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Analysing Figurative Language in the Book of Proverbs from Mahungu Lamanene Xitsonga Bible

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ABSTRACT

The Xitsonga Bible, a translation of the Holy Scriptures into Xitsonga, is a notable literary work that not only communicates the deep spiritual teachings of the original texts but also showcases the expressive richness of the Xitsonga. This translation marked a significant milestone in bringing the Christian faith to Vatsonga. This article explores the use of figurative language in the book of Proverbs from the Mahungu Lamanene Xitsonga Bible (MLXB) version, emphasising how these literary devices enhance the clarity, depth, and emotional resonance of the text. Using a descriptive qualitative method, the study employed content analysis to examine figurative language in the MLXB version, drawing on Perrine's theory of figurative language and a pragmatic perspective. The profound results reveal six types of figurative language: metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole, proverbs, and paradox, each contributing distinct meanings to the verses based on their context. Among these, metaphors and similes were the most frequently used, underscoring their pivotal role in conveying complex spiritual and moral teachings in a relatable manner. Meanwhile, hyperbole, proverbs, and paradoxes were among the less frequently identified figurative language. The study underscores the complexity and richness of the Xitsonga Bible, demonstrating the nuanced interplay between language and interpretation in conveying wisdom and insights.

Keywords: Xitsonga; Figurative Language; Bible; Pragmatic Theory; Perrine's Theory

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1. Introduction

Xitsonga is primarily spoken by the Vatsonga people, who reside in parts of South Africa, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Eswatini ^[1,2]. According to Statistics South Africa's 2022 data, Xitsonga accounts for 4.7% of the country's language speakers, with over two million people speaking it as their first language ^[3]. With its distinct linguistic features and cultural significance, Xitsonga offers a fascinating glimpse into the rich tapestry of African languages. The language has also played a significant role in preserving and transmitting the Vatsonga people's traditions, beliefs, and values. Mabunda noted that Xitsonga comprises a variety of dialects ^[4], including but not limited to Xihlengwe, Xinkuna, Xihlave, Xiluleke, Xibila, Xikomati, Xichangana, Xidzonga, Xin'walungu, Xirhonga, Xicopi, Xitshwa, Xindzawu, Xihlanganu, Xigwamba, and Ximbayi. This suggests that Xitsonga is a language composed of multiple dialects, which implies that these dialects are mutually intelligible.

The Xitsonga Bible, like other African language Bibles, was translated from English by missionaries ^[5]. Translating the Bible into Xitsonga was a pivotal step in introducing the Christian faith to Vatsonga-speaking communities. The first complete Xitsonga Bible was translated and published in the early 20th century ^[6], marking a significant achievement in the history of Xitsonga literature. This translation underwent revisions in 1929 and 2012, with the latter published in a new orthography by the Bible Society of South Africa. These efforts resulted in various versions, including *Bibele Mahungu Lama-nene* (Good News Bible) and *Testamente ya Khale ni Leyintshwa* (The Bible in Xitsonga) ^[6]. The translation process was challenging due to the unique linguistic features and cultural nuances of Xitsonga. Translators had to carefully adapt biblical concepts and imagery to ensure they were both accurate and culturally resonant for Xitsonga speakers. This involved finding equivalent expressions for biblical terms and figurative language while also considering the cultural context in which the original texts were written.

2. Problem Statement

Figurative language is a potent communicative tool that enriches the depth, emotional resonance, and cultural

significance of texts ^[7]. It involves using words or expressions with meanings that differ from their literal interpretation, allowing for the conveyance of complex ideas, emotions, and values through creative expression ^[8,9]. Across various cultures, figurative language plays a significant role in proverbs, folktales, and religious texts, serving to communicate moral lessons, cultural values, and collective wisdom ^[10,11]. The range of figurative language is vast, comprising various expressive tools. Hutasoit categorised figurative language into four classifications: comparative, contradictive, correlative, and repetitive ^[12]. Comparative figurative language includes common forms like personification, metaphor, and simile, which involve drawing comparisons between dissimilar things ^[13,14]. On the other hand, hyperbole, litotes, paradox, and irony fall under contradictive figurative language, which combines contradictory terms or ideas to create a surprising and thought-provoking effect ^[15]. Correlative figurative language, as explained by Atmaja ^[16], encompasses metonymy, synecdoche, symbol, allusion, and ellipsis, employing parallel or contrasting structures to achieve a balanced and rhythmic effect. This form of figurative language often emphasises ideas, crafts memorable phrases, and enhances the overall impact of a text. Lastly, repetitive figurative language, which includes pleonasm, climax, anti-climax, rhetoric, and repetition, is frequently utilised to establish rhythm, underscore key themes, or render a text more memorable ^[12]. Each category provides a distinct purpose in enriching language, conveying complex ideas, and engaging readers on multiple levels. In essence, figurative language serves as a multifaceted tool that not only enhances the expressiveness and emotional depth of communication but also plays a crucial role in conveying cultural values and wisdom across various contexts.

Figurative language is a crucial element of human communication and has been explored by various scholars, including Shabangu and Marhanele ^[17-20], who provide brief overviews in their grammar books on its types and use in Xitsonga. However, despite these contributions, detailed analyses of the contextual meaning embedded in texts translated into Xitsonga are notably lacking. Dash defines contextual meaning as the specific interpretation of a word, phrase, or sentence that is shaped by its surrounding context ^[8]. This interpretation considers the situation, circumstances, and environment in which the

language is used, allowing for a more nuanced and pre-cise understanding ^[8]. Unlike the general or dictionary definition, contextual meaning is influenced by cultural, social, or situational factors, as well as the relationship between speakers, their intentions, and the discourse. The limited focus on analysing figurative language and its contextual meaning in Xitsonga-translated texts creates a significant research gap. To fill this gap is particularly important given the rich oral and literary traditions of the Xitsonga-speaking community. Insufficient research on Xitsonga figurative language hinders a thorough understanding of its literary and cultural nuances, posing challenges to preserving and promoting the language's heritage. In educational settings, a strong grasp of figurative language is also crucial for enhancing students' linguistic and cognitive development ^[21]. Without adequate research and resources, educators may struggle to effectively engage students with Xitsonga's linguistic traditions. In a globalised world where indigenous languages are increasingly endangered, the lack of scholarly attention to Xitsonga figurative language and its contextual meaning further heightens the risk of cultural erosion, potentially alienating younger generations from the rich, nuanced expressions of their cultural heritage.

Thus, this article seeks to address the research gap and contribute to existing knowledge by analysing the figurative language in the book of Proverbs from the *Mahungu Lamanene* Xitsonga Bible (MLXB) version. The objectives are to (i) identify the figurative language used in the text and (ii) analyse and interpret the underlying contextual meaning conveyed through these expressions. The MLXB version, particularly the book of Proverbs, is a significant text that exemplifies the use of figurative language to convey wisdom, moral teachings, and cultural values. The book of Proverbs is inherently rich in figurative expressions, designed to encapsulate complex life lessons and cultural principles memorably and impactful. This study aims to enrich the broader field of figurative language research by highlighting the unique and underexplored linguistic features of Xitsonga, ensuring that the language's literary and cultural richness is recognised and preserved for future generations. The study is divided into seven sections, including the introduction. Section 2 outlines the problem statement, Section 3 reviews the literature on figurative language and its meaning, Section

4 describes research methodology, Section 5 discusses the theoretical framework, Section 6 presents results and discussion, and Section 7 concludes with future research directions.

3. Literature Review

This review synthesises recent studies on figurative language, focusing on its types, categorisation, meanings, and functions across various contexts, from literature and music to education and advertising.

3.1. Types and Categorisation of Figurative Language

Bawemenewi and Swarniti categorised figurative language into comparative (simile, personification, metaphor), contradictory (litotes, irony, paradox), and correlative language (allusion, ellipsis, metonymy, symbol, synecdoche) ^[14]. Among the most frequently discussed figurative devices are metaphors and similes, which serve as powerful tools for linking abstract concepts with concrete imagery. Sala-Suszyńska emphasised the cognitive significance of metaphors, arguing that they reflect how concepts are organised in the human mind ^[22]. The study also noted that metaphors are not limited to literary texts but are deeply embedded in everyday language, facilitating the communication of complex ideas. Similarly, Rohani and Arsyad highlighted the prevalence of similes in their analysis of English-language newspapers ^[23], noting that this device is particularly effective in creating vivid imagery by linking unfamiliar subjects with more familiar ones.

Personification and hyperbole are also commonly analysed figurative devices. For example, Hutasoit identified personification as a frequent figure of speech in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* ^[12], while Fatimah, Amri and Rusan established that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) lecturers frequently used personification to enhance students' understanding and engagement ^[24]. Hyperbole, on the other hand, is often employed to create dramatic intensity, as seen in Atmaja's analysis of automotive advertisement slogans, where it was used to establish a brand's identity and appeal ^[16]. Other types of figurative language include idioms, allusions, symbols, and

oxymorons, each serving unique functions in both literature and every-day communication. Resi and Adrallisman focused on idioms in their analysis of the book of Psalms, noting their role in enhancing the expressiveness of religious texts ^[25]. Meanwhile, Camelia analysed the use of similes, metaphors, and sarcasm in Sundanese literature, demonstrating how these devices contribute to the aesthetic and emotional depth of literary works ^[13].

3.2. Functions of Figurative Language

Figurative language plays a crucial role in cognitive processing and communication. Sala-Suszyńska argued that figurative language makes complex ideas more relatable and understandable by evoking emotions and imagery ^[22]. This function is particularly evident in educational contexts, where figurative language aids in the learning and retention of information. Fatimah revealed that EFL lecturers use figurative expressions to motivate students, introduce language and culture, and develop critical thinking skills ^[24]. Similarly, Rohani and Arsyad noted that similes in newspaper articles help readers comprehend complex subjects by drawing comparisons with familiar events or things ^[23]. Figurative language also serves an aesthetic function, enhancing the expressiveness and appeal of both literary and non-literary texts. Resi and Adrallisman emphasised the significance of metaphor and simile in the Psalms, arguing that these devices contribute to the poetic beauty and depth of the text ^[25]. In contemporary music, figurative language enriches the listening experience by creating new connections between ideas and images. For instance, Kamarizki and Wuryandari ascertained that metaphors and hyperbole in rap lyrics add emotional depth and dramatic intensity, enabling artists to express complex ideas and emotions in a relatable way ^[26].

In addition to its cognitive and aesthetic functions, figurative language plays a significant role in pragmatics and pedagogy. Mohd Yunos and Francis explored the implications of figurative language in song lyrics, highlighting the importance of context in interpreting meaning ^[15]. They argued that misinterpretations could arise from challenges in distinguishing between literal and figurative language or from a lack of pragmatic analysis. In an educational context, Rohani and Arsyad suggested that the use of simile and conceptual meaning in news articles aids

reader comprehension, making it a valuable resource for language learners ^[23]. Similarly, Fatimah concluded that figurative language contributes to a more dynamic learning environment by making lessons more engaging and relatable ^[24]. This suggests that figurative language can be effectively utilised in educational settings to improve students' comprehension and appreciation of literature.

3.3. Applications in Various Contexts

Figurative language is also applied across various contexts, including literature, music, advertising, education, and journalism. The use of figurative language in literature has been widely studied, with researchers focusing on its role in enhancing the expressiveness and depth of literary texts. Hutasoit highlighted the importance of understanding figurative language for literary interpretation, particularly in complex works like *Les Misérables* ^[12]. Resi and Adrallisman echoed this sentiment in their analysis of the Psalms, arguing that figurative language provides deeper insights into the text's meaning and the writer's intent ^[25]. Figurative language is also prevalent in music, where it contributes to the emotional and aesthetic appeal of song lyrics. Nursolihat and Kareviati explored the use of metaphor, simile, and hyperbole in the lyrics of "A Whole New World" ^[9], demonstrating how these devices enhance the song's narrative and lyrical beauty. Similarly, Kamarizki and Wuryandari found that figurative language in rap music allows artists to express complex emotions and ideas, adding depth and resonance to their work ^[26].

In advertising, figurative language is frequently employed to craft memorable and persuasive slogans. Atmaja analysed the use of hyperbole, personification, and metonymy in automotive advertisement slogans ^[16], emphasising their role in establishing brand identity and appeal. The study concluded that these figurative devices significantly enhance the effectiveness of slogans by making them more memorable and easily comprehensible. Similarly, figurative language serves as a valuable tool in education, particularly in fostering student engagement and comprehension. Fatimah posited that EFL lecturers often incorporate figurative language in their teaching to motivate students, introduce cultural concepts, and cultivate critical thinking skills ^[24]. Their study concluded that the use of figurative language contributes to a more

dynamic and effective learning environment. Moreover, figurative language is also prevalent in journalism, where it aids in making complex topics more accessible to readers. Rohani and Arsyad discovered that the use of similes and conceptual meanings in newspaper articles helps readers better understand and connect with the content ^[23]. The study suggested that journalists employ figurative language to create vivid imagery and draw meaningful comparisons, thereby enhancing reader comprehension. Additionally, Azmi underscored the importance of understanding figurative language in storytelling, particularly for language learners ^[27]. They argued that storytelling, enriched with figurative language, effectively improves speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills while also imparting moral values.

The reviewed literature indicates that figurative language has been extensively studied across various languages, focusing on its cognitive functions, role in education and communication, and application in media such as literature, music, and journalism. These studies highlight its critical role in connecting language to context and enhancing communication. However, there is a notable lack of analysis on figurative language in Xitsonga, particularly in texts that have been translated into the language. This article aims to fill this gap by examining the figurative language in the book of Proverbs from the MLXB version. In doing so, it contributes to the preservation and understanding of Xitsonga's linguistic heritage and enriches the broader field of figurative language studies.

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Research Paradigm

This study was conducted within the interpretivism paradigm, which is well-suited for exploring and understanding the subjective meanings embedded in texts. The interpretivism paradigm posits that reality is socially constructed, and knowledge is derived from interpreting human experiences and interactions ^[28,29]. In the context of this article, the interpretivist approach was essential for analysing the figurative language in the MLXB version of the book of Proverbs. This allowed for an in-depth understanding of the cultural, historical, and theological

nuances that influence the use and interpretation of figurative language in this biblical text.

4.2. Research Design

The study employed a descriptive qualitative research design, focusing on a detailed and systematic description of the figurative language found in the book of Proverbs from the MLXB version. Kalu and Bwalya elucidated that qualitative research is particularly useful in exploring complex phenomena that are difficult to quantify ^[30], such as the interpretation and implications of figurative language in religious texts. The descriptive nature of the study aimed to provide a comprehensive account of the types and functions of figurative language, as well as their meanings within the context of the text.

4.3. Data Collection Method

A desktop-based data collection method was used for this study. This approach involved collecting and analysing existing data from the MLXB version, specifically focusing on the book of Proverbs. Desktop research was chosen for its effectiveness in gathering relevant textual data without the need for direct interaction with participants or fieldwork ^[31]. The primary data sources included digital and print versions of the MLXB, along with relevant scholarly articles, commentaries, and theological texts that provided additional insights into the interpretation of figurative language within the text. The process began with a thorough review of the selected text, during which all instances of figurative language were identified and documented. The text was carefully examined to ensure that all relevant figurative expressions, such as metaphors, similes, hyperboles, and other rhetorical devices, were included in the analysis. This comprehensive collection of figurative language served as the primary data for subsequent analysis.

4.4. Data Analysis Method

Content analysis was employed as the primary data analysis method. Content analysis is a systematic approach to analysing textual data, allowing for the identification, categorisation, and interpretation of patterns and themes

within the text ^[32,33]. In this study, content analysis was used to examine the types of figurative language present in the book of Proverbs and to explore the contextual meaning of these expressions within the broader context of Xitsonga culture and Christian theology. Each category was analysed to determine the underlying contextual meaning and associations conveyed by the figurative expressions. Special attention was given to the cultural and theological contexts that shaped the use of figurative language in the MLXB version, as these contexts are crucial for understanding the intended messages and teachings of the book of Proverbs.

4.5. Validity of the Data

To ensure the validity of the data in this study, methodological triangulation was adopted. This approach involves integrating multiple methods, data sources, or viewpoints within a single study to verify findings and strengthen the overall credibility and depth of the research ^[34,35]. In the context of this study, triangulation was achieved by consulting various sources, including both the digital and printed versions of the MLXB, to ensure consistency and accuracy in the identification and interpretation of figurative language. This allowed for cross-verification in identifying and interpreting figurative language within the text. By drawing on varied formats of the same source, the study strengthened the reliability of its findings and ensured a more comprehensive analysis that reflected the cultural, historical, and theological dimensions embedded in the biblical text. These measures collectively contributed to the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the study's qualitative findings.

5. Theoretical Framework

The analysis of figurative language in the book of Proverbs from the MLXB version is grounded in

Perrine's Theory of Figurative Language and Pragmatic Theory. Perrine's Theory of figurative language offers a structured approach to identifying and analysing devices such as metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole, and irony ^[36]. These devices are integral to the emotional and intellectual resonance of the text. Perrine's theory has been influential in literary studies and continues to be used to analyse and understand the use of figurative language in various texts ^[37]. By applying Perrine's Theory, the study categorised and elucidated the figurative expressions in the book of Proverbs, highlighting their contribution to the text's overall message. On the other hand, Pragmatic Theory emphasises that meaning is shaped by context, encompassing physical, social, and cultural factors, as well as the speaker or writer's intent ^[38]. This theory is essential for interpreting figurative language within the cultural and religious milieu of the Xitsonga-speaking community. Together, these frameworks provide a robust foundation for examining how figurative language in the MLXB influences the interpretation and understanding in the book of Proverbs within its cultural and linguistic context.

6. Results and Discussion

This section presents the results and discussion of the findings, focusing on the identified occurrences of figurative language in the book of Proverbs from the MLXB version and an analysis of their contextual meanings.

6.1. Results

In this study, the researchers applied Perrine's theory to identify six out of the twelve types of figurative language. These included metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole, paradox, and proverbs. **Table 1** provides the result of instances of figurative language identified in the book of Proverbs in MLXB version.

Table 1. The Result of Figurative Language.

Number	Categories of Figurative Language	Results (Chapter and Verses)
1	Metaphor	1:7, 2:7, 3:18, 5:15, 5:19, 6:23, 7:27, 10:20, 10:11, 10:29, 11:30, 12:4, 13:14, 14:18, 15:4, 15:24, 15:19, 16:24, 16:31, 18:10, 18:22, 26:6

Table 1. Cont.

Number	Categories of Figurative Language	Results (Chapter and Verses)
2	Simile	2:22, 6:5, 11:22, 13:12, 25:14, 25:18, 25:19, 25:20, 25:25, 25:28, 26:7, 26:8, 26:10, 26:23, 27:8, 27:9, 27:15 27:16
3	Personification	1:20-21, 2:2, 2:10, 3:13-18, 4:9, 8:1-4, 8:12, 9:1-5, 9:13, 20:1
4	Hyperbole	5:3, 7:26, 13:20, 13:24, 17:8, 21:9, 23:2-3, 25:16, 27:3
5	Proverbs	6:27, 14:28, 16:18, 17:22
6	Paradox	11:24

From **Table 1**, it is clear that metaphor and simile are the most frequent categories of figurative language described. The abundance of metaphors and similes in the MLXB version serves to make abstract concepts more relatable and understandable to the reader. These figurative expressions are used to convey complex spiritual and moral teachings in a way that resonates with the cultural context and everyday experiences of the Xitsonga-speaking communities. The least frequent are the paradox and proverbs categories.

6.2. Discussion of the Finding

This subsection offers an analysis of the contextual meanings of the figurative language identified in the MLXB version.

6.2.1. Metaphor

A metaphor is a form of figurative language that makes direct comparisons between things based on shared characteristics or qualities ^[39]. It involves substituting one word or phrase for another with which it shares similar traits or meanings ^[40]. Redden described metaphors as figures of speech used to draw comparisons between different concepts. Unlike similes ^[41], which use explicit markers of similarity, metaphors convey meaning more succinctly by omitting such elements ^[40,42]. Essentially, metaphors express imaginative comparisons by shifting the literal meanings of terms ^[43]. In the Xitsonga language, metaphors are frequently employed to compare disparate things based on their similarities. This usage is evident in the MLXB version, particularly in the book of Proverbs

(**Appendix A**), where metaphors are used regularly. For example:

(1) *Masungulo ya vutivi i ku chava HOSI Xikwembu; lava alaka ku dyondzisiwa ni ku leteriwa i swiphukuphuku!* [The beginning of knowledge is to fear the Lord God, those who refuse to learn are stupid!] (Proverbs 1:7).

In this verse, the metaphor is present in the comparison of the “beginning of knowledge” with “fearing the Lord God”. This phrase underscores the central message that true knowledge is attained through reverence for God, who is considered the creator of all things. By equating “the fear of the Lord” with “the beginning of knowledge”, the verse highlights the crucial role of reverence and awe in the quest for wisdom and understanding ^[44]. The contrast between those who “fear the Lord” and those who “refuse to learn” serves as a stark reminder that rejecting guidance leads to foolishness, both intellectually and morally. Another verse that compares the Lord with objects is the following:

(2) *Lava lulameke, xi va hlayisela minkateko, HOSI Xikwembu i xitlhangu xa lava tshembekeke* [Those who are righteous, He takes care of their blessings, LORD God is the shield of the honest.] (Proverbs 2:7).

The metaphor is found in the underlined phrase: the Lord God is compared to a shield. A shield is known for its purpose of protecting people from harm against the enemy. This means that the Lord God protects people who are righteous and honest against the enemy. In the biblical context, the image of God as a shield is common, symbolising the Lord God’s role as a protector of the faithful. The shield metaphor underscores the theme of divine protection in exchange for righteousness and honesty. It reflects the ancient worldview where moral

and ethical behaviour was seen as being rewarded by God through protection from harm and the preservation of blessings. This metaphor highlights the covenantal relationship between God and His followers, where honesty and righteousness are seen as the prerequisites for divine favour and safeguarding. Other verses that compare God are:

(3) *HOSI Xikwembu i khokholo ra munhu la tshembekeke, kambe xi herisa lava dyohaka.* [LORD God is an honest person's fortress but causes sinners to perish.] (Proverbs 10:29).

(4) *HOSI Xikwembu i khokholo lero tiya, leri munhu wo lulama a tsutsumaka a ya tumbela eka rona.* [LORD God is a strong fortress that an honest person can run to so they can hide.] (Proverbs 18:10).

In the above-mentioned verses, metaphor is utilised to signify the Lord as a stronghold by comparing the LORD God with a *khokholo* (this can be translated to fortress or stronghold). The metaphor emphasises that God protects people who are honest with him and provides them with a fortified place. A vivid image is created by comparing the 'Lord' to a 'stronghold', signifying a fortified place of security or survival^[44]. By comparing God to a fortress, the verses suggest that those who live righteous and honest lives are safeguarded by God's power and protection, much like people who find safety within the walls of a stronghold during times of danger. The Lord does not only protect but also gives life instructions:

(5) *Switsundzuxo i rivoni, milawu i ku vonakala, marito yo tshinya ni ku laya ma komba ndlela ya ku hanya.* [Instructions are lamps, rules/laws are light, and words of discipline show a way of life.] (Proverbs 6:23).

The first underlined metaphor compares the instruction of God to a lamp (that provides light), and the second one compares God's teaching laws to light. This means that God's instructions and laws are likened to light. The last part of the verse equates disciplinary words to a way of life^[42]. Contextually, the metaphor stresses that without proper guidance, a person may metaphorically stumble in the darkness. Instructions, whether from elders, religious texts, or moral teachings are essential for achieving success and avoiding error. The book of Proverbs contains timeless wisdom and uses metaphors to draw comparisons between a woman, specifically a wife, and various other elements. For instance:

(6) *Nsati wa wena i xihlovo xa mati lawa yo tenga, timula torha ra wena exihlobyeni xexo!* [Your wife is a fountain of clean water, quench your thirst on that fountain!] (Proverbs 5:15).

In this metaphor, a wife is compared to a fountain of clean water. A fountain is a source of fresh, pure, and continuous water, symbolising vitality and nourishment^[45]. By comparing a wife to a fountain, the verse highlights the idea that a wife is a source of emotional, spiritual, and possibly physical fulfilment and refreshment. This metaphor underscores the essential role of a wife in providing support, comfort, and joy within the marriage. Just as clean water is vital for sustaining life, a loving and faithful wife is seen as fundamental to a harmonious and fulfilling marital relationship. Another metaphor that highlights the support, comfort, and joy within marriage is the following:

(7) *Nsati wa wena i ximhuntana xo saseka, vumbhurhi bya yena i bya mhala; mavele ya yena a ma ku nyike ntsako wo hetiseka minkarhi hinkwayo, rirhandzu ra yena a ri ku yive mbilu masiku hinkwawo.* [Your wife is a beautiful deer, she is beautiful as an impala, her breasts should give you absolute pleasure all the time, her love must steal your heart every day.] (Proverbs 5:19).

This verse has different figures of speech, but for now the explanation only focuses on the underlined metaphor. A wife is compared to a beautiful deer. Deer are often seen as symbols of purity and innocence, implying that the wife possesses these qualities. Contextually, this verse is part of a larger passage that encourages faithfulness and warns against adultery. The comparison of the wife to a beautiful deer is a positive image that emphasises her desirability and the joy she brings to her husband. The emphasis on her physical attributes is not merely superficial but is linked to the idea of marital satisfaction and contentment. Therefore, the use of metaphor in the book of Proverbs in the MLXB serves as a powerful tool to convey complex moral and spiritual lessons. The metaphors discussed not only enhance the richness and depth of the text but also provide vivid imagery that underscores key themes such as wisdom, righteousness, and the nature of relationships.

6.2.2. Simile

A simile is a figure of speech that draws a comparison between two distinct things. It serves as a literary device

to create parallels between different objects, ideas, or actions, enabling readers to understand one concept through the lens of another ^[24]. By linking unfamiliar ideas with familiar ones, similes enhance the emotional and sensory experience of a text, making descriptions more vivid ^[23]. Lestari and Ani ^[46], along with Maria and Bram ^[43], classified similes into four types of comparisons: (a) between animals and objects, (b) between human characteristics and objects, (c) between human conditions or situations and objects, and (d) between concrete and abstract objects. These comparisons are not intended to be taken literally but rather to highlight similarities in specific qualities. Similes are widely used in poetry, literature, and everyday speech to express complex emotions and imagery in a simple, relatable manner. In the book of Proverbs from the MLXB version, similes are used to underscore various comparisons. The analysis of the comparison between concrete and abstract objects from the text is presented as follows:

(8) *Mahungu lamanene lama humaka etikweni ra le kule, ma fana ni mati layo titimela lama timulaka torha* [Good news from afar is like cold water that quenches a thirst.] (Proverbs 25:25).

The verse above is classified as a simile. This verse employs a simile to compare the experience of receiving good news from far away to the sensation of drinking cold water when extremely thirsty. The abstract concept in this case is “good news from afar”, symbolising an emotional or intangible idea, while the concrete element is “cold water”, a physical, tangible substance that satisfies thirst. The simile highlights the refreshing, life-giving effect of good news, particularly when it comes unexpectedly or after a period of anticipation or difficulty. In this verse, the simile is used to emphasise how uplifting and revitalising positive news can be, especially in a time of hardship or uncertainty. Just as cold water revives the body, good news restores hope and joy to the spirit. The comparison also underscores the emotional and spiritual refreshment that communication can bring, especially when it bridges physical distances or difficult circumstances. The simile can also be used to make comparisons between humans and animals as seen in the following example:

(9) *Munhu loyi a tshikaka muti wa yena, u fana ni xinyanyana lexi tshikaka xisaka xa xona*. [A man who forsakes his family is like a bird which abandons its nest.]

(Proverbs 27:8).

In this verse, the simile draws a direct comparison between a man who leaves his family and a bird abandoning its nest. The literal image evokes the idea of leaving behind a place of security, care, and responsibility. In the biblical context, family is considered a fundamental unit of social and spiritual life ^[47]. Maintaining family bonds and fulfilling familial duties are seen as integral to living a righteous and honourable life. The simile reflects the cultural values that emphasise the importance of loyalty, responsibility, and care within the family structure. It underscores the perceived irresponsibility and detrimental effects of such actions. Another verse draws a comparison between human conditions or situations and objects in the following way:

(10) *Munhu loyi a lumbetaka muakelani hi vumbhoni byo hembra, wa dlaya ku fana ni xigiya, kumbe fumu, kumbe nseve wo tontswa*. [A man that bears false accusation against his neighbour is as deadly as a knobkerrie, a spear, or a sharp arrow.] (Proverbs 25:18).

This verse uses a simile to liken false accusations to weapons that cause physical harm or death. The act of making false accusations is compared to the lethal effects of weapons like a knobkerrie, spear, or sharp arrow. This comparison highlights the damaging power of false accusations, showing that, like these violent tools, they can inflict serious harm on a person’s reputation, relationships, and overall life. The knobkerrie (a traditional club-like weapon), spear, and sharp arrow symbolise violence, highlighting the devastating consequences of false accusations. The following verse used similes to illustrate the challenges of dealing with an irascible wife:

(11) ¹⁵*Ku va ni nsati wo kariha, swi fana ni ku tshama endlwini yo pfuta ngopfu loko mpfula yi na;* ¹⁶*ku miyeta yena, swi fana ni ku miyeta moya, kumbe ku fumbarhela mafurha!* [¹⁵Having an irascible wife is akin to living in a house that leaks when it rains. ¹⁶Trying to silence her is like attempting to calm the wind or to catch oil with your hands!] (Proverbs 27:15-16).

In these verses, the similes directly compare an irascible wife to a house that leaks during the rain. The difficulties of managing such a household are likened to the challenges of dealing with a wife who is easily angered. The effort to silence an irascible wife is compared to trying to calm the wind or catch oil, illustrating the futility of such

attempts. These similes highlight the ongoing discomfort and futility of managing such relationships, emphasising the need for understanding and realistic expectations in dealing with difficult interpersonal dynamics.

6.2.3. Personification

Personification is a style of language that places human behaviour and applies it to inanimate objects in such a way that these inanimate objects have characteristics like living things ^[47]. Historically, personification has been defined as a form of speech in which inanimate objects are characterised in terms of human attributes, thus representing the object as a living and feeling person ^[48,49]. This figure of speech imparts human attributes to non-human entities or concepts ^[50]. Personification can be used to compare living things to inanimate things in such a way as to appear alive ^[47]. The use of personification serves to enhance the engagement and comprehension of the readers by rendering abstract concepts more relatable and tangible ^[42]. It was noted that the book of Proverbs in the MLXB version contains personification, attributing human characteristics to non-living things. For instance, wisdom is personified and portrayed with human qualities, as seen in the following examples:

(12) ²⁰*Vutlhari bya huwelela emagondzweni, erivaleni ku twala rito ra byona leri tlakukeke; ²¹byi yima ni le henhla ka khumbi byi huwelela, byi vulavula ni le tinyangweni ta muti, byi ku:* [²⁰Wisdom is calling out in the streets with a loud voice, ²¹and standing on top of the wall calling out, talking at the city gate, and saying:] (Proverbs 1:20-21).

(13) ¹*Vutlhari bya huwelela, ku twala rito ra ku twisisa leri tlakukeke. ²Byi yima eswitsungeni etlhelo ka magondzo, ni le mahandzeni ya tindlela bya kumeka* [¹Wisdom is calling out, there is a loud voice. ²On the hilltops near the road and at the crossroads she stands.] (Proverbs 8:1-2).

In Proverbs 1:20-21 and Proverbs 8:1-2, personification is used to give abstract concepts, such as wisdom, human attributes, and actions. In both verses, wisdom is personified as a vocal, active presence that calls out and stands in various public places. Wisdom is depicted as engaging in human activities such as speaking loudly and standing in prominent locations like streets, hilltops, and city gates, suggesting its accessibility and readiness to be heard. The personification of wisdom highlights its accessibility and

the urgency of heeding its guidance. Wisdom is not hidden or reserved for a select few but is actively seeking out people in every place. This portrayal suggests that wisdom is available to all who are willing to listen and that its guidance is crucial for making sound decisions. Another example can be found in the following verse:

(14) *Vutlhari byi ta ku tlhandleka harhi yo saseka enhlokweni, byi ku ambexa ni xidlodlo xo vangama.* [Wisdom will put a beautiful crown on your head, and crown you with a shiny crown.] (Proverbs 4:9).

The verse personifies wisdom as having the ability to crown a person just like human beings do. It depicts wisdom as an active agent capable of bestowing a “beautiful crown” and “shiny crown” upon an individual. This imagery suggests that wisdom not only provides intellectual and moral guidance but also confers honour and distinction. The metaphorical crown represents the rewards and respect that come from living wisely and making sound decisions. The book of Proverbs in MLXB not only personifies wisdom but also other concepts. For example:

(15) *Vuphukuphuku byi fana ni wansati wa pongo ngopfu, wa mintirho ya manyala, loyi a nga nyumiki.* [Stupidity is like a loud, ignorant, shameless woman.] (Proverbs 9:13).

This verse personifies stupidity by likening it to a woman characterised as being loud, ignorant, and shameless. This comparison attributes human qualities and behaviours to the abstract concept of stupidity, making it more tangible and relatable. A simile is also used in this verse; stupidity is likened to a woman. By personifying stupidity as a loud, ignorant, and shameless woman, the verse illustrates how foolishness is often associated with overt and unrefined behaviours. This portrayal emphasises the moral and social drawbacks of stupidity and serves as a cautionary message to seek wisdom and avoid behaviours associated with foolishness. The use of personification makes the abstract concept of stupidity more relatable and underscores the importance of cultivating wisdom and self-discipline. In the MLXB version, personification is employed in the book of Proverbs, attributing human traits to non-living things to effectively convey the biblical message.

6.2.4. Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a rhetorical device that employs exaggerated statements or claims not intended to be taken literally but used to highlight a point or express strong emotions ^[8]. By overstating characteristics, quantities, or effects, hyperbole enhances the intensity of the speaker's emotions or the importance of a situation, creating a dramatic or humorous impact ^[15]. In the MLXB version, hyperbole serves to amplify the scriptural messages, vividly illustrating profound truths or divine attributes. This use of hyperbole strengthens the text's rhetorical power and effectively conveys deeper religious and moral lessons, as exemplified in the following verse:

(16) *Milomu ya wansati wa dlakuta yi tenga-tenga vulombe, ririmi ra yena ri rhetela ku kota mafurha.* [The lips of an immoral woman drip honey, and her tongue is as smooth as oil.] (Proverbs 5:3).

The hyperbole in this verse uses exaggerated language to highlight the deceptive allure of an immoral woman. Describing her lips as “dripping honey” and her tongue as “smooth as oil” exaggerates her seductive and enticing nature. According to Sala-Suszyńska ^[22], hyperbole employs exaggeration to create a significant impact, often for persuasive or propagandistic purposes. In this verse, it suggests that her words are exceedingly attractive and persuasive, concealing her true intentions. Contextually, the meaning reveals that her charm is dangerously misleading, akin to honey and oil, which symbolise how easily one can be deceived by outward appearances. This hyperbole emphasises the risk of being misled by seemingly attractive yet morally dubious influences. Another example of hyperbole is found in the following verse:

(17) *Ku tshama elwangwini ra yindlu, swa antswa, ku ri na ku tshama endzeni ka yona, ni nsati wo kariha.* [It is preferable to stay on the roof of the house than to remain inside the same house with a quarrelsome woman.] (Proverbs 21:9).

In this verse, hyperbole is employed to exaggerate the discomfort of living with a quarrelsome individual. The comparison of staying on the roof of the house to enduring life with a contentious woman is an exaggeration designed to illustrate the extent of the discomfort. It suggests that living with constant arguments is so intolerable that even the discomfort of staying on a roof is seen as preferable. This hyperbole conveys that the emotional distress caused by a quarrelsome woman is so severe that any

alternative, no matter how unpleasant, is more tolerable. The vivid imagery emphasises the detrimental effects of ongoing conflict and the extreme measures one might consider to avoid it. Overall, the hyperbole highlights the intensity of living with persistent strife and its extreme uncomfortableness. Another example of hyperbole can also be found in the following verse:

(18) *Loyi a tolovelanaka ni lavo tlhariha, wa tlhariha, kambe munghana wa swiphunta, u ta wela ekhombyeni.* [A person who associates with wise people will become wise too, but a companion of fools will fall into danger.] (Proverbs 13:20).

In this verse, exaggerated contrast is used to highlight the significant influence of one's social circle. It draws a sharp distinction between the outcomes of associating with wise versus foolish individuals. While the wisdom gained from being in the company of wise people is depicted as a certainty ^[51]. The phrase “fall into danger” is an exaggeration meant to emphasise the potential harm or negative consequences of bad company. Associating with the wise leads to growth in wisdom, while befriending fools metaphorically results in ruin or trouble, symbolising the negative outcomes of poor relational choices. The hyperbole underscores the importance of wisely choosing companions, emphasising the drastically different life paths that can result from this decision and reinforcing the moral value of positive influences.

6.2.5. Proverb

Proverbs are brief, often metaphorical expressions that impart practical wisdom, moral lessons, or truths ^[52]. They are crafted to offer guidance and insight into ethical behaviour and life principles, encapsulating broad truths in a concise manner ^[53]. Utilising vivid imagery and straightforward language, proverbs convey complex ideas about human conduct and divine wisdom. In the MLXB version, proverbs function as effective tools for delivering moral and spiritual lessons. According to Ighile ^[54], the book of Proverbs, a key section of this scripture, comprises a collection of sayings attributed to King Solomon and others, offering wisdom and moral guidance. These proverbs address various aspects of life, including relationships, personal conduct, and societal norms, as illustrated in the following verse:

(19) *Hosi i vanhu, laha ku nga riki na vanhu, vuhosi bya hela.* [King is a people; without people, the kingdom means nothing.] (Proverbs 14:28).

This verse conveys a powerful metaphorical message about leadership and the essential role of people in maintaining a ruler's power. The king represents authority, leadership, and governance, while the people symbolise the foundation of the kingdom. The proverb suggests that a king's strength, influence, and success depend entirely on the people he governs. Without their support, loyalty, or presence, his rule becomes meaningless. It emphasises the reciprocal relationship between rulers and their subjects, highlighting that leadership is not an isolated power but one that exists to serve and be sustained by the community. Another example of a proverb can also be found in the following verse:

(20) *Loko munhu a okela ndzilo exikhwameni, swiam-balo swa yena swi ta tshwa!* [If a man puts fire in his pocket, his/her clothes will burn!] (Proverbs 6:27).

This verse is a metaphorical warning about the consequences of reckless or harmful actions. In this proverb, the "fire" represents a destructive or dangerous action, while the "pocket" symbolises a place of personal vulnerability or proximity. The "burning clothes" suggest the inevitable consequences of engaging in risky behaviour. The proverb advises that if someone willingly brings harmful actions (fire) into their life or near their personal domain (pocket), they will inevitably suffer the consequences (burning their clothes). In essence, this verse teaches that knowingly engaging in risky or morally questionable actions will inevitably lead to negative consequences.

6.2.6. Paradox

A paradox is a statement that appears contradictory or self-contradictory but, upon closer examination, reveals an underlying truth^[55]. It is a rhetorical device in which a statement seems to oppose itself, often incorporating ironies and contradictions while attempting to reconcile conflicting emotions^[56]. Paradoxes challenge conventional logic by presenting situations where outcomes defy expectations. In biblical literature, including the MLXB version, paradoxes are used to convey moral or spiritual truths that may not conform to human reasoning but embody divine wisdom. This is exemplified in verses such

as:

(21) *Munhu loyi a hananaka, u tala ku fuma, kasi munhu wo tsonana ngopfu, u tala ku heleriwa hi swa yena.* [A generous person will often be rich, but a stingy person will often lose his possessions.] (Proverbs 11:24).

This verse presents a paradox by contrasting generosity and stinginess with unexpected outcomes: a generous person grows rich, while a stingy person loses possessions. On the surface, this appears contradictory because one might assume that generosity depletes resources and stinginess preserves them. However, the verse emphasises that generosity brings abundance in terms of wealth, blessings, or social connections, while stinginess leads to isolation or loss. This paradox challenges conventional views on wealth, promoting the biblical wisdom that selflessness is more valuable than greed. Through this paradox, the MLXB conveys profound truths, encouraging readers to look beyond superficial logic and embrace deeper moral values.

7. Conclusion

The analysis of the MLXB version, particularly the book of Proverbs, demonstrated the widespread use of figurative language. Six categories were identified: metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole, proverb, and paradox. Among these, metaphors and similes were the most frequently employed, highlighting their significance in conveying complex spiritual and moral teachings in a relatable manner. The study found that metaphors were extensively used to compare disparate things based on their similarities, often drawing parallels between abstract concepts and concrete objects. Similes, on the other hand, were used to create explicit comparisons between different elements, enhancing the vividness and emotional impact of the text. Personification was another prominent figurative language used to attribute human qualities to non-living things, making abstract concepts more tangible and relatable. Hyperbole, while less frequent, played a crucial role in amplifying the scriptural messages, using exaggeration to highlight important truths or divine attributes. Proverbs, as concise expressions of wisdom, offered practical guidance and moral lessons, encapsulating broad truths in a straightforward manner. Lastly, paradoxes, with their seemingly contradictory statements, challenged

conventional logic and presented deeper truths that often-defied human reasoning. Overall, the findings of this study demonstrate the rich and diverse use of figurative language in the MLXB version. These figurative devices serve as powerful tools for conveying complex religious and moral concepts in a way that resonates with the cultural context and everyday experiences of the Xitsonga-speaking communities. They contribute to the richness and depth of the text, making it more engaging and meaningful for readers.

Author Contributions

Conceptualisation, R.M.; methodology, N.M.; validation, N.M.; formal analysis, R.M. and N.M.; resources, R.M. and N.M.; writing—original draft preparation, R.M.; writing—review and editing, N.M. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Appendix A

Proverbs 3:18 - Vutlhari i murhi lowu nyikaka vutomi eka lava va byi kumaka; lava va byi namarhelaka, va katekile! [Wisdom is a medicine that gives life to those who find it, those who stick to it, are blessed].

Proverbs 7:27 - Yindlu ya yena i ndlela yo ya exivandleni xa vafi, yi rhelela yi kongoma etindlwini ta rifu. [Her house is a way to place of the dead, it goes down straight to the houses of death].

Proverbs 10:20 - Marito ya munhu wo lulama i silivhere leyo saseka, kasi miehleketo ya lavo hamboloka a yi pfuni nchumu. [Words of a good person are as silver, but wicked mind does not help with anything].

Proverbs 10:11 - Marito ya munhu la lulameke i xihlovo xa vutomi, kambe ku vulavula ka lavo hamboloka ku fihla tihanyi. [Words of a good person are a fountain of life, but talking's of the wicked hides their violence].

Proverbs 11:30 - Munhu wo lulama i murhi wa mihandzu leyi nyikaka vutomi, kasi munhu wa tihanyi ú herisa vutomi bya vanhu. [A good person is a medicine of fruits that gives life, and a violent person finishes people's life].

Proverbs 12:4 - Wansati wa misingiriko i harhi ya vuhosi enhlokweni ya nuna wa yena, kasi wansati loyi a khomisaka nuna wa yena tingana, ú fana ni vuvabyi lebyi borisaka marhambu. [A busy woman is crown of a king on her husband's

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Data Availability Statement

The data supporting this study's findings are available from the corresponding author upon the request.

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Conflicts of Interest

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head, and a woman that disappoints her husband, is like a sickness that makes the bones rotten].

Proverbs 13:14 - Dyondzo leyi humaka eka lowo tlhariha i xihlovo xa vutomi, lexi nga ponisaka munhu entlhan'wini wa rifu. [Education that comes from the wise is a fountain of life that can rescue a person from danger of death].

Proverbs 14:18 - Hakelo ya vanhu vo kala mano, i vuphukuphuku, kasi vutivi i harhi enhlokeni ya lava nga ni miehleketo. [Payment of ignorant people is foolishness, but knowledge is a crown on the head of those with mind].

Proverbs 15:4 - Marito yo tsakisa i murhi lowu nyikaka vutomi, kasi lama khunguvanyisaka ma heta matimba. [Exciting words is a medicine that gives life, but cruel words finish power].

Proverbs 15:24 - Rifuwo i harhi ya vuhosi enhlokweni ya lowo tlhariha, kasi xiphukuphuku xi bomba hi vuphukuphuku bya xona. [Riches are a crown of kingship on a wise person's head, but a foolish person is happy in his/her foolishness].

Proverbs 15:19 - Ndlela yo lolo yi tlhumile hi mitwa, kasi gondzo ra lowa migingiriko, ri khuleriwile ri basa. [A lazy person's way is filled with thorns, but the way of a hard-working person is clean].

Proverbs 16:24 - Marito lama tsakisaka ma fana ni xihlenge xa vulombe, lexi nandzihaka enon'weni, xi tlhela xi tiyisa miri. [Kind words are like honey that is sweet in mouth and strengthens the body].

Proverbs 16:31 - Timpfi i harhi yo dzuneka, leyi kumiwaka hi vanhu va mahanyelo lamanene. [Grey hair is a glorious crown, which is found by people with good behaviour].

Proverbs 18:22 - Ku kuma nsati, i nkateko, i ku tsakeriwa hi HOSI Xikwembu. [To find a woman, is a blessing, is being favoured by Lord God].

Proverbs 26:6 - Ku rhuma xiphunta i ku tivangela maxangu, swi fana ni ku titsema milenge. [To send a foolish one is to invite trouble, it's like cutting your own leg].

Proverbs 2:22 - Kutani jaha ri hatla ri n'wi landzelela, ku fana ni homu leyi kokiwaka hi muhalo, kumbe mhala leyi tlulaka yi wela entlhan'wini, [So the boy followed fast, like a cow being pulled by a string or an impala jumping and falling into a trap]

Proverbs 6:5 - hatlisa u phonyoka, ku fana ni mhala leyi chupukelaka muhloti, ni nyanyana leyi tsemaka rigoda. [hurry up and escape, like an impala escaping a hunter, and a bird escaping a trap]

Proverbs 11:22 - Wansati wo saseka nghohe, kambe a nga ehleketi, ú fana ni sindza ra nsuku enhompfini ya nguluve. [A beautiful woman, that does not think, is like a gold ring in a pig's nose].

Proverbs 13:12 - Loko munhu a nga kumi lexi a xi languteleke, ú twa mbilu ku vava, kasi loko a kuma lexi a xi navelaka, swi fana ni loko a kumile murhi lowu nyikaka vutomi. [When a person doesn't get what they expected, it pains their heart, but when they get what they desire, it's like getting a medicine that gives life].

Proverbs 25:14 - Munhu loyi a tinyungubuyisaka hi tinyiko leti a nga ti humesangiki, ú fana ni xihuhuri ni mapapa yo kala mpfula. [A person who brags about the gifts that they never give, is like a wind and clouds without rain].

Proverbs 25:19 - Ku tshemba mukanganyisi enkarhini wa khombo, swi fana ni ku tshemba tino leri boleke, kumbe nenge lowu sulekeke. [To trust a deceiver in crisis, is like trusting rotten teeth, or a crippled foot].

Proverbs 25:20 - Ku yimbelelela munhu loyi a nga nhlomulweni, swi fana ni ku n'wi hluvula swiambalo loko ku titimela, kumbe ku n'wi chela munyu embangeni. [Singing to a person who is depressed, is like taking off his clothes on a cold day, or like rubbing salt in a wound].

Proverbs 25:28 - Munhu loyi a tsandzekaka ku tikhoma, ú fana ni muti lowu rirhangu ra wona ri mbundzumuxiweke. [A person who fails self-control, is like a village with fallen walls].

Proverbs 26:7 - Xivuriso lexi humaka enon'weni wa xiphunta, xi fana ni milenge ya munhu wa xigono, leyi nga n'wi pfuniki nchumu. [A proverb from a fool's mouth, is like crippled person's legs that is useless].

Proverbs 26:8 - Ku nyika xiphunta swilo swa nkoka, swi fana ni ku bohelela ribye exipelupelwini. [Giving a fool important things, is like tying a stone in a sling].

26:9 - Xivuriso lexi humaka enon'weni wa xiphunta, xi fana ni nkxavi wa mitwa, lowu khomiweke hi loyi a pyopyiweke. [A proverb from a fool's mouth, is like a rod of thorn that is held by a drunk person].

Proverbs 26:10 - Munhu loyi a tholaka xiphunta, kumbe vahundzi va ndlela, ú fana ni munhu loyi a copaka vanhu hi miseve. [A person who hires a fool, or those passing by, is like a person shooting at people with an arrow].

Proverbs 26:23 - Munhu loyi a fihlaka ku biha ka mbilu ya yena hi marito yo tsokombela, ú fana ni ximbitana lexi sasekisiweke ehandle hi xikope. [A person that hides their ugly heart with sweet words, is like a clay pot that is beautified on the outside by lead].

Proverbs 27:9 - Mafurha ni mirhi ya risuna, a hi ku tsakisa ka swona, swi tano ni switsundzuxo leswi humaka embilwini ya munghana wa wena. [Oil and perfume bring joy to the heart, much like the heartfelt advice shared by a true friend].

Proverbs 2:2 - rhiya ndleve u yingisa swa vutlhari, u tikarhatela ku twisisa swilo; [Open your ears and listen and strive to understand things].

Proverbs 2:10 - kutani vutlhari byi ta ku letela, u tsakisiwa hi vutivi; [Wisdom will instruct you and knowledge makes you happy].

Proverbs 3:13-14 - 13Munhu loyi a kumeke vutlhari ni ku twisisa, ú katekile, 14hikuva vutlhari byi hakela ku tlula silivhere, byi vuyerisa ku tlula nsuku. [13A person who finds wisdom and understanding, is blessed, 14because wisdom pays better than silver, it is more rewarding than gold].

Proverbs 3:15-18 - 15Vutlhari byi ni nkoka ku tlula swilo swo bomba ha swona, byi tlula ni swilo hinkwaswo leswi munhu a swi navelaka. 16Hi byona lebyi nyikaka munhu masiku layo tala ya ku hanya, byi nyika rifuwo ni ku dzuneka. 17Tindlela ta byona ta tsakisa swinene, mabudula ya byona i ku rhula ntsena. 18Vutlhari i murhi lowu nyikaka vutomi eka lava va byi kumaka; lava va byi namarhelaka, va katekile! [15Wisdom is more important than fancy things, it is more valuable than things a person desires. 16It gives us more days to live, it gives us wealth and honour. 17Its ways are very pleasant, the paths of peace. 18Wisdom is a medicine that gives life to those who find it, those who stick to it are blessed].

Proverbs 8:12 - Mina vutlhari, ndzi pfula miehleketo, ndzi kumiwa hi loyi a nga ni vutivi ni mianakanyo leyinene. [I wisdom, I open the mind, I am found by the one with knowledge and good thinking]

Proverbs 9:1-5 - 1Vutlhari byi tiakerile yindlu, byi dzima ni tiphuphu ta yona ta 7; 2byi tlhavile xifuwo, byi hlanganiserile vhinyo ya byona, byi andlalela ni tafula ra byona. 3Vutlhari byi rhumile malandza ya byona, ma ya huwelela eswitsungeni swa muti, ma ku: 4N'wina hinkwenu mi kalaka mano, tanani haleno! Loyi a nga ehleketiki swinene, vutlhari byi ku ka yena: 5Tana hi ta dya swin'we, hi nwa vhinyo leyi ndzi yi hlanganiseleke. [1Wisdom has built itself a house and made seven pillars for it. 2It has had an animal killed for a feast, mixed spices in the wine, and laid the table. 3Wisdom has sent the servant to call out from the highest place in the town and say: 4All of stupid people, come here! And to the one who doesn't think much, wisdom says to you: 5Come let's eat together, drink the wine that I have mixed]

Proverbs 7:26 - hikuva lavo tala, ú va petile nhloko, masirha lawa a ma vangeke i ntsandza-vahlayi [because many of them, she has ruined them and caused too many deaths to count].

Proverbs 13:24 - Loyi a nga xupuliki n'wana wa yena, wa n'wi venga, kasi loyi a rhandzaka n'wana wa yena, ú

tikarhatela ku n'wi tshinya. [A person who doesn't punish their child, hates him, but the one that loves their child, strives to discipline him].

Proverbs 17:8 - Van'wana va ehleketa leswaku mali yo pfala nomo i xitshungulo, va tshemba leswaku va ta humelela hinkwako lomu va yaka kona. [Some think a bribe works like magic, they believe they will succeed everywhere they go].

Proverbs 23:2 - U nga dyi hi makolo, hambi ndlala yi ku khome ngopfu. [Don't eat fast, even if you are very hungry].

Proverbs 25:16 - Vulombe, loko u byi kumile, dyana u pima, hikuva byi nga ku hlambisa timbilu, u hlanta. [If you find honey, eat well, too much may make you vomit].

Proverbs 27:3 - Maribye ni sava, a hi ku tika ka swona, kambe ku pfukeriwa hi xiphukuphuku, swi tika ku tlula sweswo. [Stones and soil, are heavy, but troubled by a stupid person is worse].

Proverbs 16:18 - Ku tikurisa, swi vitana khombo, manyunyu ma vangela munhu ku wa. [Pride leads to destruction, and arrogance to downfall].

Proverbs 17:22 - Ku tsaka ka mbilu, swi tshungula miri, ku khunguvanyeka, swi heta matimba. [A cheerful heart heals the body, being angry, exhausts power].

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