

Chapter 4

Critiquing Language and Discourse in ‘Rwanda 20 Years on: The Tragic Testimony of the Children of Rape’ Newspaper Article

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Abstract

This chapter draws on media ethics and the social responsibility of the media perspectives to critique discourse and language in a media report about women and children in conflict situations. The focus is on a news article published in the *Guardian*’s online newspaper in 2014 entitled ‘Rwanda 20 years on: The tragic testimony of the children of rape’ and in which the victims of rape (women) during the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda and the children born as a result narrate their ordeals. The critical analysis of the discourse and the linguistic features in the news article draws on such selected linguistic tools as lexicons, transitivity, grammar, and syntaxes to show that while the article highlights the consequences of sexual violence, notably the destruction of women’s dignity and will to live, it falls short in safeguarding the rights and the dignity of both women and children. These discoveries, evidenced by the discursive strategies deployed in representing and constructing these events, support the literature on the unprincipled approaches deployed in foreign media narratives in the representation of conflict. I posit that reporting

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such issues requires sensitivity and heedfulness of the negative implications of journalistic decisions.

Keywords: Rwanda; 1994 Genocide; *The Guardian*; news discourse; discourse analysis; language; journalism ethics; social responsibility

Introduction

The Guardian is a daily international newspaper that publishes hardcopy and electronic online news that operates in 25 countries. It covers both local and international breaking news and current affairs. As do many other foreign news organisations, *The Guardian* has actively covered social, political, and cultural conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa. On 8 June 2014, *The Guardian* published a news article entitled, 'Rwanda 20 years on: the tragic testimony of the children of rape'. The 1779-word text depicts the tragic testimonies of women raped during the 1994 Rwanda Genocide and the children born as a result. The article was part of a series of events to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the infamous genocide against the Tutsi that claimed close to a million people's lives and displaced thousands, and its publication coincided with the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, hosted by the British foreign secretary, William Hague, and actress Angelina Jolie in June 2014. A decade has elapsed since the publication of the news article, but its significance cannot be underestimated, particularly in the digital age, when the articles of daily newspapers are easily accessible long after print and digital and social media platforms have increased not only free speech but also hate speech (Melck, 2024). Media's continued loyalty to ethics and to their civic roles in society – including as a watchdog, a mirror, as information transmitter and as educator – remains important. Indeed, this year's International Day for Countering Hate Speech (18 June 2024) foregrounded the role of the media, media scholars, and civil society organisations in the fight against hate speech.

While women and children are priority groups in many societies, they are often the most vulnerable population in Africa. Reporting that sensitises media audiences to their plight has often been scant and quite often misconstrued. *The Guardian's* news article, thus, provided valuable space for women to share their dreadful experiences during 1994 and highlighted not only the consequences of rape as an integral part of the Rwandan genocide but also how sexual violence was used as a weapon against the Tutsi. I accessed the article in October 2020 during preparations for a training workshop on ethical reporting of gender issues for Rwandan journalists that I conducted under Fojo Rwanda Programme. Several print news articles and stories on women and children were downloaded from both local and international news agencies and platforms for review and discussion, and the participant-journalists were asked to analyse the framing of gender- and children-related issues (prominent topics/foci, selections, recurrences, news sources, use of photographs, naming, referencing, etc.). This particular news

article drew substantial concern and sparked much debate. The disagreements lay in the approaches used to represent and construct events and people, particularly language deployment and the treatment of photos.

The analysis is theoretically positioned within critical media studies as an engagement with media production discourse (Fairclough, 2015), what Fortner and Fackler (2011) refer to as the ‘social responsibility’ of the media and the journalistic ethics of reporting on women and children’s issues. News media production discourse is a system of guidelines that specifies journalistic practices embodied in both institutional and professional norms (Fairclough, 2015). As a branch of linguistics, discourse analysis is concerned with how and why certain texts affect readers and listeners in certain ways (Fairclough, 2013; Jones, 2024). Media are assumed to shape the public’s knowledge and understanding of a given conflict, as well as the rights and needs of children, thereby changing people’s perceptions on these issues. These practices include the roles of journalists in society, media laws, policy and regulations, media production processes, and the professional code of conduct among others. This chapter focuses on the social responsibility of the media in relation to the specific guidelines of the *Society of Professional Journalists*’ (SPJ, 2014) Code and the Code of Deontology and Ethics (Rwanda Media Commission (RMC), 2014) for journalists and other media professionals in Rwanda. One of the SPJ clauses cautions journalists to ‘show compassion for those who may be affected by news coverage; use heightened sensitivity when dealing with juveniles, victims of sex crimes, and inexperienced sources’ (RMC, 2014, p. 37).

Article 8 of the Code of Deontology and Ethics for media professionals in Rwanda also guides journalists on the protection of minors and victims of rape:

The journalist shall show sensitivity and exercise caution while handling information relating to rape victims and minors less than 18 years of age. He/she shall be careful not to identify the names of victims of rape weather minors or otherwise, take care not to publish their pictures and photos or details likely to lead to their identification, except is this serves the child’s interests. (RMC, 2014, Art. 8)

Taking off from these perspectives, this chapter critically analyses the deployment of language and discourse in the representation and construction of the events, particularly the victims of rape, that is, women and the children born as a result. The investigation seeks to uncover the linguistic strategies drawn on to report the events, particularly the grammatical and syntactic choices.

Literature Review

Social Responsibility and Media Ethics

Social responsibility theory in media studies provides a philosophical framework for journalists to ethically authenticate their judgements and actions before

reporting a story (Fortner & Fackler, 2011). The [Ethical Journalism Network \(2024\)](#) emphasises five core values of journalism, namely accuracy, independence, impartiality, humanity, and accountability. Although getting the facts and getting them right is fundamental to journalists, they are further cautioned to act independently of such special interests as political, corporate, and cultural and to declare any potential conflicts of interest. Objectivity and balance are crucial elements of journalism practice, and they obligate journalists to present both sides of the issue in addition to context (Fortner & Fackler, 2011). While objectivity may not always be attainable and desirable (e.g. in brutal or inhumane cases), impartial reporting builds trust and confidence. The principle of accountability as an undisputable hallmark of professionalism and responsible journalism compels journalists to own up to their errors, correct them with regret and sincerity, and provide remedies to unfair actions (Aiden Adam in [Ethical Journalism Network, 2024](#)). Since news media content may hurt people, the principle of ‘humanity’ cautions journalists to avoid harm or minimise it and to be cognisant of the impact of their words or images on the lives of others (Fortner & Fackler, 2011).

Of the above principles, humanity is the most disregarded in news and social media, particularly in the 21st century when citizen journalists, digital activists, and other non-professionals produce and share news on social media platforms. The dizzying speed of information dissemination means that editors have come to accept these unauthenticated sources as active players in the news business. I therefore posit that in news media production processes, the social responsibility and ethical principles should be incorporated into journalists’ daily actions and decisions, particularly those affecting their sources and audiences.

In the news media professional code of ethics (e.g. the social responsibility code), journalists have a responsibility to recognise the rights of vulnerable categories and reflect them in their reports. This responsibility requires a form of reporting that includes an orientation towards safeguarding the rights and dignity of these groups (Jempson, n.d.). Both women and children should be treated as human beings with a distinct set of rights as opposed to passive objects of care or charity. Despite media’s presumed roles and potential, they have often disappointed the people whom they are supposed to serve. Media in Sub-Saharan Africa have not effectively responded to children’s and women’s issues, and, in most cases, such stories only appear in the media in cases of gender-based violence, child abuse, or exploitation, with the reports likely to be blown out of proportion or highly sensationalised (UNICEF, 2015).

The foreign media, in particular, have been criticised for exploiting children through dehumanising and controversial descriptions and the unethical treatment of children’s images and photographs (Unite for Sight, 2000–2015). [Unite for Sight \(2000–2015\)](#), a not-for-profit and pioneer of responsible healthcare delivery that serves, empowers, and mentors organisations and individuals to provide high-quality outcomes, cautions Western photojournalists working abroad to be ethically responsible, preserve the dignity of their subjects and provide a faithful, comprehensive visual depiction of their surroundings to avoid public misperceptions. In many ways, the foreign media coverage of conflicts has generally done more harm than good. For example, [Tyrrell \(2015\)](#) found that the western media’s

coverage of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda aggravated countless issues concerning the relationship between the West and Africa. Her master's thesis analysed *Le Monde* and *L'Express* (French), *The Times* and *The Economist* (British), and *The New York Times* (US) daily newspapers and established that these publications perpetuated 'Western superiority over Africa by utilizing racism to preserve colonial ideologies and stereotypes of Africans' (Tyrrell, 2015, p. iii). She further contends that 'the inherent Western racism frustrated the enactment of human rights legislation that might have saved many Tutsis' lives' (Tyrrell, 2015, p. iii), and her study contextualises the foreign media coverage of the Rwandan genocide within a larger historiographical Western-African dichotomy. While these media organisations publicised the genocide, to think of them as monolithic and consistent in their reporting is problematic. Their different political affiliations, national influences, targeted objectives, and institutional news production discourses merit consideration.

The Discourse of News Production

Media products (texts) are conventionally characterised in relation to their genre, which refers primarily to the formats of texts, and this categorisation signals to the audience the nature of the content that they are about to read (Jjuuko, 2023). News is only one of a wide range of genres in journalism, which also includes features, opinion columns, photojournalism, letters to the editor, and so on. The concept of discourse in news production applies to, among other things, the 'values and identities encouraged, contained or prevented by journalistic practices (often unspoken) as well as rules of a particular discourse' (Durant & Lambrou, 2009, p. 152). It also refers to 'interactions that take place through a text, whether spoken or written, in which the discourse is oriented to a non-present reader, listener or viewer' (O'Keeffe, 2011, p. 441). Journalistic discourse has specific textual characteristics and methods of textual production and consumption (Durant & Lambrou, 2009, p. 154). These are defined by a particular set of relationships between the text (itself) and other agencies of symbolic and material power. These three sets of characteristics (the language of journalists, production, and consumption), and the relation of a journalist to social ideas and institutions are also clearly related and sometimes difficult to disentangle (Fairclough, 2013).

Discourse as well as the concepts of 'discursive practices' and 'discursive formations' is important for our understanding of how media represents public issues. I use 'representation' here and elsewhere to refer to how meaning is given to things through language, how people make sense of these things, people, and events, and the communication of ideas and description of events to audiences through a language understood by the recipients (Hall, 1997; Jjuuko, 2023). News media products (radio, television, and newspapers) in their various formats, whether newspaper articles, photographs, or radio and television programmes, are sets of representations and, for some, they can be understood as realistic. O'Keeffe (2011), however, argued that language as a system of representation does not reflect reality but constructs it for people to conceptualise social life. In other words, meaning cannot be restricted to single words, sentences, or

particular texts but is a consequence of the relationships between different texts and their production and reception contexts. Discourse analysts have looked at a wide variety of spoken and written texts to demonstrate how text producers use language (wittingly or not) in a way that could be ideologically significant, and ‘given the power of the written and spoken word, DA [discourse analysis] is necessary for describing, interpreting, analyzing and critiquing social life reflected in a text’ (Jones, 2024, p. 98).

These theoretical perspectives guide the following critique of the discourse and the linguistic features of ‘Rwanda 20 years on the tragic testimony of the children of rape’. By analysing grammar, I seek to, among other things, uncover the concealed dogmata that can influence a reader’s view of these events.

Method

The linguistic tools used in media production have four facets examined here. First, the sentences, choice of words, and types of actions (in the text) – who does them and to whom they are done (syntax and transitivity). Second, the choice and meaning of words and phrases connoted and denoted (lexicons). Third, the naming of and references to people. Fourth, the choice of words to value or assign qualities to people, events, actions, times, and places (predications) and the likely presupposed meanings (hidden) in the text and other sets of language characteristics. Discourse is viewed here as a process, and therefore words, phrases, and sentences in a particular news text are tools actively employed by a journalist to present events to readers and can influence a reader’s interpretation of those events.

The analysis was eclectically executed to investigate the structural features and the representation of discourse content with a focus on language that considered the interaction between the reporter and information sources (addressers), and the reader/audience (addressees), particularly the way in which the addressee understands the addresser’s intended meaning in a particular situation and in the way the requirements of a particular addressee determine the organisation of a discourse. A pragmatic approach that focussed on ‘the speaker’s meaning at the level of utterances situated in a context’ and the potential of the receiver/reader to actively participate in the process of communication by supplementing the ‘missing link’ was deployed (Buja, 2010, p. 260).

Findings

The Structure

The 2014 *Guardian* news article comprises 22 paragraphs, 1,779 words, 4 photographs (Table 4.1), and 20 direct quotations. Most of the words used are English, and the few Kinyarwanda words are either names of people and places or references to the children. Only two individual Kinyarwanda words appear in this article: *Kibirizi* (an administrative unit in southern Rwanda) and *Interahamwe* (the militiamen implicated in the 1994 murders). There are eight key *addressors*: three assaulted women, three children born as a result, one therapist who is also a

genocide survivor, and the journalist, Lindsey Hilsum, who is best known for her work as international editor with *Channel 4 News*. For ethical considerations, the codes *A*, *AI*, *B*, *BI*, *C*, *CI*, and *X* were adopted to replace the real names of all information sources, and these codes reflect the familial relationships between the sources: *A* and *AI* are mother and son; *B* and *BI* are mother and daughter; and *C* and *CI* are mother and daughter. *X* is a genocide survivor and a therapist for 22 raped women and 12 children. Other sources of information in the article include the International Criminal Tribunal, the United Nations (UN), Survivors Fund (a British charitable organisation), and a Kibirizi court verdict.

Overview of Language and Discourse Content

The construction of the events in ‘Rwanda 20 years on: The tragic testimony of the children of rape’ combines stylistic features of both print and broadcast media writing. Hilsum’s article emphasises simplicity, description/colour (of the key actors), and active verbs to illuminate the actions and utterances and to whom they are addressees. There are many active verbal processes that bring to light the violence encountered by the mothers (raped women) and their children (the result) and the disequilibrium between the mothers and their children. Overall, the article establishes and demonstrates how these conflicts have persisted from conception and throughout the lives of the children. The women narrate their emotional challenges raising children conceived out of tribulations and living with the reality that their fathers are the same people who murdered their families. The children seem to understand the rejection and cruelty of their mothers, but still, the journalist narrates, ‘things are not clear as there has never been an open discussion with their mothers – most of them learned about their dark past from their neighbours’ (Hilsum, 2014).

Consistent with the conventional structure of a newspaper feature (Jones, 2024), the narrative is weaved together by the main addressor, the journalist. News is produced with a target or intended audience (addressees), so although it is a fair assumption that the article targets its predominantly British audience, its readership by other addressees and readers is likely (Watson, 2021). It is also possible that some readers have a personal connection or knowledge of the background of these events. The article is filled with hints to historical events and is about the sociological and psychological aspects related to post-genocide Rwanda (the origin of these events), so a consideration of the social values and existing prejudices in post-genocide Rwanda is as critical as the need for sensitive and constructive journalism.

Language and Discourse: A Critical Analysis and Discussion

The Title

‘Rwanda 20 years on: The tragic testimony of the children of rape’, in linguistic terms, is positioned as a ‘discourse topic’. In other words, the title is a proposition about the claims being made in the article. Here, the title informs the reader that

Table 4.1. A Description of Photographs in the Text.

Description		Captions
Photo 1	Source A1 sitting with his mother (A) facing the camera that captured their full faces	[A1, 19], and his mother, [A, 44], outside their home ... The <i>son of rape</i> , he is her only close surviving relative, after her families were killed in the genocide
Photo 2	B1 (teenager) in her school uniform is facing the camera with both her eyes in view. Her mother B is leaning on her daughter on the right in a profile view to the camera	B, right, has now made peace with her teenage daughter B1, left, having <i>tried for an abortion</i> after being raped in the genocide
Photo 3	Two militiamen facing the camera; one is wielding a gun on his shoulders and the other a machete	A <i>Hutu Interahamwe</i> militiaman in central Rwanda in June 1994
Photo 4	In a medium closeup, C1 is facing the camera with both eyes in view	[C1] was born after her mother was repeatedly raped. Withdrawn and nervous, she is now her mother's sole care taker

Source: Hilsum (2014).

the issues being presented are as much in the past as they are in the present and will be in the future.

- *Rwanda* (the Rwanda of yesterday, today and tomorrow).
- *20 years on* (past, present, and future).
- *Tragic* (happened in the past).
- *Testimony* (constructed on present and past events).
- *Children* (past, present, and future).
- *Rape* (committed to women in the past).

The title of any journalistic text has been equated to the topic, and it concisely and accurately expresses what is being discoursed in the following verbal presentation either written or spoken. Buja (2010, p. 263) viewed the topic [title] as an ‘intuitively satisfactory way of describing the unifying principle which makes one stretch of discourse about something and the next stretch about something else’. In this case, the title illuminates the progression of events from the tragedies of 1994 (20 years have passed) to the present lives of the children born of it. Viewed from the social responsibility code of journalism ethics, the label ‘Children of rape’ in the title is not constructive and conveys insensitivity towards the mentioned subjects. As one of my 2023 workshop participants opined:

such expressions can lead to isolation or exclusion of a child from society if they are identified or identify themselves with heightened sin a sin beyond humanity; can you ever feel confident in whatever you do in your life, among your people and friends? (Rwandan journalist, Kigali, 2023)

As this Rwandan journalist suggests, the use of such labels can influence people's view of reality and make children feel or be seen as outcasts of society and feel ashamed of not only their very beings but also their mothers. Language implicitly classifies experience and influences a person's view of reality, and there are various ways of presenting this topic that would have conveyed the same understanding of what the article is written about. To illustrate, in the first paragraph of the article, the author exercises rationality and not an appeal to pathos when they use 'children born as a result'. Even though the narrator's words are purposed to critique the media for their lack of sensitivity towards genocide victims, their choice of words in reference to the children entrenches the stigma. Such descriptions, often made by reporters, reinforce dehumanisation and can deepen the wounds that make them feel less human and unworthy of humane treatment. This behoves journalists to be more constructive, limit destructive statements (even from sources), and circumvent journalistic analyses that may lead to feelings of intense hatred and alienation among people involved in conflict situations and their aftermaths.

Illustrations (Quotes and Photos)

In the article's construction of the narrative, all voices (quotes) of the addressors are flagged off (lead-ins) to speak by their real names. This contradicts the ethical principles of reporting victims of sexual abuse and minors. Three of the four photographs expose the children's faces and names and, consequently, their identities (Table 4.1). This is despite the journalist's explicit acknowledgement that the subjects are 'teenagers'.

Narrative Construction – Diction and Syntax

The narrative sets off with deictic expressions that reference the time span: 'Two decades after the 1994 genocide', the television-journalist author is back in Rwanda to witness the 'extraordinary' stories of women raped during the violence and the children 'born as a result'. Unlike in the title, here the addresser is sensitive in the way she uses language by replacing the earlier reference 'children of rape' with 'born as a result'. The detail that the journalist has been in Rwanda before is an important element of the discourse for it demonstrates her competent knowledge of the historical events in focus and their context and credibility.

The first paragraph is preceded by a photograph and introduces A1 and A2 using both their real names and their facial features (Table 4.1). In addition to revealing the identity of the victim, the journalist refers to him as 'the son of rape'.

In news narratives, the manner in which a journalist names those involved in the story or conflict is likely to influence a negative view and have an ideological effect on the audience about those being referred to (Jones, 2024). Paragraphs 2–5 set the narrative in motion by introducing characters B1 and B. The reader learns that when she was 12, B1 ‘sneaked’ out of school to see her father (for the first time) at a trial where her mother (B) was testifying against him for rape. B1 had discovered from the neighbours that she was conceived in a banana plantation in 1994, after the Interahamwe (Hutu militia) gang-raped her mother (and other women) and massacred others. To add colour, B is introduced with unnecessary predication: ‘a delicate woman like a brightly coloured bird’. She is quoted as saying that she had ‘hated’ her daughter to the extent of ‘wanting to kill her’ because her father killed her family. The persistent conflicts between the women and their children that resulted from their father’s offenses are revealed to the addressee.

The journalist (main addresser) uses the caption under the second photograph (which appears before the fifth paragraph) to inform readers (addressees) that this woman had to accept her daughter against all odds for peace to prevail: ‘B, right, has now made *peace* with her teenage daughter B1 (left), after having *tried for an abortion* after *being raped* in the genocide’ (Table 4.1, my emphasis). That the subject in the second photograph is wearing her school uniform denotes that she is of school-going age, but still the image has both her eyes in view. Her mother, however, was photographed in a profile view. The caption highlights the conflict between mother and daughter through the reference to the action of having ‘tried to abort’ her daughter after discovering she was pregnant.

A cohesion within the text and language manipulation is revealed here in a retrospective sequence to create harmony; from peace to rape, from rape to attempted abortion, attempted murder, hate, mistreatment, and then, acceptance and peace. The verbal processes and descriptions (in syntax) used (through language) to convey the women’s actions (and to some extent the children’s) seem to depict the living children as their mothers’ failures to kill them either by attempting to terminate the pregnancies or, in other circumstances, as babies, toddlers, and children. These actions include ‘had hated’, ‘wanted to kill’, ‘tried to abort’, ‘throwing her out of the house’ and ‘beating her all night long’. Such verbal processes facilitate how the children make sense of positions and social relations within the communication spheres they inhabit. As Jones (2024) contends, principles of language broadly constitute the underlying associations of ways of speaking with social meanings and vice versa.

Consistent with the conventions of news article writing, paragraphs 6–9 contextualise the narrative and gives it depth. The journalist reflects on the incidents of 1994 and provides the statistic (attributed to the UN and Survivors Fund) that sexual violence against women resulted into the birth of ‘approximately 20,000 children’. The addressee learns further on that the Rwandan government and aid programmes have neglected the children and concentrated on the raped women. Consequently, many of these children live in poverty and grew up ‘feeling rejected by their mothers and stigmatized by the wider community’ (Hilsum, 2014). While the issue of child neglect and the reasons behind it are of great importance to the reader too, they are not explored and left for the reader to fill in the dots. Instead, the journalist dwells

on ethnicity and pedigree, drawing more on negative naming and referencing strategies used by informers – particularly to describe the children's associations with their fathers, 'since in the Rwandan context, children belong to their father's line' such that the children are also labelled by their own mothers as Interahamwe (i.e. killers and rapists) and the 'child of a snake'. Comparing children to criminals has the potential to inspire many different interpretations and quite likely reinforces stigma that has an impact on women and children in their community and society.

The representation of the militia men posing triumphantly in the third photograph may seem natural to the main addresser (the journalist), but to many addressees, particularly in Rwanda, 'the image triggers memories of the painful past' (workshop participant, 2023). In terms of intertextuality, or that which interconnects similar or related items or aspects in a given text (O'Keeffe, 2011), this photo treatment can easily influence interpretations that relate other subjects in the story to the militia men/killers.

Paragraphs 10–15 are devoted to X, A1, A, and C and share their experiences. The therapist, X, had been counselling the women and children to help them 'express themselves' and 'overcome their anger and grief' since 2007. Her attributions and quotes describe the children as having 'behavioural problems'. Whereas girls are 'ashamed' and often take on the suffering of their mothers, boys have 'explosive fits of temper' and are 'sullen and aggressive'. The journalist introduces sources A and A1 and locates the latter's given name within the conflict. After several attempts to 'abort her son', A named her son with a metaphor that connotes 'he belongs to them', 'them' here implying his mother's tormentors, the Interahamwe.

While metaphors enable addressors to poetically describe things, people, and places, they can also be harmful and damaging when applied to people. As Jones (2024) explains, the manner in which things or people are named can inform the readers/addressees about a lot of the way the world is viewed and can generate many different ideological perceptions, ranging from negative to neutral and positive, about that person. The ideological aspect here is established because when a noun phrase is applied to something, a label is immediately formed, the existence of which is presupposed. For instance, referring to children with such negative adjectives as 'Interahamwe', 'ashamed', 'explosive and temperamental', 'sullen', and 'aggressive' presupposes that these personalities exist and that raping, killing, temperamentality, and aggressivity are part of their being.

The addressee learns further on that A 'refused' to breastfeed A1 and 'attempted to kill' him when he was a baby. The son is represented as having 'reconciled' with his mother's 'hatred' and cruelty though he remains 'haunted' by the father he cannot bring himself to *hate* (my emphasis). It is apparent that rape is downplayed by A1's words when obscures 'rape' with 'sexual consent':

Sometimes I blame him because he raped my mother ... but maybe they were going to kill her and my father told her, 'If you let us have sex with you, we won't kill you', so mum had to agree. (Hilsum, 2014)

This misunderstanding is interpreted by the journalist as 'confused', since A1 not only acknowledges rape as a bad thing, but also posits it as a strategy used by his

father to save his mother. The journalist reports further that while A1 acknowledges that rape is 'wrong', he is troubled by his own 'confused identity' and 'feels embarrassed and angry every time he's asked his father's name' (Hilsum, 2014). The choice of the phrase 'confused identity' brings to light the ongoing challenges genocide survivors in Rwanda deal with individually in the context of reconciliation.

More depth to the story is provided in paragraphs 16–18, which describe the socio-economic statuses of these women and their reflections on their past: they are subsistence farmers, poor and desperate, who are constantly stigmatised by their dark history. The journalist draws on the discourse strategies of colour to paint a vivid picture of poverty in the lives of C and C1: 'The two live in a one-room house. The mud floor floods in the rain, and a battered old bus seat with springs protruding through the plastic serves as a sofa' (Hilsum, 2014). The current efforts in Rwanda to address the socio-economic statuses of the women as part of the programme for genocide survivors (e.g., the Survivors Fund (SURF), Genocide Survivors Support and Assistance Fund (FARG)), are left out of the report despite their significance.

The discourse shifts in paragraph 18, when the journalist deploys predication to assign C1 with the qualities of 'a smart girl', who has 'dreams' of travelling to Europe or 'getting a job in a bank'. These predication, however, change direction, and suddenly the same subject is reported as having 'fallen behind' in school and as speaking in 'monosyllables' at a volume that is 'scarcely audible', all details that denote lack of confidence. Apparently, the journalist is no longer sure of this young woman's intellectual abilities or that she has the confidence to work in a bank. The technical features of the fourth photograph (between paragraphs 19 and 20) are similar to photographs 1 and 2 and represent another example of unprincipled journalistic actions reinforced by negative lexicons in the caption: 'withdrawn' and 'nervous' to refer to the teenager, and they are accompanied by predication that assign her the qualities of being responsible: she is 'her mother's sole care taker'. As is the convention for the genre of a news article, paragraphs 19 and 20 present the events retrospectively by linking the present to the past and transporting the addressee back to the events of 1994.

The main addresser concludes the narrative in paragraphs 21 and 22 by drawing and building on X's quote: 'rape is devastating as it affects mental, physical [and] social statuses of women [...]. What a great misfortune to be a child of rape!' (Hilsum, 2014). The author combines two kinds of contrasting predicates to make predictions here, the one to flag the inescapable situations for women and the other to posit promise for children. Women have 'little hope of happiness', whereas the children can 'forge their own lives if they complete their education'. Of course, word choice can propose a different understanding than that which the addresser intended to convey. The verb 'hope', insignificant as it may sound, is still confirmatory. By using it in this context, the addresser is predicting the potential, if slim, of a bright future for the women, yet the children's future is conditional and depends on the completion of their education. Considering X's statement that it is 'a great misfortune [...] to be a child of rape', this is ambiguous. From a contemporary news discourse perspective, where reporters need to

go beyond the 5Ws and H in certain contexts, this conclusion is lacking because it ignores the details and complexities.

Conclusion

This chapter has critiqued discourse and language use in ‘Rwanda 20 years on: The tragic testimony of the children of rape’ (Hilsum, 2014) from the social responsibility of the media and the news discourse theoretical perspectives to uncover concealed meanings that can influence a reader’s interpretation of events. The analysis has revealed language and lexical forms used to present facts and events that vary from very straightforward to very esoteric – including idiomatic expressions, naming and referencing, and lexical items that are insensitive, unconstructive, and generally unethical. From a professional ethics standpoint, the article generally falls short in safeguarding the rights and dignity of women and children. Three major flaws are identified: the unethical use and treatment of images and names that identify sources; the stigmatising language in reference to the subjects while constructing the testimonials for readers; and disregard of the social values and the ongoing prejudice within the context of the origin of the events reported to international audiences.

As ‘symbolic elites’ who control the production mode of articulation with power and freedom to select the discourse genres within and determine topics, style, or presentation of discourse (Van Dijk, 2016), journalists should be mindful that this emblematic power is not restricted to articulation but encompasses the mode of influence. This critique demonstrates how the mode in which media represent events and subjects in conflict situations is likely to shape negative or positive views and ideological effects about those who are being represented. Since matters related to such vulnerable groups as women and children are sensitive in nature, reporting these issues requires greater responsibility and ethical procedures.

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