

Arguments for an appraisal linguistic discourse approach to the analysis of 'objectivity' in 'hard' news reports

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Abstract

Studies focusing on the ideal of 'objectivity' in 'hard' news reports are numerous, with most of them within journalistic studies and theorised from diverse theoretical insights. This article departs from journalistic to a linguistic discourse approach-presenting evidence that the linguistic discourse analytical framework of Appraisal Theory provides alternative ways of analysing 'objectivity' and ideological bias in 'hard' news reports. Couched in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) Appraisal is a model that explains the way(s) in which language construes attitude and enables writers and speakers to position themselves evaluatively with respect the viewpoints of potential respondents and other speakers/writers (White, 2007; Thomson, White and Kitley, 2008). The paper argues that the analysis of the construction of journalistic reality can also be adequately done from a linguistic perspective, specifically from analysing how lexical choices journalists make betray their ideological positioning both in terms of the content as well as context of the news report. In discussing this, the paper comparatively analyses two news reports in two Zimbabwean newspapers on the death of Retired General Solomon Mujuru.