Kwayedza newspaper's coverage of the Covid-19 crisis in Zimbabwe: The development of African languages

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ABSTRACT

Using critical discourse analysis (CDA) as the methodology and decolonial theory as the theoretical framework, this study sought to critique coverage of the Covid-19 crisis in Zimbabwe between March 2020 and July 2021 in Kwayedza newspaper's editorial comment. Twelve articles written in an African language were purposively selected to obtain a sizable sample. This study found that the newspaper effectively covered Covid-19 in an African language while focusing on its socio-economic and cultural impact on the country and offered precautions and prescriptions for dealing with the pandemic. Its major downside was that it downplayed certain key issues in the process due to its ownership by Zimpapers, which tends to support the government's policies. This violates ethical journalism principles such as independence, truth and accuracy and is an abrogation of the media's duty to bring accountability to public officials. This paper, therefore, recommends adherence to values of journalism which centralize public interest over that of owners.

Introduction

Language is a system of communication using arbitrary signs, codes, symbols and words (Muin et al., 2020). It is used as a communication tool to convey information and thoughts about it across many facets of society and for various purposes, such as to reflect power and politics (Harthaty, 2020). Language is sustained by prolonged use; hence, several scholars bemoan scarcity of indigenous language newspapers and studies about them (Molale and Mpofu in Salawu, 2020; Tshabangu and Salawu, 2021). Zimbabwe, like many ex-colonial African countries, is faced by this challenge. *Kwayedza* is the only Shona newspaper in the country, and it is published exclusively in the Zezuru dialect which means other Shona variants such as Manyika, Korekore and Ndau are sidelined. Shona and Ndebele languages are accused of "killing other smaller indigenous languages" (Maseko and Moyo, in Mabika, 2014, p. 2391). During crises such as pandemics, media serve as conduits of information to influence social behavior. However, "the media can also downgrade languages, either by exclusion or using them in disparaging ways" (Mpofu and Salawu, 2018, p. 2). Marginalization of indigenous newspapers in Zimbabwe is almost as old as the postcolonial state itself. Zimbabwe's first indigenous newspaper, *Umthunywa*, was established in Harare in 1985 at Zimpapers head offices where it was edited by Paul Chidyausiku, a Shona novelist and journalist and was published as an appendage of *Kwayedza* before it was discontinued in 1993 (Mabweazara, 2006).

Nonetheless, the biggest challenge for media in Africa "is the choice of English as the official language which invariably relegates the local languages to the background" (Adedeji 2015, p. 35). In Zimbabwe, English retained its status as the dominant language, despite the country's attainment of independence (Mufanechiya, 2015). English is used for serious educational, economic and scientific issues in the media whereas African languages are used for less significant stories (Kupe 2016; Mpofu and Salawu, 2018). This is a common challenge across Africa where ex-colonial languages, such as French, Portuguese or Spanish still dominate, and knowledge and information rooted in indigenous epistemology is marginalized (Chimbi and Jita, 2022).

Limited access to information leads to acceptance [and spreading] of false news (Fadipe and Salawu, 2021). It is at critical times like when there are pandemics that indigenous language publications should utilize technology to cover health issues timeously and factually (Chigudu, 2018; Salawu, 2019; Owolabi and Nurudeen, 2020; Fadipe and Salawu, 2021). Due to the changing media ecology, there is need for positioning African digital experiences as "epistemic sites of knowledge production" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni in Schoon et al., 2020, p. 2). This means journalists covering health issues should deliver information in the languages of the local people so they will understand the factual message fully and be protected from becoming victims of fake news.

Hence this study sought to investigate the extent to which journalist of a newspaper using an African language in Zimbabwe were able to contribute to the development of this language by using it to communicate COVID-19 related matters effectively during the crisis. In conducting the analysis, the study drew from the decolonial theory as the theoretical framework and critical discourse analysis (CDA) as the methodology.

Using critical discourse analysis (CDA), this study purposively sampled twelve articles that were published in Kwayedza between 5 March 2020 and 14 July 2021. This enabled the researchers to provide a nuanced analysis by identifying "themes and features" (Bal, 2014, p. 23). CDA identifies words, images and sentences in a text, analyses their angle or slant, frequency and relation with each other to show power relations (Wodak and Meyer, 2016: 2) between "those in power" and the "subaltern" or marginalized (Gramsci, 1971, p. 50). In qualitative studies, a researcher is regarded as a "research instrument insofar as his or her ability to understand, describe and interpret experiences and perceptions is key to uncovering meaning in particular circumstances and contexts" (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017, p. 3351).

Selection of editorials for this inquiry was motivated by their prominence in newspapers. As Knapp (2002, p. 3) puts it, a paper that is "worth its salt has an 'editorial' or 'opinion' page" which is the only section in a newspaper based on an opinion (Tomasky, 2003; Meltzer, 2007) albeit backed by facts (Patu in Marques, Mont'Alverne & Mitozo, 2019). Kwayedza was selected for this study because it is the only newspaper that is published in Shona, an indigenous language that is understood by many Zimbabweans. The researchers looked for editorials which were published between March 2020 and December 2021 from the paper's online archives using "Maonero Edu" as key words. However, 2020 had more Covid-19 related editorials which explains why, of the selected twelve, the year accounts for two thirds (8). For purposes of clarity, articles under study will be coded according to their publishing dates meaning that the editorial that was published on the 5th of March 2020 will hereafter, be referred to as E1 whilst E12 signifies the 14th of July 2021 edition. The data analyses are presented thematically.

Subsequent to this introductory section, there is the review of relevant literature that is split into two sections. This is followed by the methodology section, data analysis and discussion. The conclusion makes a link between the theoretical framework and the findings before the recommendations are spelled out.

Theoretical framework: Decolonial Theory

Decolonial theory refers to a plethora of theories which reject western ideologies of superiority. Contrary to common perception, colonization is not confined to a historical phase. Coloniality transcends physical and geographical subjugation by one group over the other: "the racial axis has a colonial origin and character, but it has proven to be more durable and stable than the colonialism in whose matrix it was established (Quijano, 2000, p. 533). Coloniality "survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience" (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 243). There has been a shift from 'global colonialism' to the current period of 'global coloniality' (Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 219). Ramose opines that "decolonization has neither abolished nor diminished the will to dominate on the part of the condescender" which presently manifests itself in terms such as democracy, human rights and globalization (Ramose, 1999, p. 13). In the same vein, Chomsky notes that colonialism "has often persisted in more-or-less veiled forms, notably in African countries" (Chomsky, 2016, p. vi) which concurs with what fellow critical political economist, Schiller calls "cultural imperialism" (1976, p. 23). Decolonial theory dismisses concepts such as modernity as "the snare of colonial matrices of power," ploys to retain colonialism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, p. 37).

Decolonization involves "deconstruction and reconstruction processes" (Mpofu and Salawu, 2018, p. 4). It calls for a break, a "de-colonial turn" (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 111–138) from Eurocentrism. Efforts made by African countries in enacting policies that seek to ween them from colonialism are equally viewed as pursuing the decolonizing agenda (Chimbi and Jita, 2022). Raúl Prebisch coined the term "center and periphery" (Quijano, 2000, p. 539) to describe western countries' privileged status at the expense of other countries that are relegated to the margins (see also Wallerstein, 1974). In colonized countries, educational systems are formatted in a 'Western code', with English as the "language that preserves and hides the code" (Mignolo, 2011, p. xii) hence the need for "linguistic decolonization" (Mpofu and Salawu, 2018, p. 5). Such imposition of culture on a people's beliefs is called "cultural genocide" (Novic, 2016). Mignolo cautions that Eurocentric perceptions are premised on the evolutionary notion that "the first world has knowledge, the third world has culture; Native Americans have wisdom, Anglo Americans have science." To debunk this, "political and epistemic de-linking, decolonializing and de-colonial knowledges" is necessary (Mignolo, 2009, p. 1). Intellectuals from developing countries should lead this revival from the front (Mphahele in Achebe, 1988). Such "organic intellectuals," as Gramsci (1971, p. 13), calls them, share experiences and aspirations with the community from the grassroot level.

Eurocentric perspectives about the inferiority of developing countries are not based on scientific, empirical evidence. They are subjective means of relegating other people to an "artificial, other, imagined racial category" (Quijano, 2000, p. 534). This echoes Said's criticism of the West for 'othering', ascribing the term "Orient" to Asian people (Said, 1978: 9). Decolonization calls on developing countries to adopt indigenous systems as their loci of enunciation. Asante says Afrocentricity is "relocation, the repositioning of the African in a place of agency where instead of being spectator to others, African voices are heard in the full meaning of [life]" (Asante, 1999, p. ix).

Ngugi proposes "moving the centre from European languages to all the other languages all over Africa and the world" (Ngugi, 1993, p. 10). Fraser (1990) calls on people who are marginalized based on race, culture, gender among other groups, to become "counterpublics" who refute negative claims about them. The assumption that non-western scholars are inferior to western ones is "no longer tenable" hence the need for "epistemic disobedience, independent thought and decolonial freedom" (Mignolo, 2009, p. 13). It is a form of writing back to former colonizers (Ashcroft et al., 1989, p. 1). The traditional African knowledge system equips its people to handle recurring illnesses, live harmoniously with nature and use technology from rudimentary equipment (Muwati and Gwekwerere, 2011).

Rejecting imposition of 'modernity' or western culture does not mean dismissing it in its entirety nor does it entail narcissism (Wiredu, 1998; Nyamjoh, 2015), rather "critical border thinking" is required to sift relevant aspects (Mignolo, in Grosfoguel, 2011, p. 26). For instance, the Zapatistas movement of Mexico is not "anti-modern fundamentalist" hence its adoption of democracy (Grosfoguel, 2011). African ethics should only integrate western aspects that are compatible with the African context (Ndhlovu-Gatsheni, 2018) in what is known as "glocalization", combining global and local (African) practices in the media (Phiri 2010). Real transformation happens "after we have examined ourselves [and] we radiate outwards and discover peoples and worlds around us" (Wa Thiong'o in Mheta et al., 2018, p. 2).

Media and development of indigenous languages

Marginalization of indigenous languages in most African countries is paradoxical. When newspapers were established by missionaries in the continent (Adedeji, 2015, p. 42; Mthembu and Lunga in Salawu, 2020, p. 90) "indigenous-language newspapers were the forerunners of radio and television in most parts of Africa, with the first isiXhosa newspaper *Umshumayeli wendaba* published in 1837 in South Africa" (Tshabangu and Salawu, 2021, p. 3). Yet, foreign owners have subsequently been reluctant to develop African languages (Malatji, 2014, p. 1; Njeje, 2018; Malatji, 2019; Onyenankeya, 2021), thus validating their criticism as "missionaries of global capital" (Herman and McChesney, 1997, p. 1).

A distinction is made between the mainstream model where publishers are mainly concerned with indigenous language and the subsidiary model which is used by international owners mainly for personal gain (Salawu, 2020). This explains the establishment of *Umthunywa* and *Kwayedza* in 1985 and 1986, respectively, well after English dailies, *The Herald* (1891) and *The Chronicle* (1893). Indigenous language users are also somewhat complicit in the marginalization of publications in their languages. *Umthunywa* once stopped publishing partly due to low sales (Mabweazara, 2006). In South Africa, *Mmega Dikgang*, a Setswana newspaper was converted to an English publication because of poor readership (Molale and Mpofu, 2021). Negative and ambivalent attitudes towards the development and use of indigenous languages in prestigious domains previously associated with English, such as in education and media, suggest that some Africans are still aligned to the ideology of colonialism and monolingualism (Ngcobo et al., 2021). Such language attitudes contradict the promotion of multilingualism which is now legislated in post-colonial language policies of many African countries. However, Chibuwe (2020) apportion some of the blame to the indigenous language newspapers themselves that have previously been observed not to focus on developmental issues. This is in part due to journalists of indigenous language newspapers who are guilty of coloniality and the fact that they tend to see writing in African languages as limiting to their personal career development (Chibuwe and Salawu, 2020).

Encouragingly, in the last two decades, indigenous language publications seem to be on an upward trajectory. The Zimbabwe Advertising Research Foundation Report (ZARFR) revealed that in 2017, *Kwayedza* had a 15% readership, second only to The Sunday Mail's 27% among weekly newspapers (Mpofu and Salawu 2018: 6). In South Africa, *Isolezwe* "is making waves and challenging the English language newspapers in the country" (Adedeji 2015, p. 41). The 2011 census figures revealed that readership of South African newspapers not only reflects the country's demographics but also indicates "cultural assertiveness" among speakers of indigenous language newspapers (Ndhlovu in Salawu, 2020). Chimbi and Jita (2022: 440) refer to such changes as an indication that the Bantu (Black Africans) have overcome "the social, political and economic dislocations caused by colonialism" and they now value their culture. This change can also be attributed to the fact that indigenous language newspapers have in recent years deployed strategies directed at ensuring that they turn their fortunes, such as, attending to developmental news rather than being always sensational (Chibuwe, 2020). Some legacy indigenous language newspapers, such as *Umthunywa* of Zimbabwe, have also adopted digital journalism as a means of survival post Covid-19 devastation on economy (Tshabangu and Salawu, 2022).

These promising developments on indigenous languages usage and interest are in keeping with the constitutions of these two countries. Chapter 1(6) and Chapter 4(63) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Number 20 of 2013 languages, recognizes Shona, Ndebele, English, Chewa, Barwe, Kalanga, Koisan, Ndau, Nambya, Shangani, Tswana, sign language, Tonga, Sotho, Venda, Tswana and Xhosa as official languages (Government of Zimbabwe, 2013). This is unlike previously when "most indigenous languages were grouped under the minority languages cluster, except for Shona and Ndebele which were hitherto assigned the status

of national languages and English" (Kadenge and Mugari, 2015, p. 21). Mpofu criticizes this because the "subaltern are complex, not homogenous" (Mpofu, 2015, p. 82, see also Anderson, 1983; Chipkin, 2007; Ndhlovu-Gatsheni, 2009). Similarly, the Constitution of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) gives official status to nine indigenous languages which are isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiNdebele, Swati, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, Tshivenda and Xitsonga in a country where the only previously recognized languages were English and Afrikaans (Republic of South Africa, 1996). It is worth noting that the two neighboring African countries share a number of their African languages and this serves to intensify the notion of African borders as artificial and rooted in colonialism.

Moreover, the South African government has made strides in its quest for diversity. The Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) was established by the government based on the MDDA Act No.14 of 2002. It provides financial backing to owners of community media and small commercial media (MDDA, 2019). African languages are gaining traction in Nigeria: "Contrary to the past, everything indigenous including herb for medication and language for communication is highly utilized locally which represent a new phase of thinking (Oyedele & Hungbo, 2021, p. 44).

Critical contribution to knowledge

The findings of this article are presented below by grouping them under five themes generated from data analysis.

Covid context

The opening sentence of an article is called a lead sentence and the first paragraph, is referred to as a lead paragraph. A lead sets the tone of the article. From the outset, *Kwayedza*'s editorial comments raise awareness of Covid 19.

Loaded lead paragraphs describe the disease, its origins and its social, political, economic and cultural implications. Maonero Edu prominently covered Covid-19. Except for E1, all opening sentences stand out in capital letters: "CHIRWERE" appears three times in E2, E7 and E9; SVONDO features so many times in E3, E5 and E10; NYAYA (E6); COVID-19 (E4); ZIMBABWE (E8); HURUMENDE (E11) and VANHU (E12). In all these articles, Covid-19 is the central issue although the lead paragraph in E11 refers to diseases in general.

In addition, most lead paragraphs refer to the global risk posed by Covid-19. E2 and E3 inform readers that Coronavirus and Covid-19 are closely linked. Though E2 describes them as synonyms, E3 says Coronavirus causes Covid-19. To put into perspective, the danger posed by the pandemic, the first ten of the twelve articles under study all suggest that Covid-19 continues to spread unabated. Though in E11 government relaxes restrictions due to a decline in Covid-19 cases, there is a resurgence after two months (E12). Metaphors such as the infinitive "kunyuka" (to sprout) in E1, E2, E10 and the present continuous verb form "chichitekeshera" in E2 indicate the rapid spread of the pandemic.

In typical tabloid style, *Kwayedza* explains the Covid crisis in simple terms. The verb root "-pararira" (which literally means spread) appears in infinitive form, "kupararira" ('to spread,' E3; E6; E9; E11) and present continuous form "ichipararira" ('as it spreads', E4). Recurrence of the phrase "vanhu vari kubatwa…" ('many people are being diagnosed with,' E8 and E12) emphasizes how lethal the pandemic is and the use of a dash in "— kwete muZimbabwe bedzi, asi nepasi rose" (not only in Zimbabwe, but the entire world) shows how pervasive the pandemic has become (see also discussion on *Kwayedza*'s portrayal of the Zimbabwean government below). There was a time when the use of the term "kubatwa" to denote diagnosis with an ailment was discouraged because its literal meaning 'to be caught' entails entrapment and hopelessness hence promoting stigma against patients (Makamani, 2013).

Additionally, the prefix "ch" in the word "Chirwere" which appears in several lead paragraphs as alluded to earlier and "chazengezana" ('the deadly pandemic which has ravaged the world, E1 and E7) shows how scary the disease is. The word "chazengezana," a variant of 'chazezesa', 'chaurura' and 'chazunguza,' denotes a feared phenomenon.

Kwayedza's framing of the government

Despite appearing in the middle of sentences, the Shona word for government, "Hurumende" is capitalized in E3, E5 and E9 as the state is praised even as the editorials say the country is reeling from Covid-19. Presentation of government measures (singular "danho" in E5 and "matanho", plural in E3 and E11), gives the impression that it cares for its citizens. A third of the study's unit of analysis, (E3, E5, E9, E11) begin with a recap of government's latest intervention, "Svondo rino" (This week) in E3, "Svondo rapera" (Last week, E5) and "Hurumende nemusi woMuvhuro…" (On Monday, the government…, E11). A5 portrays the government as leading from the front in the fight against the deadly pandemic. It also implies that the state is a considerate employer as it will continue to pay full salaries to 85% of its workers who it has instructed to stay at home to curb the spread of Covid-19. Though this seems like a considerate gesture by the country's biggest employer as *Kwayedza* dutifully says, the paper employs 'sunshine journalism' which is a pitfall of constructive journalism. The paper does not disclose that civil servants are 'earning' meagre salaries.

In the clash between citizens and the state, *Kwayedza* takes the latter's side. Further travel restrictions may be justifiable considering rising Covid-19 cases but the statement "veruzhinji vasangofambe-fambe" (*Kwayedza*, 2020c) is condescending. This is because the reduplicated verb "fambe fambe" implies moving aimlessly. The word "veruzhinji" (the masses) suggests that few, including politically connected people, are exempted through an "essentialist and exclusivist ideology" (Kanyegirire in Skjerdal, 2012, p. 637). Restrictions to movement without guaranteeing a safety net or assistance to citizens who are mostly self-employed is ill-advised. Upon realizing that it was important to save both lives and livelihoods, South Africa, whose economy is much more stable than

Zimbabwe's and has a lower unemployment rate, has, since March 2020, been distributing a $22 monthly grant to unemployed citizens. This grant has been extended to 2023. Even better, Algeria announced plans to disburse $92 a month to individuals in the 19-40 age groups (Reuters, 2022).

Factual Reporting

To its credit, *Kwayedza* sometimes exposes the dire situation in the country albeit without naming any culprit. E8 discloses that Zimbabwe has the highest Covid-19 cases and death rate in the SADC region. Such information is important for both the government and citizens as it informs them of the stage in which the crisis is in. E4 says Covid-19 cases and deaths continue to rise in Zimbabwe and the pandemic has now claimed 40 lives. E9 describes these statistics as an ominous sign, "mucherechedzo wekuti mamiriro ezvinhu haana kunaka" hence the need for taking necessary steps (*Kwayedza*, 2021c).

Impact of Covid 19 on society: Culture- deaths, funerals and burial

Covid-19 resulted in religious, socio-cultural and economic challenges. Though E7 is not the longest lead paragraph in this study's sample, it is clearly the most loaded:

Chirwere cheCovid-19 chazengezana pasi rose uye chakonzera zvakare matambudziko makukutu anosanganisira kufa kwevanhu pamwe chete nekudzorera kumashure zvikuru budiriro munyaya dzehupfumi (Covid-19 has brought anxiety and other serious problems around the world which include deaths and slow economic growth, (*Kwayedza*, 2020).

Furthermore, E12 bluntly states that more than 2 200 lives from 73 200 cases have been lost and implicitly states that this is unacceptable, "Havasi vanhu vashomaba ivava" (one death is one too many) (*Kwayedza*, 2021).

Nonetheless, "what is considered 'normal' or 'expected' in relation to death, bereavement and grief can be understood as social constructs, informed by and replicated in societal discourses, and that these can vary cross-culturally" (Selman et al., 2021, p. 1278). Among African people, the earth is "an arena for the interplay of forces," the living and the dead hence mourners gather to hand the deceased's spirit to the ancestors who in turn pass it to God (Achebe, 1988, p. 62). Similarly, Christians converge and ask God to receive the soul of the late person. Despite one's beliefs, generally everyone believes that a loved one deserves a rousing sendoff which involves shaking hands, sharing food and stories during the funeral wake. Though *Kwayedza* is renowned for promoting Shona culture (Chirimuuta, 2017), the paper shows support for temporary suspension of cultural gatherings in compliance with Covid-19 protocol. The pandemic resulted in the promotion of individualism over communalism (Eze and Acqua, 2020).

War against Covid-19

An earlier study revealed that "in most narratives, the fight against COVID-19 was equated to a fight against a political opponent" (Tshabangu and Salawu, 2021, p. 485). By the same token, a cursory look at headings of editorials under study reveals a clarion call for vigilance : A1 "Coronavirus — Tose tine basa" (We all have a duty to prevent the spread of Coronavirus; A2 "Yava hondo yedu tese" (It is now everyone's war); A3 "Covid-19: Hondo haisati yapera" (the war is not yet over); A9 "Covid-19: Zvinhu zvanyangara" (The situation is really bad); A11 "Regai kuvarairwa, Covid-19 ichiriko;" (Do not let your guard down, Covid-19 still poses a threat); A12 Dziviriro mushonga mukuru (prevention is better than cure); A8 "Ivai nehanya neupenyu"; A10 "Harare musatambe neupenyu hwevanhu" and A5 "Upenyu pamberi, zvimwe kumashure" all stress the sanctity of life. A7 Covid-19: Zim iri mugwara (so far Zimbabwe has handled the Covid 19 pandemic well and A4 "Dzimwe tsika siyanai nadzo (Do away with some customs). Of the 12 editorials, only one, E6 "Mhirizhonga iyi ngaipere" has a heading which is not a call to arms but ceasefire between squabbling couples. The ZANU PF government often uses the war metaphor to show its determination to achieve its objectives. In 2002, the country's founding president, Robert Mugabe appointed a "war cabinet" which was to fight the opposition from western countries and the country's economic challenges.

Discussion

Though tabloid newspapers have finally been accepted into the mainstream even by the likes of *Berger* who were initially ardent critics, *Kwayedza* must therefore pacify critics of indigenous language newspapers who regard them as an addendum or translation of English publications (Mabweazara, 2006). In response to this call, the paper exposed devastating religious, socio-cultural, and economic implications of the virus, traced its origins unpacked its features, provided statistics of casualties and offered precautions and prescriptions to deal with the crisis. This is to be lauded as it indicates a change on the part of African language newspapers from sensational reporting about rural and township news to focusing on developmental matters (Chibuwe, 2020).

In keeping with principles of ethical reporting, newspapers should find creative ways of castigating actions which militate against interests of the public. *Kwayedza* also needs to train and or employ professional editors to subject the paper to rigorous proofreading. Capitalization of "Hurumende" (Government) in the middle of a sentence appears to be a sign of ignorance that Shona grammatical rules are similar to English ones. Similarly, unnecessary placement of a hyphen in "Cha-zengezanwa" is an indictment to the paper's reputation. Furthermore, selection of English words like "40" instead of 'makumi mana' in E4; "15 percent" rather than 'chikamu chimwe chete nechidimbu' (E5); "2 200" instead of 'zviuru zviviri nemazana maviri' and 73 200 (zviuru makumi manomwe nezvitatu nemazana maviri) inadvertently undermines the communicative effect of Shona. Though 'ndufu' appears in E8, an English translation

"fatality rate" is provided as if to add clarity. *Kwayedza* was once a source of rich Shona writing but it seems as though its writers are more fluent in scientific terms than their mother-tongue. This is an indication of what Chibuwe and Salawu (2020) described as lack of commitment to the development of African languages by journalists of indigenous language newspapers who view it as not beneficial to their career development. In this regard, Harthaty (2020) appeals that the mass media can use its power to introduce politics into language use by coming up with new words and expressions.

Covid-19 "brought the best and the worst" out of people (Moyo, 2020). Notwithstanding its satisfactory coverage of the crisis, *Kwayedza* seems to have suffered from a conflict of interest as its ownership by state publisher, Zimpapers, prevented it from demanding accountability from the government. Critical discourse analysis unpacks "ideologies embedded in discourse" (Maguire and Delahunt, 2007, p. 3351). *Kwayedza*, therefore misdirected its missiles by slamming victims of the government who include ordinary citizens trying to eke out an honest living for violating Covid-19 restrictions. This supports the call for Zimbabwe to establish a body that is similar to South Africa's MDDA to promote diversity by financially assisting community and small commercial media entities. This will assist in filling the existing lacuna in balanced political reporting. Plurality with diversity nurtures competition for markets which facilitates responsible journalism.

Conclusion

In keeping with the values of decolonial theory, the *Kwayedza* newspaper achieved a noticeable amount in promoting indigenous languages during it reporting on Covid-19. There were commendable creative ways of disseminating information about the disease using an African language. This assisted the government in reaching and educating as many citizens as possible about the virus. Yet, there were areas of concern such as grammatical errors that appeared to be influenced by political bias and lack of commitment to the course of indigenous languages revitalization by black journalists. Moreover, the use of English words when Shona ones existed was found to be a linguistic violence. There is therefore a need for all policymakers, the government, indigenous language experts, black journalists and citizens to unite in implementing recommendations of the 2013 constitutional amendments on the equitably use of languages. This will ascertain that the decolonization agenda is implemented in all spheres of society.

Ethical journalism principles were equally violated in the process since issues of independence, truth and accuracy were not adhered to due to the political agenda peddled by the newspaper. This paper, therefore, recommends adherence to values of journalism which centralize public interest over that of owners. Journalists, especially black ones in Africa, need to begin to view themselves as agents of change and transformation. Journalists should distance themselves from political bias as this would make them and the newspapers they represent appeal to all citizens across political divides. Those who write in indigenous languages should not be shy to coin and use existing words that would assist revitalize African languages after the many years of neglect during colonialism.

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