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Name-Calling as a Communicative Tool in South African Political Discourse

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Abstract

This article reports on a study which emanated from an extended study that explored how name-calling serves as a communicative strategy in political discourse. As an extension, and with a distinct focus on selected political cartoons entrenched in the South African press, the current article details name-calling as a communicative tool in South African political discourse. The study adopted a triangulation theoretical framework, due to its espousal of multiple naming theories. The researchers opted for qualitative discourse textual analysis methodology coupled with exploratory-explanatory research design. Document collection and semiotic analysis were used in succession, as data collection strategies. From the accessible population of ten cartoons, purposive sampling strategy was employed in selecting five cartoons that served as the sample for the study. Name-calling constructs were sequentially extracted from linguistic and visual discourse segments, and were qualitatively analysed through the semiotic analysis, and the theoretical tools underpinning the study. The findings of the study revealed that most of the name-calling stemmed from political corruption. Disclosurement and reaction instigation were found to be the most used naming-communicative strategies during name-calling. Additionally, ideological character and aggressiveness were the most common semantic-pragmatic inherent categories of political discourse reflected. To this end, the study submits that cartoons in the South African press employ various name-calling constructs to express viewpoint, persuade, reprimand and construct arguments.

Keywords: onomastics; name; name-calling; political discourse; communication; cartoon

Introduction

The current study explored how name-calling serves as a communicative tool in South African political discourse, with a precise focus on selected political cartoons from three South African newspapers, namely, the *Sunday Times*, the *Daily Sun* and the *Daily Maverick*. Communication and language are indispensable because as communication transpires, certain language features are prevalent in the communicators' messages, and such features among others, are rooted within onomastics, which is at the temperament of the current study. Koopman (2002, 8) states that the term "onomastics" is derived from the Greek word *onoma* which means "name". According to Machaba (2004, 24), Burchfield (1981, 72 cited in Chauke 1992, 5) defines onomastics as "the scientific study of names as names", which is a commentary on the human tradition of naming entities, while Mamvura (2014, 2) posits that "naming is not a haphazard exercise but is a socially conditioned linguistic behaviour". Therefore, it is essential through language to understand names, in terms of their meaning and communicative functions.

Negative names are bestowed upon people at certain stages of their lives. According to Nendauni (2020, 2), when people assume new positions and behave in a certain way, or are involved in questionable activities, they automatically invite what is termed "name-calling" (Tsai, Knutson and Fung 2006 cited in Nendauni and Sadiki 2019, 85). Nendauni and Sadiki (2019, 85) "explicate name-calling as the labelling of others with derogative or negative terms as a way of connecting a person to a negative symbol or image". Kennedy and Zamuner (2006, 387) concur that name-calling practices are prevalent in a variety of cultures and groups, and they serve a wide range of social and semantic functions. This premise is vital to the study, since it considers names as a communicative tool, strategically devised to achieve specific goals. Be that as it may, name-calling is pervasive in almost every sphere of life, because it ranges from families, schools and workplaces to other social spaces. A case in point is that of short people who suffer from dwarfism, who are often called "shortcoming", "shotput", "full stop", and other expletives. In South Africa, foreign nationals are often called "*makwerekwere*", which is derogatory; Afrikaners are labelled "racists"; and Indians are often labelled "thieves", while homosexuals are named queers or "*izitabane*" (plural) and "*isitabane*" (singular), in isiZulu. Nonetheless, the claims, meanings and messages of these name-calling constructs remain unexplored.

It is, therefore, important to note that name-calling is a dominant factor in politics, and this is affirmed by Tsai (2006), who attests that politicians who want to discredit their opponents often use name-calling, by bestowing each other names such as racist and terrorist. Politician and former Western Cape Premier Helen Zille (2009–2019) was once named a "racist"; South Africa's former president Jacob Zuma (2009–2018) was once named a "thief" after it was alleged that he had utilised public funds to construct his private Nkandla home; and owing to the Marikana massacre, current president Cyril Ramaphosa (2018–present) was named a "killer". These are some of common name-calling episodes pertaining to politicians in South Africa. Calling the police force "pigs"

in the press, for instance, is not just derogatory, but borders on the entire configuration of government power as filthy and immoral, and this results in the entire police force being considered as worthless, and in turn, this legitimises assaults on them (Nendauni and Sadiki 2019, 86).

After a comprehensive scrutiny of cartoons in South African newspapers, the researchers observed that there was a very high prevalence of name-calling in political discourse. However, the meaning of such name-calling constructs remains unexplored, hence the need for the current study. Cartoons

constitute a special media discourse that harnesses language in which linguistic and non-linguistic resources are manipulated efficiently and persuasively to create effect and impression dramatically to evoke a particular response from the audience. (Bright 2013 cited in Kondowe 2014, 40)

For the purpose of the study, name-calling in political cartoons was explored, because “cartoons have widely been defined as metaphorical codification of a satirical humorous genre through which an artist subtly informs, educates and entertains the readership” (Bright 2013 cited in Kondowe 2014, 40). All things considered, Kondowe, Ngwira and Madula (2014, 40) affirm that cartoons articulate views; create valued urgings; and offer explicit understanding on current issues of social importance.

In considering these issues, the researchers further observed that readers regularly encounter name-calling constructs in newspapers, with reference to politicians, without actually being aware of the cognitive significance of the linguistic aspects captured in such bestowed names, and their descriptive backing. Little is known about the underlying meaning and messages encapsulated in such name-calling constructs within society, hence the need to establish the underlying discourses. This is a critical exercise, since human cultural tenets and knowledge may be embedded in some of these constructs, which are strategically and socially constructed, in order to achieve specific goals. Thus, the current study sought to fill the gap by undertaking a deeper descriptive enquiry into the meanings and interpretation of such name-calling constructs, which are exhibited in selected political cartoons, across the South African press.

Purpose of the Study

With a distinct focus on political cartoons entrenched in South African newspapers, the purpose of the study was to explore name-calling as a communicative tool in South African political discourse. The purpose was realised by the following objectives:

- To identify cartoons exhibiting name-calling constructs in the *Sunday Times*, the *Daily Sun*, and the *Daily Maverick* newspapers.
- To establish underlying meanings and messages of name-calling constructs, which are embedded in linguistic and visual discourse segments captured in selected cartoons.

- To extract communicative strategies evident in bestowed name-calling constructs.

Theoretical Points of Departure

The study adopted a triangulation theoretical framework, due to its espousal of more than one theory. According to Angen (2000, 66), a triangulation theoretical framework involves using multiple theoretical perspectives to examine and interpret data. The study was grounded on four “theories of naming”, on the basis that the meaning of a name remains a contested subject in the philosophy of language, as affirmed by Jamil (2010, 150). The theories were: John Mill’s Millian theory of names or Millianism (1843); Gottlob Frege’s sense-based theory of names (1892); Bertrand Russell’s descriptivist theory of names (1952); and Charles Peirce’s theory of semiotics (1860s).

Mill’s Millian Theory of Names

The first contribution to naming was made by Mill (1845) who came up with what is popularly known as Millianism. He proposed three types of names, namely, proper name, common name, and definite descriptor, all of which culminate in the assertion that names refer to something and are non-connotative. According to Mill (1862 cited in Katz 2001, 137), “Proper names are not connotative. They denote the individuals who are called by them; but they do not indicate or imply any attributes as belonging to those individuals”. Mill advanced a follow-up argument to support his stance, by stating that after being given a name based on an event that has happened, the reason for its bearing wears off, but the name remains as a referent (Jamil 2010, 153). For example, Afrikaners were regarded as racist prior to 1994, owing to the apartheid regime. However, although the apartheid regime has ended, Afrikaners – even those who were born post-democracy – are still projected as “racists”. Sengani (2008, 41), who attests that “when a person dies, his name soldiers on, as it is used to talk about him, to describe him and his life”, further supports this view.

Frege’s Sense-based Theory of Names

Frege (1892) challenged the Millianism approach by introducing the sense-based theory of names. He may be considered as the first intellectual giant in the philosophy of language. He was the first to raise the issue of meaning by formulating an organised theory of meaning, for a part of natural language, as the theory of meaning is at the core of the philosophy of language. Based on the study of Zabeeh (1968 cited in Sengani 2008, 42), although his focus was more on proper names, Frege (1892, 44) states that “to talk about a name is to talk about the various properties of its bearer”. It is, therefore, imperative to note that these properties are in the form of definite descriptions or propositions. He provides an example of the name “Aristotle” as a name that can be understood from various senses, and expands that, for example, Aristotle is considered as a pupil of Plato, a teacher of Alexandra the Great, or “the stagirite discipline of plot” (Frege 1892, 45). These are senses that convey information about Aristotle and have a function as definite descriptions of the bearer. From Frege’s observation, people can have different and multiple propositions or descriptions of the same name.

Russell's Descriptivist Theory of Names

Conversely, from the description point of view, Russell (1952) introduced the descriptivist theory of names which positions names in terms of their descriptors. Russell's approach to naming is from a logical and epistemological perspective (Linsky 1980 cited in Sengani 2008, 42). For Russell (1952), a name is simply a symbol, directly designating an individual who is its meaning. According to the descriptive theory, names have semantic value of some definite description and context-sensitive descriptivism. This naming approach reveals that names describe their bearers, for instance, labelling Zuma, as "two heads" is a commentary on his physical attributes. Russell associates names with context-sensitive descriptivism, because the semantic value of a name differs from context to context. Russell's view pertains to Peirce's theory of semiotics.

Peirce's Theory of Semiotics

Peirce's theory of semiotics (1860s) is an account of signification, representation, reference and meaning (Bloom 2002, 54). Semiotics is about "visual signs", and includes words, images, sounds, gestures and "body language" (Schrader and Dillard 1998).

All four of these theoretical perspectives were deemed necessary for the current study as they contain theoretical tools required for data analysis.

Research Methods

To pursue the research objectives, the study adopted qualitative discourse textual analysis as the specific methodology for the study, coupled with exploratory and explanatory research designs, where emphasis was placed on political cartoons as a form of visual discourse, and special media texts that depict issues of social importance transpiring within various distinct communities. The researchers jointly collected 20 political cartoons from the *Sunday Times*, the *Daily Sun* and the *Daily Maverick*. However, of the 20 cartoons collected, only 10 met the requirements for the study due to the naming properties they exhibited, making them the accessible population for the study, which was determined based on the following parameters:

- The selected cartoons were political.
- The selected cartoons were published between 2014 and 2019.
- The selected political cartoons contained elements of name-calling.

For the purpose of the study, a homogenous sampling, which is a form of purposive sampling, was employed in order to select the sample (Creswell 2005, 146). Homogeneous purposive sampling requires the researcher to select a sample based on shared characteristics. Therefore, cartoons that exhibited a high prevalence of name-calling, which targeted issues of social importance, were selected. From the accessible population of 10 cartoons, the researchers used purposive sampling to select five

political cartoons as the sample for the study. The five cartoons were selected based on the assertion that they contained the most prevalent elements of name-calling that the study sought to explore.

The researchers collected the data by following a series of political cartoons published between 2014 and 2019 in the *Sunday Times*, the *Daily Sun*, and the *Daily Maverick* newspapers, through print and online platforms. The following steps were considered for data collection: searching for cartoons in the South African press through print and online platforms; capturing and downloading cartoons with more relevancy to the research problem of the study; and identifying linguistics and visual discourse segments exhibiting name-calling constructs.

The data collection, analysis and interpretation occurred concurrently, due to the fact that semiotics as a data collection method was also utilised as a method of data analysis, as it uncovers meanings embroiled in signs, that is, name-calling constructs and texts and texts (Holloway and Wheeler 2002, 235). With semiotics, the researchers were able to extract the data exhibited in discourse segments contained in the political cartoons. This flexibility enabled the researchers to analyse the underlying assumptions and connotations embroiled in the production of meaning bestowed in specific name-calling constructs, thereby providing a more contextualised interpretation. It also revealed underlying meanings and messages encapsulated in discourse segments exhibiting name-calling constructs. Ultimately, the analysis of both linguistic and visual elements enabled the researchers to develop a framework on the socio-cultural interpretations derived from bestowed names. Guided by the interpretivist paradigm, the researchers provided suggestions for future studies and drew conclusions.

Data Analysis

The data was analysed qualitatively, and the key aspects of analysis were taken into consideration chronologically as follows:

- **Step 1:** Cartoon presentation and description: In the first stage, the cartoon is visually presented as the source of data. The researchers provide a synopsis of the background to the events which led to the choice of that particular cartoon.
- **Step 2:** Cartoon analysis: In the second stage, the researchers extract linguistic and visual discourse segments exhibiting name-calling constructs and analyse them using semiotics and theoretical tools.
- **Step 3:** Cartoon interpretation: In the final stage, the researchers interpret the analysed data; highlight communicative strategies evident during name-calling; and describe issues of social importance, as well as semantic-pragmatic inherent categories of political discourse, highlighted from name-calling constructs in the cartoon.

Cartoon 1: “Dead President Walking”

Cartoon Presentation and Description

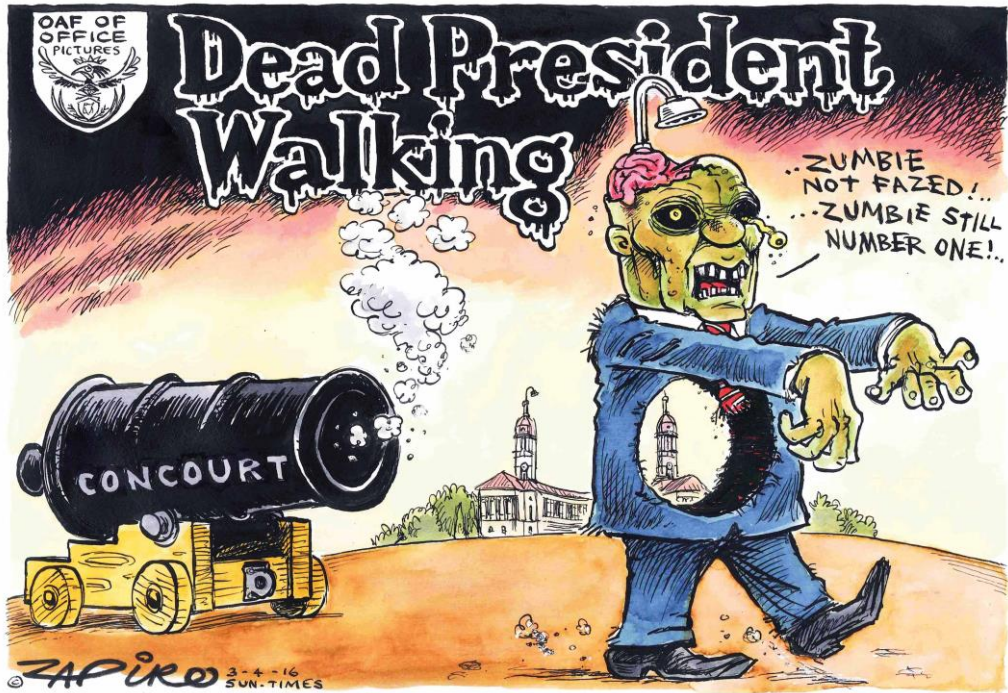


Figure 1: “Dead President Walking” by Zapiro (© 2016 Zapiro, reprinted with permission: www.zapiro.com)

Jonathan Shapiro is a South African cartoonist, known as Zapiro, whose work appears in numerous South African publications. Zapiro (2016) comes of age in his 21st annual compendium titled *Dead President Walking*, and Zuma once again takes centre stage for all the wrong reasons, along with his cronies, the Gupta brothers, and his nemesis, Julius Malema. During an interview about this cartoon, of which the imagery was so powerful that it was re-worked for the cover of the book, Zapiro stressed the fact that the book could have been titled *Buy the Beloved Country*, in reference to Alan Paton’s *Cry, the Beloved Country*, and the alleged Gupta influence on national issues. Former president Zuma is presented as a zombie (appropriately, zumbie), stumbling away from the ConCourt (Constitutional Court) cannon, that has blasted a hole right through him, in front of the Union Buildings in Pretoria.

Cartoon Analysis

Linguistic Discourse Segments: “Dead president walking”

“Dead president” is a prototypical endocentric compound name-calling construct; it is compositionally and semantically transparent. It is formed by two words whose stems contain two lexical items that can stand on their own as separate words. The captured name-calling construct formation is as follows:

Dead [adjective] + **president** [noun] + **walking** [verb]



Descriptor

The grammatical content of the exhibited name-calling construct reveals that meaning can be interred from its constituents as affirmed by O’Grady, Archibald and Katamba (2011, 131). Though the cartoon has the power to evoke laughter by expressing what is absurd, the cognitive content suggests that people use names to reveal their practised memories. Just like a zombie, Zuma is dead, but still exists amongst the living. This connotes the death of Zuma’s political career, though he was still the president at that time. It is significant to highlight that names are more meaningful in the context (time, place and speech acts) within which they are used. Zuma is named “zumbie”, and the construct zumbie is also a derivative word formed through the word-formation process of blending, because it is formed from a combination of the word “Zuma” and “zombie”. Perspectives that emerge on the semantic functions of the construct zumbie indicate that a name does not only function as a marker of personal identity, but also as an index of sociological structure. This is supported by Mill’s (1845) theory, which postulates that names imply attributes belonging to their bearer.

Visual Discourse Segments

Zuma is illustrated as a zombie and this correlates with the text accompanying the cartoon. Zuma is literally illustrated as a zombified president, these iconic illustrations are accurate, because they complement the name-calling constructs accompanying the cartoon. Zuma is portrayed with claws just as a zombie is expected to have; these are the claws he uses to squander the public’s money. On the top of his head there is a showerhead, since at his rape trial he was named “the shower man” after he was rumoured to have taken a shower to wash away HIV/AIDS. Furthermore, the cartoonist has used exaggeration as a linguistic feature by pointing out that Zuma is a “dead walking president”, and he has also employed symbolism through his visual depiction of Zuma full of holes, his brain erupting, and left eye popping out.

Cartoon Interpretation

In this cartoon, Zapiro names Zuma the “dead president”, nonetheless, Zapiro does not wish for Zuma’s death, but he wants to convey a message that Zuma is dead politically. The cartoon is so cataclysmic, on the basis that the president carries on as if nothing has happened, after he had appeared at the apex court of the country, the Constitutional Court. The apex court of any country is crucial to what goes on in the body of politics. Moreover, the Constitutional Court had come up with the damning judgement, stating that he had violated the constitution, yet he carried on as if nothing had happened. No matter how corrupt he is seen to be, no matter how dead he is seen to be, and how much of a liability to the African National Congress (ANC) he is, he keeps going. Disclosurement is used as a communicative strategy, whereby the cartoonist explicitly exposes former president Zuma. A spotlight is placed upon his unbearable deeds that resorted to him being labelled the “dead president”. The semantic-pragmatic inherent political discourse reflected in the cartoon, is ideological character. In the cartoon, Zuma epitomises those political characters who abuse state resources, because of the power vested upon them.

Cartoon 2: “Farewell”

Cartoon Presentation and Description



Figure 2: “Farewell” by Zapiro (© 2017 Zapiro, reprinted with permission: www.zapiro.com)

This cartoon was published after “outspoken politician Makhosi Khoza bid farewell to the ‘alien and corrupt’ ANC in a heart-rending speech at Liliesleaf Farm in Rivonia, Johannesburg” (Masweneng and Jordaan 2017) on 21 September 2017. This was after Khoza was verbally victimised since she had proposed a vote of no confidence against Zuma, as the then President of the ANC. In her speech, she said, “either way, she’d hope to find more purpose in life than to tap dance with the deadly, greedy hyenas and wolves” (Du Plessis 2017).

Further, Khoza said that she had become involved in politics as a moral duty to South Africans:

Khoza, who has spoken out against corruption, and infuriated the party leadership with her public calls for President Jacob Zuma to resign said that “an injustice by a black man is no different from an injustice by a white man”. Khoza said that she was not alone in the pursuit of a just society within the ANC. (Masweneng and Jordaan 2017).

This cartoon reflects some of the views expressed by Khoza during a press conference held as she departed the ANC system.

Cartoon Analysis

Linguistic Discourse Segments: “Lions’ den”, “deadly hyena and greedy wolves”, “goodbye to new alien and corrupt ANC”

Name-calling constructs exhibited in these discourse segments portray the corruption and immoral acts which bedevil the ANC, which is the leading political party in the country. These metaphorical name-calling constructs emanate from direct comparison of the ANC with the “lion’s den” and “aliens”, while its members are named “deadly wolves and greedy hyenas”. Name-calling constructs reflected in the linguistic discourse segments captured in the cartoon include lions’ den, wolves, hyenas, alien and corrupt ANC.

Khoza calls the ANC a lions’ den to reveal that politicians associated with the ANC are in an antagonising state due to hostility associated with the party. She wants to highlight the fact that being in the ANC is not all glitz and glamour, as people may think, it is rather full of complexities and agony. She also refers to ANC officials as wolves, this is a commentary on the characters of ANC politicians, who are assumed to be pretenders and backstabbers by Khoza. Khoza does not just name the ANC hyenas in vain, she wants to alert the public that the ANC which raised her as a child from the age of 12, has now decided to “kill” her for lunch, like “hyenas” would do when killing their young.

Khoza says the ANC is alien and corrupt – an alien is a species that is not native to its environment. The cognitive significance embroiled in these negative descriptors implies that the current ANC is not as it was during the time of struggle against apartheid, as it has deviated from its principles and policies, and it has been captured by many influences; hence, she assumes that it is alien in the current time. She highlights the fact that the ANC today is not premised on the principles of justice, fairness, morality and unity. It has become fascist and non-democratic, and it does not value freedom of speech and open dissemination of ideas and truth. She further calls it a “corrupt political party”, full of politicians who want to enrich their pockets, at the expense of ordinary South African citizenry. There is evidence of symbolism in the above captured constructs, for instance, “wolves” and “hyenas” are symbols of corruption amongst ANC members. In addition, Russell’s (1952) descriptivist theory of names positions names in terms of their descriptors, and this has dented the image of the ANC, which is the ruling party in South Africa.

Visual Discourse Segments

Khoza is depicted as an angry woman who is pulling her “luggage” or even “baggage”, that is, all the beliefs and attitudes that she has accumulated over the past years. She is walking away into the unknown, and these visual discourse segments complement the

linguistic discourse segments captured above. In her act of naming, Khoza makes use of the following linguistic features: imagery, analogy, symbolism and metaphors. Using metaphor as a linguistic device, she compares the ANC to an alien. She also employs analogies to compare the old principled ANC with the current corrupt ANC. The corrupt ANC officials are also shown wearing prison regalia because they allegedly belong in jail.

Cartoon Interpretation

The cartoonist reflects on the happenings within the ruling ANC, which makes ordinary citizens aware of what is happening within their party. In the cartoon, Khoza exposes the entire structure of the ANC, by explicitly stating what she knows, and what she thinks. In her discourse, she positions the ANC as a party full of corrupt officials, plagued by infighting and scandals. Khoza indicates that the ANC that she joined, and the one that she knows, has no policies which condone corruption and defend corrupt members and promote scandalous leaders to higher positions. She uses nomination as a communicative strategy during naming; this is reflected in her choice of negative labels, which she bestows strategically on the ANC to tarnish its image.

Cartoon 3: “Scavengers”

Cartoon Presentation and Description



Figure 3: “Scavengers” by Zapiro (© 2018 Zapiro, reprinted with permission: www.zapiro.com)

A scavenger is an animal that feeds on carrion and discarded items and has a detrimental effect on animals as well as human beings. The cartoonist depicts ANC officials who were involved in corruption scandals, especially money looting in their various departments. These politicians were found to be implicated during state capture sittings.¹ A case in point is Tom Moyane who allegedly squandered taxpayers’ money at the South African Revenue Service (SARS). Nomvula Mokonyane, on the other hand, was heavily implicated in Angelo Agrizzi’s testimony at the Zondo Commission, while, Bathabile Dlamini has always been in the spotlight for allegedly squandering South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) money.

1 [The Zondo Commission or State Capture Commission of Inquiry] is a judicial commission of inquiry instituted by then President Jacob Zuma on 23 January 2018 to investigate allegations of state capture. It is led by deputy chief justice Ray Zondo. . . . The official proclamation in the Government Gazette instructs the commission to inquire, investigate and make recommendations into any and all allegations of state capture, corruption and fraud in the public sector (Du Toit 2018).

The depicted ANC members are featured because of their alleged corruption scandals and their alleged involvement in state capture. The cartoonist labels them “scavengers” because it is alleged that they stole from the government that “had already been stolen from”, and they simply wanted to finish off a government that was disintegrating.

Investigations by amaBhungane journalists in 2017 revealed that [Ace] Magashule [the then secretary general of the ANC] [was] part of the Gupta network, with his son, Gift, on the payroll of the Gupta family – which played Zuma like a puppet while he was president. A new book, by journalist Pieter-Louis Myburgh suggests that the amaBhungane revelations were just a tip of the iceberg.

(<https://www.biznews.com/undictated/2019/04/02/tsotsi-republic-ace-magashule-scandal-explodes>)

South Africans from all walks of life, and particularly from the Free State where Ace Magashule served as premier from 2009–2018, have agreed that he is allegedly a gangster. Some even call him Secretary “General wa Tsotsi” as their anger grows that the ruling party is not dealing with corruption from its ranks, fast enough. While she was Environmental Affairs Minister, Mokonyane (another one labelled a “scavenger”) was heavily implicated in Agrizzi’s testimony at the Zondo Commission. Mokonyane has since written a letter to the commission to object to the fact that she was not notified about the allegations. According to Agrizzi, Bosasa² forked out exorbitant amounts of money for the ANC’s Siyanqoba rallies, allegedly, at Mokonyane’s insistence. Agrizzi alleged that she made the requests through the late Gavin Watson, who served as Bosasa’s CEO from 2000–2019.

Supra Mahumapelo is also regarded as one of the “scavengers” due to corruption allegations that he has been accused of. The Hawks, for instance, raided Mahumapelo’s office and seized various documents linked to a multi-million-rand, worth R160 million, contract that was allegedly awarded to Nepo Data Dynamics. State arms manufacturer Denel was criticised by the Minister of Public Enterprises Pravin Gordhan for allegedly awarding Mahumapelo’s son a R1 million bursary. Dudu Myeni, as the former chairperson of South African Airways (SAA) until 2017, is closely associated with former president Zuma. Myeni was also chairperson of the Jacob Zuma Foundation, which ran out of funds in 2017. Her SAA appointment mystified onlookers, because they allegedly believed that she was not equipped for the job of managing a state-owned entity. Under her leadership, SAA sank deeper into a quagmire and went through billions of rands of taxpayers’ funds. Meanwhile, it has emerged that, beyond the daily diet of headlines about SAA’s troubles, Myeni had allegedly received vast “piles of cash” in exchange for sharing information with Bosasa bosses. Hence, she is also

2 Bosasa is a South African company specialising in providing services to government, most notably prison services. It is controversial for its involvement in corruption allegations exposed during the Zondo Commission of Inquiry.

labelled a “scavenger” by the cartoonist. The *Daily Maverick* has been following the state capture inquiry closely.

Cartoon Analysis

Linguistic Discourse Segment: “Scavengers”

The cartoonist labels the ANC officials “scavengers” due to their involvement in dubious scandals involving the looting of money. A “scavenger” is an animal that feeds on decaying organic matter, it is a beast. This means that the ANC officials depicted in the cartoon as “scavengers” are bottom feeders, in this regard the construct “scavenger”, serves as a peg on which to hang descriptions, because it carries readily available information about its bearers, who are ANC officials. The construct captured is logically connected with the characteristics of ANC officials, thus it accumulates meanings in the course of its usage. It is significant to note that in this cartoon the construct “scavenger” has somehow lost its lexical domain to pick up onomastic traits, as well as non-linguistic associations, to describe the issue of social importance in the cartoon. The cartoonist has renamed ANC officials to rewrite their identities. This implies that the status of the name-calling construct is mirrored by symbolism. The name-giver has employed a metaphor as a linguistic device, in order to directly compare ANC officials to “scavengers”.

Visual Discourse Segments

The officials are all depicted carrying bags of money, which has connotations of their involvement with money looting and reveals their hidden inner character. Symbolism has been employed as a linguistic device, where “scavenger” has been employed to symbolise ANC politicians. The cartoonist has illustrated ANC politicians clad in black cloaks, which is a symbol of the darkness associated with the evil that these politicians involve themselves with. Another interesting visual depiction is that the politicians are illustrated with showerheads on their heads, or their walking sticks, as in the case of Moyane, and this is strategically done by the cartoonist to reveal that these politicians emanate from the Zuma camp. The showerhead is a symbol associated with Zuma, for having said at his rape trial that he allegedly showered off HIV/AIDS.

Cartoon Interpretation

The cartoonist has used disclosure as a communicative strategy when naming these ANC members, and his broader intention is to expose them to the public. The semantic-pragmatic categories, or inherent feature of political discourse reflected in this cartoon is emotiveness, because the basis of this cartoon consists of various combinations of syntactic elements, which give to concrete discourses and texts, as productive embodiments of discourses, not only integrity and connectivity, but also an additional expression. This has a dire impact on society because the citizens now regard politicians as crooks, and politics as a dirty game.

Cartoon 4: “Mr Fix-it vs Mr Wreck-it”

Cartoon Presentation and Description

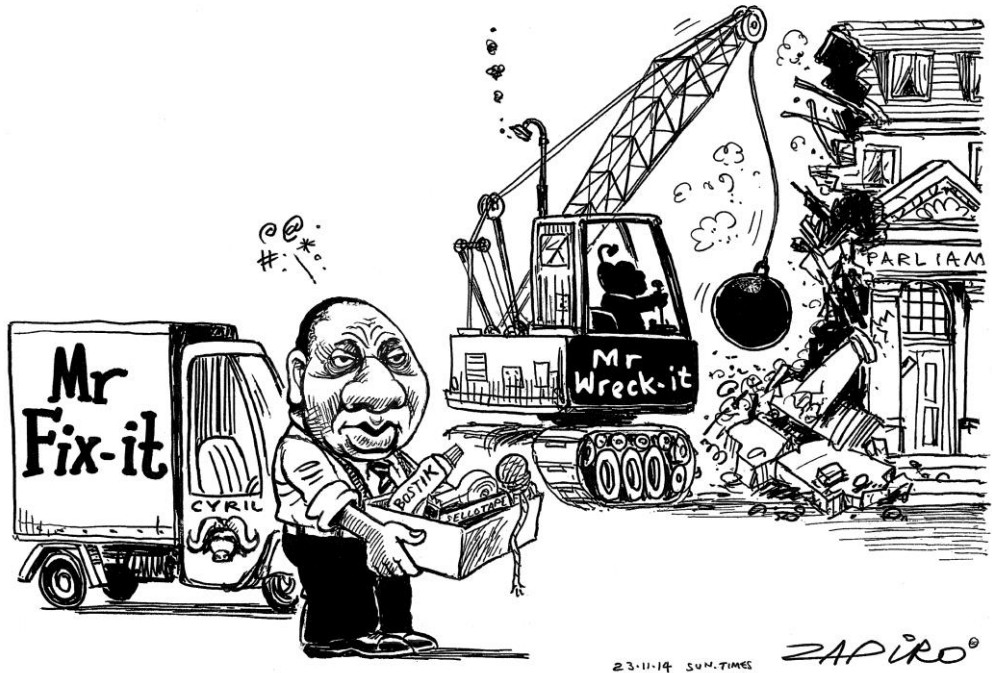


Figure 4: “Mr Fix-it vs Mr Wreck-it” by Zapiro (© 2014 Zapiro, reprinted with permission: www.zapiro.com)

This cartoon reflects the contradictory roles played by former president Zuma and current president Ramaphosa. The cartoon illustrates that Ramaphosa intervened in “building” the South African parliament, after Zuma had destroyed it by means of his dubious involvement with the Gupta brothers. Ramaphosa tried to broker a deal between the ANC and the main opposition parties to restore order to the chaotic situation in the country. Zuma’s refusal to fulfil his constitutional duties to take parliamentary questions was partly the cause of the disruptions in parliament. Ramaphosa was not just deputising for Zuma, but he was also responsible for doing damage control in Zuma’s government.

Cartoon Analysis

Linguistic Discourse Segments: “Mr Wreck-it vs Mr Fix-it”

“Mr Wreck-it” is the name given to Zuma that presupposes his behaviour of wreaking havoc in the South African economy. “Mr Wreck-it” is a name-calling construct derived from the verb phrase, that is, the part of the sentence that indicates the action to be performed. “Mr Fix-it vs Mr Wreck-it” are placed at a close range to depict metaphorical

name-calling, because they exhibit opposite comparatives, with a link to related name-calling constructs. These two opposite constructs reflect the ability of Zuma and Ramaphosa to agonise over their political expertise, and responsibilities. The formulaic images portrayed in the exhibited name-calling constructs call for descriptive analogies in terms of Zuma and Ramaphosa characters.

From the social constructivism point of view, the meanings attached to these name-calling constructs are common knowledge, with various connotations since they are derived from social interaction in society. The occurrence of renaming occurs for symbolic purposes, as well as cultural purposes, as is the case in the above captured name-calling constructs. The construct “Mr Wreck-it” symbolises destruction, chaos, money laundering, corruption, deception, illegal-dealings, theft and other criminal activities; while the construct “Mr Fix-it” symbolises a new dawn, adjustments, order, “fixing the country”, and other positive attributes. These are context-sensitive descriptivism descriptions, describing the former and the current president. It is evident that in this regard, the cognitive significance of a name is linked to the function of the names bestowed on the two presidents.

Visual Discourse Segments

Zuma is depicted as the man operating the forklift, wrecking the parliament buildings with a huge steel demolishing ball, hence the appropriateness of the name “Mr Wreck-it”. The cartoonist employs symbols and signs with reference to the name that has been bestowed on Zuma. Zuma is depicted using a forklift to demolish the building that represents the parliament, and this is epitomises the former president’s character, as he has throughout his reign caused havoc. In terms of the context-sensitive descriptivism, Zuma is called “Mr Wreck-it” because of his political and presidential track-record. The illustrated “ball wrecking” bulldozer, that he employed to demolish the parliament, is a symbol of Zuma’s character, as evidenced in the name “Mr Wreck-it”, bestowed on him. The cartoonist has distorted certain features, which are the least flattering, and emphasised with exaggeration, in order to provide more detail on the subjective issues. Hence, the portrayal of a “wrecking” ball, which demonstrates descriptors, properties and propositions associated with Zuma’s character. In terms of colour, Zuma is illustrated in black, a dark colour associated with doom, destruction, darkness and evil, while Ramaphosa is wearing a white shirt. In this regard, the black colour worn by Zuma represents the dark and sinister activities that he engaged in, that is, the negative dealings during his era which was dogged by controversy and characterised by nepotism, corruption and illegal dealings; while the white colour worn by Ramaphosa symbolises a new beginning with leadership that is characterised by integrity. Ramaphosa’s character is presented with a box full of Bostik, whose purpose is to “fix”, and to restore what was torn apart by Zuma. Portraying him as “Mr Fixit”, therefore symbolises Ramaphosa as the one who will restore the demolished parliament.

Cartoon Interpretation

Zuma is named “Mr Wreck-it”, and this is a description of his tendency to destroy, rather than build. Before Zuma assumed the presidential position there was order in parliament, but as soon as he assumed power, he unleashed his destructive powers. Zuma is portrayed as destructive, while Ramaphosa is projected as the upright character, who is expected to clean up after him, and restore order. The cartoon reveals that Zuma was a very destructive as president. The cartoonist uses metaphor to juxtapose former president Zuma and current president Ramaphosa, by referring to them as “Mr Wreck-it” and “Mr Fix-it”, respectively.

The cartoonist employs disclosure and blame shifting, as communicative strategies in naming. Through disclosure, the cartoonist reveals Zuma’s destructive nature and positions him as the cause of all the negative publicity surrounding the country. The cartoonist also presents a juxtaposition, by positioning the two characters as “Mr Wreck-it” and “Mr Fix-it”. In line with Mill’s (1845) common-sense view, the semantic contribution of a name is its referent, hence, the cartoonist through his portrayal of the former and the current president has successfully provided sufficient evidence that names identify individuals uniquely, and they are meaning-bearing signs, since they convey information.

Cartoon 5: “Xenophobic Attacks”

Cartoon Presentation and Description



Figure 5: “Xenophobic Attacks” (© 2019 *Daily Sun*, reprinted with permission)

This cartoon stems from the 2019 xenophobic attacks that transpired in South Africa. Many people were killed, and hundreds arrested after mobs attacked foreign-owned shops in Johannesburg and Pretoria, as well as other parts of South Africa. The attacks drew condemnation from across the African continent and resulted in reappraisal attacks abroad. Nigeria began evacuating some of its citizens, it also recalled its high commissioner, and boycotted the World Economic Forum on the Africa Summit, in Cape Town. The latest wave of xenophobic attacks was undergirded by the belief that foreigners, mainly migrants from other African countries, are to blame for South Africa’s social and economic woes. However, research has shown that the country faces bigger challenges than hosting foreign nationals. Consequently, this cartoon reflects what transpired as a result of xenophobic attacks.

Cartoon Analysis

Linguistic Discourse Segments: “South Africa is not Africa ... Makwerekwere go home . . . monkeys go home”

The construct “*makwerekwere*” was coined to express disapproval of African foreigners in South Africa. In terms of definite description and context-sensitive descriptivism, foreigners are bestowed with derogatory names because of their origin. “*Makwerekwere*” is formed as depicted below:

ma- [formative – depicting plurality – Li-Ma, class 7 & 8 in African languages]
 + **kwirikwiri** [sound patterns / (verb)] = **makwerekwere** [derivational (inflected noun)]

The formative [ma-] in the stereotypical construct denotes possession; the presence of the prefix [ma-] in the name “*makwerekwere*” signifies people whose language sounds like “*kwirikwiri*”. It is important to note that though the formative [ma-] in this construct denotes possession, in most instances [ma-] is used to denote gender (Koopman 2002), but in this name-calling construct [ma-] is not gender related.

Visual Discourse Segments

The South Africans are burning stores owned by foreign nationals in South Africa, and the natives are seen carrying dangerous weapons, such as machetes, and fuel with which they wanted to kill and burn foreign nationals. The visual projections compliment the above captured linguistic discourse segments. The cartoonist employs symbols, caricatures and formulaic images reflecting stereotypes exhibited by South Africans towards foreign nationals from other African countries. South Africans are reflected beating up and killing fellow-Africans from other African countries. This reveals the extent of their xenophobia, as reflected in the written text accompanying the cartoon.

Cartoon Interpretation

The semantic contribution of name-calling constructs captured in this cartoon speaks volume about South Africans who are projected as xenophobes, due to the recent attacks of foreign nationals, which resulted in the death and arrest of many people. In this cartoon, South Africans label African foreign nationals as “*makwerekwere*” and “monkeys”. This is a commentary on the prejudices and stereotypes exhibited by South Africans towards people from other African countries. South Africans have employed naming as a part of language to dehumanise fellow Africans based on border demarcations and binaries. It is important to point out that dehumanisation based on language functions on two different levels. Firstly, it reduces a person’s humanity to the level of an animal, or lesser species, as a means of justifying the ill-treatment of individuals. It essentially detaches the humanness from the person, while attaching connotations of non-humanness, so that one is desensitised to any ill-treatment of an

individual. Secondly, by dehumanising other individuals, there seems to be a need to curtail their perceived racial superiority, and this is mostly embodied in language.

One of the derogatory names used to refer to African foreigners (Neocosmos 2010, 11), reflected herein is “*makwerekwere*”. It is derived from the name “*kwerekwere*”, which means foreigners who came to the townships and informal settlements of South Africa and could not speak the local languages. One theory on the origin of this term is that their own languages sounded like “*kwirikwirikwiri*” to the locals (Neocosmos 2010, 11). Another more plausible theory is that this term was a corruption of the word “*korekore*” (Neocosmos 2010, 12). The Korekore are Shona-speaking people living in the Northern part of Zimbabwe and spill over from the highest plateau into the Zambezi valley as affirmed by Bourdillon (1979). Constructed racial categories, such as “*makwerekwere*”, carry racial connotations, some of which are degrading, and others jocular but offensive, nonetheless. This terminology makes foreign nationals to be a form of ridicule in South Africa.

Some South Africans call African foreign nationals “monkeys”, which not only serves to group, identify and discriminate against them, but also justifies the inhumane treatment, and possible killing of these people, as it represents the extermination or fumigation of “harmful” creatures, viewed and represented as non-humans. These name-calling constructs convey the language of “cleansing” the unwanted parts of society through xenophobic attacks and are similar to those used during the Rwandan genocide in 1994, where millions of lives were lost.

The issue of social importance raised by the cartoonist is that the wrongfully labelled “xenophobic attacks” have shown the capacity for racism as a structure to be embodied and practised by blacks. The racialisation evident in blacks’ attitudes proves how colonialism was “perfected”, and the full circle of the phenomenon represented by black people keeping “other” black people on the fringes of society, and “exterminating” them, in a fashion that was designed by colonialism, to ironically, mete out a similar treatment to the black South Africans, during the apartheid era.

Discussion of the Findings

Communicative Strategies Deployed during Naming

Names are strategically devised to achieve specific objectives and convey messages. As evident in the title, the current study submits that name-calling is a communicative strategy on the basis that people are bestowed with derogatory names, or name-calling constructs to convey specific messages. Thus, the following communicative strategies were employed during name-calling:

- **Nomination** is a naming strategy used to present the story objectively and truthfully. Nomination is evident in Figure 3, and is also employed in Figure 2, wherein Khoza names the ANC an alien, because of the party’s current projections,

which according to her no longer adhere to and maintain the principles and values of the party, as is required of party members.

- **Reaction-instigation** is a naming strategy often employed with the hope that the attitude or behaviour of the name-bearer will change. Reaction-instigation is evident in Figure 5, wherein South Africans label foreign nationals “*makwerekwere*”. This is a derogatory name, which connotes that foreign nationals are not welcome in South Africa and they should go back to their African countries.
- **Blame-shifting** is used as a communicative strategy in naming, as reflected in Figure 5, wherein for instance, naming foreigners “*makwerekwere*” does not only discriminate against them based on their nationality, but it also projects blame on them for the social and economic challenges which are experienced by South Africans, who still regard themselves as disadvantaged.
- **Disclosure** is one of the most widely used communicative strategies throughout the exhibited name-calling constructs in the study. Disclosure is employed on the bases that a name is bestowed to disclose, or to highlight, a specific meaning or message. In Figure 1, Zuma is labelled “the dead walking president”, this is a commentary on his poor leadership, and it discloses his corrupt activities, which have destroyed the morale and the trust of the people of South Africa in him. In Figure 3, ANC members are named “scavengers”, and this naming construct speaks volumes about their character, as it reveals how cruel they are to the country’s economy.

Issues of Social Importance Exhibited in Name-calling Constructs

The study findings revealed that names are placed in socio-political contexts as speech acts, to connote the happenings within the political spectrum. Thus, it is important to note that the study focused on name-calling within the political discourse. Naming in the study was regarded as a socio-political process that yields linguistic products, that is, name-calling constructs. Research evidence proves that within the international onomastics’ community, a small but growing number of scholars are investigating ways in which naming reflects societal changes (Neethling 2005, 3). Otherwise, the importance of the study was to highlight issues of social importance within society, as reflected in name-calling constructs embedded in political cartoons. Consequently, issues of social importance pertaining to corruption, segregation, and other issues related to naming, were found to be evident.

Therefore, the study submits that politics is the greatest factor that influences the selection and utilisation of name-calling towards politicians in the South African press. By implication, it seems that traditional name research has not only “been afraid of politics” (Pulman 1983, 103), but it has also failed to honestly reflect on its own complicity in power struggles over naming. The study reckons that people’s understanding of a name-calling construct is dependent upon their knowledge of the community of practice, linguistic ability, and understanding of onomastics traits, associated with the bestowed name.

The study findings also revealed that society often bestows derogatory constructs to one another, as a form of social segregation. However, it is vital to note that segregation occurs in different dimensions, which can be racial, xenophobic and gender-based, or more depending on the context and people involved. In Figure 5, for instance, South Africans are labelled “xenophobe”, because of their abhorrent attitude toward foreigners. Thus, the study has proved that corruption is at the centre of South African politics. For instance, in Figure 1, Zuma is named “the dead president”, because he is regarded as politically dead, due to how he destroyed the economy, as well as all state-owned enterprises of South Africa, which resulted from his multiple corruption scandals.

Name-calling is also due to physical attribution. In his study, Guerini (2005) reports that the most common types of these names are hurtful as they refer to the recipient’s physical appearance, particularly their weight or height, their nose, teeth, hair colour or hairstyle, freckles or warts. Similarly, in the study done by Herbert (1995), the study findings also revealed that people are often exposed to name-calling due to their physical attributes. For instance, short people are often subjected to multiple derogatory names. Furthermore, in Figure 4, Zuma is named “Mr Wreck-it” to project blame on him for the destruction that was prevalent in the national parliament and the country, during his reign as the president of South African. There are numerous name-calling constructs that are constructed with the intention of projecting blame on the “other”. Louwrens (1998) has emphasised the symbolically unifying functions that names enjoy as performative catalysts for popular identities.

Theoretical Tools’ Implications in the Study

The current study adopted a triangulation theoretical framework, due to its espousal of more than one theory since the meaning of a name remains a scholarly debate. The study submits that the theories adopted for the study were relevant and applicable to the subject studied. Mill’s (1845) theory was applicable in terms of its semiotic properties because he argues that the semantic contribution of a name is its referent since names are meaning bearing signs. Mill (1845) for instance, stresses that names perform an informative function, this is proven in Figure 1, wherein the constructs “dead president”, reveal that Zuma is responsible for the destruction that prevailed during his reign, as well as his corrupt dealings. It is also evidenced in Figure 2, wherein the construct “scavengers” reveals that the ANC politicians are renowned for engaging in corrupt activities. It is further evident in Figure 5, wherein South Africans label the foreign nationals as “*makwerekwere*”, which reveals their xenophobic attitudes towards foreign nationals.

The study findings also reflect aspects of Frege’s (1892) theory of sense which posits that names contain properties which are in the form of definite descriptions or propositions and leave space for multiple senses. The study contends that names and semiotics are indispensable, and this agrees with Russell’s (1952) descriptivist theory

of names, which maintains that names are symbols with the semantic value of some definite description and context-sensitive descriptivism.

Conclusion

Onomastics is a broad field, and while extensive research has been done, most of it has been skewed towards proper names. It was, therefore, imperative to conduct a study on name-calling, as one of the unexplored cognates of onomastics. The researchers approached the study through a philosophical and linguistic approach to naming. Cartoons containing linguistic and visual discourse segments exhibiting name-calling constructs were analysed, in order to determine the meaning of name-calling constructs bestowed to name-bearers, who may in some cases been politicians, messages encapsulated, issues of social importance, and to further determine evident communicative strategies deployed. At the theoretical level, the study makes a significant contribution to the theory of name-calling. The study concludes that there is an enormous strategic use of name-calling in political cartoons, and this reflects everyday life within societies.

Thus, the study concludes that names contain properties which are in the form of definite descriptions or propositions. The study also concludes that cartoons in the South African press employ various name-calling constructs to express viewpoint, persuade, reprimand and construct arguments. The study has indeed proved that name-calling can serve as a communicative tool, to convey specific goals of the name-giver. The study has implications both in the linguistic discipline and in society since name-calling is apparent in everyday communication.

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