THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Representational Discourse in TV News Preludes in Kenya

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Abstract:
Apart from introducing the main news items, news preludes are also commentaries of media houses, aimed at guiding the interpretation of news towards preferred ideological perspectives. For this reason, the language used in news preludes may explicitly show bias of the media house on issues covered in the news items. This paper attempts to unearth some ideological nuances represented by the language used by two major TV channels in Kenya (Nation Television, NTV and Kenya Television News, KTN). Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this paper analyses the language used in the preludes to represent characters and social issues of public interest to show how the media manipulates its viewers to see things from a determined angle and thereby playing a hegemonic role in shaping social life. Corruption in Kenya has been a big issue for a long time with scandals being unearthed every now and then. The government is blamed for not dealing with corruption decisively. Through use of particular lexicon, structural foregrounding devices, quoting authority, and other devices, the news writers perspectivize issues of corruption thereby creating a framework of interpretation for their viewers.

Keywords: Representation, Ideological nuances, Perspectivize, CDA, Hegemony

1. Introduction

Media is a social and discursive institution which plays the role of regulating and organizing social life as well as producing social knowledge, values, and beliefs through linguistic means (Dijk, 1993a). Since there are many news outlets competing for the same audience, they aim at distinguishing themselves from one another through appealing to the public. What is often overlooked about the news is that the agencies producing them constitute businesses (Fowler, 1991). They too, promote and sell a product (that is the news) to the customers. A critical look at media discourse is necessary, considering that the increasingly influential role of the mass media does not necessarily pave way for more objective reporting. There is pressure that often influences choice of language that satisfies the desires of different social actors within the media. This pressure often manifests itself in the texts that appear in TV news preludes. The views expressed in them may reflect the political ideologies that the owners of the media house subscribe to.

Fairclough (1995) observes that the media plays an active role in mediating and constructing discourse. It is therefore unrealistic to suppose that the media is neutral in its rendition of news as they would have their audience believe. The actual position is that the media exercises significant power in the social-political scene and seeks to regulate legitimacy issues. The power the media possesses is symbolic power in the sense that it can only influence its audience through persuasion. As Van Dijk (1995) observes, the media exercises a certain amount of mind control on its audience through its persuasive tact and suggests that mind control by the media is particularly effective when the media users do not realize the nature or the implications of such control. The persuasive power of the media is seen when the audience change their minds on their own free will, as when they accept news reports as true or journalistic opinions as legitimate or correct.

News texts have great ideological significance in contemporary societies and this significance is vested in their production and dissemination by the media and their consumption by audiences (Thompson, 1995). It is for this reason that this paper focuses on the discursive strategies employed in news preludes to uncover the stances that point to bias in representation of reality. News preludes orient the story in a specific direction and form the lens through which the rest of the story is viewed. To do this, preludes make use of vocabulary that may be ideologically colored and other features of linguistic structure. The "spin" in the news preludes is meant to influence the way the viewers will view the rest of the news. They are presented in a way that will grab the listeners' attention and keep them glued to the station.

Depending on the nature and newsworthiness of a news item, the prelude or the introductory commentary is formulated to express views that may variously reflect ideological stances of the news editors, TV station owners, the government or the political class. Here we find the application of one of the major persuasive to poi, commonly used in advertising, by which the message is validated, aimed at gaining favour of the audience. The discursive strategy of using everyday language mixed up with rhetorical figures of speech, linguistic devices such as word plays is a means of influencing public opinion - a persuasive media function. By implementing methodologies that influence and manipulate

their viewership, individuals within the media, and those with media access, such as politicians and the government are able to distance themselves from their intended audience by hiding behind the methodologies they employ to shape their legitimation of power. It is thus necessary to identify the linguistic mechanisms which convey ideology. Stubbs (1996) says that ideology need not function at the level of conscious or intentional bias; once it is realized that choices have been made, it is also realized that other choices could be made, and that reality could be presented differently.

Corruption is a global concern and usually elicits a lot of sensationalism every time it occurs. There is a widespread agreement that corruption represents one of the most pressing issues facing business and society today (Ryan, 2000). This study will explore the role of language and discourse in efforts to show how it is legitimized. The discourse of corruption is viewed as intimately linked with power relations, subject positions, and forms of knowledge. It manifests social and ideological struggle (Phillips and Hardy, 2002). Breit (2011) observes that despite the important role of the media in contemporary society, it has received surprisingly little attention on studies of corruption. This may be because the media is deemed to have little or nothing to do with the activities and intentions of allegedly corrupt culprits and thus gives limited insights on how to tackle or present corruption. However, the media is an important avenue of understanding the processes through which conceptions of corruption are constructed, reproduced and transformed. Discussions of corruption take place in various arenas and media forms a key avenue in grasping not only the discourses and discursive struggles in public discussions on corruption but also essential ambiguities and contradictions embedded in the issue itself. It provides a rich ground for a systematic discourse analysis with a view to uncover ideological undertones that arise in such situations. This study discusses how corruption plays out in the media and specifically in news preludes.

2. Methodology

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is used both as a theory and an analytical framework. Purposive sampling of preludes to get the texts addressing the issues of corruption in Television networks KTN and NTV was done. Fairclough's (1995) model for analysis three dimensional (the physical text, the discourse practice, and the social practice) approach to textual analysis was used. This means the texts were analysed systematically through describing the news preludes in terms of their semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic properties, while interpreting them and explaining their meaning within the social and historical contexts.

3. Discussion

In 2015, the National Youth Service (NYS) a body charged with youth empowerment through job creation was involved in a corruption scandal that saw the loss of at least 1.6 billion shillings ("money lost in NYS scam", 2015). It came to the limelight after the release of a report by the public Accounts committee in parliament revealed theft of public funds which was said to have been masterminded by influential figures in the government and executed by nondescript personalities. Text 1 reveals how the media brought this issue into the limelight.

Text 1   Exactly how much money was stolen from the much talked about NYS projects? That is now at the center of the ruling coalition's corruption war. The figures are   6 billion and 11 billion and the amount seems to be rising every single day. Tonight welift the lid that is the despair of young women and men who were to benefit from the project   but   are currently facing a bleak future. (KTN 28/11/2015)

The rhetorical question in this text foregrounds the proposition that the amount of money involved is still unknown and it could be huge amounts. Questions are used to create a rhetorical situation in order to 'converse' with the readers and persuade them to adopt a viewpoint (Schaffner, 1997). Hardman (2008) further argues that asking rhetorical questions is a discursive practice that highlights the dialogic nature of a text and foregrounds a proposition. Legitimation is established by making reference to an open opinion 'much talked about' which aims at democratizing the issue. The choice of the perception verb 'seems' expresses the state of existence of the proposition and encodes the notion that there is a possibility that the amount is higher than the figures being given. It encodes the implication that conspiracy is involved to conceal the actual figures. The Ethics and Anticorruption Commission (EACC) CEO at the time said that the amount lost was 1.8 billion shillings ("money lost in NYS scam", 2015). The use of the declarative 'that is now at the center of corruption war' asserts the certainty with which the media speaks. The media envisages dealing with corruption as 'a war' within the coalition, implying that it will not be easy since it would involve those in power within the government. This is a negative representation of the coalition government and the media encourages the viewers to share in this conceptualization. The pronoun 'we' creates solidarity for the media and the likeminded Kenyans who are victims to the corruption in the country. It serves to create a shared sense of criticism towards the government as a form of mutual engagement, which helps construct a group identity. This also contributes to the construction of a synthetic community of practice through the implication of joint values for group members. Group identity construction can be linked with the profit motive of the media (Fowler, 1991). Making the viewers feel included as part of a community of readers will encourage them to watch the news and adopt the media's views. Ideologically, the included here are portrayed as desperate young men and women who were to benefit from NYS projects.

Relating to the same issue of corruption, Text 2 was aired as a reaction to the media address made by a Jubilee (current ruling party in Kenya) affiliate Kikuyu MP Kimani Ichung'wa, where he accused members of opposition Junet Mohamed who was then Suna East MP and the leader of opposition Raila Odinga of benefiting from the NYS loot. All along the alleged suspects involved in the NYS scandal were Jubilee affiliates therefore these new revelations that pointed fingers to the opposition came as a shocker in the country.

Text 2: (emphasis ours) There is full consensus in Kenya that there is rampant corruption in the public sector. However, when it comes to the question of who are the real perpetrators of graft, it all becomes a mystery, apolitical ping pong

where the government and opposition sides are engaged in an unending slugfest. After months of intense pressure from the opposition over corruption, it appears the government is now keen to turn over the tables on the opposition by insisting that the opposition leaders are also corrupt. Or are beneficiaries of graft. Could this be a case of either side trying to blackmail the other into silence or are the politicians really serious about fighting corruption? (NTV 5/4/15)

In the text, the media identifies itself as a knowledgeable observer and a political commentator by representing its opinion to the listeners as a fact through the usage of a categorical statement: 'there is full consensus that there is rampart corruption in the public sector'. It further democratizes the issue by saying that there is 'full consensus'. This implies that it is a generally accepted opinion that corruption is flourishing in an uncontrolled manner and all Kenyans are privy to it. The use of the statements falls under what Searl (1979) classified as representative speech acts in which the speaker represents the world as he or she believes it is (Yule and Brown, 1983). The media uses a contrasting coordinator 'however' to contrast the shared knowledge of the existence of corruption with the fact that they never get to know who the perpetrators are. The use a perception verb 'appears' expresses the state of existence of the proposition that 'the government is now keen to turn over the tables'. The verb 'be' shows the certainty with which the proposition is made.The idiom 'turning over the tables' further underscores the corruption allegations towards the opposition as a retaliatory strategy and probably not true. The statement is laden with sarcasm directed at the government in its suggestion that it can shift blame from itself to the opposition in matters corruption.

The choice of lexicon shows a negative stance adopted by the media towards both the government and the opposition. The choice of lexicon to describe the anonymity of the perpetrators brings out the cynicism with which the media views the war against corruption. It is viewed as 'a mystery' implying that it is impossible to get to know them due to the blame game between the two sides captured by the image of a ping pong ball that bounces from side to side. The metaphoric construction of the tussle between the opposition and the government as a 'slugfest' conjures in the mind of the listener an image of war that is not likely to come to an end. These choices serve to prime viewers to see both the opposition and the government as non-committal in the war against corruption. Use of the modal 'could' expresses a certain degree of certainty of the suggestion offered, that the government is trying to blackmail the opposition to silence. By employing a rhetoric at the end of this text 'could this be a case of either side trying to blackmail the other into silence or are the politicians really serious about fighting corruption?' and the use of the intensifier 'really' evaluates the state of affairs in a subjective manner and reveals the pessimism with which the media regards the whole issue. It reveals its stance on the issue that the politicians are not serious about fighting corruption.

In 2016, a corruption scandal was unearthed in the ministry of health. It allegedly involved loss of 5 billion shillings, thus it was a scandal of bigger magnitude than the NYS 1.8 billion shillings' scandal ("inside story of 5 billion scandal at the ministry of health", 2016). According to the audit report, the funds were stolen in a well-orchestrated syndicate through double payment of goods, diversion of funds, and inordinate manipulation of Integrated Financial Management Information Systems (IFMIS). On the strength of the health scandal, NTV revisited the corruption issues that the country had witnessed. Texts 3-8 capture the long prelude that NTV aired then.(The division of texts has been done for ease of reference in analysis).

Text 3: The outrage is palpable, the anger visible and the frustration is mounting. Tonight the country's patience is stretched to its limits, the numbers are alarming and the frequency is shocking.

Text 4: Four years into its term in office, the stain on the fabric of the Jubilee administration can no longer be concealed. Some of its harshest critics are saying it plainly and I quote" This is the most corrupt government in the history of Kenya".

Text 5:From Eurobond to NYS, Hustler jet to standard gauge railway and now the ministry of health and health sector on its death bed, the illustrations are countless.

Text 6:Tonight on NTV we call out on official corruption in government systematically perpetrated and condoned by those who serve in it. The state of corruption in Kenya is at crisis proportions. The country is seemingly floating unguided on where the answers lie.

Text 7: And just a week ago President Uhuru Kenyatta seemed to raise his hands up in surrender, and the EACC, the body mandated with fighting the vice is in shambles. On NTV tonight we raise the alarm, the strength is simply unsustainable.

Text 8: Corruption is about to swallow the future of the country as those in
positions holding responsibilities appear to either participate, abdicate, or either stand by side. On NTV tonight we call it by its name "System yamajambazi". (NTV27/10/16)

The use of adjectives such as 'palpable' 'mounting' 'alarming', and 'shocking' in text 3 evokes a series of nuances in the listener's mind, which are linked emotionally with the corruption cases that had happened in the country. Such lexicon serves the purpose of triggering an emotion mode of fear, sadness, insecurity and anger among the citizenry. Social actors appeal to emotions to construct, impose, debate or (de) legitimize certain perceptions of reality, contributing individually to form their community's vision of social behavior (Elster, 1994). These emotions are key in the (de) legitimization process towards the Jubilee government. They condition, prepare and skew the audience towards accepting and supporting the views of the media that triggers the emotions in the first place. Gastil (1992) holds that loaded words impose a mental attitude desirable both to the speaker and the listener. The use of these emotionally loaded lexes and expressions aim to delegitimize Jubilee government by implying that it has failed in its fight against corruption. They impress upon the listeners an image of hopeless and disillusioned Kenyans who have lost hope in the war against corruption. Consequently, their use can polarize the situation in the country.

Biber et al (2002) also points to the use of adjectives and adverbs as ways in which stance can be expressed. Adjectives express stance within their syntactic role in modifying nouns. It is in their role as evaluative and emotive descriptors as opposed to classifiers that adjectives can express stance. Describing corruption as 'official' in text 6 implies that the government actually sanctions corruption. The levels described as being at 'crisis proportions' presupposes that the Jubilee Government is overwhelmed and lacks a well-organized plan to fight corruption and aims at prejudicing the reader against the jubilee government. These evaluative lexes aim at delegitimizing the jubilee government by portraying it as corrupt and incompetent. The complements of the verb 'be' are usually subjective adjective phrases that reflect a high degree of the writers' /speakers' certainty (Biber, Johnson, Leech, Conrad, 1999). In text 6 for instance, the use of the verb 'be' in the statement 'the state of corruption is at crisis proportions' makes the proposition on the state of corruption in Kenya categorical, leaving no room for an alternative view. The choice of the perception adverb 'seemingly' expresses a generally accepted state of affairs and encodes the notion that there is a possibility that the country lacks the 'right' leadership to help in dealing with corruption. It conceptualizes the government negatively as one whose leadership is questionable.

Reference to the number of year**s** the Jubilee Administration has been in office in the text aims at showing how ineffective it has been in fighting graft. It uses narrativization strategy that links the present to the past in a bid to justify its views by referring to what some of its harshest critics had said earlier in a TV interview that 'Jubilee is the most corrupt Government ever' (text 4). Legitimation here is obtained by connecting the issue at hand (the crisis as a result of corruption in the country) to what had been said in the past by John Githongo, anti-corruption crusader, in the TV interview. According to Van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999) and Vaara et al., (2006), time scope is the key feature of narrativization, distinguishing it from other legitimation strategies. The implication in stating that 'for the four years' jubilee has been in governance 'the stains in it can no longer be concealed'(text 4), is that the government has not been committed to serving Kenyans but has engaged itself in corrupt activities such that they have become too many to be covered. This reveals a drawback in its administration which calls for a new approach in governance or a change altogether. The phrase 'just a week ago the president seemed to raise his hands in surrender' (text 7) is meant to justify the medias' view that the country is at a crisis as a result of corruption. Legitimation here is based on a happening that had occurred during the presidents' address to the nation on corruption, where he had expressed the view that he had done all in his capacity to fight corruption but still the war against corruption was still proving to be difficult and he blamed the institutions entrusted with fighting corruption for not playing their part as required.

Texts 3-8 have highly invested in metaphors with an aim of delegitimizing the government. Koller (2004) points out that examining the use of metaphors can encode the ideological viewpoint of a text. He argues that metaphors are multifunctional; their textual function contributes to cohesion within texts, while the interpersonal and ideational functions help writers to define a topic with the intention of persuading readers to share the particular way in which an issue has been conceptualized. The intensity of corruption within the government is metaphorically referred to as 'a stain' (text 4) which invokes the image of dirty marks that are clearly visible and cannot be not easily removed. This encodes the notion that that corruption deals in the country are so many thus clearly visible and would be a difficult task to eradicate it as long as Jubilee Government is in leadership. This negative representation of the government indicates an ideological stance of the media station that the jubilee government is extremely corrupt and does not deserve being in leadership.

Metaphorically referring to the government as 'System yamajambazi' (text 8) compares the countries' leaders to gangsters who are out to rob the country. Gangsters are to be feared since their intentions are to maim, kill and rob people what is rightfully theirs. This metaphor faults the integrity of the government's leadership. The choice of this metaphor is significant from a critical viewpoint in constructing the reality that the jubilee government does not deserve to be in leadership since it does not have the interests of its citizens at heart but is driven by personal interests. NTV media station aims at encouraging the viewers to share in this ideological stance. In text 5, the situation of the health sector is equated to (a patient) being on a death bed and this indicts the jubilee government for crippling such a vital sector that deals with the health of the nation. If the citizens are unhealthy, then the economic growth of a country is at stake. The media aims at constructing a particular view of reality that the health of the nation is at stake and a government that cripples the heath sectors does not have the interest of Kenyans at heart thus does not deserve to be in leadership. Koller (2004) suggests that the constructing of reality through metaphors helps to maintain the media institutions' own symbolic power. By so doing, the media portrays itself as mindful about Kenyans welfare.

By the use of the pronoun "we" (text 8) the media draws attention to itself and shows empathy as the one raising the alarm. The media identifies itself as a knowledgeable observer and a political commentator by representing its opinions to the listeners as facts. The choice of the pronoun 'we' is relevant in demarcating those who share in this opinion and those that do not. It creates solidarity for the media and the likeminded Kenyans who are victims of the corruption in the country. It serves to create a shared sense of criticism towards the government as a form of mutual engagement, which helps construct a group identity. Group identity construction can be linked with the profit motive of the media (Fowler, 1991). Making viewers feel included as part of a community of viewers will encourage them to watch the news of a particular media channel and adopt their recommendations.

Text 9 was aired immediately after the auditors' general report which revealed the alleged loss of 5 billion shillings in the ministry of health through corrupt deals. The media reported on this scandal in relation to other alleged scandals, portraying it as a mega scandal within the Jubilee government.
Text 9In what might be the latest, the newest and the biggest scandal in the jubilee   administration, the ministry of health has admitted that an interim audit exposed what   appeared to be the loss of at least 5 billion in the ministry, but was

quick to say that those who were being audited have not been given a chance to say where the funds went. KTNs associate editor Noah Otieno joins me to paint a picture of what this really means. (KTN 26/10/16)

The use of adjectives 'biggest' and 'newest' function as evaluative and emotive descriptors thus expressing stance. They presuppose existence of other scandals and this portrays a government marred by corruption scandals. Modality is expressed by the use of the modal 'might' which expresses a possibility and the idea is to invite the audience to decide whether it's 'true' and this makes the audience 'part' of the discussion. When the news anchor calls the associate editor to join him to 'paint' a picture of what it means, it implies that they are about to describe the situation in a particular way which may not necessarily be the way things are. According to Van Dijk (1993) and Fowler (1991) news is not simply an incomplete description of the facts, but a specific kind of (re)construction of reality according to the norms and values of some society.

Text 10 was aired as a reaction to increased corruption scandals in the country. The media went a step further and employed exemplarity to put across its views strongly. It highlighted some of the biggest decade old corruption scandals witnessed in the country.

Text 11 everybody wants answers: Is this monster called corruption becoming a national culture? It looks like it is and from all the views coming from the social media, many seem to agree. These are just some of the big ones.... (NTV 15/4/16)The anchor refers to 'everybody' as having a similar stance concerning corruption and by so doing the writer is democratizing an opinion. The media aims to persuade the people to take a certain stance on an issue because 'everybody' has sanctioned it. Fair Clough (1995a) considers democratization as a pervasive strategy of contemporary orders of discourse. The media goes ahead to confirm its views and justifies it by giving "evidence". The underlying motive in democratization is to isolate anyone holding a different opinion as wrong and out of touch with everybody else and in this case anyone who doesn't hold the views that 'corruption has become a national culture' is out of place.

4. Conclusion

As the discussions have shown, the media uses language to serve ideological purposes and to shape its legitimation power. Some of the language styles that feature significantly in expressing stance are use of well-chosen and emotive lexicon, rhetoric forms that 'engage' the audience, presumptions among others. There is reason to believe that the media does play a significant role in shaping attitudes and opinions, hence the necessity of systematically interrogating the language of media to make some generalizations on the relationship between media and society. News preludes propagate the ideology held by specific TV channels and in so doing the TV stations construct identity positions for themselves based on ideological or political lines. This paper has also illustrated that subtle dynamics and power plays take place in mediatized corruption scandals. Power relations play a key role in crafting and representing scandals of corruption. It is clear from the analysis that representations in news preludes are biased and seek to guide the interpretation of the news.

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