

Media and Ethnolinguistic Minorities: Framing the Tonga and Nambya in Selected Zimbabwean Mainstream Newspapers.

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Abstract

Studies that focus on the framing of ethnolinguistic minorities in Zimbabwe's mainstream media are scarce. These ethnic groups—among them the Tonga and Nambya—are generally marginalized in everything. Not only are they geographically located on the margins of Zimbabwe but they are also located on the fringes of political, economic, sociocultural, and economic development. The Tonga are located in Kariba, Binga, and parts of Gokwe, while the Nambya are located around the Hwange area and areas around Victoria Falls. Prior to the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act of 2013, Tonga, Nambya, and other indigenous languages were classified as “minority languages,” while Ndebele and Shona were the two national languages, and English was the official language. In the new constitution, the formerly marginalized languages are now accorded the same status as the officially recognized languages of English, Shona, and Ndebele. Hence, the status of Nambya and Tonga shifted from “minority” to “previously marginalized” languages. Though the terms officially recognized languages and previously marginalized languages are somewhat vague and indecisive, the enactment of the new constitution increased interest in the so-called previously marginalized ethnolinguistic minorities. For instance, Tonga was elevated to an examinable subject in public examinations at Grade 7, Ordinary level and Advanced level. Similarly, Nambya, Kalanga, Venda, and Tonga were introduced at the degree level at some Zimbabwean universities, while in the mainstream media, the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation introduced news in some previously marginalized languages. However, this did not alter the framing of Tonga and Nambya ethnolinguistic minorities in mainstream media. Whereas the Tonga received more coverage in *The Chronicle* and *The Herald* than Nambya, the quality of coverage was the same for both ethnic groups in both newspapers. Four broad frames were utilized and these are: the education frame, the culture frame, the not-so-subtle marginalization frame, and the development frame. These frames perpetuate long-held stereotypes about the Tonga and Nambya. Furthermore, the stories about the two ethnic groups were mainly categorized as opinion, local, and entertainment. This creates the illusion that no Tonga story is worthy to be categorized under national news, business news, or political news. It builds into and reinforces the

marginalization of the Tonga and Nambya as backward and stuck in the past. Implied is that the Tonga and Nambya are insignificant to the national developmental agenda in Zimbabwe.

Key Words: Media and Ethnolinguistic Minorities, Tonga, Nambya, mainstream media, Zimbabwe.