

## Promoting Social Reconciliation in Post-apartheid South Africa: Engaging "Forgiveness" Texts in Bible Translation Performance

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### ABSTRACT

*This article describes an ongoing effort within the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa to design a performative translation of biblical texts on forgiveness into Sesotho, one of the official languages of South Africa. The goal is to communicate effectively the concept of forgiveness to both confessional communities and those outside those communities. This translation will help the hearers to understand better the Old Testament concept of forgiveness and how that concept can promote social reconciliation within the polarised society of South Africa. The design of a performance translation of forgiveness texts and its implementation in society provides a model for similar translations into the other ten official languages of South Africa. The study is based on Biblical Performance Criticism.*

**KEYWORDS:** Performance; Forgiveness Texts; Forgiveness; Bible Translation; Polarised Society; Biblical Hebrew; Sesotho

### A INTRODUCTION

The current article continues the previous work published on how *happiness can* be understood better through Bible Translation by different communities living in post-colonial Africa.<sup>1</sup> That study shows that happiness and humanness are closely related because happiness is a fundamental human value. Furthermore, the study demonstrates how translation performance regarding happiness can assist in the restoration of humanness. In other words, restoration here is an agent of change in a post-human world. Drawing from that

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<sup>1</sup> Jacobus A. Naudé, Cynthia L. Miller-Naudé and Tshokolo J. Makutoane, "Bible Translation in Postcolony Africa: Reclaiming Humanness through Bible Translation Performance," in *Translation Studies Beyond the Postcolony* (ed. Kobus Marais and Ilse Feinauer; Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017): 210 – 219.

discussion, the current study argues that many people cannot truly fulfil humanness without forgiving one another and staying happy. In that sense, happiness and forgiveness are the central pillars of humanness.

A study of the concept of forgiveness would show that this is the most complex and challenging element to understand and apply in day-to-day life. Many people, including believers and non-believers, across all races and gender, talk about forgiveness and reconciliation but the practice of it is a massive task. If these concepts were understood correctly by all, many friendships, marriages, lives and other relationships could have been saved and restored irrespective of religion, colour or political affiliations as well as literacy or economic status. A correct understanding, in this context, rests on the biblical and human notion of *forgiving* and *forgetting*.

The current article attempts to show how to restore humanness in the post-human world by creatively translating and performing selected Old Testament texts on forgiveness to educate Christians and non-Christians especially Sesotho speakers and let them see how much happier society members could be if they can forgive another to promote social cohesion. The primary account of performing these texts is that many communities in Africa, including Sesotho, are still in the oral world or, more precisely, members of oral-written cultures and societies with an oral tradition that also function successfully within socially dominant written cultures. Therefore, designing a performative translation of forgiveness texts with orality at its centre will enable the readers to hear and see the translation performed to them. On the other hand, this will allow the translators and performers to communicate this challenging concept more effectively and efficiently to promote social cohesion in contexts of unforgiveness. A similar study to the current one is that of Dickie<sup>2</sup> which deals with the translation of praise Psalms through oral performance for the Zulu communities. Dickie's study answers the question: how can praise Psalms be understood better by the Zulu communities? It argues that is through oral performative translation that the Zulu communities can understand praise Psalms better.

The biblical texts on forgiveness in the current study were arranged by the translation team in a string or stair-like pattern. This means one text is followed by others. A text therefore carries the same meaning that is carried by the preceding one(s). In the current study, the main concept that features in all these texts is forgiveness (see section 6). This innovative way of arranging the texts was to attract the viewer and hearer's attention. In relation to the concept of forgiveness, other critical theological concepts were discovered in those texts. These concepts included *goodness*, *mercifulness*, *compassion*,

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<sup>2</sup> June Dickie, "Community Translation and Oral Performance of Some Praise Psalms within the Zulu Communities," *The Bible Translator* 68/3 (2017): 253–268.

*repentance, and healing.* The relationship between these concepts and forgiveness will be discussed briefly later in section 6.

The performative translation employed in this study follows the Biblical Performance Criticism and Orality approaches to translation and it can also serve as a model for other languages in Africa. What triggered my interest in the performative translation of *forgiveness* is Wendell E. Miller's profound theological insight into and exposition of the concept.<sup>3</sup>

For this article, the focus is on Old Testament biblical texts on forgiveness. There are two main reasons for focusing only on the Old Testament. First, Sesotho speakers, like most African believers, hold the Old Testament close to their hearts because they believe that it is closer to their way of living and thinking. This proposition is supported by Majola when he says: "The Old Testament (OT) is much loved in Africa, perhaps due to its close cultural and religious affinities with traditional African culture and ethnic religions."<sup>4</sup>Second, since this is a continuing research, New Testament texts on forgiveness will be tackled in the future but in a different format<sup>5</sup> from the one employed in the current study. In this article, different texts of forgiveness are creatively stacked together in a string-like pattern (see section 6) as an alternative way of presenting a performative translation.

This article commences with an exposition of principles and practices of Bible translation in modern translations and a discussion on Biblical Performance Criticism supported by orality and the *skopos* as theoretical frameworks underpinning or guiding the research. It presents the definition and nature of *forgiveness*, an actual example of a performative translation of biblical texts on forgiveness into Sesotho and the conclusion.

## **B PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES OF MODERN BIBLE TRANSLATIONS**

The notion of principles and practices of Bible translation is a broad one. It does not only include rules or guidelines for translators of the Bible from its original or source languages to target languages, but it also refers to translation theories and strategies. In terms of modern translations, the study cites two

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<sup>3</sup> Wendell E. Miller, *Forgiveness: The Power and the Puzzles* (Warsaw, IN: Clear Book Publishers, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> Aloo O. Mojola. "The Old Testament or Hebrew Bible in Africa: Challenges and Prospects for Interpretation and Translation," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 35/3 (2014): 1.

<sup>5</sup> For different presentations of performative translations, see Naudé, Miller-Naudé and Makutoane, "Bible Translation," 184–187. In this work, one text (that is Matt 5:3–12) with its verses was performed by different students. In the current article, different texts (not one text) on forgiveness stacked together were performed by different groups of members of the congregation. The issue here is not about who performs but about the design of the performative text(s).

Sesotho translations of the Bible: 1909/61 and 1989. The nature of these translations will be discussed later in (1) below. In discussing the principles and practices of Bible translation in the current study, the following translation theories are key: prescriptive/normative theories and equivalence, descriptive approach, and functionalist approach with Skopos theory as the pivotal approach.

## 1 Prescriptive/normative theories and equivalence

The period, 1950-1970, was a time of general linguistics within the field of translation studies and most of the translation frameworks and models were developed only from general linguistics. During this period, translation studies were dominated by prescriptive/normative theories which promoted the notion of producing a translation which is the mirror image of the original text. In reacting to this notion, Naudé says: "This was impossible. These theories lacked the necessary sensitivity on socio-cultural conditions under which translations were produced to comply with the requirements of acts of communication in the receiving culture."<sup>6</sup> It is only from the 1980s onwards that doors were opened for other disciplines such as philosophy, communication science, anthropology, etcetera to develop translation frameworks. The linguistic approach to translation was underpinned by the fixed theory of equivalence. This theory was based on the sameness between the source and target texts with an emphasis on the source text.<sup>7</sup> In terms of normative approaches to translation, equivalence was the prevailing concern and the criterion against which translators were to judge the quality of translation. In simpler terms, a translation was judged to be good, bad, or indifferent in terms of what constitutes equivalence between the source and the target texts. Therefore, linguists strove to propagate equivalence as a means of bringing about accuracy that could result in good, right and faithful translations.

In support of equivalence, Catford defines translation as a replacement of textual material in the source text by the equivalent textual material of the target text.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, Nida argued that the translation process is the production of a text in another language with features that resemble the source text in the situation of the target culture.<sup>9</sup> He also introduced the dimensions of

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<sup>6</sup> Jacobus A. Naudé, "Translation Studies and Bible Translation," *Acta Theologica* 20 (2000): 11–22.

<sup>7</sup> Jacobus A. Naudé, "Equivalence," in *A Guide to Bible Translation. People, Language, and Topics* (United Bible Societies; ed. P.A. Noss and C.S Houser; Swindon: Xulon Press, 2019): 415-422.

<sup>8</sup> John C. Catford, *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).

<sup>9</sup> Eugene A. Nida, *Towards a Science of Translating: With Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating* (Leiden: Brill, 1964).

formal and dynamic equivalence to his model. By formal equivalence, he meant a faithful reproduction of the source text in both form and content whilst by dynamic equivalence, he referred to a translation that aims at the complete naturalness of its expression. Instead of striving towards equivalence (that is, the sameness between the source and the target texts), specific translation strategies are used.<sup>10</sup> This means that the translator must resort to certain translation strategies to make the text readable for the target audience. Translation strategies are the main tools used to describe and identify two main underlying dimensions namely: (i) the transference of culture-specific terms as well as (ii) overall translation strategies. On the dimension of transference of culture-specific terms, one would refer to the work of Toury on translation norms because translation strategies contain an element of culture. Toury discusses three categories of translation norms namely, initial, preliminary, and operational norms.<sup>11</sup>

Initial norms concern an overall choice between leaning on the original text and adherence to norms which act in the target culture itself. Initial norms govern the basic choice a translator makes between adherence to the source text structure and source culture norms to meet the linguistic, literary, and cultural norms of the prospective new readership in the target culture. Preliminary norms involve factors that determine the selection of the texts for translation and overall translation strategies. The overall translation strategy is employed to attain the appropriate translation. For the current study, principles of Orality within Biblical Performance Criticism were adapted (see section 3) and used as overall translation strategies to attain an appropriate performative translation of biblical texts on forgiveness into Sesotho. One must remember that the overall translation strategy determines the kind of translation. Operational norms concern actual decisions made in the translation process. These can be, amongst others, the additions, omissions, and textual norms revealing linguistic and stylistic preferences. Some of these decisions were applied in designing the proposed performative translation of Old Testament texts on forgiveness into Sesotho.

Newmark also notes that, "In a given translation, there has to be one overall strategy that will make the readability of the strange text within the context of the new audience possible. In practice, however, a translation is generally a compromise between two extremes which will either be primary

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<sup>10</sup> Jacobus A. Naudé, "An Overview of Recent Developments in Translation Studies with Special Reference to the Implications for Bible Translation," *Acta Theologica*, Supplement 2 (2000): 18.

<sup>11</sup> Gideon Toury, *In Search of the Theory of Translation* (Tel Aviv: The Porter Institute of Poetics and Semiotics, 1980).

source-oriented or primary target-oriented"<sup>12</sup>. The two extremes of translation identified by Newmark can be represented as follows.

#### **SOURCE TEXT- ORIENTED**

Word-for-word translation  
 Literal translation  
 Faithful translation  
 Semantic translation

#### **TARGET TEXT- ORIENTED**

Adaptation  
 Free translation  
 Idiomatic translation  
 Communicative translation

To clarify these two extremes in this article, it is critically important to refer to the two Sesotho translations of the Bible and describe them according to the above extremes to determine their character and impact on the readers.

Sesotho (a language belonging to the Niger-Congo language family and one of the eleven official languages of South Africa) has two translations of the Bible, namely the old one of 1909/61 and the new one of 1989. The former imitates the form of the original text; the translation follows a literal translation, faithful [to the form] translation, word-for-word translation or what could be labelled as formal correspondence or equivalence. This kind of translation reflects the Biblical Hebrew structure in Sesotho in terms of lexical items; for instance, the divine name YHWH is translated as *Jehova* to reflect one way of pronouncing the name in Hebrew. The latter translation can be characterised as a semantic equivalence translation; non-literal, idiomatic (current idiomatic Sesotho), free, faithful [to the meaning] or dynamic equivalence. Another example is the title of the book of Exodus, which is translated as *Phallo* (to depart, to go out, that is, a description or explanation of the Latin title used in English translations). In contrast, the title is rendered as a loan word *Eksoda* (Exodus) in the 1909/61 translation.

The former seems to be complex and difficult to its users (both to those who can and who cannot read the written text) for the following reasons: (i) its adherence to a word-for-word philosophy of translation (reflecting the Biblical Hebrew structure in Sesotho in terms of lexical items for the *Lord* such as *Jehova* (1909/61), which is Hebrew instead of *Morena* (1989) and (ii) features of colonial interference during the translation of the Bible (e.g. the use of the Afrikaans loan word *tronk* for *teronko* instead of the indigenous Sesotho word *tjhankaneng* for *prison*). The primary concern of the latter version is meaning and readability, but it was not well accepted by much of its readership. One must remember that these two Sesotho translations lean heavily on the reader's ability to understand a written text. Although both are used in the church, at home by members of the church and in public by Sesotho readers, the two translations constitute a very serious problem in a religious community made up of members who cannot read the written text. This was proven by a

<sup>12</sup> Peter Newmark, *A Textbook of Translation* (London: Prentice Hall, 1988/1989).

preliminary study of illiteracy which was undertaken by the researcher in Bloemfontein's Sesotho-speaking congregations in 2007.<sup>13</sup> The study indicated that 11% of church members could not read or write; this figure would presumably be higher in rural communities. Furthermore, among the remaining 89% of the members of the religious communities are readers who still find it difficult to master the content of the Bible due to the difficult vocabulary and language structure of the text when read aloud. In simpler terms, the nature of these two Sesotho translations of the Bible, based on the extremes discussed in 1 above, compromise the understanding of the readers and hearers of the Bible in Sesotho in a huge way. Furthermore, due to these extremes, the translation of Old Testament texts on forgiveness in these two Sesotho versions is different (see section 5). Their similarities are not as conspicuous as the differences. Given this scenario, one would argue that the divergences in these two translations (1909/61 and 1989) of the Old Testament texts on forgiveness pose a problem for readers and hearers of the Bible in Sesotho. Therefore, this article proposes a performative translation (see section 6) of forgiveness Old Testament texts into Sesotho, for readers and hearers of the Bible in Sesotho to have a clearer understanding of the concept when the translation of texts about forgiveness is performed before them.

Since the two extremes of translation strategies identified by Newmark in section 1 above complicated the understanding of the strategies of the translation process, Naudé simplified them to clarify the transfer of culture-specific terms.<sup>14</sup> In this case, Naudé identified the following strategies for translation as in section 2:

- (a) Transference – the process of transferring a source text language item to a target language text unchanged. In this case, the source language item becomes a loan item in the target language.
- (b) Indigenisation/domestication – this strategy is very similar to transference but is used when an item is adopted from the source language with a slight modification to remove some of the foreignness.
- (c) Cultural substitution – This strategy involves replacing a culture-specific item (or expression) with a target language item (or expression) that does not have the same propositional meaning but is likely to have a similar impact on the target reader.

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<sup>13</sup> Tshokolo J. Makutoane, "Re-animating Orality: The Design for a New Translation of the Bible into Sesotho" (PhD thesis, University of the Free State, South Africa), 2011.

<sup>14</sup> Jacobus A. Naudé, "A Descriptive Translation Analysis of the Shocken Bible," *OTE* 12 (1999): 79.

(d) Generalisation – The use of a culturally neutral term, a less expressive item or even a more general term to define the source language culture-specific term.

(e) Specification/intensification/explication – The use of a culturally more specific term, a more expressive item or even a more specific term to define the source language culture-specific term.

(f) Deletion/Addition – Deletion: Using deletion as a translation strategy means that the source text item is not rendered in the target text at all. Addition: The target text contains linguistic, cultural, or textual items, which did not occur in the source text

(g) Transposition – A translation strategy involving a change in grammatical form from source language to a target language.

(h) Translation couplet – In this category two of the above strategies can be combined.

In designing the oral performative translation of forgiveness texts in this study, not all the above translation strategies (decisions) were used. Mostly used strategies in designing a performative translation in section 6 are indigenisation (domestication), cultural substitution and addition.

On the issue of equivalence, Naudé says that its dimensions include the notion that a target text must be a mirror of the source text in form and content. This notion had some limitations that gave an opportunity for other frameworks to develop as well. These frameworks included amongst others, the descriptive and the functionalist models of translation. In terms of the process of their development, the two models or approaches developed independently but simultaneously.<sup>15</sup>

## **2 Descriptive approach**

Considering equivalence in relation to the descriptive approach to translation, Naudé profoundly states: "Although equivalence is a quality of all translations, no matter how good or bad, the task<sup>16</sup> is about describing the shifts and transformations that translations produce."<sup>17</sup> Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) has made a high impact on the field of translation studies. Developed in the early 1970s, its presence gained strength in the 1980s and it became a well-known approach to translation studies in the 1990s. It also describes the

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<sup>15</sup> Naudé, "An Overview," 44–69.

<sup>16</sup> *Task* here means the role of the descriptive approaches to translation.

<sup>17</sup> Naudé, "Descriptive Approaches," 418.



phenomena of translation and translating.<sup>18</sup> The DTS has three main roles. First, it is product-oriented, which means that it describes the function of an already existing translation either one translation (for instance, the role of the 1989 translation in Sesotho, its revisions) or comparative translations (for example, 1909 versus 1989 translation in Sesotho). Second, it is function-oriented, which means it deals with the function and influence of the translation in socio-cultural situations or contexts. For instance, what purpose(s) or roles do the 1909 translation and the 1989 translation, and its revision play within Sesotho-speaking communities. Third, it is process oriented. This means that it considers the conscious decision-making act of translation which, amongst others, is based on the investigation and description of the translation brief and translation strategies followed for the already existing translations.

### 3 Functional approach

The other prominent translation framework that developed in that era of the early 1970s is the functionalist approach to translation. The notion that is highly accentuated in this model is that it is not the source text that is given first preference but the target text for the prospective audience. In addition to this proposition, Naudé says: "According to the functionalist approach to translation, a translation is viewed adequate if the target text or the translated text is appropriate for the communicative purpose defined in the translation brief."<sup>19</sup> The functionalist approach was introduced as an alternative to equivalence. Various proponents like Reiss, Vermeer, Holz-Mänttari and Nord, to mention but a few, contributed enormously towards the being of this approach.<sup>20</sup>

#### 3a Skopos theory

Reiss and Vermeer identify the core or axis around which an adequate or true translation revolves, namely the skopos theory.<sup>21</sup> The word, skopos, is the Greek word for aim, goal, or purpose. Reiss and Vermeer introduced it into translation theory in the 1970s. The theory focuses on the importance of the target text. On this notion, Nord argues that: "it is not the purpose of the source text to determine the translation methods and strategies to be used in the

<sup>18</sup> James, Holmes, "The Name and Nature of Translation Studies," in *James Holmes, Translated! Papers on Literacy Translation and Translation Studies* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988), 71–78.

<sup>19</sup> Naudé, "An Overview," 15.

<sup>20</sup> For an exhaustive discussion of the contribution of these proponents towards the being of the functionalist approach to translation, see Christiane Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained* (2nd ed.; Manchester: St Jerome, 1997, 2018).

<sup>21</sup> Katharina Reiss and Hans Vermeer, *Grundlegung einer allgemeinen Translationstheorie*. (Tubingen: Niemeyr, 1984)

process of translating, but the intended purpose, i.e., the skopos of the target text."<sup>22</sup> This means that each text is produced for a given purpose and it should serve that purpose. According to the skopos theory, the target text must be acceptable and meaningful in the sense that it is coherent. Expounding the meaning of coherence, Nord says it should be understood in two ways: (i) intra-textual coherence: the target text becomes part of the recipient's situation and culture; (ii) inter-textual coherence: the target text must have a relationship with the source text, which is considered as the information giver of the translator.<sup>23</sup>

In this article, a performative translation of forgiveness texts of the Old Testament is designed in a unique way with the purpose, aim or intention of communicating the concept of forgiveness to Sesotho readers and hearers of the Bible in an efficient and comprehensible manner. For Nord, the theory of skopos seemed incomplete without the inclusion of the translation brief because this is actually where the translation process starts.<sup>24</sup> It is the heart of the skopos theory.

### 3b Translation brief

The translation brief specifies what kind of translation is needed that is why the initiator or the translator is a decision-maker about the purpose and aim of the translation skopos. The translation brief does not tell the translator how to translate a particular text or what text type is needed for the particular situation (i.e. in this case the Sesotho-speaking people who cannot read the written text should be provided with an oral translation that suits their situation). This translation depends on the translator's ability and competence to master the translation strategies or decisions to produce a text that will function in the respective environment. In commenting further on the translation brief, Nord argues that: "An ideal translation brief provides explicit or implicit information about the intended target text functions, the target text addressees, the prospective time and place where the translation is going to be used and also the motive for producing or receiving the target text."<sup>25</sup> These dimensions of the translation brief must be analysed eventually to provide explicit or implicit information about the target text. Thus, the dimensions of the brief concerning the target text which is Sesotho oral translation of forgiveness texts designed in a performative pattern will be analysed in section 3 as follows:

### **Analysis of the dimensions of the translation brief in the current study**

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<sup>22</sup> Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity*, xxx.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

- (a) Intended function of the target text: To teach forgiveness to promote social cohesion amongst the societies.
- (b) Addressees: Both oral and non-oral Sesotho speakers.
- (c) The medium of production: Performative translation based on Orality and Biblical Performance Criticism
- (d) Time of the target text: Reformation Day (31 October 2009).
- (e) Space or place where the target text would be used: Church setting during the liturgy and outreaches in the informal settlements of Mangaung
- (f) Motive for text production: For the oral and non-readers to understand the Old Testament concept of forgiveness better. This will also remind all oral communities about how their indigenous knowledge (orality and performance) can be used to understand the Old Testament concept of forgiveness when performed before them.

One must also be cautious that the translation process does not start and end at the analysis of the target text in the brief, but it also touches an analysis of the source text whereby two main aspects must be considered. The two aspects, namely preservation and adaptation, take place between two types of translations—the literal or word-for-word translation and free translation of the target text. Considering the notion of the word-for-word translation means that 100% of the source text is transferred into the target text, thereby, overestimating equivalence than functionality and loyalty. From the above discussion of the basis of different types of translation in (1), the two translations of the Bible into Sesotho cannot fully address the needs of the readers and hearers of the Bible in understanding forgiveness. Therefore, in designing a proposed performative translation of forgiveness texts into Sesotho, by adapting these Old Testament texts on forgiveness into a performative translation based on the translation intention or *skopos* informed by the translation brief in (3) and the translation strategies in (2), the readers and hearers will have a full understanding of the concept of forgiveness.

The next section discusses theoretical frameworks on which a proposed performative translation of the Old Testament texts on forgiveness into Sesotho rests. These frameworks are Orality and Biblical Performance Criticism as the basis for designing a proposed performative translation of Old Testament texts on forgiveness into Sesotho as demonstrated in section 6.

## **C ORALITY AND BIBLICAL PERFORMANCE CRITICISM: THE BASIS FOR PERFORMATIVE TRANSLATION**

### **1 Orality**

The spoken language had been for so long the mostly used medium of communication by the oral cultures. This was not only a special knowledge, but it was also an experience created to communicate the valuable information in a unique way. This valuable information encapsulates pedagogical life

experiences of the oral or indigenous people. Nel says this type of knowledge is the embedded knowledge used by local communities to survive challenges (old and new) through the ages with the intention of maintaining the customs and livelihood.<sup>26</sup> From experiences of oral communities, stories, songs, idioms and proverbs, riddles and so on were meticulously crafted to communicate this special knowledge about how to live wisely through spoken language from one generation to the other. What was communicated was remembered by future generations.

#### 1a Definition and nature of orality (oral world)

In broadening the horizon of defining the nature of the oral world, it is critically important to consider the definitions by respective scholars. Havelock defines orality (oral world) as the world that describes societies which do not use any form of writing.<sup>27</sup> In the current study, which is within the parameters of communities who have two (written) versions of the Bible in Sesotho, it means that the respective communities are not completely oral but orality has been used to enhance their understanding of the concept of forgiveness through a performative translation of Old Testament texts of forgiveness into Sesotho. Finnegan adds that, "the oral world is by definition dependent on a performer who formulates it in words on a specific occasion; there is no other way in which it can be realised as a literary product."<sup>28</sup> Nandwa and Bukenya define orality or oral world as "utterances, whether spoken, recited or sung, whose composition and performance show artistic characteristics of accurate observation, vivid imagination and ingenious expression."<sup>29</sup> Okpewho defines the oral world as traditional literature that comes from the past and is handed down from one generation to the other.<sup>30</sup> Njoku says orality is the thinking and transmitting of oral thought from generation to generation.<sup>31</sup>

From the above definitions of the oral world, one can deduce that there is no way one can understand what the oral world means without bringing into

<sup>26</sup> Philip Nel, "Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Language Practice: Interface of a Knowledge Discourse," *Journal for New Generation Science* 6/3 (2004): 94–105.

<sup>27</sup> Eric A. Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present* (New York: Vail Ballou Press, 1986).

<sup>28</sup> Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa: Backgrounds, Characters, and Continuity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970).

<sup>29</sup> Jane Nandwe and Austin Bukenya, *African Oral Literature for Schools* (Nairobi: Longman, 1983).

<sup>30</sup> Isidore Okpewho, *African Oral Literature. Backgrounds, Character, and Continuity* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992).

<sup>31</sup> Njoku A. Chukwudi, "Wisdom in Re-inventing the Wheel? Cultivating and Industrialising Indigenous Knowledge Tracts in Africa," *Indilinga African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems: A Cross-pollination and Critique* (Pinetown: Pinetown Printers, 2005), 144–165.

the spotlight the element(s) of performance, actions, and movements.<sup>32</sup> These are the main dimensions which shape the nature of the oral world. From all the definitions of the oral world above, there is one common denominator and that is performance. This clearly demonstrates that one cannot refer to orality without making mention of performance and vice versa. Influenced by Jousse, Finnegan argues that performance, underpinned by orality encapsulates elements such as repetition, reduplication, mimicry, gesture, onomatopoeia and ideophones. Therefore, the notion of performance is seen by Jousse as the main pivot around the development of the oral world. It is in this tradition that stories were told in a unique way for specific purposes and reasons.

The following subsection answers the question: how can performance with orality at the centre be used to translate the Bible for Sesotho speakers who find it difficult to master with ease the contents of the (written) Bible and in the case of this study, the concept of forgiveness? Biblical Performance Criticism anchored by oral principles is used to design a performative translation for Sesotho speakers to understand the concept of forgiveness when performed before them.

## 2 Biblical Performance Criticism

Various scholars have different interpretations and opinions about the definition of *Biblical Performance Criticism*.<sup>33</sup> I have opted for Maxey's definition because it is the most straightforward and most comprehensive. According to Maxey, "Biblical Performance Criticism is a theory or technique that reconceptualises the task of Bible translation when it considers both the original oral context of the source text and utilises a performance modality for the target text."<sup>34</sup> Based on this definition by Maxey and the different renditions of the Old Testament texts on forgiveness in the two Sesotho translations of the Bible (see section 5 below), the current study has proposed a performative translation of these texts (see section 6), that is, the translation has

<sup>32</sup> For an exhaustive discussion of these elements of orality, see Marcel Jousse, *The Anthropology of Geste and Rhythm* (2nd ed.; trans. by E. Sienaert and J. Conolly; Durban: Mantis Publishing, 2000).

See also Walter J. Ong, *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967); Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Routledge, 1982).

<sup>33</sup> Nathan Esala. "Ideology and Bible Translation: Can Biblical Performance Criticism Help?" *The Bible Translator* 66/3 (2015): 216–229; Peter S. Perry, *Insights from Performance Criticism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016); David Rhoads, "Performance Criticism: An Emerging Methodology in Second Testament Studies – Part I," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 36 (2006): 118–133; Ernest R. Wendland, "Performance Criticism: Assumptions, Applications, and Assessment," *TIC Talk* 65 (2008): 1–11.

<sup>34</sup> James A. Maxey "Biblical Performance Criticism and Bible Translation," *The Bible Translator* 66/3 (2015): 212–215.

to be read out loud, heard and understood without any hassle. Briefly, translators must prefer a participatory communication model,<sup>35</sup> which entails a translation from the source text with meticulous consideration for rhythm and sound. Since Africans understand the principles underpinning oral literature so clearly and because orality is the core element of African traditional religion, it is essential to have orality incorporated in Scripture through a translation of the Bible.<sup>36</sup> Translation of the Bible into African languages will have to make the most of the oral features of those languages. The translators must use the correct translation strategies to produce an easily audible and comprehensible translation when recited to the Sesotho-speaking audience in church or privately.

#### 2a Features of Biblical Performance Criticism: Orality at the heart of it all

It is important to note that it is highly impossible to talk about performance translation without the idea of orality. The issue of translation for performance rotates around the point of systemic features of orality.

- Biblical Performance Criticism has the following characteristics<sup>37</sup>
  - (a) It places a high value on memory; that is, it connects the mind through a story. Therefore, what helps memory retrieve the necessary information during a performance is an oral element of repetition.
  - (b) It not only involves storytelling, but it also creates the story through performance through oral elements of rhyming and sound and improvisation by additives – necessary oral features.
  - (c) The audience not only hears the story, but it also experiences it; therefore, the audience is not passive but active – an oral acknowledgement feature.
  - (d) Biblical Performance Criticism views performance as translation. If the

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<sup>35</sup> For this article, Sesotho readers of the Bible were given an opportunity to participate in the prospective performance translation. They were given scripts to air their views and make inputs about what an oral translation should look like in terms of Sesotho oral features. They also participated in preparations such as rehearsals of the scripts for memorisation (they were not just reading them) before they performed those forgiveness texts in front of the congregation.

<sup>36</sup> Ernst R. Wendland, "Towards a "Literary" Translation of the Scriptures: With Special Reference to a "Poetic" Rendition," in *Contemporary Translation Studies and Bible Translation* (ed. J.A. Naudé and C.H.J. van der Merwe; Acta Theologica Supplementum 2, 2002), 164–201.

<sup>37</sup> James A. Maxey, *From Orality to Orality: A New Paradigm for Contextual Translation of the Bible* (Biblical Performance Criticism 2; Eugene: Cascade Books, 2009).

translation occurs in performance, the translation takes place through sound, silence, gestures, and interaction with the audience. These aspects are not just *add-ons* but are part of one integrated act of delivery: performance within the broader framework of orality.

(e) Translation for performance can include the use of historical presence or homeostasis.<sup>38</sup> By this, the story's narration is in the present, although it happened a long time ago. This also applies to biblical poetry and the Psalms.

The performative translation is not confined to a specific group of people or place such as the church or happening only within the church's walls, but it is meant for the communities at large for namely churchgoers and non-church and laypeople. When people see these series<sup>39</sup> of performance translations during the outreaches at the townships, squatter camps and in the city's CBD, their lives could change for the better. Their understanding of forgiving other races (in South Africa, black and white due to apartheid) might change to build South Africa and Africa, whose people understand clearly what it really means to forgive one another.

Prior to the performance of the proposed translation of the Old Testament texts on forgiveness (see section 6) on 31 October 2019, a brief presentation by the presiding minister was made. This presentation talked about the definition and the nature of forgiveness in general and from a biblical point of view (see section 4). The main reason for the presentation was to make the readers and hearers of the Sesotho Bible to have a clear understanding of forgiveness before it was performed for them. Another point of discussion in that presentation was to show how forgiveness has been translated in both Sesotho translations of 1909/61 and 1989 (see section 5). A brief explanation of the reasons behind these differences (as discussed in (1) above) was clearly made to the congregation by the translation team. The congregation clearly recognised the differences between the two translations in terms of the translation of the concept of forgiveness. They were encouraged not to have a negative attitude towards the two translations, but they were to use both because the two translations complement one another. Since the two translations do not cater for readers or hearers of the Bible who find it challenging to master the content of the written text, that is why a performative translation with oral features (see section 6) was proposed to cater for all readers and hearers of the Bible in Sesotho.

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<sup>38</sup> Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Methuen, 1982)

<sup>39</sup> This is one of the performances that took place on the 31 October 2019 at the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, Rehauhetswe, Bloemfontein.

## D DEFINITION AND NATURE OF FORGIVENESS

### 1 Definition

Biblical Hebrew uses the word סלה for *to forgive/to pardon*.<sup>40</sup> According to Koehler and Baumgartner,<sup>41</sup> סלה is an action of God or God's practice of forbearance, pardon or forgive. In this sense, God is the subject or initiator of the practice and is always ready to pardon or to forgive. Sesotho translations (1909 and 1989) use *ho tshwarela (to forgive)/ tshwarelo (forgiveness)*.

The concept of *forgiveness* can be defined either generally or theologically. In a general sense, the idea is to give pardon for a fault or cease to resent or *tend to forgive*.<sup>42</sup> In theological terms, forgiveness implies a *release from guilt and the re-establishment of a relationship*. In this case, God can pardon human beings and human beings can pardon those who have wronged them.<sup>43</sup>

### 2 Nature of the concept: Broadening the Horizon

In defining its nature, forgiveness is described extensively as something having within its high changing power. Besides its great changing power, it is argued that God does not remember the sins of His people and does not intend to punish them.<sup>44</sup> It is from this proposition that the two main concepts of *forgetting* and *remembering*<sup>45</sup> emanated. It is argued that although God knows everything about His people; He has forgotten nothing in terms of their sins – in other words, His *forgiveness* of sins has nothing to do with forgetting that the people have sinned but that He will not *remember* their sins (Job 34:21–22; Jer 31:34, etcetera). *Forgetting* in this context<sup>46</sup> is an intentional withholding of blessings by God (Jer 23:39–40; Gen 40:23); and has nothing to do with a slip of memory, a temporal lapse of consciousness or a complete loss of memory.

In addition to *forgetting* and *remembering*, the notion of *forgiving* and *forgetting* is further discussed in this current article. Focusing on this issue is like someone trying to do the impossible. The idea becomes *impossible* if someone *forgives* but does not *forget*. It can happen from feelings of pain that

<sup>40</sup> Prideaux S. Tregelles. *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures, Translated with Additions and Corrections from the Author's Thesaurus and Other Works* (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1990).

<sup>41</sup> Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1988).

<sup>42</sup> Katherine Harber and Geoffery Payton, eds., *Heinemann English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford Press, 1979).

<sup>43</sup> Miller, *Forgiveness*.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 5–7.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 55–63.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.



have become entrenched in someone's mind, making one doubt that one has truly forgiven. It presents not only an unbiblical thought but also offers an unworkable plan. After all, it is a burden that God has not placed on His people because it is impossible to carry out. He commanded His people to obey Him to be free from the power of pain and dominating memories. He commanded to forget the *offences* of those who have hurt others.<sup>47</sup>

In exploring the concept of *forgiveness* further, there are different types of forgiveness. Central to them all are the two main types namely *vertical* and *horizontal* forgiveness. These are labelled as *God-given gifts*, which means God has provided these two for handling offences between individuals.<sup>48</sup> The initial grant, vertical forgiveness, involves praying unconditionally and releasing to God the penalty of each offence whenever one has anything against anyone. In other words, the offending talks to God through prayer about the offender. He releases his anger to God through prayer, and it is God who forgives first before the offended person. In this way, forgiveness is achieved through prayer. The latter gift, horizontal forgiveness, grants forgiveness when the offender repents because they need to have the burden of his offence lifted; for instance, if an offender asks the one, they have offended to forgive, then, the offended will have to forgive unconditionally. As an offended believer, there is a tool/power that one will always have namely *vertical forgiveness (forgiveness through prayer)*. As an offended believer, one is not dependent on horizontal forgiveness; whether one's offender repents or not has no effect on the God-given power of vertical forgiveness. The main message about forgiveness to every person is that God forgives us first before we forgive others. Believers are to forgive because God has forgiven them unconditionally.

The following section showcases how the concept of forgiveness is conveyed in the Old Testament and how it is translated into Sesotho translations of 1909/61 and 1989. As discussed earlier in this study, it was concluded that, given their natures, the two translations of the Bible into Sesotho translate the Old Testaments texts on forgiveness differently and this poses a serious problem to the readers and hearers of the Bible into Sesotho. To deal with the problem of reading, hearing, and interpreting these translations, this study proposes a performative translation of Old Testament texts about forgiveness (see section 6). This translation is based on the principles of Biblical Performance Criticism and Orality (see section 3). However, the current study focuses only on Old Testament texts on forgiveness due to the reasons that were discussed earlier on (see section 1, paragraph 5).

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 53.

## E CONCEPT OF FORGIVENESS IN BH AND SESOTHO TRANSLATION

### Example 1: Exod 34:9

#### BHS

וְסָלַחְתָּ לְעֹגְבוֹנוֹ וְלַחַטָּאתָנוּ  
And **pardon** our iniquity and our sin.....

#### 1909/61 Sesotho Translation

*O mpe o re tshwarele ditshito le sebe sa rona /*  
May You please **forgive** us our iniquity and our sin.

#### 1989 Sesotho Translation

*A ko re tshwarele melato ya rona le sebe sa rona*  
Please **forgive** us our iniquities and our sin

The 1909/61 and 1989 render the concept as a plea.

### Example 2: 2 Kgs 5:18

#### BHS

לְדַבֵּר הַזֶּה יִסְלַח יְהוָה לְעַבְדֶּךָ  
[קק] (נא) יִסְלַח יְהוָה לְעַבְדֶּךָ בַּדְּבָר הַזֶּה  
In this matter, may the LORD **pardon** your servant ... may the Lord **pardon** [you servant in this matter.

In 1909/61, the speaker was addressing the Lord, asking forgiveness directly for himself hence *n* – prefix [1pcs] in *ntshwarele/forgive me* and 1 pcs pronoun *nna/I* to show emphasis, whereas in 1989, the speaker, although he is speaking of himself to the Lord; he is addressing the Lord indirectly: no featuring of *n* – prefix [1pcs] attached to *tshwarele/forgives* and the 1pcs pronoun. The word *servant* features in both translations, and it affects the translations differently. The indirect address of 1989 agrees with the BH.

### Example 3: 1Kgs 8:30

#### BHS

וְשָׁמַעְתָּ אֶל־תְּחִנַּת עַבְדֶּךָ וְעַמֶּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל  
וְשָׁמַעְתָּ וְסָלַחְתָּ  
And listen to the supplication of Your servant  
and of Your people Israel...  
and hear and **forgive**

#### 1909/61 Sesotho Translation

*Mamela diqelo tsa mohlanka wa hao le tsa setjhaba sa hao sa Israele....*  
*o mamele o be o tshwarele/*

Listen to the requests of your servant and your people Israel...  
 you will hear and  
 you will forgive

**1989 Sesotho Translation**

*Ako mamele kopo ya mohlanka, le setjhaba sa hao sa Israele... mamela...mme ha o utlwa o se tshwarele/ Please listen to the request of your servant and of your people Israel... and when you hear (them) forgive them.*

The 1909/61 version is not specific about who is to be forgiven; is it the servant or the nation Israel? *Forgiveness* here is rendered so that it caters to both the servant and the nation as *the one to be forgiven*. This agrees with the BH – the 3plc pronoun: *they*.

The 1989 version is more explicit and direct. *Forgiveness* here is directed to the nation Israel. This is justified by 3cs pronoun *-se / it*.

**Example 4: Lev 4:20<sup>49</sup>**

**BHS**

וַיִּכְפֹּר עַל־הֵמָּה הַכֹּהֵן וַיִּנְסָאֲחַז לָהֶם:

And the priest shall make an atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven

**1909/61 Sesotho Translation**

*Moprista o tla ba etsetsa pheko jwalo, batle ba tshwarelwe /*  
 The priest will make the cure for them in that way,  
 for them to be forgiven

**1989 Sesotho Translation**

*Moprista a ba etsetse tefelo ya sebe, mme batla tshwarelwa/*  
 The priest will make a payment (atonement) of sin,  
 and they will be forgiven

From the above examples and many more,<sup>50</sup> one could make the following deductions:

- The God of Israel is the one who forgives His people. This is in response to the plea (prayer) made to Him as in examples 1 and 2. The issue of prayer (a request) in this example is highlighted by the statement – *please pardon your servant*.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Lev 4: 26, 31; 5:10,13

<sup>50</sup> Cf. 1 Kgs 8:30, 8:34, 8:50; Jer 5:7, Jer 31:34; 19:13, 33:8; 36:3; 50:20; Ps 25:11; Lam 3:42.

- In example 4, the 3ms *it / se* refers to *sin that shall be forgiven*<sup>51</sup> and in Sesotho for the word atonement, the words cure, and payment (atonement) are used in 1909/61 and 1989, respectively, which could create some difficulties in terms of interpretations by oral cultures.

**Example 5: Ps 130:4**

**BHS**

כִּי־עִמָּךְ הַסְּלִיחָה  
לְמַעַן תִּירָא

For with You, there is forgiveness  
That You may be feared.

**1909/61 Sesotho Translation**

*Empa tshwarelo e teng ho wena, o tle o tshwajwe!*  
But there is forgiveness in you so that you may be feared

**1989 Sesotho Translation**

*Empa wena o a tshwarela, e le hore re tle re o hlomphe!*  
But you forgive so that we respect you

From the above examples, the following remarks are made:

- 1909/61 renders *tshwarelo /forgiveness* as a noun like in BHS.
- 1989 renders it as a verb/participle. In other words, there is no difference with BH because participles in BH can also be rendered as nouns
- Contrasting concepts: *fear* and *respect* in the 1909/61 and 1989 respectively; and 1909/61 agrees with the BHS

**Example 7: Ps 86:5**

**BHS**

כִּי־אַתָּה אֱלֹהֵי טוֹב  
וְסֶלֶחַ  
וְרַב־חַסְדִּים לְכָל־קֹרְאֶיךָ

For You Lord, (you) are good,  
and ready to forgive, and abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You.

**1909/61 Sesotho Translation**

*Hobane wena, Morena o molemo, o mosa, o tletse lereko ho bohle bao rapelang!*  
For you, Lord, you are good, merciful, and kind to all those who pray you.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Lev 4:26, 31; 5:10, 13.

### 1989 Sesotho Translation

Wena Morena, o molemo, o a tshwarela; mohau wa hao o moholo ho bohle ba ipiletsang ho wena/

You Lord, you are good, you forgive; your mercy is significant to those to appeal to you.

- 1909/61 does not render an overt translation of *to forgive*. Instead, the concepts *merciful (mosa)* and *kindness (lereko)* are used – this says that it is out of mercy and kindness that God *is always forgiving*.

Remarks:

- 1989 renders the concept of *forgiving* correctly and it agrees with the BH.

### Example 8: Dan 9:9

#### BHS

לְאֵדֹנָי אֱלֹהֵינוּ הַרְחֵמִים וְהַסְלִיחוּת  
כִּי מָרַדְנוּ

To the Lord our God (belong) compassions and forgiveness  
though we have rebelled against Him.

#### 1909/61 Sesotho Translation

Empa ho Morena, Modimo wa rona, ho na le mohau le tshwarelo, hobane re ikgantsheditse Yena/ But to the Lord, our God, there is mercy and forgiveness for we have turned against Him

#### 1989 Sesotho Translation

Morena Modimo wa rona yena o mohau, o a tshwarela, leha rona re mo fetohetse/

Lord our God, He is merciful, He forgives, though we have turned against Him

### Example 8: Ps 103:3

#### BHS

הַסְלִיחַ לְכָל-עֲוֹנוֹתַי  
הָרַפָּא לְכָל-תַּחֲלָאִיכִי:  
who forgives all your iniquities;  
who heals all your diseases

#### 1909/61 Sesotho Translation

Ke yena ya tshwarelang makgopo a hao ohle,  
ya fodisang mahloko a hao ohle/  
He is the one who forgives all your iniquities;

who heals all your diseases

### **1989 Sesotho Translation**

*Ke yena ya [tshwarelang] melato ya hao kaofela*

*Ya fodisang mahloko kaofela/*

He is the one [who forgives] all your iniquities.

who heals all your diseases

### **Remarks:**

- Both translations render *forgiveness* as a participle. They reflect the BH.
- In all the above, there is a clear affirmation that God of Israel is the one who *forgives* His people.

Although the concept of forgiveness is researched in the two Sesotho translations with Hebrew, the problem remains in the above examples. The divergence between the Sesotho translations with the BH excludes oral cultures. Besides that, they have different ideologies and characteristics, making it more difficult for oral cultures to comprehend quickly. One must remember that 1909/61 was meant to reflect the form of the source text (Hebrew) and 1989 to reflect both form and meaning of the source text. Both translations only cater for those who can read. Therefore, when the message of forgiveness texts is heard and performed, it will be remembered for a long time by generations and generations; hence, performative translation based on the principles of Orality anchored by Biblical Performance Criticism, is a better option in this regard.

The following section showcases how performative translation of Old Testament texts on forgiveness based on Orality and Biblical Performance Criticism was designed to address the needs of Bible readers and hearers in Sesotho to understand forgiveness and other related concepts better to promote social cohesion.

## **F PERFORMATIVE TRANSLATION OF BIBLICAL TEXTS ON FORGIVENESS INTO SESOTHO**

Clearly, the two Sesotho translations of the Bible did not fulfil the needs of the readers and hearers e some of whom find it challenging to master the contents of the written text (as was evident during Bible study sessions of the congregation). The translation team of Rehauhetswe congregation under the guidance of the presiding minister, therefore, decided to design a performative translation of Old Testament texts on forgiveness and other related concepts. The performance translation of Old Testament texts on forgiveness and other related concepts was based on features of Orality and principles of Biblical Performance Criticism (see section 3). Different groups of the congregation were assigned roles to play in the performance of these texts by the translation

team. They had to rehearse and memorise these texts a week before the performance.

The performance translation of biblical texts on the concept of *forgiveness* was employed during the prayer session for our country, the continent at large and those who are in leadership positions. The Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, Rehauhetswe undertook this initiative to pray for social change and cohesion in our polarised society and country in the post-apartheid era. The prayer took place on 31 October 2019 [Reformation Day] at our local church. The central theme was: *Forgiveness has excellent power to unite societies!*

The performing team was constituted by the following participants: the Pastor who played the role of a leader of proceedings and performance); two narrators whose primary role was to introduce the central theme of the day; the congregation at large; youth, women (mothers); men (fathers) and children. What is essential also is a two-way communication between *the moruti*/pastor and the rest of the partakers. This promotes an *interactive – participatory* mode of communication in the proceedings of the liturgy. The role of the narrators is extraordinary in the sense that they introduce (set the stage for) the concept of *forgiveness* and its essence. The words are a contextualised translation (designed into a poetic format) of Miller's translation into Sesotho.<sup>52</sup> This was a live performance.

**THEME: TSHWARELO ENA LE MATLA A MAHOLO, A TSOTEHANG!  
/FORGIVENESS HAS GREAT AND WONDERFUL POWER!**

**INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

***Moetapele* /Leader:**

*Tshwarelo ena le [matla] a maholo a tsotehang/  
Forgiveness has incredible power!*

***Mophethi 1*/Narrator 1:**

*E, [Matla] a tswang ho Modimo,  
Indeed the [power] from God*

*[Matla] hodima maemo ohle/  
[power] upon all circumstances*

***Mophethi 2*/Narrator 2:**

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<sup>52</sup> The text is drawn and adapted (to fit the context) from some of the introductory remarks in the opening chapter of Miller, *Forgiveness*. As a follow up project, the whole book will be translated into Sesotho.

*E boelanya moetsadibe le Modimo/*  
It reconciles a sinner with God.

*E hlola melato yohle/*  
It overcomes all offences  
*E bopa botjha dikamano tse senyehileng/*

It builds anew broken relationships.

**Mophethi 1 and 2/Narrator 1 and 2** (*Ba buela hong/Talk simultaneously*):

*Ruri ke matla a tswang ho Modimo/*  
Indeed it's the power from God.

*E hlola kgalefo le moya wa ntwal*  
It overcomes rage and the spirit of war.

*Matla a yona ke a tsotegang, a tswang ho Modimo!!*  
Its strength is lovely; its (power) is from God!

## **MOTSOTSO WA KGUTSO/MOMENT OF SILENCE**

### **Exodus 34:9**

#### **Line 1: Moruti/Pastor:**

*Oho! Morena re tshwarele ditshito le dibe tsa rona/*  
O! Lord forgive our iniquities and our sins

### **2 Kings 5:18**

#### **Line 2: Phutheho/Congregants:**

*Morena hle! A ko re tshwarele Morena, re tshwarele rona bahlanka ba hao/*  
Please, Lord, please! forgive us, forgive us; your servants

### **Leviticus 4:20**

#### **Line 3: Moruti/Pastor:**

*Modimo o re file konyana ya sehlabelo/*  
God has given us a lamb of sacrifice

#### **Line 4: Phutheho/Congregants:**

*Konyana ya sehlabelo hore ka yona re tshwarelwe/*  
Lamb of sacrifice that through it we are forgiven

#### **Line 5: Batjha/Youth:**

*Ena ke Jesu, eo e leng tshwarelo ya rona/*  
He is Jesus, our forgiveness

## **MOMENT OF SILENCE**



**Line 6: Moruti/Pastor:**

*Morena nnete ya mmakoma ke hore ho na le seo re se tsebang ka wena/  
Lord, the absolute truth is, there is something we know about you!*

**Psalm 103:4;**

**Line 7: Phutheho/Congregation**

*Hore o na le pelo e tshwarelang/  
That you have a forgiving heart*

**Line 8: Bana/Children:**

*pelo e tlatseng kutlwelobohloko le tshwarelo /  
The heart full of compassion and forgiveness*

**Daniel 9:9**

**Line 9: Bomme/Mothers:**

*Morena Modimo wa rona o a re tshwarela, o na le pelo e hauhelang; leha re o  
kwenehela/  
Lord our God, you forgive us; you have a merciful heart; though we turned  
against you!*

**Line 10: Batjha/Youth: empa o dula o re tshawrela /**

but you remain forgiving us

**Psalm 86:5**

**Line 11: Moruti/Pastor:**

*Morena o lokile/  
Lord, you are good*

**Line 12: Bontate/Fathers:**

*Mohau wa hao o moholo/  
Your mercy is great!*

**Line 13: Putheho/Congregants:**

*ho ba bitsang ho wena/  
to those who call upon you*

**Line 15: Phutheho/Congregants:**

*hobane lerato la hao ha le fetoe. Oho, Morena; o ho Morena; o ho Morena,  
re utlwele bohloko mme o re tshwarele! /  
for your love does not change. O, Lord, o Lord, o Lord, have mercy on us and  
forgive us!*

**Line 16: Moruti /Pastor:**

*Hona le seo re se tsebang /*

there is something we know!

**Line 17: Phutheho /Congregants:**

*ha wena moetsadibe o sa kgutlele ho Modimo /*  
when you sinner does not *return* to God,

**Line 18: Bontate/Fathers:**

*Modimo o ba lesisitheho ho o tshwarela/*  
God doubts to *forgive* you!

**Line 19: Bomme/Mothers:**

*jwale kgutlelang ho Modimo, o tla le tshwarela/*  
Now *return* to God, for He will *forgive* you

**Psalm 103:3**

**Line 21: Children:**

*Ke yena ya fodisang malwetse a hao kaofela /*  
He is the one who *heals* all your diseases

**Line 22: Congregants:**

*Morena ha ho le jwalo; re ka belaela jwang? /*  
Lord, if it is like that, how can we doubt?

The following paragraphs briefly explain the stylistic analysis (see 6.1) of the performative translation of forgiveness texts into Sesotho. In these paragraphs, an explanation of other theological concepts discovered in the texts on forgiveness is made. Specific translation strategies (see 6.2) in designing a performative translation will also be shown.

## 1 Stylistic representation of the designed performative translation

During the liturgical proceedings (as part of the processes), a moment of silence is displayed. This is viewed as an appropriate time for everyone to listen to God and to have a deep sense of introspection.

There is a *moment of transition* (the utterance) in line 6 and line 16, which the pastor administers. The moments are transitional because, in line 6, for instance, major concepts like *love* (line 16); *forgiving heart* (lines 7–9); *goodness, mercifulness* (lines 8, 12 and 16); *compassion* (line 16); *repentance* and *healing* (between lines 17 and 21) are introduced. The fact that God has a forgiving heart, shows clearly His unfailing love, goodness and mercy. Christian communities and societies at large must show these attributes. Above all, if we forgive one another, that is true repentance and it heals the inner being. The above concepts underpin the central umbrella concept of *forgiveness*, and they have profound theological meaning when talking about *forgiveness* in the Christian context. It is through these concepts that the idea of

*forgiveness* is clarified. In line 17, there is a change of addressee. In the previous lines 1–15, the addressee was God and human beings did the address. In line 17, the address is made by individuals amongst themselves – hence, *each one teaches one* principle, which is underlined by the *interactive-participatory* mode of communication. This *moment of transition* also draws the attention of the hearers and readers to what to expect, which is different from the previous proceedings but also is a moment of introspection. Line 22 is an improvised conclusion. Line 3 flows into lines 4 and 5 and the concept of Lamb Sacrifice is introduced and in line 5, the meaning comes up as Jesus Christ. The lamb of sacrifice is derived from the concept of a priest's atonement. The priest is the one who administers sacrifices. In the context of the article, the lamb for sacrifice is highlighted in lines 4 and 5.

## 2 Oral features as translation strategies in designing a performative translation

Besides the above explanation in 6.1, the current section exhibits some of the oral features on which the above analysis rests. The exhibition is critically important because it also shows where adaptation or contextualisation, indigenisation or cultural substitution as translation strategies has taken place in the translation.

= Addition of the concept of *matla/power* to the introductory remarks. This is repeated five times to show the intensity of the meaning of *forgiveness* as having authority.

= addition of vocatives: O, Morena /O, Lord! Lines 1 (Exod 34:9), 2 (2 Kgs 5:18), and 15 (Ps 86:5) (repeated three-time) show the intensity of a humble plea of the one who is praying.

= Adding *tshwarela/forgive* (2 Kgs 5:18) in line 2 to make it an oral translation. In the same instance, *ntshwarele/forgive me* – which is 1cs has been adapted to *re tshwarele/ forgive us*, which is 3pc because the plea is no more for certain individuals. Still, for specific individuals, the collective, the whole congregation is God's people.

= Adding repetition of *konyana ya sehlabelo/lamb of sacrifice* (Lev 4:20) in line 4 complementing the one in line 3, making the whole translation an oral one.

= Figure of speech which is an idiomatic expression *nnete ya Makoma/absolute truth* in line 6 (Lev 4:20). This is an elaborative additive.

= The addition of an affirmation line – *Morena ha o rialo, re ka belaela jwang?/ Lord if it is like that, how can we doubt you?*

## G CONCLUSION

This article addressed how biblical texts on forgiveness/*tshwarelo* [to forgive/*ho tshwarela* can] be translated to effectively communicate the concept of forgiveness to Sesotho speakers and other oral-written communities in Africa to promote social reconciliation and cohesion? The article proposed an oral performative type of translation of the Old Testament texts about forgiveness (see section 6). This type of translation is based on the Biblical Performance Criticism approach to translation with Orality at the centre of it all (see section 3). When the different groups of the congregation performed these texts on forgiveness in the liturgical setting before everyone present, one could notice a coherent and overwhelming response from the performers themselves and the audience. A new dawn of their spiritual nourishment was created for them. From this positive response, one could conclude that Biblical Performance Criticism, with the principles of Orality at its centre, provides a conducive way for African societies to engage with biblical texts to have a clearer understanding of Scripture when performed. This is an appropriate way to promote their spiritual well-being through forgiveness and reconciliation. In sum, this type of translation allows persons still in the oral world to participate actively in the performance of biblical texts, thus, allowing them to overcome the exclusion and dehumanisation caused by illiteracy. Performance translation continues an ancient tradition of appropriating biblical texts and adapting them to new audiences and new contexts, as this study has shown.

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