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DOI: 10.1080/10228195.2018.1524922

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# “Land Reform Costly”: Zimbabwe Land Reform Negation Discourse in the Print Media

**Ernest Jakaza**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9639-5312>

Midlands State University, Zimbabwe

[jakazaet@gmail.com](mailto:jakazaet@gmail.com); [jakazae@staff.msu.ac.zw](mailto:jakazae@staff.msu.ac.zw)

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## Abstract

The Zimbabwean land reform programme’s inception and impact have been studied from various disciplinary perspectives chronicling and profiling its negatives and positives. However, very few discourse-linguistic studies have been carried out on this topic, even the media is evaluative in its reporting of relevant news. The media’s digestion and subjectivity in news reporting is well documented, making objectivity in news reporting a “myth.” The dichotomisation of news reporting is evident in state and private newspapers. This study is an appraisal and controversy analysis of negation and affirmation discourse realised in private and state print media in Zimbabwe. Though it is known that the private media is a mouthpiece of opposition political parties, evaluations of negation discourse on the Zimbabwean land reform programme have not been carried out. The study appraises the use of negation discourse in the Zimbabwean independent print media and questions whether the media’s projections are controversial and/or myths.

**Keywords:** negation discourse; appraisal; controversy analysis; land reform programme; subjectivity in news

## 1. Introduction and Background

This study is an appraisal and controversy analysis of news representation in the print media. It explores how the print media has “digested” Zimbabwe’s Fast Track Land Reform Programme. The study of news representation is not a new phenomenon. Research in news representation ranges from media to linguistic discourse studies (Chari 2010, Archakis and Tsakona 2010, White 2006). Various theoretical spectrums have been utilised, among them critical discourse analysis, appraisal theory, systemic

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Routledge  
Taylor & Francis Group

Language Matters  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rlms20/current>

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10228195.2018.1524922> ISSN  
1753-5395 (Online), ISSN 1022-8195 (Print)  
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functional linguistics, and implicature (Fairclough 1995; White 2006; Sabao 2013; Jakaza and Visser 2015). However, new contexts, theoretical perspectives and topics to be represented provide new perspectives and understandings of the notion. The study reengages the appraisal framework together with controversy analytical approaches for the exploration of the “controversial” Zimbabwean land reform programme (ZLRP) as represented in the Zimbabwean print media.

The land question is one of the major causes of invasions, wars and struggles amongst humanity. Land is a livelihood of a people as it is not only used for agriculture purposes. It does not only give a person an identity as it is the bedrock upon which one stands. The colonisation of Zimbabwe by the British ushered in a new perception of land. Blacks were displaced from fertile pieces of land and moved to sand- and tsetse fly-infested areas like Gokwe and Sanyati. The value of land began to be seen in tandem with its produce. The displacement effect, compounded by the “industrialised” conceptualisation of farming, had a negative effect on blacks. However, the dawn of independence in Zimbabwe saw land redistribution being carried out by the black government. The speed at which this was happening did not sit well with a number of people or political parties and civic organisations. Some ethnic groups began to advocate going back to their ancestral roots. Among the early land invasions are those that were carried out by the Svosve people. The Zanu PF-led government consolidated the Zimbabwean people’s efforts to regain their land and lost identity. Chari (2010) argues that the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999 changed the political landscape of Zimbabwe.

Among other impulse reactions to the formation of the MDC, Zanu PF handled the people’s uprising and bankrolled the ZLRP to counter the MDC threat. The ZLRP, because of the way it has been handled, has come to be known by a variety of names. Anti-ZLRP voices have named it *Jambanja*, with affirmative voices naming it the Third Chimurenga or *hondo yeminda* (“war for the land”). The seemingly neutral term is Fast Track Land Reform Programme. The term *Jambanja* connotes a disorganised, an unlawful and uncalled for act. On the other hand, the term “Third Chimurenga” or *hondo yeminda* reconnects the displaced blacks with the struggle that was started in the First Chimurenga (1896–1897), justifying the uprising. It qualifies the ZLRP as a war to regain the lost land. However, the whole programme has been negatively appraised and described by some as a violation of human rights, un-orderly, unconstitutional and hence illegal. On the other hand, pro-ZLRP and Zanu-PF-led government voices have positively appraised the whole programme as a success. This has been the “controversy” surrounding the ZLRP from the onset. Are the negative perceptions about the ZLRP consistent more than a decade since the inception of the programme? What are the current evaluations and perceptions of the ZLRP in Zimbabwe? These are some of the questions this research intends to address.

One of the media’s functions is to inform the public. In being informative, the media is supposed to report news objectively. Objectivity relates to neutrality, professional

writing, authenticity, and ethical and balanced reporting (Jakaza 2016). However, objective news reporting is difficult to attain. It is impacted on by a number of factors, from news selection to publication. What the audience reads in newspapers or watches on television or other media outlets are the news reporters’ subjectivities. According to Bell (1991), audience design is one of the factors that impact on objectivity. Audience design is a way of reporting in which news reporters employ evaluative devices that align with their audiences’ expectations. Thus, audience design, as a process, impacts on journalists’ use of language when reporting news stories and even when selecting stories. Archakis and Tsakona (2010) argue that audience design relates to the news digestion process. News is reconstructed in the selection of specific texts, when paraphrasing and when journalists employ framing devices that reflect their political orientation and audience. Thus, in the reconstruction of the ZLRP as a success or failure in Zimbabwe, the print media resort to various appraisal formulations. The resources that are employed in the appraisal of the ZLRP’s aftermath shed light on how the various media want the audience to perceive it.

Subjective news reporting has been argued to be dichotomised. Newspaper publications are generally divided into the categories of government or independent newspaper, national or community newspaper, daily or weekly newspaper, and according to the language of communication—English or Shona or Ndebele (in Zimbabwe) (Jakaza 2013). The dichotomisation of news is realised through the use of evaluative resources that advance parallel or divergent ideologies or perspectives. In this evaluation, negation discourse is utilised to undermine and disregard other, contrary voices. This is supported by White (2006, 37), who argues that news reports are “value laden, ideologically determined discourse with a clear potential to influence the media audience’s assumptions and beliefs about the way the world is and the way it ought to be.” The ZLRP, having been a campaign card for Zanu PF since the beginning of the millennium, has been supported through a number of initiatives to make sure that it is a success. Among other initiatives, the Zanu PF-led government has recently advocated for Command Agriculture, a programme in which the government provides seed and fertilizers to farmers in order to increase production. Command Agriculture, among other initiatives, is meant to support and make the ZLRP a success. The success of the ZLRP, it is argued, will be realised when Zimbabwe reclaims its status as the bread basket of Southern Africa. The study appraises the “success” of the ZLRP as expressed in print media evaluations. An appraisal of land reform discourse in the print media sheds light on the appraisal resources realised and the dis/alignments created.

Research on the “controversial” ZLRP in Zimbabwe has been carried out mainly from historical, development studies, sociological and media perspectives. A discourse-linguistic study of the ZLRP as appraised by the Zimbabwean print media is important. The ZLRP’s inception and implementation process has been the focus of other research

on this topic. This research is aimed at examining the ZLRP’s aftermath. A summative evaluation of the process as realised in the print media is made.

There are two research paradigms that are utilised in research: quantitative and qualitative research methodology. This study utilises the qualitative research paradigm which focuses on information concerning attitudes, beliefs, motivation and behaviour of human beings to explore social phenomenon (Biggam 2011). Following the qualitative research paradigm, the researcher aims to explore how people (news reporters) in everyday settings create meaning and interpret events in their world (Mangeya 2014). The journalists’ attitudes, beliefs and ideologies are subjectively cemented in a news article. The controversies caused by the ZLRP require a qualitative analytical approach. To achieve this, the discourse-analytic research design inherent in the appraisal theory framework is implemented. A discourse-analytic research design of Zimbabwe’s print media, specifically, *The Herald*, *Daily News*, *Zimbabwe Independent*, *Chronicle*, and *Newsday* is applied. Results obtained from an appraisal of the print media representation of the ZLRP’s aftermath are generalised to media appraisals of ZLRP.

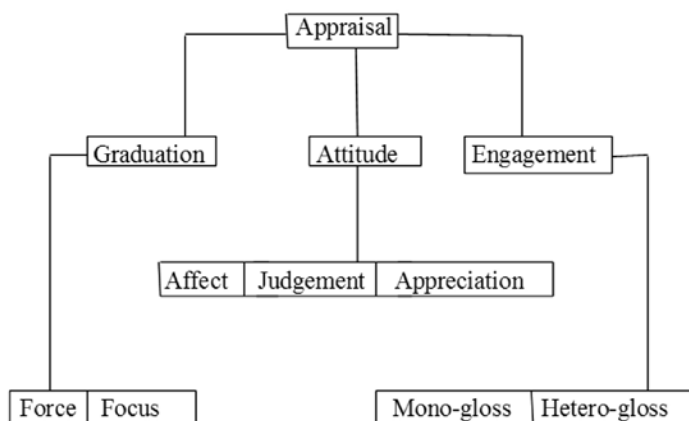
The purposive sampling method was employed in the selection of newspapers and newspaper stories. It is a method of choosing items in a structured manner. Newspapers and newspaper stories from the period between July 2014 and August 2017 that aid in achieving the objectives of the study were purposively sampled. The researcher considered the fact that news is subjective and that newspapers are generally divided along the dimensions of government versus private and daily versus weekly, among other dimensions. Thus, two government and three private/independent newspapers were selected. Of these five newspapers, four are daily newspapers and one a weekly newspaper. Negation and affirmative discourse is realised in the dichotomised newspapers. The study argues that dichotomisation and negation discourse in news reporting are a reflection of the media polarisation in Zimbabwe between the independent and state media. The study is more interested in appraising the independent print media’s stance towards the ZLRP, examining how they have dialogically negated the process and appraised it as “controversial.” The study is not only interested in analysing how the discourses are realised but also in answering the question why such dichotomisation and use of appraisal resources are dominant in advancing negation discourse in the appraisal of the ZLRP?

## 2. Appraisal and Controversy Analytical Approaches

Appraisal theory is a fairly recent discourse-analytic approach to the study of the language of evaluation that was developed from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). It developed the interpersonal metafunction of SFL focusing on the ways in which speakers/writers construct particular identities and how they position themselves and those they are addressing. McCarthy, Matthiessen and Slade (2002) observe that the

three theories, SFL, critical discourse analysis (CDA) and appraisal, form a family of interrelated theoretical frameworks. Not only are they all socially oriented but CDA and appraisal are a “development” of SFL. All these theories investigate the ways in which language constructs and is constructed by social relation. They, however, crucially focus on different areas of analysis. Appraisal theory, which is the framework for this study, explores how social relationships are enacted in language. It explores the subjective presents of the writer/speaker adopting certain stances towards both the materials they present and those with which they communicate (Bednarek 2006).

The theory aims to understand how authorial identities are enacted in discourse as writers/speakers dis/align themselves with actual or potential audiences. According to White (2005), authorial stance involves the speaker/writer indicating how they have responded emotionally to the person, thing, happening or situation being evaluated. This authorial stance indicates the attitudinal positioning of the speaker/writer towards the person, thing or situation which triggers the emotion. Thus, the theory is a tool that can be utilised to conduct a discourse-linguistic inquiry on the use of language affirming or negating ideologies, policies, situations, things et cetera. The theory has three interacting domains; Attitude, Engagement and Graduation which are further divided as shown in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1:** The appraisal system

Source: adapted from Jakaza (2013)

Attitude includes values by which speakers pass judgments and associate emotional/ effectual responses with participants and processes (Bednarek 2006). Engagement concerns “the linguistic resources which explicitly position a text’s proposals and

propositions inter-subjectivity” (White 2005, 8). Graduation involves resources used in the grading or scaling of meanings.<sup>1</sup>

The ZLRP has been described as “controversial.” Language is at the centre in the representation of the controversy of ZLRP. In order to fully explicate the “controversy” present in the ZLRP, the researcher engages controversy analysis as a second analytic framework. Controversy analysis is a development of the argumentation theory. Controversy has been argued to have “to do with confrontation and with tenacious efforts to put an end to the confrontation by means of argumentation” (Van Eemeren and Garssen 2008, 2). In this confrontation, there should be two antagonistic parties putting all their efforts into bridging their misunderstanding through employing argumentation methods. In colloquial language the term controversy refers “to a difference of opinion that is ‘mixed’ and has become a persistent conflict” (Van Eemeren and Garssen 2008, 2). The difference of opinion will appear as if it is irresolvable as it will have developed into a state of “quasi-permanency.” However, controversies have to be classified, as they vary in accordance with degrees of being controversial. They have been argued to range from minor controversial matters (mere squabbles) to deep controversies (where there are deep disagreements) (Van Eemeren and Garssen 2008, Dascal 2001). Thus, mere squabbles might escalate and develop into deep disagreements. The study explores the ZLRP “controversy” as represented in the print media. The analysis that follows examines how the print media frames the “controversy.”

### 3. Land Reform “Aftermath”: Negation Discourse

This is the data analysis section of the study. It focuses on exploring the print media appraisals and controversies of the ZLRP. Utilising the engagement resource of the appraisal theory, the study examines how the print media contracts or expands the dialogic space on discourses about the ZLRP. The other appraisal resources are mentioned in passing but the main focus is on the engagement resource. The aim of the study is to evaluate how the independent and state print media dialogically negated and positively appraised the ZLRP’s “aftermath.” Controversy analysis was engaged as a tool to analyse the nature of disagreements about the ZLRP represented in the print media. The following typographical conventions (adopted from Jakaza 2013) have been utilised to mark appraisal resources in the text:

*Italics*: engagement contract values (deny, counter, concur, endorse, pronounce)

**Bold** and “-ve”: negative attitude (affect, judgement, appreciation)

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1 For an extended discussion on the appraisal theory, refer to Jakaza (2013), Martin and White (2005), White (2006; 2005) and Bednarek (2006).

Independent media has been argued to be in search of news that exposes and damages the image of the government. The Zimbabwean government has been vocal and adamant that the ZLRP will not be reversed in response to calls from the opposition political parties, in particular the MDC. The *Newsday* newspaper, advancing the opposition agenda, published a story “Government Threatens to Reverse Land Reform” (Chidza 2017, *Newsday*, August 18). The headline presents the Zanu PF government as backtracking on its position. This presents the political party and government as not as formidable and resolute as citizens might think. From the *Newsday* appraisals, the ZLRP is represented as a failure. The new black farmers have been negatively evaluated as “struggling” as they are failing to pay leases and rentals. Negatively labelling new black farmers as “struggling” is not only discourse of failure of the ZLRP, but a negative appraisal of the black race. The agenda being advanced is that of bringing back a better race, the white farmer. According to Jakaza (2013, 87), “[n]egation is a linguistic resource that has been commonly used in the critical assessment of institutions and actions/performance of government officials.” Language users utilise negation as a strategy to dis/align readers/listeners with certain dialogic voices. In this case, the notion in question is the ZLRP.

Newspapers, sometimes, appear to be in dialogue. The state newspaper, *The Herald*, in anticipation of independent newspapers’ negation discourse, published a story positively appraising government actions on the ZLRP. In the story, “Land Reform: From Distribution to Production” (Tsododo 2014, *The Herald*, July 8), *The Herald* dialogically *disclaims*: *denies* the claim that government will ever reverse the ZLRP. The newspaper states that “government is *not* going to reverse the land revolution.” Rather, the newspaper denounces the impression created by the independent media as “*not only* counter-productive to the studious efforts of the new farmer *but* is also working to perpetuate food shortages.” (Tsododo 2014). The state paper questions the subjective reporting of news by the independent papers, citing it as a contributory factor in food shortages in Zimbabwe. In negating the independent voices in the dialogic space, *The Herald* is contracting the space for the independent media to manoeuvre, aligning the readers with the ZLRP ideology.

The ZLRP’s aftermath has been categorised as “controversial.” The *Zimbabwe Independent* newspaper published a story entitled “Land Reform: The Overlooked Compensation Option in Zim” (Chulu 2017, *Zimbabwe Independent*, January 28). The reporter sees two divergent views that seem irresolvable. The first perspective is that the ZLRP has not borne any fruit, hence land should be returned to the white farmer. The second view is that “we cannot return acquired land”; the nation should have patience with the new black farmer. In controversies, as opposed to discussions and disputes, the difference of opinion is not viewed as a mistake, but as divergent attitudes and preferences as well as varied methods of problem-solving. Parties involved in controversies believe that an increase in the amount of evidence or arguments will tilt the “balance of reason” in their favour (Dascal 2001). Again as opposed to disputes which are either irresolvable



or dissolved, controversies can be resolved. Thus, in an effort to resolve the ZLRP controversy at hand, the *Zimbabwe Independent* reporter throws another argument into the dialogic space. To solve the controversy, the newspaper proposes compensation of farming assets by the government. The paper argues that

- i. Our Land Acquisition Act and the constitution are clear: *Only* improvements on farms will be compensated, and *not* the land itself. Our task then is to get the best out of this legislative reality (*Zimbabwe Independent*, 28 January 2017).

The writer utilises *disclaim: deny* appraisal resources [*only, not*] to “close down on” (to use appraisal terminology) any alternative voices that might be entertained in the dialogic space. This third perspective is presented as final and not open to debate. Reference to the Land Acquisition Act and constitution is also strategically used to authenticate the argument. Thus, to resolve the impasse on the land question, the newspaper argues for compensation of only the improvements on the farms, and land should not be included in the compensation figure. In advancing the newspaper’s standpoint, the reporter makes use of the pronoun “our.” Pronouns are “always worth noting” (Fairclough 1995, 145) as markers of identity and forms of strategic manoeuvring. When utilised, these personal and possessive deictics evaluatively dissociate and associate the audience with a particular standpoint. They are a form of identity construction or group identification (Van de Mierop 2006). However, in advancing the third possible solution to resolve the “controversy,” the reporter should give room for other voices in the dialogic space for the controversy to be resolved amicably. Combining both expanding and contracting engagement resources provides a better way of resolving the problem. “Dialogic contraction has to do with closing down or fending off dialogical alternative voices in discourse” (Jakaza 2013, 86). As opposed to dialogic contraction, dialogic expansion resources open up the space for other voices.

The ZLRP has been negatively appraised as costly. Negation discourse realised in independent media advances the perspective that instead of benefiting the nation the ZLRP embarked upon by the ruling Zanu PF government caused losses. Journalistic evaluations are intended to appeal to their readership, dis/engaging them with particular ideological inclinations and social values. In these ideological inclinations, the audience is positioned as to which events are valued as newsworthy and made to interpret news from the newspaper’s appraisal perspective.

The ideological inclinations and alignments of a news story are laid bare in the headline. Headlines constitute the summary, a synopsis and an abstract of the whole story (White 1998). However, it should be noted that some headlines, driven by wanting to lure the reader in, mislead the audience. Advancing negative representations of the ZLRP, *Daily News* published a story entitled “Land Reform Cost 1,5m jobs: Chinamasa” (Mashaya 2017, *Daily News*, May 26). Through sourced authorial voice, the paper relays Chinamasa’s concerns and position. Attribution is strategically utilised to authenticate

and neutralise reports. Chinamasa, being the Minister of Finance and a Zanu PF MP, is used to authenticate the negative perspective that the ZLRP is a failure. In the story, the ZLRP is described as “controversial” and as having caused the Zimbabwean economy to be highly informal. However, Chinamasa is later quoted in the story disclaiming and denying any thought by the ruling Zanu PF government of reversing the ZLRP. He, however, stresses that “[t]here is no way an economy can grow and expand when a vital productive asset like land is held by one or two people” (Mashaya 2017). In other words, Chinamasa acknowledges that the ZLRP is a controversial issue that requires more arguments in order to tilt the balance of reason in its favour.

The other controversy surrounding the ZLRP is that it has been carried out along racial lines. The negative discourse, doing the rounds in independent and international media, has soiled the whole programme, describing it as having been a case of the black versus the white race. Black Zimbabweans (Zanu PF) have been accused of instigating violence towards white farmers. The dichotomisation of the land redistribution process along racial lines fuels deep controversies. The state daily newspaper, *The Herald*, realised that racial dichotomisation was also an issue that needed attention in the controversy. In a counter-discourse mode to silence the independent media, *The Herald* published a story entitled “Land Reform Non-Racial—Minister” (Chikwati 2017, *The Herald*, September 11). The story was necessitated by disgruntled voices over the then Lands and Rural Resettlement Minister, Dr Mombeshora’s, plans to equitably distribute land along non-racial lines. *The Herald* presents the minister as responding to these disgruntled voices. Dr Mombeshora is directly quoted as saying

- ii. The land issue has *nothing* [disclaim: deny] to do with race, *but* [disclaim: counter] deals with the equitable distribution of the finite resource ... We are *not* [disclaim: deny] racists ... *But* [disclaim: counter] *the truth is that* [proclaim: pronounce] it was *not* [disclaim: deny] racial. (Chikwati 2017)

The minister utilises *disclaim: deny* [*nothing, not*] to define his position and *disclaim: counter* [*but*] to shove (to use appraisal terminology) and clear any doubt in the readers’ minds about land redistribution along racial lines. The *proclaim: pronounce* engagement resource [*the truth is that ...*] is strategically used to “indicate the authorial voice’s direct involvement in the text explicitly acknowledging being the source of the utterance” (Jakaza 2013, 89). The use of pronouncement resources raises the interpersonal cost of rejecting or doubting the author’s utterance in future communicative exchanges.

The independent media’s negation discourse on the ZLRP metaphorically described the former President Robert Mugabe as a beggar. The independent media hunts for such stories that expose the government. Mugabe, in the *Newsday* story “Mugabe Pleads for Land Reform Financial Support” (Munyukwi and Gonye 2017, August 26), is appraised as having noted “lack of productivity” on the farms owned by resettled farmers. The paper cites Mugabe applauding the government’s Command Agriculture programme

for yielding positive results. However, the programme is also described by the authorial voice as a “late bid by Zanu PF government to spruce the soiled image of the ZLRP which analysts have deemed to be largely controversial” (Munyukwi and Gonye 2017). It is the reporter voice commenting on Mugabe’s direct quotations that is utilised to shape and direct the reader’s thinking on the matter under discussion. It is used to challenge any utterances that have been made by Mugabe in his speech, driving the reader to the conclusion that the ZLRP is a failure. The Command Agriculture scheme which Mugabe has applauded as the solution to the ZLRP’s problems is evaluated as having reduced Mugabe to a beggar.

- iii. Mugabe begged mostly financial institutions to inject resources into the scheme which has suffered immense criticism for its mediocre results (Munyukwi and Gonye 2017).

The scheme that Mugabe applauded is also negatively appraised as “mediocre.” This negation discourse, cited as counter-productive by state newspapers and government officials, is the lifeblood of independent newspapers. Independent media thrive on such discourse. This dichotomisation in news reporting strains objective news readers as they are forced to read the same stories in various newspapers to try to reach the truth of the story. Whether they will be able to get to the truth of the story is a matter of concern.

The theme of the conference held at Midlands State University, Zvishavane Campus, Zimbabwe, in 2017, “Beyond’ the Land Reform in Zimbabwe,” alluded to two issues: that the ZLRP has been concluded, and that it is an ongoing process. The *Daily News* questions why the ZLRP is not coming to a conclusion. In other words, the *Daily News* is advancing the proposition that the ZLRP should have been concluded but it is still ongoing. The newspaper published a story with the headline “Will Zim Govt Ever Conclude Land Reform?” (*Daily News*, February 23, 2016). The rhetorical question is dialogically contractive. It proclaims, limiting the scope of dialogistic alternatives in the ongoing debate. The reader is dialogically contracted and aligned to accept the perspective that the ZLRP should be concluded. The idea of considering the ZLRP as an infinite process is entertained in the dialogic space but later dismissed and discarded. Rhetorical questions *proclaim: concur*, presenting something as given or in accord with the generally accepted way of doing things.

The narrative of the story is in tandem with negation discourse realised in independent media. The newspaper argues that “*Clearly*, [*proclaim: concur*] gov’t new farmers have **dismally failed** [-ve judgement] to rise to the challenge ...” (*Daily News* 2016). The contractive *proclaim: concur* resource is utilised to dialogically limit the space and confine the reader to the writer’s intended meaning. Condemning the new farmer is also strategically employed to drive the reader to the conclusion that the ZLRP should be concluded as the farmers are hopeless. In the narrative, the reporter also rhetorically negates the ZLRP, aligning the readers with concluding the programme. The reporter voice questions “When will we wrap up this programme, gentleman?” (*Daily News*

2016). Dialogically contracting the space, the author presents himself as part of the problem solvers. As discussed above, pronouns are a key factor in negation discourse. The "political" pronoun, "we," in the narrative is categorically employed to dichotomise the two groups in the "controversy." Ilie (2010, 66) argues that the pronoun "we" is "the inclusive and exclusive 1st person plural pronoun" prone to ambivalent interpretations. The ambivalence is situated in the inference of who is being referred to by "we." The reporter voice invites the reader to be in the camp that is in favour of concluding the programme. The other camp and its ideological inclinations are negated and condemned.

#### 4. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to appraise negation and affirmative discourse realised in Zimbabwean independent and state print media. Focusing on the appraisal theory's engagement resource, the study evaluated how the newspapers dialogically communicate negation and affirmation discourse to their audiences. It has been argued that Zimbabwe independent print media employs engagement contracting values, disclamation and proclamation strategically to constrain the dialogic space, dismissing other voices. The readers are confined and aligned to the papers' ideological inclinations. The ZLRP is appraised as controversial. In line with Dascal (2001), the newspapers have been advancing arguments in support of their position in order to resolve the controversy in their favour. In as much as this is a noble idea, the study argues that there is need for a balance between expanding and contracting engagement resources, otherwise the mixed differences will persist. The study also argues that negation discourse in media compounds the difficulty of attaining objectivity in news reporting. Published news stories are only subjective evaluations of the reporter dis/aligning the readers with their ideological inclinations. It should be stated that in these subjectivities, no cogent evidence is provided to support the negation discourse. The resettled black farmers are consistently appraised as failures and the ZLRP equally evaluated as chaotic and unsuccessful. Counter-discourse from state-owned newspapers affirming the successes and challenges of the resettled farmers has been interrogated as well. The failures of the resettled farmers are reconstructed as challenges in state-owned newspapers. However, the research concludes that dichotomisation in news reporting realised in the use of appraisal resources impacts not only on objectivity in news reporting but also on how controversies can be resolved in media discourse.

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