speech", and such doubling is observed in either the root or

stem or syllable or segment of a word and it can take the complete word or part of the word. If it takes the full form it results in complete reduplication whereas if it takes part of the word it forms partial reduplication. Mokhathi-Mbhele (2020a) initially described complete reduplication in Sesotho personal names, noting that the complete reduplication form forms partial reduplication. This feature is observed where the onset diacritic apostrophe functions as noted in *metla-metla*[mɛtlamɛtla] 'stupidly run to un-appreciating company' which contrasts with the partial reduplication in `*metla-metla* [mmɛ́tlamɛtla] 'sharpened him/her modestly' as the corresponding form that bears an onset diacritic apostrophe. The partial feature reflects only at the initial part of *metla-metla* [mɛtlamɛtla] where it takes the onset diacritic apostrophe. Mokhathi-Mbhele (2020b) also described the partial reduplication feature in Sesotho personal names. Actually, the duplication process is observed on the initial morphemeand it is caused by the employment of the onset diacritic apostrophe.

The reduplicated words are a guide to the eleventh observation in which the onset diacritic apostrophe reflects its impact of classifying words into different grammatical word classessuch as noun normally presented as (n), verb as (v), adjective as (adj), adverb as (adv), preposition as (prep). This classification is asyntactic categorization in which word classes are formed.This categorization displays that the onset diacritic apostrophe dovetails the Morphology discipline into the Syntax discipline as Syntax selects the words built in Morphology to form the noted various word classes. The onset diacritic apostrophe regroups these nasal initiated words contrasted by the apostrophe to differentiatesyntactic categorization so that:

nyoka [nɔka] (adj) 'uneven' *vs* `*nyoka*[ɲɲōka] (v) 'beat me thoroughly'
mane[mane] (demonstrative det)'there' or 'yonder' *vs* `*mane* [mmane] (n) 'lightening'
mela [mela] (n) or (v) 'lines' or 'grow' *vs* `*mela*[mmela] (v) 'grew on me' or 'malt' (n)
nyopa [nōpa] (n) 'barren person' *vs* `*nyopa*[ɲɲōpa] (v) 'trouble me'
mala [mala] (n) 'intestines' or 'stomach ache'vs `*mala* [mmala] (adj-n) 'colour'
noha [nōha] (n) or (v) 'snake' or 'guess' *vs* `*noha* [nnōha] (v) 'make a guess about me'.

The twelfth observation raised by the onset diacritic apostrophe is that it is a derivation catalyst as it changes the word class of a similar word form but maintaining its physical feature.This impact reflects when the onset diacritic apostrophe initiates the same form of a word, that word transfers to a different word class. In Crystal's (1999:1) words, derivation "in linguistics, is the process of forming a new word from an existing word often by adding a prefix or a suffix" and that new word would normally assume a different word class. Though derivation basically depends on the employment of affixes (prefix or suffix), it is observed that the onset diacritic apostrophe on Sesotho words has the capability to resemble the prefix-affix and form new word classes. This observation is supported by Brown and Miller's (2013) view that derivation is a process

which makes new lexical forms from word stems and word roots and the words on which the onset diacritic apostrophe is inflected have assumed different word classes as exemplified.

The thirteenth observation is that the prefixing functions with the onset diacritic apostrophe to prevent misspelling such as: *ha`moho, bo`ngoe* and introduces *hammoho, bonngoe* respectively. When writers are aware that prefixing of words initially spelled with onset diacritic apostrophe requires an omission of that apostrophe to derive a new word, misspelling problems of such words are resolved. Such misspelling cases are a chronic problem among writers of Sesotho language as they frequently face indecision regarding these spellings. Awareness that it is compulsory for words which employ onset diacritic apostrophe with nasals as the initial letter to double that initial nasal when prefixed as exemplified in `*moho* [mmɔhɔ] which changes to *hammoho* [hammɔhɔ] 'together'; `*nete* [nnete] which changes to *bonnete* [bōnnete] 'truly' or 'to be honest'; `*ngoe* [üüwe] 'one' which changes to *bonngoe* [bōŋŋwe] 'inidividually' or 'in unity' is crucial. These changes rid the mid-diacritic that devalues accuracy causing the anomaly of an infixed diacritic apostrophe.

The fourteenth observation is that the physical presentation of the onset diacritic apostrophe has been obligatory in history of Sesotho because evenobsolete words also required the contrast presentation using the onset diacritic apostrophe. Examples pertain to `*nona* [nnōna] 'mother'vs*nona* [nɔna] 'get fat'; `*noto* [nnɔtɔ] 'note'. vs *noto* [nɔtɔ] 'hammer'.Obsolete words not in need of onset diacritic apostrophe include *nena* [nena] 'loathe';*ngotla*[ŋɔtla] 'hide';*nyokola*[ɲōkōla] 'decaying' and they differ with `*ngotla* [ŋŋɔtla] 'beat me' and `*nyokola* [ɲɲōkōla] 'chase me away' respectively. Such words are rather archaic to current speakers and are normally substituted with either English versions or Sothofied versions if in need of translation. Synonymic expressions are the best preference hence examples pertain to *nyokola* with synonymclause being *li etsa makoeba* [di ɛ́tsa makwɛ́ba] 'beginning to show bubbles', `*nena* expressed as *ha a mpatle hoo* [ha a mpatle hɔō] or *o `nyonya* [nɔɲa] 'he/she detests me so much'.

The fifteenth note is that the contrastive feature borne of the onset diacritic apostrophe forms onomastica sex specific names and they occur as *Male vs Female*references in:*Mantšo* [mantsʰō] 'dark complexion male' *vs* `*Mantšo*[mmantsʰō] 'dark complexion female'; *Mona* [mōna] 'jealousy' vs `*Mona* [mmɔna] 'conspicuously seen'; *Makhang* [makʰaŋ] 'fat meat given to brave men' vs `*Makhang* [mmakʰaŋ] 'a woman who always argues'.The onset diacritic apostrophe, therefore, must not suffer explicit presence in this case. The onomastica feature also incorporates the baby talk onomastica such as *Nana* [nana] 'baby talk form of *ngoana* [ŋwana] 'baby' and `*Nana* [nnana] 'dearly loved baby' as well as *Nono* [nɔnɔ] 'small bodied baby' vs `*Nono* [nnɔnɔ] 'small bodied dearly loved baby'.The names without the onset diacritic apostrophe are generally male specific as they are family names. The onset diacritic creates the intimate relation between the female

baby and the parent and that reflects in the form, articulation and the inherent meaning of these names.In Mokhathi-Mbhele's (2023b) description of these baby talk words as Sesotho personal names. she notes that in some cases, baby talk namesmay be differentiated from a common noun by the onset diacritic as in *Noko* [nōkō] 'porcupine' vs *'Noko* [nnɔkɔ] 'short form of *'Mannokisane*[mmannɔkisane]' (a small bodied baby loved by its mother) built from the middle of *'Mannokisane'* with the person directed terminal [ɔ].

The sixteenth observation is that the male specific family names are normally void of the onset diacritic apostrophe. However, some male specific family names are structured with the onset diacritic apostrophe and an example is `*Malikhetla* [mmadikʰɛ́tla] 'mother of shells' and it resumes with the **bilabial** place of articulation. The Sociolinguistics impact is that their expression requires the address terms that aremale specific such as *ntate or abuti or malome or rangoane `Malikhetla* [ntatɛ́/abuti/malōmɛ́/raŋwane]`*Malikhetla* [mmadikʰɛ́tla] 'daddy/brother/unclemother of shells' and that sex specific contrast of male address form on a female structured name creates linguistic description intrigue. The **velar**articulation may give `*Ngoae* [ŋŋwajɛ] 'scratch me' or 'scabies disease'. Omission of the onset diacritic apostrophe renders anomalous words such as *malikhetla*[madikʰɛtla](cannot access meaning) and *ngoae* [ŋwajɛ́] 'scratch' hence the obligation to explicitly present the onset diacritic apostrophe as the initial element in these names.

The seventeenth observation is that the onset diacritic apostrophe in Sesotho has significant impact in preventing some expression problems. Such include, the invention of non-existing usage as in:*ke taba ea **nete**[ke taba ja nete] "it is a matter of smear" instead of *ke taba ea `**nete**[ke taba ja nnete] 'it is a truthful matter'. A further problem to beavoided is the production of accurate but anomalous structures as in:*Ba apere **mala** o mosoeu* [ba apɛ́re mala ɔ mōswɛ́u] 'They are wearing white intestines' instead of *Ba apere `**mala** o mosoeu* [ba apɛ́re mmala ɔ mōswɛ́u].

VIII. CONCLUSION

Obligation to observe the physical inscription of the onset diacritic apostrophe to redefine form-meaning accuracy and appropriateness in the inscription of the Sesotho language cannot be over-emphasised. The onset apostrophe diacritic elevates the value of preservation of accuracy-appropriateness in spelling and necessitates the crucial merge of the Linguistic fields whereby Phonetics-Morphology-Syntax-Semantics (PMSS) as multi-faceted description is advocated by the IMP theory. The onset diacritic apostrophe in the Sesotho words is a dire need to maintain value and uniqueness of Sesotho and it is a call to every author to exercise this competence through written communicative performance and use it as a resource for functional linguistic orientation. Employment of onset diacritic apostrophe facilitates for the overcome and even eradication of the problem of assumptive reading-writing practice.

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