

## DEMOCRATIC DISCOURSE? REALISING ALTERNATIVES IN ZIMBABWEAN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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### **Abstract**

*This article discusses political discourse in Zimbabwe from a perspective of discourse analysis. It examines two speeches presented (in English) at a seminar on Structural Adjustment and Political Democracy and subsequently published. One speech was given on behalf of a government minister and the other was presented by the Secretary-General of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions. The speeches in their published form are examined in terms of their attempts to maintain or challenge hegemony in political discourse in Zimbabwe. The Minister's speech is described briefly as an exercise in rearticulating discursive hegemony at a critical point in Government policy formulation. The main focus of this article is an analysis of the linguistic strategies employed by the trade unionist to challenge that hegemony, by drawing the audience to consider alternative perceptions. His use of adversatives, negatives and questions is analysed in detail. The article concludes that the trade unionist's discourse strategies are an effective means of introducing a democratic voice into Zimbabwean political discourse and of engaging an audience in 'collaborative denaturalisation' of government discourse.*

### INTRODUCTION: POLITICAL DISCOURSE

This article is concerned with issues of political discourse in Zimbabwe, particularly possible strategies for introducing increasingly democratic voices into political discussion. The article will examine two speeches on Structural Adjustment and Political Democracy given in the early 1990s, one by a government minister and the other by a trade unionist. This article will concentrate on the latter, discussing means by which the trade unionist attempts to introduce alternative perceptions to those presented by the minister.

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<sup>1</sup> This article draws on material presented at a Linguistics Department seminar in 1995 at the University of Zimbabwe, and also on a paper presented at the International European Systemic Functional Workshop in Liverpool, UK, July 1998. This article is, however, a new discussion of the material. I am grateful to Professor M. Bourdillon for constructive comments on an earlier version of this article.

Political discourse has been widely studied, particularly within the areas of Pragmatics (e.g. Wilson, 1990; Ilie, 1994; 1998) and Critical Discourse Analysis (e.g. Fairclough, 1989; 1992; van Dijk, 1993). Typically, Pragmatics studies have sought to describe and explain strategies of political argumentation and, particularly, persuasion. Ilie's detailed pragmatic analysis of the speeches of the Romanian dictator, Ceausescu, demonstrates the linguistic strategies he used for totalitarian manipulation. Critical Discourse Analysis has tended to concentrate on the ways in which much political discourse is produced by, and in the interests of, powerful elites: the studies show the strategies by which the ideologies of the powerful are presented as 'natural'. Van Dijk, in an overview of Critical Discourse Analysis, states:

We pay more attention to 'top-down' relations of dominance than to bottom-up relations of resistance, compliance and acceptance. This does not mean that we see power and dominance merely as unilaterally 'imposed' on others. On the contrary, in many situations, and sometimes paradoxically, power and even power abuse may seem 'jointly produced', e.g. when dominated groups are persuaded, by whatever means, that dominance is 'natural' or otherwise legitimate. Thus, although an analysis of strategies of resistance and challenge is crucial for our understanding of actual power and dominance relations in society, and although such an analysis needs to be included in a broader theory of power, counter-power and discourse, our critical approach prefers to focus on the elites and their discursive strategies for the maintenance of inequality (Van Dijk, 1993, 250).

Fairclough, however, prefers to adopt Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony' as a way of describing power relations, rather than 'dominance'. He explains:

Hegemony is leadership as much as domination across the economic, political, cultural and ideological domains of a society. Hegemony is the power over society as a whole of one of the fundamental economically-defined classes in alliance with other social forces, but it is never achieved more than partially, and temporarily, as an 'unstable equilibrium'. Hegemony is about constructing alliances, and integrating rather than simply dominating subordinate classes, through concessions or through ideological means, to win their consent. Hegemony is a focus of constant struggle around points of greatest instability between classes and blocs, to construct or sustain or fracture alliances and relations of domination/subordination, which takes economic, political and ideological forms. Hegemonic struggle takes place on a broad front, which includes the institutions of civil society (education, trade unions, family), with possible unevenness between different levels and domains (Fairclough, 1992, 92).

Within the Zimbabwean context, despite significant differences from Western societies, an approach to political discourse that emphasises

the possibility of instability in hegemonic alliances seems more relevant than one emphasising domination. While the discourse of the political elite in Zimbabwe, in particular the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU [PF]) government, has many characteristics of the discourse of powerful elites elsewhere, the situation is complex. As Fairclough stresses, hegemony can be conceived as leadership: in Zimbabwe, the present political elite gained their positions after a successful war of liberation. The government sees its power as validated not only in electoral terms, but also in terms of its leadership of the liberation struggle. In the immediate post-independence years, the legitimacy of this claim was rarely challenged, and the government was able to present itself as representing a national consensus, with homogeneous assumptions and aspirations, frequently expressed in terms of Marxist discourse (see, for example, Love and Morrison, 1989).

In more recent years, this 'equilibrium' has become more 'unstable', as the promises of independence have not been fulfilled. There has been abundant evidence of corruption among the political elite and the pressures from international financial institutions to restructure the economy in ways vastly different from the earlier socialist rhetoric have become a major factor in policy formation.

The speeches which will be examined in this article were presented at a crucial point in this developing instability. The two speeches were keynote addresses at a seminar on Structural Adjustment and Political Democracy in the early 1990s, when the government was in the process of embarking, at the behest of the International Monetary Fund, on 'economic liberalisation'. While ZANU (PF) can be seen as very much a monolithic party, with little distinction between party, government and state, the early 1990s saw a gradual separation of the organs of civil society, especially the trade unions, from the nationalist consensus and the start of the voicing of separate interest groups. These speeches represent the discourse of this separation, and therefore provide an interesting point at which to examine political discourse in Zimbabwe in terms of potential instability in the existing hegemony.

The opening speech was presented on behalf of the then Minister of Trade and Industry, Kumbirai Kangai, and was followed by that of the Secretary-General of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, Morgan Tsvangirai. The seminar was organised by the independent journal *Social Change and Development*, and the speeches were subsequently published in the journal in 1992. I discuss the written version in this article. The Minister's speech will be discussed briefly, with attention being focussed on the ways in which the trade unionist's speech attempts to problematise the hegemonic discourse. Both speeches were originally presented and subsequently published in English.

## HEGEMONIC DISCOURSE: THE MINISTER'S SPEECH

The speech by the Minister was characteristic of elite political discourse, assuming authority from his position. It was essentially monologic, anticipating no interaction with the audience. Indeed, at the event no such interaction would have been possible, as the Minister did not attend in person, but had the speech read on his behalf. More significantly, the speech was linguistically monologic, using linguistic choices which do not invite interaction.<sup>2</sup> For example, the entire speech is in the declarative mood. The speech is, indeed, a good example of political discourse which strives to naturalise a hegemonic position — to persuade the audience that the government's perception of the current situation and its interpretation of alternatives is inevitable (Fairclough, 1992, 87). I shall not discuss Kangai's speech at length here,<sup>3</sup> but will give some brief indications of the ways in which it sought to naturalise the IMF structural adjustment policies and present them as desirable for Zimbabwe.

Kangai's speech, despite its apparent assumption of authority, seeks to rearticulate the government's hegemonic position, by persuading his audience that past support should naturally be extended to the new and different economic policies being embraced by government. Kangai's speech is in three sections; the first dealing with the theoretical relationship between structural adjustment and democracy; the second concerned with the application of the policies in Zimbabwe and a Conclusion which reflects on the current state of affairs in the country. In the first section, the Minister seeks to convince his audience that economic liberalisation is both inevitable and desirable for the country as a whole. This he does by authoritative assertions which presuppose the ideology of economic liberalisation. A typical example is his defence of the market economy:

Another equally important element of structural adjustment is the concept of *market forces*. Market forces should be given relatively great latitude to determine economic activities. This is appropriate because in a market economy, the market itself, by and large, ensures that no-one gains an unwarranted advantage.

Here the Minister asserts the appropriateness of market forces, and implies that their benefits extend to everyone, assuming a homogeneous society, equally open to the advantages of liberalised trade. That this is not exactly the case is conceded a little later:

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<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of 'engagement' in discourse, which suggests a model based on the Bakhtinian concept of 'monoglossia and heteroglossia', see White, P. R. R. (1998) 'Towards a Grammar of Power and Solidarity — Developments in the Linguistics of Evaluation, Inter-Subjectivity and Ideological Position', Paper presented at 10th European International Systemic Functional Workshop, Liverpool.

<sup>3</sup> For a fuller discussion of the two speeches, including an extensive analysis of Kangai's speech, see Love (forthcoming).

A fourth characteristic of structural adjustment is the inevitable *adverse social effects* it has on the poor and vulnerable groups particularly in its early stages.

This 'exception' appears to be presented as an unfortunate side-effect, which need not be examined in depth. Further assertions concern the nature of democracy: in countries like Zimbabwe,

Democracy is evidenced by the holding of regular elections in which people are free to exercise their right to vote and stand for elective offices.

Again the assertion is presented as self-evident, and the benefit to 'people' as uncontroversial.

In the second section, Kangai acknowledges that structural adjustment may need some adaptation to the Zimbabwean context. Here he attempts to reassure the audience that the government is continuing to work for the advantage of all Zimbabweans, thus justifying its continuing hegemonic position.

The economy should be steered in a direction that should facilitate the role of indigenous entrepreneurs and private initiative. It is necessary to put a significant portion of the economy in the hands of our own people in order to change the productive relations of the economy.

It is noticeable that these assertions are impersonal and generalised, refraining from specifying what precise policies the government will follow. The Minister also lays stress on continuity:

Promotion of cooperatives will continue to be regarded as a means to strengthen the social organisation in the economy and uplift the social and material conditions of the people.

Thus this section of the speech is designed to reassure the public that the Structural Adjustment Programme does not signal any major change of policy on government's part, and therefore need not provoke a change in popular support. The Conclusion works to maintain an undifferentiated national consensus. The Minister 'boasts' of the successes of Zimbabwe, using 'we' to invite his audience to identify with these:

We have one of the most diversified manufacturing sectors in Africa with the exception of South Africa together with a well developed infrastructure. Our country's entrepreneurial and managerial skills base is unique in the region with the exception of South Africa.

This consensus is then called upon in an adhortation to support the government's policies:

There is need for all of us to work closely towards a national consensus to make a success of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme and Trade Liberalisation. The enabling environment is there, and firmly

fixed, for we are a truly democratic society and have a relatively robust and diversified economy.

Thus the Minister's speech presents Structural Adjustment as a natural policy with natural implications, and suggests that its benefits will extend to all, at least in the long run. It should therefore be seen as a continuation of the previously supported policies. The speech reasserts the reliability of government in promoting the national interest and works to maintain the consensus that Zimbabweans should work together to make the policy a success. It is an attempt to paper over the cracks appearing in hegemony, by presenting government policy in terms of broad objectives, which appear uncontroversially positive.

### RESTRUCTURING HEGEMONY: THE TRADE UNIONIST'S STRATEGIES

Within the context of Zimbabwe in the early 1990s, where there was as yet no effective opposition party, the task of challenging such hegemonic discourse fell on organs of civil society. The ZANU (PF) government had faced no danger of immediate defeat, and therefore the most urgent task appeared to be the democratisation of political discourse by means of opening up debate to a wider range of voices. The most effective strategies were likely to be those which 'denaturalised' the government discourse, questioning assumptions and presenting alternatives. The speech given by Morgan Tsvangirai, representing the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, in response to Kangai's speech, will now be examined in detail to see to what extent it fulfils this role.

The most striking feature of the trade unionist's speech is Tsvangirai's concern to present *alternatives* to the Minister's assertions. He presents alternative agendas, alternative claims, alternative evaluations, alternative interpretations, and can be said to represent alternative voices. My concern here is not with the content of these alternatives, but with the linguistic resources Tsvangirai utilises to engage his audience in consideration of alternatives. Interestingly, a number of linguists have discussed the linguistic features which may be used to raise alternative possibilities in an audience's or reader's mind. Grimes (1975) introduces the concept of 'collateral information', which he suggests,

relates non-events to events. By providing a range of non-events that might take place, it heightens the significance of real events (Grimes, 1975, 65).

Similarly, van Dijk (1977, 30) refers to linguistic features which present 'alternative possible worlds'. White (1988), in his model of engagement in text, includes the category of 'counter-expectation'. All these concepts refer to ways of engaging an audience in comparison with differing

alternatives. Here I shall draw mainly on some of the linguistic features included by Grimes: adversatives, negatives and questions.

In the Minister's speech, these features are notable by their absence. Questions do not occur, and there are very few instances of adversatives or negatives. Thus the speech creates the impression of smooth coherence of argument, with no room for alternatives: in other words, a typical strategy of naturalisation.

In Tsvangirai's speech, by contrast, 'collateral information' is ubiquitous. Since his aim is to present alternatives to the Minister's argument at every level, he uses a variety of types of collateral information to invite the audience to consider alternatives to the Minister's claims, interpretations, evaluations and entire agenda.

### **Adversatives**

Adversatives, such as 'but', 'however', 'instead of', hold two ideas — whether expressed by complete statements or by alternative elements in a clause — in tension, producing contrasts between differing perspectives. They thus lead the audience to look at a situation from two viewpoints, or to challenge the validity of one statement in the pair. They can be seen as part of the grammar of 'counter-expectation' (White, 1998), since an apparently completed statement is then 're-opened' by contradiction or questioning.

Tsvangirai begins his speech by using adversatives to 're-set' the agenda and offer an alternative focus to the issue of 'structural adjustment and political democracy'. He opens with a list of the 'five pillars' of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP), which is uncontroversial. He then goes on:

*But* out of those, one is fundamental for the success of structural adjustment: political reform.

Thus he appears to accept the framework of ESAP, while offering a different sense of priorities: much of the Minister's speech had dwelt on economic aspects of adjustment, and had made no suggestions for political reform, presupposing the adequacy of the existing situation in Zimbabwe. Tsvangirai then proceeds to offer an interpretation of the effects of ESAP which is in marked contrast to the Minister's optimism:

We accept that it [Structural Adjustment] will succeed, *but* it will succeed in making a few people richer and the majority of the people poor.

He goes on, combining adversative and question: 'It will work, *but* at what cost?'

Here, early in his speech, Tsvangirai uses adversatives to contest the meaning of 'success' of structural adjustment, and to re-set the agenda to a consideration of the negative effects. The audience are invited to

consider which ‘meaning’ is more likely to represent the situation as they see it. Thus, while conceding the ‘existence’ of the structural adjustment programme, Tsvangirai suggests a contradiction between its objectives and its likely outcomes, and invites his audience to weigh these alternatives.

This contrast between the government’s objectives and observed outcomes occurs frequently in the speech. Tsvangirai takes the government’s specific objectives under the programme and makes alternative claims about the already observable outcomes:

Government talks of 16% inflation, *but* this is already jumping to 25-30%.

\$200 million has been set aside for a bridging loan for buying imports, *but* we have overshot this sum . . . *Instead* of liberalising trade, you are being forced to take measures to prevent imports coming in . . .

Here the contrasts are between the claims the government has made for the structural adjustment policy and the economic reality Tsvangirai claims to see around him. Thus Tsvangirai uses adversatives to suggest the essential ‘unreality’ of the government’s optimistic predictions, presenting the audience with specific claims which challenge the potential ‘success’ of the programme.

Adversatives are further used, in combination with negatives, to contrast what the government *has* done with what it has *not* done. He mentions the government’s intention to set up a Social Dimensions Fund which would cushion the effects of economic reforms on vulnerable groups:

At the moment the [social] fund *does not exist*. *There is no* infrastructure . . . *But* ESAP is already in place.

Thus he points out the contrasts in the government’s priorities in implementing the programme. Indeed, he points out weaknesses in the government’s entire approach to reform. He offers the claim:

Any country that is serious about structural reform, *but* doesn’t deal with the historical imbalance of land reform, hasn’t done anything.

Here the implication is that the government is claiming to be serious, but failing to grasp the fundamental requirements. He continues:

In this country we are saying that we can’t institute any land reform. *But* what we have managed to do is that the ruling class have acquired farms for themselves *but* have failed to distribute any land to the people.

Here, Tsvangirai cites a claim that, according to his assertion, questions the government’s ‘seriousness’ about reform. He then uses paired adversatives to suggest precisely what the government *is* serious about. The first ‘but’ suggests that the ‘ruling class’ has been able to



institute some kind of 'land reform', despite the claim to the contrary. This is then contrasted with its failure to achieve the kind of land reform which was presupposed in talking about 'the historic imbalance'. Tsvangirai's use of adversatives thus presents the audience with alternative views of priorities and seriousness in addressing economic reform and invites them to choose which to focus on.

Towards the end of his speech, Tsvangirai sums up his position: he realises that there has to be structural adjustment, but suggests that there may be alternatives to the government's approach:

As to structural adjustment, we say any society has to structurally adjust *but* how is it done?

Thus he returns to his opening contrasts of questioning the interpretation of structural adjustment, inviting his audience to speculate about alternatives.

It is interesting to note that, with the exception of an isolated instance of 'instead of', Tsvangirai uses the single adversative 'but'<sup>4</sup>. This is in some ways unsurprising, since this is the most frequent adversative in spoken discourse, and the published version of Tsvangirai's speech is clearly close to its spoken form. However, it is perhaps also significant that 'but' is a complex adversative, combining different relationships. Martin comments that 'in English "but" neutralises the distinction between contrast and concession as far as relations between clause complexes are concerned' (Martin, 1992, 176). It implies a concession that the claim of the preceding clause is valid, while introducing a significant contrast to it. This complexity realises the trade unionist's intention of attempting to engage in constructive criticism of government policies. The use of adversatives in the speech introduces alternative evaluations of the success of the outcomes of the structural adjustment programme and of the seriousness of the government in pursuing radical reform policies. Above all, he uses adversatives to suggest alternative interpretations of what structural adjustment really implies.

### **Negatives**

The use of negative statements is a particularly important strategy for challenging and hence 'denaturalising' the claims made by others. The significance of the use of the negative is that the 'opposing' claim is itself cited, only to be denied (White, 1998, 14). Negation of a statement presupposes that it has been made as a claim, and there is thus an implicit intertextual tension between the claim and its negation

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<sup>4</sup> I am grateful to Professor M. Bourdillon for drawing my attention to this feature of the text.

(Fairclough, 1992, 121; Pagano, 1994). A negation denies a claim which is already in some ways 'on the table', either explicitly or implicitly in terms of a general experiential framework (Pagano, 1994, 256). It is discursively anomalous to negate a statement which nobody would expect to be true. Pagano argues that:

For people to deny something, they assume that they and their interlocutors share a common world in which certain beliefs and expectations are usual (Pagano, 1994, 258).

Negation is one of the key categories of Grimes's collateral information. He points out:

Events that do not take place have significance only in relation to what actually does happen (Grimes, 1975, 65).

Thus negation is frequently seen as a way of questioning the validity of explicit or implicit assumptions, and also of presenting alternative and contrasting interpretations of events and situations.

Negations may take a variety of forms: they may deny the validity of a claim; they may make negative predictions or they may focus on the non-performance of a potential act. In all these cases, the effect is likely to be to present an alternative view of events for consideration, and lead towards an alternative evaluation.

Tsvangirai makes extensive use of negatives. It is interesting that he does not make many simple denials of government claims about the structural adjustment process. Rather, as in his use of adversatives, he accepts the basic framework of the need for some form of structural adjustment, but questions the success of what is actually happening, and challenges the priorities which have been chosen by the government. Above all, he uses negatives to draw attention to the contrast between the government's claimed intentions and the prevailing reality.

For example, he makes negative predictions based on prevailing conditions: 'The social initiatives *will fail* because they *don't exist*.'

Here the prediction is *lexically* negative, in that the word 'fail' only has meaning in terms of its tension with its positive antonym 'succeed'. This prediction is based on a claim of simple logic: the social initiatives cannot succeed because 'they don't exist'. Tsvangirai wishes to draw attention to prevailing, negative reality, in contrast to the broad, positive predictions of the Minister.

In his discussion of economic stabilisation, Tsvangirai argues, again, that the conditions are unsuitable for government to achieve its objectives. Unpredicted inflation has produced conditions which will obstruct economic objectives:

When 60-70% of our manufacturing industry is dependent on raw material imports it means some of our industries *are not going to run* because they *can't import* what they need.

The negative prediction is a confident one, implying certainty (high modalisation), while the grounds for the prediction take the form of a confident claim of a prevailing negative condition. This implies that government has not taken into account the specific conditions of Zimbabwean industry, and hence their plans will not be successful. In fact Tsvangirai predicts that the economic conditions will require policies totally opposed to those government is embracing: 'We will need more controls, *not less*.'

Here the linguistic realisation of the negativity is in the disjunctive adjunct 'not', which contrasts 'less' with 'more'. The effect of this is to draw attention to the word 'controls' which both adjectives modify, thus emphasising the contrast between the approaches of the trade unionist and the Minister.

Many instances of Tsvangirai's use of negatives focus on 'absence' of desirable outcomes or the 'non-performance' of desirable actions. In his discussion of the social dimensions fund, the emphasis on absence is strong.

At the moment the social fund *does not exist*. *There is no* infrastructure, *there is no set-up* as to how the \$20 million is to be distributed or how they are to make social programmes with it. But ESAP is already in place; *there is no institution* to counter the impact that is already there. The social initiatives will fail because *they don't exist* . . .

Kangai had merely remarked, at the end of a section of his speech:

Aware of the inevitable negative social effects that our Economic Structural Adjustment Programme will engender, a number of safety net schemes for the poor and vulnerable groups have been proposed.

Tsvangirai comments on the social fund (one of the 'safety net schemes') using a sequence of five negative clauses. The first and last use the form 'do not exist'. Tsvangirai's choice of 'exist' as the negated verb is significant, as he wishes to emphasise the contrast between the government's objectives, as propounded in Kangai's speech, and what *exists* at the time. Thompson, using Halliday's terminology (Halliday, 1994), describes the verb 'exist' as 'best analysed as a material process' which 'reflects at least partly a choice to represent the entity . . . as involved in a "going-on" (which happens to be that of existing)' (Thompson, 1996, 101). In other words, in this case Tsvangirai has chosen to give prominence to the 'activities' of the proposed social fund/social initiatives by making these schemes the grammatical subject of the opening and closing clauses of this section, thus implying that they should be performing effective action, whereas in fact their only 'action' is to 'not exist'. In the intervening sentences, Tsvangirai employs three existential clauses — clauses of the form 'There is . . .' (Halliday, 1994). Thompson describes existential clauses thus:

What is happening with existential processes is that the speaker is renouncing the opportunity to represent the participant (the Existent) as involved in any 'goings-on'; and the distinctive structural pattern provides an explicit signal of this renunciation (Thompson, 1993, 101).

Thus the existential clause represents the opposite choice to the clause with 'exists' as the verb: mere existence, rather than potential action, is the focus, thus drawing attention to the Existent. However, in the case of the clauses used by Tsvangirai, the Existents are negative, modified by negative adjectives: 'no infrastructure', 'no set-up', 'no institution'. Thus he emphasises the 'existence of negativity', as if one were looking for something expected and failing to find it. These contrasting patterns effectively draw attention to the 'absence of success' of key expectations of government policy: government has not got beyond the stage of 'schemes' and 'proposals', while the major economic policies of ESAP have been acted upon. Thus he suggests a negative evaluation of the government's priorities in carrying out its policies. Similarly, when discussing the prospects for workers retrenched because of ESAP, Tsvangirai uses negative existential clauses to emphasise the absence of policies which might have alleviated the situation:

*As there has not been adequate resettlement and the informal sector is largely illegal and receives very little if any aid from the Government, there is nothing the retrenched workers might fall back on.*

Here the first existential clause, which provides the grounds for the later claim, is negative in form. The second existential clause, which provides the claim, uses a strongly negative Existent, 'nothing the retrenched workers might fall back on'. Again this produces the effect of emphasising the absence of something expected, intensified by the lexical negatives associated with the description of the informal sector, 'illegal' and 'very little if any aid'.

Issues of priority are also at stake when Tsvangirai uses negatives to raise issues where effective action might have been taken and has not been: 'For the past twelve years we *have not changed* Rhodesian laws: *we have not even examined* them.'

Here the repeated negatives draw attention to the verbs, with the suggestion that 'not even examining' the old laws is an amazing omission. In an associated criticism, Tsvangirai uses a negative grammatical subject:

*So you have a board which is totally foreign-dominated that is responsible for selling our tobacco. No-one has examined the effect of this on the flight of capital.*

This choice of subject raises the question of who might have examined this issue, and therefore implicitly criticises government's lack of action.

In these examples the audience is again invited to focus on the 'non-action' of the government, in areas in which, Tsvangirai implies, different priorities would have produced very different results. Taking up a specific issue, that of the encouragement of co-operatives (a point mentioned by Kangai), Tsvangirai uses negatives to evaluate the manner in which this apparently positive policy has been carried out:

The other problem we face is the position of co-operatives. They are caught in this problem: here was a white man, with a farm *he didn't pay* for, with access to financial resources and government support. Now you expect the co-operatives to achieve the same productive level when they have to pay for the land. They have *no capital, no skills, no political or financial support* . . . there is a clause in the law which says that if the co-operative *does not achieve* the same production as the previous landowner, then that co-operative must be turned over for resettlement. How can you expect them to compete?

The first negative clause reminds the audience, almost casually (given the contraction) of the fact that colonial settlers did not pay for their farms, and lists their other benefits. The condition of the co-operatives is then contrasted with this, by repeated negative adjectives which emphasise the absence of such benefits, and by the strong negative conditional clause. Thus the negatives produce a forceful contrast between the new policies and the past (colonial) conditions in agriculture.

Finally, towards the end of the paper, Tsvangirai uses negatives to adopt a more directly confrontational stance towards the representative of government:

And the peasants have their own interests, but these groups *are not being heard* in policy formulation. How can you say Zimbabwe is a democratic state? Elections *are not* a reflection of democracy. We are running policy formulation on foreign consultants; *there is no place* for indigenous intelligentsia who know the conditions of the country to participate.

The negative clauses here are each in direct contrast to their preceding clauses. The first involves the presupposition that an interest group in society should be consulted on policy, a presupposition which is being violated by the government. The second negative clause provides a direct contradiction to the Minister's 'claim that Zimbabwe is a democratic state'. The final negative clause in the sequence contrasts a presupposed desirable situation with the one prevailing.

Tsvangirai closes his address in open confrontation expressed through negatives:

It [the programme] *cannot be imposed* for society to accept or leave. We *cannot accept* that government alone has the national interest at

heart . . . *It is not* government alone that knows what the people want and expect.

Here the negations presuppose a paternalistic attitude on the part of government. Tsvangirai anticipates that his audience will agree that government's actions in general and the Minister's speech in particular reveal a paternalistic attitude to civil society, which he proceeds to challenge directly. He uses the strong negative 'cannot', which in this context acts as high modulation (Halliday, 1994), expressing effective prohibition. This suggests the inevitability of conflict if the government persists in its paternalistic practices. The final negative clause produces emphasis by negative 'predicated theme', a structure 'which allows the speaker to pick out a single element and give it emphatic theme status' (Thompson, 1996, 128). In other words, the negative attention drawn to 'government alone' leads the audience to reflect on who else does 'know what the people want and expect'. Again, this challenges Kangai's appeal for a nationalist consensus behind the government.

Thus Tsvangirai uses a variety of negative structures to lead the audience to evaluate alternative perceptions of prevailing conditions, likely outcomes, potential policies and possibilities for participation in policy making.

### Questions

Questions are a frequent feature of political discourse, particularly of an adversarial nature. Wilson (1990) has discussed the pragmatics of political questioning and answering, reviewing the literature on types of questions. Questions made in the context of a public forum, where a politician has delivered a prior speech, are likely to be complex, in that they will be addressed to at least two potential addressees, the previous speaker and the audience. In the case of Tsvangirai's speech, the range of addressees is probably wider, in that any questions addressed to the previous speaker should be taken as addressed to the government, while the audience as addressee can be assumed to represent the general public. These wider roles become more significant when the speeches appear in print. Moreover, few questions in political speeches are true open questions, seeking information. While many are rhetorical questions, as will be discussed below, others may act to raise issues not previously mentioned — to raise collateral information — in order to justify points to be made by the speaker. The different types of questions used in Tsvangirai's speech will be discussed in terms of the differing ways in which they take issue with the government's policies and record.

The first type of question Tsvangirai uses is apparently open, beginning with 'What?' Such questions normally require an answer. However, Tsvangirai's questions of this type are so wide that it is clear

that they are meant to set the agenda for his speech: he will proceed to answer the questions. In his introduction he asks two questions of this type:

What are the political reforms that we in the labour movement think are necessary in order for structural adjustment to have some chance of success? . . . It [structural adjustment] will work, but at what cost?

The first question establishes clearly that Tsvangirai will be speaking from a different perspective from that of the Minister, that of the labour movement. It also emphasises the focus on ‘political reforms’, which had not been considered necessary by the Minister. Thus the question acts to set the agenda of Tsvangirai’s speech. The second question could be treated as rhetorical, as it implies that there will be a substantial cost, and therefore can be said to convey ‘an evaluation of information assumed to be already known’ (Ilie, 1994, 38). However, it can also be responded to as an open question, with the audience doubtless keen to offer contributions to its answer. Potential answers are taken up in Tsvangirai’s speech, and thus this question, too, announces his agenda. One effect of using questions to introduce the points on which he wishes to focus is to invite the audience to consider their potential answers to the questions, and therefore engages them in the ongoing discourse. A further point is that, if the questions are seen as addressed to the previous speaker, there is an implication that issues have been neglected, since the questions imply that they still need raising. Thus these questions, in addition to introducing Tsvangirai’s agenda, serve as a negative evaluation of the Minister’s speech. The final question of this type occurs close to the end of the speech, when Tsvangirai asserts: ‘As to structural adjustment, we say any society has to structurally adjust but how is it to be done?’

Thus at the end of the speech he again suggests that the entire issue of structural adjustment needs to be looked at differently: the government can have no answer to this question other than already stated policy, but the other groups within the potential audience may have a wide range of ideas. It is precisely the government’s failure to access this pool of ideas by democratic, participatory discussion which Tsvangirai is attacking.

The use of questions to raise issues ignored by the Minister is taken further by a different type of ‘What?’ question which appears semi-rhetorical:

To what extent can they [laws] impinge on the economic factors, to ensure our people have access to production? Then to what extent is state policy formulation supported by the social sectors of the society? What inputs are these institutions [private institutions] making?

Again, such questions presuppose the importance of considering the issues they raise, and stress that government has not seen them as worthy of discussion. The first relates to Tsvangirai's negative assessment of reform of laws, mentioned above, and thus repeats his point that the government has neglected a potential route to achieve their claimed objectives. For government, this is a trap question: if they were to attempt any positive answer, they would be conceding their lack of action. If they were to deny the efficacy of laws in affecting the economic situation, they would be conceding their irrelevance in policy formation. For the labour movement, the implied answer is that laws can be effective, but have not been so to date, thus providing a negative evaluation of government's record. The second question again has two potential answers: government clearly believes that 'the social sectors' fully support government policy formulation, since Kangai's speech has appealed to a broad consensus. The answer implied by Tsvangirai, and anticipated as the audience's response, is clearly negative, since he stresses the paternalistic imposition of policies without participant discussion from civil society. The final question in this group is slightly different. It appears to be asking for information about the role of private institutions in policy making. Here the government is capable of giving a reply, but the context suggests that the question is here directed to the audience, whose response is likely to be an assumption that such institutions are making contributions which the labour movement and civil society would not be happy with. Thus the question serves the double purpose of stressing the secrecy of the policy making processes and raising suspicions about their content. Each of these questions attempts to re-set the agenda of issues under debate, by raising alternatives for the audience — and, hopefully, the government — to consider.

Other questions are more clearly rhetorical, and constitute direct challenges to the government. In the earlier part of the speech, they are used to challenge the logic of government policies:

... so how can anyone invest in these circumstances? But how can we get that if devaluation means that our products are actually cheaper outside? How do you expect them [co-operatives] to compete?

Each question clearly assumes a negative answer. It is a common characteristic of rhetorical questions to 'exhibit opposite polarity: a *positive rhetorical question* is like a strong *negative assertion*' (Ilie, 1994, 42). It is significant that the pronouns vary in these questions: here Tsvangirai is not necessarily taking up a fully adversarial position, but is questioning the efficacy of policies in areas where he sees the labour



movement as an involved stakeholder, and therefore is pleading with the government to see the weaknesses of their policies.<sup>5</sup>

Tsvangirai then gradually shifts to questions addressed directly to the government as challenges.

How can you come out with a programme that only supports one social interest group at the expense of everybody else? How can you say Zimbabwe is a democratic state? How can you achieve development objectives when you don't even examine how the plans will reach the objectives set?

Such 'How can you . . . ?' questions are clearly rhetorical. The presuppositions involved make an answer impossible. Such questions presuppose a) that the specific addressee has performed the action which is being challenged and b) that the rest of the audience considers the action wrong or the claim invalid. Ilie states:

What is specific about the message conveyed by the rhetorical question is the *addresser's commitment* to the propositional content of its implied answer. It is this commitment that the addresser wants the addressees to become aware of, so as to reconsider their beliefs, assumptions or convictions accordingly (Ilie, 1994, 38-9).

The 'How can you?' type of question also suggests an interpersonal element of reproach. Thus, while attacking the government directly for its policies and claims, Tsvangirai also appears to be appealing to them to consider the alternatives present in his implied answers, and act in the interests of the people.

Tsvangirai's use of questions works to raise alternative issues neglected by government or to present other perspectives from which his audience can approach the subject of structural adjustment and democracy. It thus assists in 'denaturalising' the Minister's policy presuppositions, claims and assumptions of a national consensus.

#### CONCLUSION: DEMOCRATIC DISCOURSE?

Tsvangirai's speech can be seen as an attempt to transform the discursive event of the seminar from a reception of top-down government policy statement to an interactive critique of policy and a formulation of alternatives. It could not, of itself, of course, be effective, since the Minister himself was not present. It could, however, be significant discursively, in the trade unionist's willingness to problematise the Minister's speech and engage the audience in critique, drawing partly on

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<sup>5</sup> For a more wide-ranging discussion of pronoun use in the two speeches, see Love (forthcoming).

their own awareness of prevailing conditions (cf Fairclough, 1992, 97). Tsvangirai is thus contributing to the 'instability' of hegemony.

Tsvangirai makes extensive use of the strategies of collateral information — adversatives, negatives and questions — to achieve this effect. He makes alternative claims for the audience to compare with the Minister's. He suggests alternative priorities, which he believes his audience will prefer. Thus he questions the Minister's presuppositions about desirable policies and about likely outcomes. He leads his audience into alternative evaluations of the government's achievements and of its intentions. By so doing, he rejects the presupposition of a national consensus, and involves the audience in evaluating policies and prevailing conditions from their own diverse positions. Thus his speech could be viewed as an exercise in 'collaborative denaturalisation'.

However, Tsvangirai is careful not to make his speech crudely oppositional. His aim appears to be to open up dialogue with the Government if this is possible, through problematising its position and querying the effectiveness of its policies. Moreover, he confronts government from a position of participation in an attempt to 'reform' national policies. He provides clear evidence to back his claims, and invites the audience to reflect upon their own experience. He thus presents Government with an expression of alternative views and interpretations, which simultaneously encourages others to make their voices heard. He reaches a point of direct confrontation with the Government precisely when he accuses them of refusing to listen to such voices.

Tsvangirai's speech appears to employ effective strategies for engaging in hegemonic struggle, as the nationalist consensus in post-independence Zimbabwe is replaced by differing interest groups who wish their voices to be heard in policy formulation.<sup>6</sup> Analysis such as that employed in this article is intended to draw attention to ways in which political discourse in Zimbabwe may be made more democratic.

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<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, at the end of 1998 Tsvangirai was 'voted the Rothmans of Pall Mall Communicator of the Year for his efforts aimed at improving the working conditions of employees in Zimbabwe' (*The Financial Gazette*, Nov. 19, 1998), 2.

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