

1. How corruption is reflected in language: the case of Zimbabwean Shona

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Abstract

This paper informed by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the Speech Act Theory (SAT) and the Functionalist Theory of Language, argues that many Zimbabweans as reflected in the Shona language have become corrupt. It puts forward the theory that in most cases where services are asked for or are supposed to be provided, there are certain words and phrases that are couched in a manner that is reflective of people requesting for or demanding bribes. The paper laments that attempts to eliminate corruption are almost insurmountable because the rot affects almost everyone, the rich and the poor as well as the powerful, and those without power. It does not however suggest that people become corrupt because of language, but that language becomes reflective of the cancer that has largely blighted the country. The paper does this through an exegesis of selected phrases such as Pano panoti ini (This is my space) and Regai vambodyewo (It is their time to eat, viz, Let them loot or enrich themselves since it is their time) that show the depth of the rot with some people even condoning it. The paper concludes by pointing out that although language has always been used as a vehicle in corrupt transactions, the Shona language is today more reflective of this cancer largely because of the economic challenges that the country of Zimbabwe is facing.

Keywords: Corruption, Critical Discourse Analysis, Speech Act Theory, Functionalist Theory

Introduction

Language is an important asset to human beings and forms the basis through which humans relate to each other and with the immediate environment. Although technically language is fundamentally a system of communication where sound or signs convey objects, actions and ideas, it is also expressive in character (Sircello, 1967). It is through language that human beings express emotions, wishes and even intentions. In addition, it is a reflection of both the good and the bad of any society, in terms of building peace or destroying it, for instance. While it has a bonding effect in that it connects people, language also has fissures through which the darker side of humanity like corruption or religious fundamentalism evinces itself. Through these crevices it can be observed that language is also a tool that has been manipulated and abused by those with power and access to state machinery such as radio and broadcasting stations to call upon audiences to support agendas that are detrimental to human relations, for example as happened in Rwanda during the genocide (Kellow & Steeves, 1998). Language in its social function can also reflect the social situation in a given community and one of the reflectors is words and

phrases that are used. Drawing on some examples from Shona, one of the languages spoken in Zimbabwe, this paper argues that the scourge of corruption is now engrained in the Zimbabwean psyche. The writers note that it is not only the Shona who use words to hide their corrupt tendencies and their affinity to it. The English language for example is also awash with words and phrases that euphemistically refer to bribery and corruption without necessarily saying out the words 'bribe' and 'corruption'. It is important to note that the prevalence of corruption is reflected in all languages and not only Shona as among the Swahili speakers especially in Kenya, it is '*kitu kidogo*' (Franz, 2012, p.2). For cross-border traders from Zimbabwe, or those Zimbabweans resident in South Africa but without passports and/or permits, the police and passport officers always ask the affected parties to 'make a plan' so that they are left free to go. The plan is the payment of a bribe. In Zimbabwe a bribe is also one of the major forms of corruption as an act between two parties; either representing themselves or third parties. It is in Shona known as *chiokomuhomwe* or *chiokomunhava* (hand-in-pocket/hand-in-bag). Despite the prevalence of bribery in Zimbabwe, it has to be noted that it is not the only form of corruption. There are other forms that include theft of trust, property, and abuse of state or institutional services.

Background: Corruption in Zimbabwe

Corruption is as old as post-independence Zimbabwe is. In the 1980s there were cases that involved high-ranking public and private citizens like Frederick Shava (Kalley, Schoeman, Andor, et al., 1999) and Sampson Bernard Mashata Paweni (Zimbabwe Government Gazette, General Notice 371A of 1984). Both Shava and Paweni were pardoned (Shana, 2006). Shava was one of the cabinet ministers who received cars from Willowvale Motor Industries and sold them at highly inflated prices. Zimbabwe lost about US\$6 million when Bernard Paweni bribed government officials so that he would win a government tender to transport drought relief food across the country. When he was caught, he was jailed for 15 years but later this sentence was reduced to 10 years on appeal. Paweni was again pardoned (Takawira, 2017). What made corruption entrenched in Zimbabwe largely has to do with the post-independence leadership. Mandaza (1986) notes that the seed of corruption in post-independence Zimbabwe was partly a result of the search for power and wealth. He states:

The long years of colonial domination and deprivation, not to mention imprisonment and the hard days of the struggle, became almost the licence - albeit for only a few among the many who might claim such a licence - to accumulate quickly; and the state ... appeared the most viable agency for such accumulation" (Mandaza 1986, p.57).

The above words are quite important in that they point out when and how the corruption rot set in in Zimbabwe. It has become so endemic that a lot of people live with it as is noted by Tizora (2009, p.26) who points out:

With the Zimbabwean economy in the doldrums corruption has become an accepted and almost expected way of doing business especially in the public sector. If a civil servant still goes to work today it is not because of the salary but the opportunities to enhance his paltry income with corrupt acts using the organisation's resources

Through Tizora's words, it becomes clear that corruption permeates almost all Zimbabwean sectors, from the public- to the private sector. One of the areas through which signs of corruption manifest, besides an underpaid civil servant continuously going to work, is language. This is what this paper discusses.

Research methods

The researchers adopted a qualitative approach to this study. The data for this paper was collected through participant observation, which involved informal conversations with people who include among others, police officers, senior officials in government, some workers in quasi-governmental organisations, and those in the private sector. The use of informal conversations was considered best suited for this type of research because it is not intrusive since information is gathered in an unsuspecting environment and in a set-up where there is no formality of the office set-up. Subjects, although aware of being interviewed they are relaxed in such a set-up. In this case there was no fear that one would refrain from using registers and terms that reveal the depth of corruption because there was no fear of any labels. The researchers also relied on their memory because as Prager (1998, p.215) notes memory is important in research. He thus suggests that recognising and appreciating remembering as a 'post-hoc' representational exercise is fundamental if we are to realise the contribution of the present to our memory of the past. In the case of this study, memory was principal in informing researchers because it is an active though subjective manifestation process of our earlier experiences.

These are encoding, which refers to the conversion of information into a form that can be stored in memory. Linked to this is the action of storing which is the act of maintaining the prearranged information in memory. The last of this is retrieval (May & Einstein, 2013). The importance of remembrance in qualitative research is thus highlighted by Keightley (2010, p.55) who argues that memory is a vast and potential resource that can be harnessed to explore relationships between private and public lives, agency and power as well as the past, present and future. The issue of language is therefore one of agency and power as well as one that has bearing on Zimbabwe's present and future as a state. This is so because language, as noted by

Ahearn (2001), has the power to socioculturally mediate capacities to act. Language as agency then can cause people to act in certain ways, for instance acting corruptly or acceding to corrupt acts after being compelled by political heavyweights.

Theoretical framework

This paper is informed by three theories, namely the Speech Act Theory as propounded by Austin (1962) and further elaborated on by Searle (1969, 1975) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Van Dijk, 1993) that discusses language as used in a social context and how it reflects power relations as well as the Functionalist Theory as propounded by Allen (2007) among others. The Speech Act Theory (SAT) was first propounded by Austin and suggests that three kinds of acts are simultaneously performed by an utterance:

- Locutionary act: An utterance with determinate sense and reference. (E.g. I will eat later.)
- Illocutionary act: The making of a proclamation, proposal, promise etc., in uttering a sentence, by virtue of the conventional force associated with it. (E.g. a promise or a threat.)
- Perlocutionary act: Bringing about effects on the audience by means of an utterance with effects being special to the circumstances of utterances. (E.g. making hearer happy, angry, or scared etc.) (Austin, 1962, pp.99-106, 108).

Searle (1975, 1976) like Austin, is of the opinion that we cannot explain meaning in where there is a dearth of the context of a speech act. In light of this Searle thus posits that sentences are devoid of expressing a proposition unless they are analysed in context. Therefore, through using Austin's framework, he puts forward the idea that there are several ways of describing the same speech act. Searle (1976) classified Austin's SAT thus:

- Representatives: Commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed propositions (e.g. asserting, concluding).
- Directives: The speaker attempts to get the hearer to do something (e.g. request, question).
- Commissives: Commit the speaker to some future course of action (e.g. promise, threat).
- Expressives: Convey a psychological state (e.g. thanks, apologies, congratulation).
- Declarations/Declaratives: Effect changes in the institutional state of affairs (e.g., declaring war, christening) (Searle, 1976, pp.10-14).

From a SAT perspective, it is therefore clear that:

- All utterances serve to express propositions and to perform actions;
- The (illocutionary) speech act is associated by convention with the form of the utterance;
- Illocutionary force is specified by a set of felicity conditions which may be classified according to Searle as:
 - preparatory conditions: real-world prerequisites;
 - propositional content conditions; and
 - sincerity conditions: restriction on beliefs, feelings and intentions of the speaker.

Felicity (appropriate) conditions specify how the context has to be in order for an utterance to perform the type of act it is conventionally associated with (Searle, 1969, pp.66-67).

A look at the above shows that SAT is relevant to the study of Shona utterances with regards to corruption because even though they may not fit in all categories, they are directives, declaratives and expressives. Speakers utter words that entice the hearer to engage in corrupt activities because one may have read non-verbal signs that indicate that the environment allows one to engage in such a discussion. SAT ties in very well with CDA. SAT as observed above (Searle 1975, 1976) only has meaning and significance where there is context. CDA's relationship with SAT is that it provides an insight into context, especially the interface between discourse, power, dominance and social inequality. It in addition gives an appreciation of how discourse replicates itself and sustains these bonds of dominance and inequality. Van Dijk characterises Critical Discourse Analysis as:

... a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context (Van Dijk, 2001, p.352).

In light of the above definition of CDA, it is essential to understand that the main underlying idea behind CDA is its perception of language as social practice. It contends that all users of language do not function in social vacuums, and because they are not in isolation they are informed by a set of cultural, social and psychological frameworks (Zavala, 2018). It is in light of this realisation that it can be noted that CDA accepts the significance of the social context to be of supreme importance. As a result of this realisation CDA studies the linkages that exist between textual structures and power relations. It thus becomes clear through CDA that connections exist between textual structures and their function in human interactions within society. It has been used

to explore power relations in social contexts and in this case, is deployed to analyse the same power relations as they relate to the communication of requests for bribes from those who need assistance and are entitled to get it without payment or without feeling that they have been given a huge favour (Searle, 1976; Van Dijk, 2001). CDA is an attempt at imitating that which is not explicitly said but is aimed at the hearer and the speaker wants it to be understood and read by the recipient as s/he also reads it in the same manner. CDA thus opens up space for the systematic exploration of often opaque relationships of causality and determination that comes into play between discursive practice, events and texts, as well as wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes (Van Dijk, 1995). It also enables the investigation of how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles overpower. CDA further allows for the exploration of how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony as reflected in some of the contexts that will be highlighted in this paper.

One of the three theories that are important is the Functional Theory that was largely propounded by Jakobson (1960), and Halliday (1975, 1978). According to Jakobson, any act of verbal communication consists of six elements namely (1) a context (the co-text, that is, the other verbal signs in the same message, and the world in which the message takes place), (2) an addresser (a sender, or enunciator), (3) an addressee (a receiver, or enunciator), (4) a contact between an addresser and addressee, (5) a common code and (6) a message.

Each element is the focal point of an oriented relation or function. There are six of these functions that are (1) emotive/expressive, (2) referential/informative (3) conative/persuasive/directive (4) phatic and (6) poetic/aesthetic.

Jakobson further states:

(1) the referential function is oriented toward the context (the dominant function in a message like 'Water boils at 100 degrees'); (2) the emotive function is oriented toward the addresser (as in the interjections 'Bah!' and 'Oh!'); (3) the conative function is oriented toward the addressee (imperatives and apostrophes); (4) the phatic function serves to establish, prolong or discontinue communication [or confirm whether the contact is still there] (as in 'Hello?'); (5) the metalingual function is used to establish mutual agreement on the code (for example, a definition); (6) the poetic function (e.g., 'Smurf'), puts 'the focus on the message for its own sake' [(Jakobson 1960: 356 in (trans. of Tritsmans, 1987: 19)].

Halliday (1975) also argues that language has three functions: Ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The ideational function of language is that language

allows users to conceptualise the world for their benefit as well as for the advantage of others. It sees language as a coding system that deals with the relationship human beings and nature. The ideational function is divided into two aspects, the experiential and the logical. Halliday (1975, 1978) posits that the experiential deals with grammatical choices that enable speakers to make meanings about the world around them. The logic goes beyond this in that it enables speakers and hearers to decipher and weigh meanings carried in statements.

Halliday (1975) further puts forward the notion of the interpersonal function of language. He points out that language is an act that is participatory in nature because it serves as a medium of communication between individuals helping to establish and maintain relationships. He in addition notes that language has the potential to anger as well as please others, besides its capacity to in addition, influence behaviour. Halliday further argues that language also enables situations to give room for the cultivation of sympathy or help. Linked to the interpersonal function of language is the textual one. This focuses on the relationship of language to the verbal and non-verbal situational environment among others.

It is in light of the influence of the likes of Halliday and Jakobson that Allen (2007, p.254) asserts that functionalism refers to linguistic structures that “can only be understood and explained with reference to the semantic and communicative functions of language, whose primary function is to be a vehicle for social interaction among human beings”. These words are critical in decoding the meanings embedded in certain codes and registers that are used to reflect corruption either as a request or as an offer between the communicating parties. What is therefore critical to note is that, a functional approach to language is founded on an interest in performance, or actual language use (Berns, 1983) as will be found in examples that are explored in this paper.

What is corruption?

Corruption is an immoral and unethical, illegal, bad, and dishonest deed, especially **committed by people in positions of power and authority**, in particular those who are of the opinion that they are not subject to censure by anyone under them (Hornby et al, 2010, p.239). Such people because of their positions can even threaten those under them with either dismissal or other action that they may deem will put their subordinates in their ‘proper place’. The word corruption etymologically comes down from the Latin word *corrumpere* which means (to) deteriorate or destroy either physically or morally (Cresswell, 2010, p.103). The implication of this Latin definition is that through death everyone becomes corrupt. However, when applied to morality and ethical matters it means moral decay as experienced in communities when a person, be it a public officer or one with authority in the private/public

sector receives or gives (usually) an unsolicited 'present' for private gain. It can also be one who is not in authority who also gives or receives an unsolicited present or money for his/her benefit. Corruption is best defined by Van Duyne (2001) who says:

Corruption is an improbity or decay in the decision-making process in which a decision-maker consents to deviate or demands deviation from the criterion which should rule his or her decision-making, in exchange for a reward or for the promise or expectation of a reward (2001, p.75).

There are many cases of corruption but the major cause of this problem is nothing other than sheer human greed or artificial and even genuine shortages. It is not always poverty that causes it because in some instances it is usually those who have the means who can pay bribes. Corruption is at times also initiated by those in positions of power who can influence or decide whether one gets their support or not (Šumah, 2018). Through the use of certain codes, people indicate to those they will be interacting with whether their intention is to get a bribe or in the inverse to give a bribe or other favour in kind. What is however important to note is that a gift and a bribe are not one and the same thing because a present, whether given in private or public is announced. However, language plays a significant role in both cases.

Corruption and language creativity

As observed by Austin (1962) in SAT, language can be used to declare (declarative), give direction or order (directive) and express a wish or expectation (expressive). A discussion of some of the phrases that were collected shows that language or utterances do not just express propositions but also perform actions. The phrases when analysed from a CDA perspective in addition reflect power relations, and thus function to not only express wishes and give direction or orders, but are furthermore statements of power and menacing force between those who wield it and those who are at their mercy. In the discussion that follows, several phrases/clauses are discussed. However, in some instances those related to them are also used to buttress the ubiquity of corruption as reflected in everyday language. It is common in Zimbabwe to hear a person utter the words "*Zvangu zvaita*" (I have succeeded in getting what I wanted).

The word '*zvangu*' (mine/for me) is key here. In such a context where one feels that s/he has got what they wanted the word carries a connotation of success in getting something that almost everyone is struggling for. The statement, from a SAT

perspective is an expressive in that the speaker, through it putting across a sense of joy for having got something that s/he had for long wished or desired to have. Unfortunately, such an expression of success is not for the benefit of all, but for an individual. Implied in the words is also a sense of having got something after a struggle, and in the Zimbabwean context it may also imply that one got whatever s/he acquired through corrupt means such as paying a bribe in cash or kind, not excluding the extension of sexual favours to the one who has access to the goods/services required. The use of bribes means that there is a case of power relations where one who finally gets something would have been forced by circumstances to pay. So despite the expression of joy by the utterer of the words, "*Zvangu zvaita*", the sad reality is that of an exploitative relationship which under the CDA lenses reflects how those who have power can use it to exploit those who are at their mercy. The phrase thus sums up the Zimbabwean situation where individualism which is frowned upon under *ubuntu/unhu* has come about not as a result of Westernisation or other foreign cultures but because of life challenges that have forced some citizens to get into corrupt relations. It is after getting something through corrupt means that some people get into fits of jubilation, celebrating moral depravity and acts that are a negation of *ubuntu*. From a functionalism perspective, it comes out clearly that social relations and activities are skewed in favour of those who have the power to manipulate those who depend on them for services. Other acute cases of corruption are more elaborately made manifest in the words and clauses that are discussed in the paragraphs that follow below.

There are instances when the "illocutionary force-indicating device" (Searle, 1976, p.14), like when the sentence *Pano panoti ini* (This place says me/This place spells my name) which actually means "This is my space/territory" is used. Those in power use this statement to declare that they are at the pinnacle of power and should not be challenged or queried on their acts. This may not necessarily be because of a leader's inclination towards corrupt acts, but just to stamp one's authority. This same phrase may however mean that the speaker is declaring that he is the one in charge of for example, a given place or events and as such his actions like taking away what is not his/hers cannot be questioned. This is an act of corruption if it happens. From a SAT standpoint what the speaker is therefore declaring is that no one among his/her subordinates has the right to ask him why s/he is doing things the way s/he is doing them. In other words, from a functionalist perspective, language in its interpersonal function (Halliday, 1975) is relaying information to those being addressed that because all authority in that particular place is vested in him/her, then no one has to say or act in a manner that is *ultra vires* his/her clout. The speaker as reflected from a CDA viewpoint is in this case exhibiting clear evidence of abuse of office or authority and is threatening those under him/her. Such words do not only point to corruption as where one feels s/he has to be left to exploit the institution

or organisation, but are also reflective of dictatorial tendencies. The authoritarian sentiments that underlie these words are indicative of power relations. The speaker has clout and it is this power that s/he is using to throw her/his weight around.

It has to be noted that despotic propensities also exist in institutions not necessarily because one wants to keep a firm grip on those under him/her but in addition because one desires to instil fear in subordinates so that they do not query his/her actions especially as regards abuse of resources. Since all utterances serve to express propositions and to perform actions, it has to be noted that these words are both declarative and expressive because they issue out a threat to subordinates thus entrenching corrupt practices. They are therefore a rejection of any ideas by one in a position of authority and trust that he/she may perceive as likely to torpedo his/her chances of enriching him/herself illicitly from public and/or trust property (Saragih & Medaline, 2018).

It is interesting to note that some people go beyond saying "*Pano panoti ini*", to telling some people to find their own places to manage. In some schools, colleges or universities some heads can be heard telling those who would have queried them, "*Tsvagawo pako pekutonga*" (Find your own place which you can run or preside over)". From a CDA perspective these words are an imperative clause that is couched in politeness as is reflected in the use of the enclitic */-wo/*. They are however an order as well as a declarative anchored in power relations where the speaker is telling whoever has raised a red flag over his/her actions to hold her/his tongue since s/he is not the one in charge of that particular space. It is a clear case of one telling off another because as far as s/he is concerned power resides in and with her/him. In addition, from a SAT point of view, the statement is an expressive in that it is expressing the speaker's desire and wish to see the petitioner move to another place to avoid inconveniencing him/her (in doing what s/he wants like pilfering company property). The statement is additionally a declarative and directive in that through it the speaker is declaring that s/he brooks no questions as to how s/he does things. It is also a directive or order to the inquirer to avoid asking questions that may be irksome to the one in charge of a particular station. Because one does not want to be asked uncomfortable questions, besides using any one or all of the above mentioned statements, s/he may declare, "*Ndini ndiri panyanga*" (I am the one with the reins of power) (Literary: I am the one on the horns/sitting on the horns). This declarative is a clear indication that one does not want to have his/her corrupt activities questioned. The words are therefore a product of one who is confident that nothing will befall him/her.

Another common utterance is *Regai vambodyewo* (Let them eat, it is their turn). It is an interesting statement that reflects how corruption has permeated the Zimbabwean mentality and has been accepted as normal. When it involves those who

are ascending new positions it can also be rendered as “*Regai timbodyewo*” (It is our turn to eat). These clauses sum up how rotten to the core some in the Zimbabwean community have become. The words as stated above are an unwitting testimony to how low some in Zimbabwe have fallen in moral terms. It is an indictment of a society that has failed to extricate itself from the jaws of corruption and in fact accepts it as part of its everyday life (Transparency International Zimbabwe, 2019). This corruption as exhibited by Zimbabweans as reflected in this Shona clause is best defined by Heidenheimer et al., (1989, pp.8-9) as the “destruction or spoiling of anything, especially by disintegration or decomposition with its accompanying unwholesomeness...” It is in addition “... a making or becoming morally corrupt, a fact or condition of being corrupt; moral deterioration or decay; depravity”, as well as “... the perversion of an institution, custom... from its primary purity”. From the foregoing insights, it is thus clear that the Zimbabwean moral landscape in as far as corruption is concerned is a pointer to a community that is disintegrating and is characterised by the perversion of both public and private institutions. Zimbabweans’ moral depravity is consequently realised when it becomes acceptable that to ascend to a higher position means that one has room to behave corruptly since it is their time to amass material possessions or “eat”.

It would seem that some in Zimbabwe assume that ascension to higher positions of power either politically or in the workplace is a time of self-enrichment and the open and defiant employment of relatives and lovers. This is captured in the alternative version of the same clause where people, especially those employed or benefitting because they are related to the incumbent openly talk about their relationship to *mukuru* (the boss). They feel that their positions of power and privilege entitle them to loot and plunder hence the words “*Regai timbodyewo*”. From a SAT view they feel that state and/or institutional assets are there for the benefit of their group and not everyone. The words are consequently not only declarations of intent but also expressions that they feel that they have a right to loot. They are, in addition a subtle directive to the general public to keep quiet and raise a red flag when those entrusted with higher office start looting. To make matters worse, these words express arrogance and a lack of concern with accountability and transparency. If anything, these words ring with a defiance and an underlying paralinguistic element where the speaker is defiantly telling whoever cares to listen that it is acceptable that whoever is in a given powerful position has a right to loot and plunder assisted by his/her cronies. As is the case with “*Pano panoti ini*”, this phrase though innocent, may encompass an expression of intent and desire to plunder without question. It is also a declaration of intent and a directive to whoever may want to question to keep quiet because as the words assume, plundering and looting are permissible in Zimbabwe and as long as people do it in turns. What the statement “*Pano panoti ini*” and the other one before it do is that they serve to confirm that language does

more than communicate. What the clauses *Pano panoti ini* and *Regai vambodyewo* reveal is that language is reflective of the host community because as these sentences expose, corruption has become so ingrained in the Zimbabwean psyche and practices such that it has become acceptable. The same words *Pano panoti ini* and *Regai vambodyewo* also succinctly disclose the arrogance of power – where those in power do not tolerate being called to order by those they consider as less important and even as of no consequence.

What may be worrisome with the use of the clause *Regai timbodyewo* by those in power could be the perception of a kleptomaniac belief that people come to believe that everyone who ascends the reins of control for a company or organisation and even a ministerial office has a right to loot. This assumption can get traction and possible confirmation from the fact that almost all public officials who have been arraigned before the courts in Zimbabwe have not been convicted. The *Daily News*, a Zimbabwean newspaper has raised concerns that those brought before the courts on charges of corruption are never convicted, raising questions about the seriousness of the Government's fight against corruption. A contributor to the *Daily News* writes:

Until we start seeing convictions and perpetrators being sent to jail, the on-going crusade will just remain a witch hunt ... and authorities do not have to go far or even scratch their heads if they want to do a thorough job in bringing corrupt government to account. They just have to go to the Auditor-General Mildred Chiri's startling reports which have all these years been ignored. (Wilson, 11 November 2018).

The above quotation shows that there is no political will in fighting corruption in the corridors of power. There in fact have been no convictions so far and those who have been brought before the courts are those who are viewed as having belonged to the G40 or Generation 40 faction of Zanu-PF an informal grouping of some politicians who were suspected to be working against the possibility of Emmerson Mnangagwa (leader of *Lacoste Faction*) succeeding former president Robert Mugabe as the president of Zimbabwe. Examples of those who have been brought before the courts are as the cases Chombo, Chipanga and Mandiwanzira. Earlier on 6 July 1989 the then President Robert Mugabe used Presidential powers to undermine the authority of the courts when he pardoned Frederick Shava (Kalley, Schoeman, Andor, et al., 1999). Shava had been convicted for having bought new cars without paying sales tax, and then selling them well above the maximum price in what was dubbed the Willowgate scandal (Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, 2001). Shava later on went to be appointed Zimbabwe's Ambassador to China, and is currently Zimbabwe's permanent representative to the United Nations. The presidential amnesty had cleared him. This case is a clear pointer to the fact

that some of those who utter the words like “*Regai timbodyewo*” commit serious offences like theft of property because they know that as long as they remain in good books with the most significant person in the party (Zanu-PF) and Government, they would not be arrested and convicted. It is important to point out that corruption is prevalent in both the public and private sector. For example, due to fuel shortages, some service station workers are diverting fuel into a parallel market.

Linked to *Regai timbodyewo* is *Nhasi ndezveduwo* (Things are now under our control or we are now entitled to something) which is a declarative and a celebration of expectation. Under normal circumstances the statement is uttered when members celebrate the success of one of their own. By one of their own is meant a situation whereby part of a group or a family perceive one who would have succeeded in rising to the top when appointed to government, or to a directorship in a company or institution is expected to give jobs or contracts for supplies to his/her kith and kin. That person’s success is viewed as family or group accomplishment. The *nhasi ndezveduwo* idea has even been immortalized in a song “*Nhasi Ndezveduwo*” by the late Oliver Mutukudzi. Unfortunately, the same celebratory aspect is misconstrued by those who have ascended higher and influential positions. They see this as meaning that they have to exploit, loot and steal as much as they can from the organization they will be presiding over. It is also perceived as a means of employing relatives, friends and even lovers, some of whom may not even have the requisite experience and qualifications. Mkamanga, writing in *The Nation* newspaper of Malawi amplifies and expresses grief over this sad reality that afflicts Africa’s leaders and others when they get into higher offices, especially political ones. She laments:

It is common knowledge that the whole idea of introducing multiparty politics in Malawi was not to give a chance to every party to form a government and abuse public resources. It is unfortunate that so far ruling parties in the multiparty era seem to have a wrong perception that winning the election gives them a green light to go-ahead with the culture of ‘it is our turn to eat’. Eating simply means converting public resources into personal fortunes (*The Nation* January 21, 2018).

These words are an indictment of both public and private leaders who perceive upward social mobility mainly with regards to positions of authority as an opportunity to loot and pillage. They fail to realise and appreciate that they are there to serve, safeguard and promote growth. Mkamanga’s (2018) words also speak to the Shona declarative, *Tapinda-tapinda* (We have won). These words are usually said by those who also view the success of a colleague as opening avenues for their own enrichment and other forms of entitlements.

Promotions of colleagues are perceived as avenues for professional growth for those who may feel that they are not adequately qualified. It is therefore not surprising that one, in a veiled way, may be told, "*Musatikanganwe kana makwira manera*" (Do not forget us when you climb the ladder). This is a statement that is however clothed in ambiguity and deliberately so. Even though language is a means of conveying ideas, it does not always follow that the ideas that are communicated come out clearly. Speakers, especially those who may be requesting to corruptly get favours package their words in what on the surface appears to be innocent language. The intention of the speaker is only made manifest through the response that the respondent will give. Words such as *Musatikanganwe kana makwira manera* may be spoken by someone who is careful and does not want to be accused of asking for favours. If that person is accused, s/he may respond by stating that s/he was only asking the other person not to become proud and sever all ties with peers and former workmates because s/he has assumed a new and higher and possibly better paying position. Such an excuse is plausible from a social relations standpoint.

This statement has a self-preservation measure for the speaker in the event of a boomerang effect, whereby the opposite of the expected and intended may happen in that s/he may be rebuffed. The statement *Musatikanganwe kana makwira manera* is from a SAT view an expressive where the speaker subtly expresses hope that the addressee will respond positively and promise or even make an undertaking to hire the speaker to occupy a higher position than s/he is currently holding and for a better pay and possibly other perks. What may also be interesting to note is that the addressee is being asked to forget those who may be better qualified and hire this addresser who may not have the requisite qualifications and experience. The addresser may also be asking the target of his/her words to even deliberately create a position for him/her. What is also interesting to observe is the fact that the addressee may respond either positively or negatively. This is an indicator that despite the above words *Musatikanganwe kana makwira manera* being veiled; both sides know what they mean. Another dimension to the clause is that we realise that the one who perceives her/himself as having little influence is speaking and pleading with the one with power, asking for favours. Such an act of pleading with power clearly reveals the actuality that language is reflective of power relations where those without power plead with those who have it.

There are times when a member of the public or an organisation may rebuke a person s/he sees committing an offence. It is on rare occasions that such a censure gets a positive response as in seeing the reprimanded person changing his/her behaviour. In most cases, the person who rebukes someone for doing wrong or acting improperly gets a counter-rebuke. It may happen that one may advise a colleague to be professional and ethical in his/her work conduct. For example, one may tell a work

colleague to refrain from abusing organisational resources for his or her personal gain, for instance, the use of an organisation's tractor and labour force on his/her farm for private gain. The rebuked part may feel offended and give a response such as "*Unoda kuzviita ani (pano)?*" (Who do you think you are (here/in this place?)) These words are what the Shona would term "*Kurovera munhu kumadziro*" (Hitting someone against the wall). They are a strong counter-censure that tells the person being responded to not only to shut up and mind his/her business but to stop being a moral police officer and representative of the organisation. The respondent is also telling his colleague that he has no authority and power to speak to him by manner of reproach and reprimand because s/he has no *locus standi*. From a SAT perspective, the person who has been reproached is making a declaration that no one in that organisation has the power and authority to rebuke him. This ties in with the CDA perspective under whose gaze these words are a reflection of power relations. The same words also reflect how language is used as a tool by those with power to remind subordinates of their positions in the hierarchy of organisations.

From the above paragraph it can be realised that although CDA is generally accepted as relating to social power where organisations and institutions laud it over people, in the discursive event just discussed it can be realised that there are power relations between a top official in an organisation and a subordinate (Van Dijk, 1996, p.84). It may also be between friends where a rebuked friend may be of the view that his companion does not have to interfere in what the rebuked part may perceive as a beneficial exercise. The respondent in his/her counter-rebuke is telling his/her colleague that s/he is untouchable. Such words are normally uttered by the politically connected who believe that because of the protection of their political godfathers, they will never be censured. These words in fact have the same effect with "*Regai timbodyewo*". The person is telling his colleague to keep quiet and let him harvest as much as s/he can from the organisation while s/he still has time. Other statements that are uttered to the same effect and in similar circumstances are, "*Ndezvako here?*"(Are these your things?/Is it your property?), and "*Zvinei newe?*"(What does this have to do with you?).

At times when people are rebuked or have people around them who are always pointing out where they err in their work or query certain acts; they are perceived as troublesome. This is captured in the statement "*Hatidi vanhu vanonetsa*" (We do not want troublesome people). As has been observed in the preceding paragraph, the speaker of these words is one who feels that because s/he has the power, s/he does not want anyone to interfere and possibly upset their apple cart. These are words of a person who perceives chastisement as frivolous and vexatious. These words smack of corruption in that they reflect on a type of leadership that does not tolerate being 'called' to order by so-called juniors and subordinates or outsiders.

Such utterances and others discussed earlier on demonstrate that corruption in Zimbabwe is not necessarily a phenomenon that is caused by those who do not have and want access to some goods and/or services such that they have to pay someone to facilitate for them. The statement *Hatidi vanhu vanonetsa* clearly proves that the powerful, in both the public and private sector, including in religious organisations are the main culprits as reflected in the responses that they give to those who would have reprimanded them.

It is also interesting to note that the clause and declaration "*Hatidi vanhu vanonetsa*" is a pointer to how institutions, especially public ones have been captured by the powerful and highly connected. These words may also mean that the person who is perceived as troublesome may be kicked out of his/her job. The clause is thus more than a declarative but may also be read and understood as a pronouncement of an intention to fire. This is possible because it is common knowledge in Zimbabwe that some people have either been kicked out of their jobs or have been transferred on 'promotion' to tasks that ensure that they do not interfere with the powerful and possibly expose them. This is what happened with Geoff Nyarota then editor of the *Chronicle* newspaper that is published in Bulawayo. His employer Zimpapers (a Government-owned media house) was prompted to remove him from the newspaper that had exposed corruption at Willowvale Motor Industries, an indignity that was later dubbed the Willowgate Scandal (Nyarota, 2006).

While it is true that the rich and powerful are among the most crooked and therefore the most corrupting force, there are times when some people use threats against those they perceive to be standing in their way to acquiring something that they want. This is usually done through name dropping. For example, in a university or college, a student who is usually weak may drop in a conversation with the concerned lecturer, the name of the Principal or Vice-Chancellor mentioning for instance how they are related. This act of name-dropping is a clear sign of how corrupt the student is and it is intended to instil fear in the lecturer concerned so that the student will make the grade if s/he is or has not been doing well in assignments and tests. Linked to this are cases where when people are stopped at police traffic roadblocks and have committed offences call their relatives and connections in higher offices so that they rain down fear into the hearts of the police officers. These people in most cases say to the police officer in charge of the operation, "*Taurai nevari pafoni*" (Talk to the person on the phone/at the other end of the line). The effect in most cases is that such people are left to go after the officer would have talked to the 'person on the phone'. Such an act highlights how deep corruption has permeated the Zimbabwean society.

The death and decay of Zimbabwean society in moral terms is also reflected in what on the surface appear to be innocent one or two-word statements, like “*Ko?*” (What about?), and “*Saka mazotii?*” (So what did you say?). “*Ko?*” on the surface is an innocent statement but when it is analysed in context it is a term that is on occasions used by would be bribers, or those asking for bribes to respond in a manner that confirms or disproves one’s willingness to participate in a corrupt activity. Among the interlocutors, the one who first speaks makes the utterance on the belief or assumption that there are adequate felicity conditions for him/her to utter it. If the second interlocutor understands the meaning and message relayed, s/he would proceed to confirm and the corrupt act, which is usually an exchange of money or present, is effected. The clause “*Saka mazotii?*” carries the same weight with the probing statement “*Ko?*” It is first and foremost an invitation for engagement. The second interlocutor’s response serves as a welcome gesture, a warning (usually accompanied by extra-linguistic acts, like a slight shaking of the head), or a rejection of the invitation. What is clear as regards the moral rot in Zimbabwe is that these two clauses have revealed that language users as animals that are a product of their environments exploit an assortment of linguistic constructions at the same time as they are making requests and solicitations for bribes. They also utilise verbal dexterity which is words woven in a clever manner to appeal to the other part of verbal carpentry as Agbedo (2012, p.27) puts it, when they are in the process of receiving or accepting bribes.

Conclusion

This paper has analysed several phrases and clauses that are spoken by Zimbabweans that are a reflection of how corrupt the Zimbabwean society has become. It has clearly shown that corruption is a cancer that has gnawed at the core of Zimbabwe’s moral and ethical fabric. The clauses discussed have shown how corruption has become so prevalent such that when people speak it is possible that they do not realise that they are promoting corruption and its attendant evils such as lying and even promoting acts that may lead to acts of murder. The paper has shown that corruption knows no boundaries because both the rich and powerful as well as the so-called disadvantaged also partake in it even though it is to a lesser extent. It has also observed that the involvement of the less powerful in corruption is usually because they will be desperate while for the powerful, corruption is fuelled by greed. Some clauses like “*Regai vambodyewo*” are indicators of how sick some

people in Zimbabwe have become. This is because these words are an acceptance of corruption and are also an endorsement of corrupt actions. When people speak and say that people have to be given a chance 'to eat' it means that they accept that their society is corrupt and they want those in positions of leadership to take turns in looting national institutions. The paper has noted that the biggest challenge that Zimbabwe faces is that while corruption has become prevalent, the situation is worsened by the fact that the political leadership does not seem to be very keen to have offenders convicted for corruption and where convictions have been carried out as is the case of Frederick Shava, who was pardoned on 6 July 1989 after having been convicted of having bought cars at low prices and sold them at exorbitant costs. The amnesty extended to him by the former president may have disillusioned those who preside over such cases to always avoid convicting the accused not because of lack of evidence but because of presidential pardons. What the paper has therefore observed is that language is used as an important vehicle through which corrupt intentions are conveyed and through the same means that the fruits of corruption are not only shared but are also celebrated. For the reason that people would have been hooked in the corrupt acts, it is again language that is used to consolidate and sustain corrupt activities, through some clauses that not only ask some people to shut up, but to also justify corruption as an opportunity for self-enrichment. It is thus through it that the abuse of public office and trust as well as the looting of national or organisational property is sustained.

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