

The presentation of the fast track land reform in Zimbabwe, views from two dailies, *The Herald* and *The Daily News*.

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Abstract

This paper examined the discourse of land as shown in reporting by two Zimbabwean dailies, The Herald and The Daily News in May 2000. The research used critical discourse analysis to reveal how, linguistically, the two dailies in Zimbabwe positioned themselves through their reportage of the fast track land reform programme. It asked three essential questions: Who was shown, doing what? Whose voices were heard? and How was the audience influenced to evaluate? The Herald mainly featured influential political and social figures from within the country and the region as agentive participants whose actions were largely neutral and/or verbal. The Daily News on the other hand presented politicians, ZANU PF functionaries like war veterans and party supporters as agentive participants involved in material action acted on a variety of specified patients, among whom were farmers, teachers, opposition party supporters and villagers. The Herald was also seen as focusing more on speeches made by important people like politicians, whereas The Daily News tended to focus on material action (usually violent) shown to have been suffered by sectors of the country's population. The research showed how language can be used to paint different pictures of the same social phenomenon and therefore influence the readership to evaluate the land issue differently; while The Herald supported government policy, The Daily News took a negative stance towards it.

Keywords: *Critical Discourse Analysis, land redistribution, agents, patients*

1. Introduction

This research was undertaken to find out the reportage on the land question in Zimbabwe. It examined the linguistic options available and utilised by the papers to position themselves vis a vis the fast track land reform programme. The paper also sought to examine the challenge (to *The Herald*) presented by the newly established rival daily newspaper.

Background

The Herald, the erstwhile sole daily paper in Zimbabwe, was established as a colonial paper back in 1891 and stood, as it were, as the role model of a daily paper in independent Zimbabwe. Its main function, as a colonial paper, was reporting on activities surrounding the colonization of the British colony later to be called Rhodesia. The paper, with a majority South African ownership and operated by the Argus Media Group, lived through the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965 by the Rhodesia Front party led by Mr. I. Smith. During this time and the years following this declaration of independence, *The Herald* produced propaganda to project a more positive image of the racist regime that was already being ostracized by the international community. Through the use of propaganda, it aided in the suppression of the popular demand for self-determination by the majority blacks as well as the war of liberation that ensued subsequently in the 1970's. Thus in the colonial period as well as the era of the Rhodesia regime, *The Herald* was an instrument employed in the suppression of the majority blacks to the advantage of the minority white population.

With the dawn of independence in 1980, the Mass Media Trust was formed and government acquired majority share holding in *The Herald* as well as other papers in the Zimpapers group (that include the Manicaland *The Manica Post*, the Matebeleland *The Chronicle*, as well as *The Sunday Mail*.) The changeover from a colonial paper saw the political propaganda of the former Rhodesian state being

replaced by a state controlled press with politically appointed editors. News about rural areas of the country, development-related concerns and the goals of the new socialist government were given prominence. This press contained numerous reports about leading political figures and frequently presented speeches and statements by politicians, particularly the president. (Morrison and Love, 1996)

Under the new press regime, *The Herald* found itself once again in the realm of projecting, to the public, a particular image of the government and its function more or less mirrored the political discourse of former communist states of Eastern Europe as Jakubowicz, 1994 cited in Morrison and Love, 1996, argues:

The avowed goals of the communist media were, of course to create an ideologically correct symbolic environment, filled with content designed, among other things, to socialize the audience in the ideas and values of communism. Since, however, the system was unable to deliver on its promises; the media's main role soon became that of putting a gloss on the authorities' actions, to provide 'evidence' of the system's success in attaining its goals. In order to do that, they had to create in their content an alternative reality, a Potemkin village, as it were, and seek to imprint that image on the minds of the audience in the hope that it would replace or substantially supplement and improve the image of reality gained from direct observation and first hand experience. The goal was to achieve a cultivation effect writ large, so that everyone would give the officially sanctioned media answers to questions about reality and would be guided by them in their own lives.

Morrison and Love called this a 'discourse of achievement' and it may be inferred that a number of the papers in the Zimpapers group had, as their major thrust, the projection of a more positive image of the government, a role, ironically, *The Herald* had been performing since its inception more than a century ago.

Although there were a number of privately owned weekly papers, such as *The Financial Gazette* and later on *The Mirror* as well as monthly magazines like *Moto* and *Parade*, there were no notable alternatives to *The Herald* that emerged in the first decade of independence. It was not until the second decade that *The Daily Gazette* emerged as a rival daily paper. Its operation was, however, very short-lived. It collapsed after a few months because of inadequate funding. In 1999, the Associated Newspapers Group, with the help of local and foreign investors, set up the short-lived *The Daily News** and the Bulawayo based *The Dispatch*. The paper was better funded and, for the first time, a suitable paper to challenge *The Herald's* monopoly on the daily news market emerged. *The Daily News* presented an alternative and its advent 'provided Zimbabweans with the freedom to choose, on a daily basis, where to seek information about important local and national issues.' (Media Monitoring Project, Zimbabwe, 2000:14) Their motto, "Telling it like it is", suggested that they were coming into the news business from a different angle and were presenting events in ways that differed from those established by the earlier paper. This is what gave impetus to this study, an interest in finding out what linguistic options *The Daily News* had to present their particular picture of social reality in their reporting on issues relating to the land question as compared to the more seasoned *The Herald*.

A corpus of 36 articles selected from both papers that reported on the issue of land during the month of May 2000 was studied. The period chosen is important because during this time the discourse of land was pervasive in both papers. It was the time when both the ruling party (ZANU PF) and the opposition (MDC) were campaigning for the June parliamentary elections after the rejection of the proposed draft constitution in February. "For ZANU PF, the land was the central campaign issue; 'The land is the economy and the economy is the land' was their slogan." (MMPZ, 2000: 48)

* The Daily News plant was bombed in 2001 under mysterious circumstances. No one has been arrested since.

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Land has been at the core of Zimbabwean history since its occupation by the British South Africa Company in 1890. The colonization of the whole of Africa during this period (later to be called the scramble for Africa) was driven by the desire by European powers such as Belgium, Britain, France, Germany and Portugal to command and exploit the vast mineral resources on the continent as well as expanding territory. Cecil John Rhodes had an imperialistic dream to expand the British Empire and also to acquire mineral rights. A number of concessions negotiated by Rhodes and the then Ndebele chief, Lobengula, as well as the Royal Charter that was granted to Rhodes by the British monarchy sealed the fate of this British colony. From the second of September of that year, 1890, up until independence in 1980, Zimbabwe was under foreign rule.

During the period of colonization and dispossession of land rights, there were a number of wars that were fought against the colonial forces by the local indigenous population. The most noted of these was the one later to be referred to as the first Chimurenga which was fought from March 1896 to end in October 1897. This uprising was commanded by spirit mediums Nehanda and Kaguvi. Because of tribal divisions among the indigenous groups and the military might of the colonial forces, the local populations were defeated and from then on the struggle for land became a central concern and especially in the nationalism of the 1960's and early 1970's. The address form 'Mwana wevhu' (Child/Son of the soil) in reference to people who were involved in the struggle was a passionate appeal to that cherished link between the people and their land. Indeed, land was the rallying concern in the second Chimurenga of the 1970's, and, even after independence, land redistribution was one of the priorities that the ruling party set out to address. There was a lull, however, in the urgency of the matter. Not much was done by way of acquiring and redistributing land to the crowded rural populations. This was even more so, considering the restriction on changes in the land tenure system that was enshrined in the then current Lancaster House constitution. Thus political discourse was rather silent on the issue until the rejection of the proposed draft constitution (in 2000), which sought among other things to address the land question. The intervening period between February and June gave way to the discourse of the fast-track redistribution of land, which was dominant in the campaign rhetoric as well as in the media. This is the period that this study was based upon and it examined the ways by which language was used to represent reality, enact social relations and establish identities (Fairclough, 1992) in *The Herald* and *The Daily News*.

Thirty-six 36 articles from the newspapers were examined in terms of lexico-grammatical features to show how the dailies positioned themselves vis-à-vis the land question. In analysing the data, the paper sought to provide answers to three questions: (a) Who was shown? doing what?, (b) Whose voices were heard? and (c) How was the audience influenced to evaluate?

2. Methodology

The approach used in this paper was based on Fairclough's theoretical perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis that draws on social theory. The approach brings together linguistics and social theory. The concept of Critical Discourse Analysis develops from 'critical linguistics' a theory developed by Fowler et al. 1979 as well as Hodge and Kress, 1998. These scholars base 'critical linguistics' on Halliday's 'systemic functional linguistic theory' an approach which views language as

Multifunctional, always simultaneously representing the world (the ideational function) and enacting social relations and identities (the interpersonal function), seeing texts as built from choices within available systems of options in vocabulary, grammar and so forth.
(Fairclough, 1995:25)

Critical analysis of language focuses not just on the surface connotative meaning but also show 'connections and causes which are hidden' or the denotative meaning (Fairclough, 1995:25) and the worldview created by each text or discourse.

Discourse is used in linguistics to refer to

extended samples of either spoken or written language ... this sense of discourse emphasizes interaction between the speaker and the addressee or between the writer and reader and therefore processes of producing and interpreting speech and writing as well as the situational context of language use. (Fairclough, 1995, see also Stubbs, 1996 and Coulthard, 1985)

Critical analysis of discourse focuses on discursive practices critically viewing language as socially shaped and socially shaping.

3. Results and Discussion

Representation of Participants.

According to Kress and Hodge (1979:7) communication and message exchange have three dimensions: Text: the linguistic and formal aspects of the verbal message; a message is constructed from written or spoken language. Discourse/discursive practice: the exchange of messages is an interaction between people that involves the use of language- a process of producing, circulating and interpreting texts. Orders of discourse: both text and discursive practice are socially situated and part of social action. The social contexts of texts and discourse are non-discursive social conditions such as class and power relations within a society that influence the production, circulation and interpretation of texts and are in turn shaped by them.

The first question: Who is shown? doing what? can be unraveled by considering Kress and Hodge's (1979:7) point that "the grammar of language is its theory of reality" because grammar provides models that describe the interrelation between objects and events. Grammar provides categories for distinction between subject and object in a sentence, explaining causation by linking a deed to a doer, Sonderling, (1998)

A number of groupings of participants emerged from the data.

1. War veterans, their leaders and their organisation. The Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA). These usually collocated with ZANU PF supporters.
2. Government officials, who included President Mugabe, ministers and high-ranking civil servants.
3. Foreign officials who included foreign heads of state, ambassadors and representatives as well as foreign organisations.
4. Villagers and other low ranking members of the population.
5. Nominalised participants. These are verbal processes that function in clauses as participants as in the examples, 'Land invasions', 'terror campaigns'.

Representations in *The Herald*

The Herald concentrated on the following groupings of people:

1. High placed politicians, civil servants and regional leaders were presented mainly involved in verbal processes. The clauses in which they appeared were marked by reporting verbs like 'said', 'warned', 'reiterated', 'urged'.
2. War veterans and farmers were presented as coordinate agentive participants in neutral action, e.g. 'War veterans and white farmers *are continuing* their tours.'

Observation: *The Herald* seems to de-emphasise the agentive role of war veterans, not once were they depicted as being at the forefront of material action, especially of a violent kind.

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3. Villagers and the intended beneficiaries of the land reform process were an undefined amorphous group who did not participate in any way apart from being ‘moved’. E.g. ‘nearly 4300 families have been resettled/moved...’

Representations in *The Daily News*.

1. In *The Daily News* more attention was paid to independent economists, political commentators, world bodies e.g. FAO, IMF World Bank etc.

Observation: The paper gave the impression of seeking expert economic opinion on the implementation of the land reform programme.

2. War veterans were fore-grounded as initiators of the action of the verb or agentive participants with other groups (eg. school teachers, villagers, farmers, opposition supporters) as patients/goals suffering some violent action. This is also true for passive sentences. (See the section on verbs below).

Observation: War veterans were subjects in material action.

The voices heard or Representation of Speech

Much of the news that got reported during the period comprised statements from different people. *The Herald* seemed to concentrate on quoting political voices and *The Daily News* on opinions concerning economics. Three speech acts dominated the discourse in both the dailies and these were Proposition or Narration (which is associated with providing information, describing events, actions, people, objects, etc.), Exposition (which is associated with explaining and interpreting) and Adhortation (which aims at persuading and influencing). The tables below show the pattern of speech act occurrences in the two papers:

Table 1. The Herald

Quoted/Attributed Voices	Speech Acts	Total	Percentage
Government Officials and War Vets leaders	Adhortation	32	51.6
Farmers and the CFU	Proposition	14	22.5
Foreign high ranking officials	Proposition	11	17.7
Others – leader of widows of war vets	Adhortation	1	
- Lawyer for women’s group	Adhortation	1	
- a headmaster	Adhortation	1	
- a businessman	Adhortation	1	
- Chris Mlambo (victim of attack)	Proposition	1	8.2
TOTAL		62	100

Table 2. The Daily News

Quoted/Attributed Voices	Speech Acts	Total	%ge
Farmers and CFU	Exposition	15	31.25
Economic bodies/economists	Exposition/Prediction	11	22.92
Govt. officials and war vets leadership	Proposition	13	27.08
Foreign Officials	Proposition	1	
Others – Canadian High Commissioner	Proposition	1	
- Australian High Commissioner	Proposition	1	
- The British Government	Proposition	1	
- Justice George Bartlette	Proposition	1	
- Residents	Proposition	1	
- Morgan Tsvangirai	Proposition	1	
- The MDC	Proposition	1	
- David Coultart	Proposition	1	18.75
TOTAL		48	100

By presenting the negative aspects of the modus operandi of the reform exercise through proposition and exposition, *The Daily News* appeared as encouraging the readership to engage in issues, thereby elevating the readers' stature. On the other hand by being overly 'adhortatory', *The Herald* appeared as if it was more instructing and in a way condescendingly reducing the level of the readership to that of passive reception of ideas and points of view enunciated by government and its officials without question.

Evaluation

Evaluation is defined by Hunston and Thompson (2001) as 'the broad cover term for the expression of the speaker or writer's attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or propositions that he or she is talking about.' In the dailies, evaluation was typically realised through Lexis e.g. nouns and verbs as well as other things like use of honorific titles.

Typical lexical choices:

Words categorise the world from different points of view, 'a writer, speaker, or painter (is) inclined to see what they write, speak, or paint rather than write speak or paint what they see.' (Sonderling, 1998:14) Word choice reflects a person's particular view of phenomena and the aggregate of the words used in a paper may also reflect the paper's position vis a vis social reality. The following section presents selected words used in the two dailies:

Adjectives.

The Daily News

rowdy (war veterans)
 marauding (war veterans)
 invaded (farms)
 short (supply of food)
 tense (situation)
 unreasonable (hour)
 illegal (farm occupations)
 aggressive (war veterans)
 machete-wielding (war veterans)

The Herald

unbalanced (stories from the media)
 small (plots)
 poor (soil)
 skewed (ownership of land)
 land hungry (people)

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Nouns

The Daily News

Farm invaders, intruders, the gangs, farm invasions, disruptions (of agricultural activities), food shortages, food imports, price increases, interest rates.

The Herald

the government, war veterans, congestion, land imbalances, farm occupations, land occupation, land redistribution.

It was clear that the one paper bluntly stated the negative, while the state paper appeared to put a gloss on issues perhaps to make them more palatable.

Verbs

The choice of verbs is also crucial presenting modes of judgement. In hard news stories, *The Daily News* used semantically loaded verbs especially violence-related verbs for purposes of evaluation, for example: ‘tormented, was forced out, has been abducted, was force-marched, pounced on, butchered, slaughtered, murdered, abducted and killed, killed, beaten, shot, raped, invaded, assaulted (world entities). *The Herald* seemed more interested in discourse entities by focussing on ideas and thoughts expressed in speeches reported on, hence frequency of Reporting Verbs, for example:

Cde Clifford Mumbengegwi *said* the majority of Zimbabweans were now much poorer than their forefathers because they had no means of production. (24-05)

He (Thabo Mbeki) *expressed* hope that peace would return to the Democratic Republic of Congo... (06-05)

Cde Karimanzira *said* the event was evidence of the Government’s quest to correct the historical land imbalance inherited at independence in 1980... (29-05)

The types of verbs and frequency of their occurrence is shown in the following table,

	Reporting verbs	Violence related verbs	Others	Total
<i>The Daily News</i>	86	148	331	565
	15.2%	26.2%	58.6%	
<i>The Herald</i>	133	18	203	354
	37.6%	5.1%	57.3%	

Again the choice of words presented what appeared to be the grim reality of the implementation of the fast track land reform in *The Daily News*, while *The Herald*, by mainly focussing on reporting verbs and minimising agency in violence related actions, presented an extremely watered down version of the whole programme, thus putting it in a more favourable light..

Honorific Titles

Honorific titles were used as a method of evaluation. *The Herald*’s use of ‘Cde’ (comrade) implied solidarity with the member so referred (dating back to the war of liberation) and the title was used strictly with members belonging to the ruling party and regional sympathisers. The title elevated the stature of the cadre, therefore authenticating and validating their statement. *The Daily News* never used ‘Cde’ and seemed to insist on the more formal ‘Mr’, ‘Dr’ as if to imply that their interest was more in the people’s ideas rather than who they were as persons.

4. Conclusion

As a government-controlled paper, *The Herald* has been performing the same function since its inception in the 1890's, i.e. presenting the government side of events. In the period under review the paper mainly reported on politicians involved in the processes of telling people what to do and how to perceive and evaluate the land acquisition and redistribution (which was taken as not only necessary but well thought out and extending from the history of colonialism and dispossession). It legitimated the case for urgent remedies to the situation but was silent about the adverse implications entailed in the programme. The paper devoted a lot of time and space to government officials and politicians who were mainly involved in verbal processes that were adhortatory. It appeared as if the participants were mainly instructing the readership to react to situations and view the world from certain ideological positions. The interpersonal relations and identities created in the paper seemed to position the readership at a level of passive recipients of information generated from above, by people of higher status. The reader was persuaded to internalize the importance of land redistribution but was not encouraged to look beyond it. The legitimacy of the stance taken by government on the land question was vested in the war of liberation and assumed regional proportions through quotation of the various sympathetic voices of leaders from within the region.

The Daily News devoted time and space to alternative participants and voices. Politicians and other highly placed individuals in government did not feature as much as they did in *The Herald*. In the latter, war veterans were given an elevated status which *The Daily News* subverted by showing them as a group of fallible people capable of unleashing havoc on parts of the population. They were presented as actors who participated in material processes involving mentioned patients, who suffered the action. They (war veterans) were shown as collocating with murder, rape, theft, harassment etc. and largely to blame for the atrocities that were associated with the land question leading to a negative evaluation. *The Herald* wanted them to be evaluated in a positive light (therefore they are not associated with material action in the month under review).

Unlike *The Herald*, which mainly concentrated on recording verbal processes that were adhortatory, *The Daily News* concerned itself more with analysis, explanation and interpretation of the situation obtaining in the country. It got away from the official line of quoting politicians who represented and supported the policy and brought in experts in the field of economics who analysed the situation on the ground, explained its implications and pointed to the future.

While the differences between the two papers in terms of content and attitudes tended to be quite obvious, discourse analysis allows us to analyse how these were realized linguistically and perhaps showed the need for journalists to be aware of the impact of the linguistic choices that they make in news reporting. The paper also shows the importance of critical language awareness in the readership. An enlightened readership may be more aware of some of the more subtle functions to which language may be put in painting different pictures of social reality.

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