

**A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF MEDIA DISCOURSE
AFTER A NATURAL FLOODING DISASTER
IN MALAWI, IN 2015**

by

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DECLARATION

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DEDICATION

To the memory of my loving father '*Katayeni Patson Chikaipa*'

and dear sister '*Madalo Chikaipa*'

who all passed away when I was still writing this thesis
(23rd April and 30th November 2017 respectively).

May your souls continue resting in eternal peace.

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will cherish the moments we spent our lives together in this world. May your souls Rest In Eternal Peace Dad – Mr Katayeni Patson Chikaipa and dear sister - Madalo Chikaipa. I dedicate this work to both of you.

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ABSTRACT

This is a multimodal critical discourse analysis study that investigates the media discursive strategies in the representation of the catastrophic flooding disaster of January 2015 in Malawi. It analyses the representation of social actors in local print and international online websites, investigating which discursive strategies are typically used to present the selected content, and what the overt and covert meanings are that visual and linguistic texts puts out to their respective implied audiences.

The theoretical and analytical framework uses a combination of different approaches within CDA, specifically Fairclough's (1992, 1995) dialectal relational approach, Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996, 2006) Grammar of Visual Design, and Van Leeuwen's (2008) Social Actor Model. Using a multimodal approach, the study analyses articles purposively selected from a data corpus of 308 news articles that incorporated 313 news images gathered from two local Malawian print media, namely *The Daily Times* and *The Nation*, and two international online news websites, *The Guardian* and *Daily Mail Online*.

The methodology is predominantly qualitative although some elements of quantitative paradigm were used to explain patterns, frequency and or volume of media coverage. The data is organised according to emerging themes, and the analysis is done by critical reading of the verbal and visual texts. The findings are that both the local and international media use discursive strategies that negatively represented the floods as destructive without due attention to the possible contribution of unsustainable agricultural activities of humans that are likely to have triggered or exacerbated the disaster and its effects. In addition, overlapping and interlocking discourses, namely humanitarian, hegemonic and expertise discourses, are evident of the dependencies in the global north – south divide. Further, there is a generic positive portrayal of the donor countries and non-profit organisations as effective and with agency, and at the same time a negative representation of the Malawian government and victims of the crisis as passive recipients of the relief aid.

Although the multimodal analysis shows how the reporting upholds and perpetuates stereotypes of gender in the media representation of the disasters, this analysis established that there is minimal difference between ways in which men and women are portrayed by the local (insider) as compared to the international (outsider) media. This is significant considering another stereotype according to which the people of the UK are seen to be relatively liberal and sensitive

to gender role casting as opposed to the African media that are seen be relatively conservative in subscribing to traditional gender role casting.

Overall, the findings reveal that the media representation of the floods is not neutral; rather it is socially constructed with various ideological perspectives. The study contributes greatly to an understanding of the general linguistic and visual discursive tendencies that local print and international media use in the portrayal of participants in a flooding disaster that occurred in a relatively remote country such as Malawi. In addition, it fills a gap that exists in semiotics on the empirical studies that focus on the interplay between verbal texts and images in disaster representations in African contexts specifically, and in the global south more broadly.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie navorsing het binne die raamwerk van kritiese diskoersanalise strategieë ondersoek wat in multimodale nuusberigte gebruik is in verslagdoening vroeg in 2015 oor 'n vloedramp na swaar reën in Malawi. Dit analiseer die manier waarop sosiale rolspelers in plaaslike koerante, sowel as in geselekteerde internasionale aanlyn nuusberigte, verbaal en in beeldmateriaal gekonstrueer word. Spesifieke aandag aan word gegee aan diskoersstrategieë kenmerkend van bepaalde soorte inhoud; ook die direkte en indirekte betekenis wat visuele en talige tekste aan die onderskeie publikasies se verbeelde lesers voorhou, word ondersoek.

Die teoretiese en analitiese raamwerk van die studie steun op verskillende benaderings tot kritiese diskoersanalise, spesifiek op Fairclough se (1992, 1995) dialekties-relasionele benadering, Kress en Van Leeuwen se (1996, 2006) “*Grammar of Visual Design*”, en Van Leeuwen se (2008) sosiale rolspeler model. 'n Korpus van 308 nuusberigte wat 313 foto's ingesluit het, het die data van die studie uitgemaak. Met aandag aan multimodaliteit (geskrewe teks en beelde wat gesamentlik die nuusitem uitmaak), is berigte gekies uit twee plaaslike Malawiese gedrukte koerante, *The Daily Times* en *The Nation*, en uit die webbladsye van twee internasionale koerante, te wete *The Guardian* en *Daily Mail Online*.

Die metodologie is kwalitatief, alhoewel sekere elemente uit 'n kwantitatiewe paradigma gebruik is om patrone, frekwensie van sekere items en die volume van die mediadekking uit te wys. Daar is bevind dat sowel die plaaslike as die internasionale media diskoersstrategieë gebruik wat die vloede negatief beskryf as destruktiewe elemente, sonder aandag aan die moontlike bydrae van nie-volhoubare landbou-aktiwiteite wat moontlik deur menslike handeling aan die gang gesit of vererger is. Verskillende diskoerse wat humanitêre, hegemoniese en kundigheidskwessies tematiseer, oorvleuel en bou op mekaar, in terme wat 'n globale noord-suid verdeling bevestig. Lande en nie-wins organisasies wat hulp verleen word positief gekonstrueer as effektiewe weldoeners. Terselfdertyd word die Malawiese regering sowel as die slagoffers grootliks aangebied as passiewe ontvangers van noodhulp en toegifte. Alhoewel die multimodale analise uitwys hoe beriggewing oor natuurrampe gender stereotipes instandhou en verder uitbou, wys dit ook uit dat die karakterisering van plaaslike mans en vroue in plaaslike en internasionale nuus kwalik verskil. Dit is opvallend met inagneming van verdere stereotipes waarvolgens Britse joernaliste as relatief liberaal en sensitief t.o.v. gender

rolverdelings sou wees, teenoor Afrika-media wat in hierdie verband getipeer word as konserwatief.

Die studie wys veral uit dat mediaberigte oor natuurrampe soos vloede nie neutraal is nie; dit verteenwoordig verskillende ideologiese perspektiewe in die sosiale konstruksie van die ramp self, asook van die verskillende rolspelers. Deur aandag te gee aan die uitbeelding van 'n vloedramp, die mense wat groot skade, verlies en trauma ly, sowel as die verskillende instansies wat ná die natuurramp hulp verleen in afgeleë dele van 'n relatief onbekende land soos Malawi, dra hierdie navorsing by tot die uitbou van kennis oor algemeen taalwetenskaplike en visuele tendense in media diskoerse oor natuurrampe. Plaaslik en internasionale nuusagentskappe, gepubliseerde en virtueel berigte word in ag geneem. Die studie vul 'n kennisgaping in die semiotiek deurdat dit die gebrek aan empiriese studies wat fokus op die wisselwerking tussen verbale tekste en beelde in die weergee van rampe in 'n Afrika konteks spesifiek, en wyer, in die globale suide, uitwys en dan ook uitbou.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
GVD	Grammar of Visual Design
MCDA	Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis
DHA	Discourse Historical Approach
SAM	Social Actor Model
DRA	Dialectical Relational Approach
GN	Global North
GS	Global South
SFL	Systemic Functional Linguistics
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
MDPDMA	Malawi Department of Poverty, Disaster and Management Affairs
CRED	Centre for Research on Epidemiology of Disasters
PDNA	Post-Disaster Needs Assessment
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
OCHA	Office for the coordination of Humanitarian affairs
NTV	Nepal Television
NBM	National Bank of Malawi

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This dissertation offers a multimodal critical discourse analysis of local print and international online media representations of extreme weather-related events, specifically of the 2015 floods that caused massive destruction and loss of lives to a rural community of largely subsistence farmers in the Shire valley in Malawi.¹ In doing so, it reflects on a category in journalism referred to as “natural disaster reporting”, which is often the topic of reflection in media studies as well as in journalism training. It will relate to certain questions that are widely addressed within this field, but it will also investigate conditions that are likely to be unique to third world communities where exceptional circumstances of poverty and limited development obtain, and which determine how and how much media attention is directed towards natural disaster events. The study works with data from an under-researched region in an African country, identifying and critically analysing selected news items and images that form part of natural disaster media discourse. It pays attention to how participants are represented in the different kinds of media, which discursive strategies are typically used to present the selected content, and what the overt and covert meanings are that each medium puts out to their respective implied audiences. It focuses largely on media narratives that appeared as instances of the dominant discourse of the disaster, with a view to analysing the verbal representation and choice of accompanying visuals in covering the event.

In this study, I take an approach characterised as multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA), referring particularly to Kress and van Leeuwen’s (1996, 2006) *Grammar of Visual Design* (GVD), and to Fairclough’s (1992, 1995) dialectical relational approach (hereafter DRA) for the linguistic textual analysis. The discussion is complemented by tools from other approaches such as van Leeuwen’s (2008) social actor model and Kövecses’s (2002) cognitive theory of metaphor. The MCDA enables a critical examination of the discourses of power,

¹Malawi, a country situated in southern Africa, ranks 170 out of 188 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI 2016) and is categorised as one of the poorest underdeveloped countries in the world. Most of the people live below the “poverty line” which, according to sociological and anthropological measures, makes them more vulnerable to extreme weather conditions than more developed countries and communities are. (See <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/MWI>)

hierarchy, blame and compassion embedded in the interaction between the visual images and verbal texts in the representation of the social actors. In terms of the linguistic analysis, the study makes use of Fairclough's (1992, 1995) ideas of description, interpretation and explanation. Ultimately, the analysis focuses on the media reporting on one of the most powerful and destructive disasters on record in Malawi, the flooding that followed months of heavy rain in the region. It is an illustrative case of a discourse of humanitarian crisis as represented in local print and international online news media published at the height of the crisis, between January and March 2015.

The concept of 'discourse' in this study refers to language in use, considering either written or spoken modes of expression (Brown and Yule 1983:1). It also refers thematically to 'Discourse' as defined by Gee (1999:27) which refers to the discussion centred around a given topic, in this case Disaster Discourse in which human activity is (in more and less justifiable ways) related to devastation of the natural environment.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Between November 2014 and February 2015, Malawi experienced heavy rainfall which resulted in excessive flooding in large parts of the country. Many news reports indicated that the unprecedented floods brought about extensive destruction to human infrastructure and thus also to the country's economy, as it is heavily dependent on agriculture in rural regions such as those hit by the flooding. It is on record that 278 people lost their lives, mostly due to drowning. Varying debates emerged regarding the potential factors to which the natural catastrophe could be attributed. Some considered the cause of the floods to be climate change, whereas others blamed destructive, perhaps also abusive human activities towards the environment as having contributed to and aggravated the unstable weather patterns and related siltation of rivers. The devastating events and associated effects of the natural catastrophe of 2014/2015 were covered extensively in the local Malawian media, as well as in some international news outlets.

The mass media, electronic, broadcast and printed, are instruments of wider communication that give a local as well as distant public an opportunity to access information on an extensive scale. Typically, local news on events that affect the everyday lives of Malawians will be published in Malawian media only. For Malawian news to be internationally reported, the scale of the event will have to be considerable. Therefore, when a British newspaper such as *The Guardian*, or an internationally distributed publication such as *The Daily Mail Online* publish

reports on floods in an otherwise (to them) unremarkable African country one can assume that the events and their effects represented an emergency of exceptional severity. For O'Neill, Boykoff, Day and Niemeyer (2013:413), the media are powerful agents that shape, translate and interpret information that people rely on to help interpret and make sense of the complexities of their natural environment. Though most people regard mass media as only the source of information about the events, the representations that newspapers provide play a significant role in the way people construe and come to terms with the natural phenomenon. Franks (2008:28) argues that awareness and perceptions of disasters are directly related to the media coverage even though the scale of damage may not be in proportion with the damage inflicted. Cockburn (2011) in fact, points out that media coverage of natural disasters is rarely as neutral and accurate as is often assumed. The amount of coverage a disaster is given is not always proportionate to the scale of the catastrophe: where it happens, who is affected, and what other newsworthy events happen at the same time are co-determiners of how much and how widely a particular devastating event and its aftermath will be covered. Against this background, the mass media coverage of a large-scale natural disaster becomes interesting: the media does not only represent what happens; it also shapes the public understanding of what transpired. This study thus becomes one that investigates humanitarian disaster discourses related to flooding, noting in the process the similarities and differences between the media discourses that were generated after (e.g.) Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the earthquake in Pakistan in 2005 as well as the Haiti Earthquake in 2010, the Fukushima quake and tsunami of 2011, record flooding in Queensland Australia in 2013, and record rainfall resulting in calamitous floods in the UK in December 2015.

It is taken as common cause that what is presented in the media cannot be read as “pure facts”. The truth claims made in journalism are necessarily embedded in the worldviews, judgements and preferences of the publisher (Carvalho 2007:225). Fairclough (1995:12) notes that ideologies are usually at play in the political and social debates in the media. The news media play a prominent role ‘in the reproduction of ideologies in society’ since they construct the social, political and economic structures in which they operate (Joye 2009:46). Van Dijk (1988:34) claims that “... news about Third World countries is invariably framed in a western ideological or cultural perspective, which in part leads to highly stereotypical accounts of only a few types of event (coup and earthquake).” Further, Fowler, Kress, Hodge and Trew (1979) and Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996/2006) highlight how ideological underpinnings of discourses are captured, also in the linguistic structure and visual images of the texts. The nature

of authority and distribution of power in socio-cultural context is represented in what authors topicalise and how this is written (or spoken) or visualized. Wodak and Busch (2004:109) emphasize that in Critical Discourse Analysis (hereafter CDA) the media are important public spaces and that media discourses are sites of social positioning and power struggle. This study notes that media discourse does not represent the natural crisis neutrally, but constructs the phenomenon by embedding various ideological perspectives in the ostensibly factual reporting.

In this regard, globally there have been numerous studies focusing on the ideological construction strategies of humanitarian disasters in different regions, although these have mostly concentrated on discourses situated in the global north and Asian countries. For instance, as pointed out by Joye (2009:46) and Moeller (2006:174-75), studies on newspaper coverage of humanitarian crises have focused on the developments in the global north because many crises with unimaginable proportions in the global south, particularly the sub-Saharan region go unreported in the media. Most of the disaster studies have taken a turn from attention to the destruction to focus on development, governance or political perspective in developed countries like the United States, Canada, Britain, France and Germany; other countries with strong international presence like China, Russia, Japan and the north pole region are also given prominence. However, studies on humanitarian disaster discourses enacted in the media of sub-Saharan Africa generally, and of Malawi particularly, are much less prevalent. This underscores an observation of Moeller (2006:176) that disasters recognised by the media in the global north receive massive coverage and have attracted a lot of academic research interest in media discourses. However, this does not imply the absence of humanitarian disaster related news in the African media; it merely emphasizes biasness towards newspaper discourse studies that focus on global north and Asian countries and a neglect of the same in the African continent. Typically, humanitarian disaster affairs in African countries are very selectively attended to. The limited attention to media representations of issues, events and debates on humanitarian disaster matters, leaves a vacuum in our knowledge of Africa's ideological constructions of the humanitarian discourse. Against this background, the study investigates how the ideological discourses of inequality are articulated in the humanitarian news and images associated with the 2015 floods in Malawi, as it is played out in the local print and international online media. Thus, the attention is on the media coverage and community dialogue about the rainfall and massive flooding of January 2015 in the southern part of Malawi.

Essentially, the rationale for conducting this study lies in its intention to explicate discursively those historical, economic and political features of the natural disaster discourse in Malawi, which differentiate it from similar discourses in global north, Asian and other African countries. It is interested in distinguishing marked features of the one discourse that are not necessarily replicated in the other. Drawing on the critical linguistics, the study will demonstrate that ideologies are not manifested only through the ideational content of the discourse, but also through forms of expression which encode social meanings (Fowler 1991).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In a comparatively under-researched region in Africa, this thesis addresses a problem referring to the discursive media construction of the natural disaster, particularly focusing on how the newspaper discourse represented the crisis apparently neutrally, but in fact embedding different ideological perspectives. It considers specifically the various ways in which local print and international online distributed media construct catastrophes in an African country, with attention to how the social actors in the catastrophe are represented. Further, the focus is on an instance of humanitarian discourse where the relation between human welfare and natural disaster is more or less explicitly reported. A selection of media reports were critically analysed to identify the discursive linguistic and visual communicative strategies used to characterise the natural disaster, particularly the social actors, the challenges of making a living they encountered and the numerous discourses of hierarchy and inequality in the news reports in the aftermath of such devastation.

Previous studies on newspaper discourse have concentrated on investigating the construction of social meanings through linguistic structures in the media (Conboy 2007; Richardson 2007; Teo 2000; El Refaie 2001; Bishop and Jaworski 2003). These studies have examined how media representation of the different groups such as women, immigrants and ethnic minorities sustained unequal social power relations and reproduced dominant ideologies. However, there is little research on news media representation of natural phenomena and the human actors involved, hence this study interrogates the mediated constructions of the devastating floods to disclose how they put certain ideologies about natural disaster more or less explicitly into the discursive space created by the local print and international online media.

1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The general aim of the research is to critically analyse discursive linguistic and visual strategies used in the media reporting of the Malawi flooding of January 2015. The goal is to demonstrate how, as in other reporting on hazardous weather events, newspaper reporting of the natural catastrophe in Malawi even when seemingly neutral, reflects different ideologies that shape the public perception and reaction towards the events. In order to achieve the broad objective of the study, the following specific objectives were set:

- i. To profile the volume of mediated material covering the floods and their effects in Malawi across the six weeks directly following the most devastating events, and then to classify this material according to genre;
- ii. To identify the dominant thematic and discursive features used in the linguistic and visual texts which covered the Malawi floods during the identified period;
- iii. To examine and analyse a selection of the reports and visual images listed in i. above, with a view to disclosing how local actors in the area where the flooding was experienced, are discursively constructed or represented;
- iv. To analyse, specifically, the textual and photographic representations of gender during the 2015 floods in Malawi.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The key research question that the study intends to address is: How do the local print and international online media discursively represent the Malawi flooding crisis of January 2015? However, the study responded to this broad question by providing answers to the following secondary research questions that emerged from the specific objectives;

- i. How widely were the Malawian floods of January 2015 reported in selected publications of the local and international media, and which were the genres in which such reporting was presented?
- ii. What thematic, generic and discursive features such as metaphors, hyperbole and superlatives were used in covering the devastating floods and related to human activity in Malawi?

- iii. In a close reading of selected news reports what kind of social identities are constructed of human actors and of environment in the areas where the floods were most devastating?
- iv. How are the male and female subjects portrayed visually in the selected newspapers covering the disaster, and why were the participants portrayed the way they are in the local print and international online media?

1.6 THEORETICAL POINT OF DEPARTURE

The present study is mainly set within the overarching theoretical framework of MCDA drawing specifically on ideas and methods developed to analyse linguistic and visual forms of communication. The approach seeks to bring awareness as to how social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by linguistic texts and visual images in the social and political context (van Dijk 2001:352; Kress and van Leeuwen 1996/2006; Machin and Mayr 2012; van Leeuwen and Jewitt 2001). The value of taking MCDA to analyse the media reports in this study is that they examine the multiple modes of communication thereby disclosing how meanings are encoded in the linguistic and visual manifestations of the natural disaster discourse, and then recognising and explicating the relationship between linguistic and visual messages as published by different media outlets. The discursive practices within which the natural disaster news generally, and the events of flooding in particular were produced and consumed, are in also focus. The larger social economic and political practices within which these reports were published, are investigated. Considering the large volume of reports and the variety of themes that were addressed, the study will highlight and analyse only a selected number of salient features of the reporting, namely referential or naming strategies, metaphors, hyperbole and superlatives (grammatical, lexical and textual) and the visual features based on layout and salience.

A fundamental premise of the MCDA theoretical approach is that discourses are realized through a combination of different kinds of semiotic resources and not only by means of language-in-isolation (Iedema 2003:33; Kress and van Leeuwen 2006; Jewitt and Oyama 2001). In the printed media different modes, such as verbal texts and images, appear together and interact to form meanings. Baldry (2000) and Matthiessen (2007) stress how communicative instruments currently used in public communication cannot ignore that meanings are standardly expressed through various semiotic resources. Text producers, such as journalists, have a wide range of choices available for representing news making participants

and newsworthy events. Their communicative activity is inspired and shaped by power relations and ideology. This means the written and visual texts are products of the authors' choices, made to highlight certain aspects of identity, often connoting specific ideas, ideologies and values that are not overtly articulated (Machin and Mayr 2012:50). Therefore, the study utilized MCDA to explore the linguistic and semiotic choices that journalists, editors and media companies used to produce texts on the disaster in Malawi. By recognising that other choices could have been made, and other devices could have been used, the approach assists in developing a deeper understanding of the kind of ideas, values, identities and sequence of activities that were being represented or implied in the texts and images about the disaster. Moreover, by highlighting the element of choice, particular linguistic devices, as well as choice of topics, layout and visual images, the study unravels aspects of meaning that are partially or completely suppressed or obliterated in conscious as well as unconscious legitimising particular ideologies.

'Ideology' is a key concept in Critical Discourse Analysis (Wodak 2002:9), as are notions of 'power' and 'agency'. CDA centres on critically analysing discourses produced by those who are in power, who are responsible for social inequalities, and who have the means and opportunity to address social problems and improve attention to the interests of disempowered groups (van Dijk 1993). It emphasizes how ideology, power and dominance are constantly constructed and reconstructed through linguistic and visual processes. The concepts of 'ideology', 'power' and 'agency' were introduced and have been expounded in Sociology and Philosophy (Richardson 2007; Stoddart 2007); critical discourse analysts draw on understandings from these fields when investigating the linguistic or discursive features of a particular text. CDA is thus notoriously "interdisciplinary" (Wodak 2001).

Many scholars have explored relations of language, power and ideology from a critical theory perspective with different understandings of the term "discourse". Apart from defining discourse in terms of its communicative function (see Brown and Yule 1983; Cook 1989), with emphasis on language-use-in-context, this study considers insights from sociolinguistics and critical linguistics. Wodak (1996:3) argues that discourse sociolinguistics is a form of sociolinguistics which assigns equal importance to text and context. Similarly, Fairclough (1989:4) identifies Critical Language study as an approach to analysis that raises consciousness as to exploitative social relations, through focusing upon language. Despite these approaches lacking coherence, the theoretical considerations they work with give a framework for

examining different aspects of the texts and broader social cultural context in which the flooding disaster occurred and was reported, and they assist in acknowledging how power and ideologies are decisive in news selection as well as in ways of reporting. These ideologies control, shape and produce natural disaster discourse and in turn the discourse controls and shapes the social cultural context.

This study takes as its point of departure a basic assumption of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006/1996) that in contemporary communicative systems the discursive meanings in society are expressed through a combination semiotic resources. Texts remain part of the social context framework of CDA, in which the general view is that social practices influence texts, shaping the context and mode in which they are produced. As Richardson (2007:37) observed, the structure of texts influences how they are understood by those who read and consume them. This dissertation follows this understanding that the media are produced by specific institutions which have entrenched interests and expect to achieve certain social effects. In concrete terms, the study can be described as one interested in the way newspapers discursively represented a set of events of a natural catastrophe not only demonstrating how the accounts depart from a neutral and objective perspective, but also determining what kinds of constructions the various publications present of actors and events on which they report. Following MCDA, the study shows how particular media produce and reproduce social domination, including possible abuses of power in which one group controls others, and conversely, discursive resistance to such abuse.

1.7 METHODOLOGY

1.7.1 Research design

The nature and objectives of the study identify it as one to be conducted within a qualitative paradigm. This paradigm is best suited to the research questions that are focused on detailed representation of a particular discourse in a narrowly defined area of interest. The research concentrates on a limited, selected number of texts of a particular genre, looking at thematic and discursive features which disclose embedded ideologies as well as socially constructed ideas and identities. The study is largely interpretive as the analysed data identifies recurring themes and finds categories that disclose overt and covert meanings. The analysis discloses themes and motifs that have been articulated, and the different narratives covered in local print and international online news reports on the catastrophic flooding in Malawi. The approach

helps to demonstrate how the events, issues and debates surrounding the natural catastrophe have been constructed and addressed in the mass media, also considering the different interests of local and international outlets.

The study follows MCDA by drawing links between the linguistic and visual parts of the text, also connecting the textual analysis to the social analysis. For the textual analysis, the study draws on Fairclough's (1992, 1995) view that discourse is a social practice embedded in a social context. Focus is on the context, which is understood on the three levels namely (i) immediate context of the text, (ii) the institutional setting, and (iii) the social cultural context. The visual analysis adopts Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996, 2006) observation that images are not secondary or supplementary to the verbal text, but are a constructive and integral part of the interaction. With or without accompanying text, they constitute a textual component which creates meaning in a unique, feature-dependent way. The integration of the approaches facilitates interpreting the choice of language and images and how they relate to the social context in which they occur, and noting the social consequences of their use. The design of the study allows for examining the relationships between discourses and social conditions, ideologies and power relations. An investigation of how the discourses on unprecedented floods in Malawi permeated both the local and international media, is likely to disclose the various kinds of interest of different kinds of publishers. Therefore, the MCDA used in this study is constituted of a number of analytic devices that include ones suggested by Fairclough (1992, 1995) and by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2006). As Wodak (2008:8) argues, "relationships between language and society are so complex and multifaceted that interdisciplinary research is required".

1.7.2 Sources of data

For the study, I collected data from the following print publications across a period of six weeks: two local newspapers (*The Daily Times* and the *Nation Newspaper*), and two international online newspapers (UK based *Daily Mail Online* and *The Guardian*). Publications covering a period of three months, between January 2015 and March 2015, were systematically scrutinised for all information on all different aims, objectives and questions about the natural catastrophic flooding representation in the media. The two local daily newspapers selected here are the most widely circulated English publications in Malawi. Though there were some publications in the local languages, that was outside the scope of this study. The two UK international publications selected are relatively high profiled ones that are generally recognised for high standards in

journalism and are circulated widely outside of Britain. Another motivation for the selection of the newspapers is that they were accessible by the readers and widely distributed to a larger audience. In addition, the online archives could easily be documented. The particular time frame was chosen as this is the period in which, after heavy rainfall, the catastrophic floods ravaged large areas in Malawi and so were important in terms of current newsworthiness.

The print newspaper and online website articles are sampled using non-probability or non-random sampling techniques. In this kind of sampling all articles on flooding are considered as relevant to the study. No initial target of a maximum number of articles was set. As the time frame is limited, all reporting is scrutinised for relevant material to be investigated. For closer analysis, purposive sampling was used, selecting the suitable articles from the larger corpus of selected texts. For a finer textual and visual analysis, a representative set of texts and visual images were selected. The number of articles, the particular genre (i.e. lead articles, reports on investigative work, editorial reflection) to be analysed and the range of ideologies for instance on human activity, assignment of responsibility, characterising of ‘social actors’ are investigated and decided on the basis of the full sample of texts.

1.7.3 Data analysis

As mentioned, the data is analysed using the MCDA, particularly using Fairclough’s (1992, 1995) dialectical relational approach and Kress and van Leeuwen’s (1996, 2006) Grammar of Visual Design. The chosen model of analysis pays special attention to

- i. situational and historical context,
- ii. linguistic description,
- iii. the relationship between discourse processes and the text,
- iv. the relationships between discourse processes and social processes,
- v. and the visual/image analysis

The analytical model characterises CDA as a circular process in which analysis needs to recognise and describe the form and function of the text (thus also attend to genre), relate it to the way it is produced and likely to be consumed, and relate it to the wider society in which it takes place (Richardson 2007:37). However, the integration of Fairclough’s (1992, 1995) dialectical relational model to the grammar of visual design developed by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2006) assures sufficient scrutiny and transparent exposition of the power and

ideologies embedded to the language and images of the newspaper reports on the catastrophic flooding, and ultimately this as well establishes how characterisation of the natural catastrophe portrayed the (un)affected communities in Malawi.

1.8 ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS

This thesis is organised in seven chapters. This first chapter presents the general background, giving an introduction to the study on how media reporting of natural disasters shapes the public interpretation and perception of the news. The chapter gives the problem statement, objectives and research questions that guide the study. Further, it presents the theoretical point of departure that will be further elaborated in later sections.

Chapter two gives the situational context of the study. It explores the literature about the media reporting of different disasters in the world, as a recognised journalistic theme, presented in various genres. The chapter examines the pattern and effects of disasters in Malawi and how they have been reported in the media. It confirms that different disaster reports generate different themes and multiple discourses in varying socio-cultural contexts.

Chapter three reviews the literature and theoretical underpinnings guiding the study, which largely highlights the ideal concepts of CDA and MCDA. The chapter discusses Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996/2006) multimodal analysis and Fairclough's (1992, 1995) DRA as overarching theories for the visual and linguistic analysis of the disaster reports. Further, the chapter also examines those aspects of other CDA approaches that were considered in the analysis, such as van Dijk's (1998) notion of ideological stereotyping, 'us' and 'them' representations. It also considers the approaches of van Leeuwen (2008), Machin and Mayr (2012) and Jewitt and Oyama (2001) in the analysis of the images, particularly showing how the point of view, distance and layout affects the interpretation of meanings derived from the combination of visual and linguistic modes of communication.

Chapter four presents the research methodology which includes the techniques of data collection involved in carrying out the research. The chapter highlights the data collection process from the local print media houses in Malawi, particularly the Blantyre Newspapers Limited and Nations Publications Limited, and the online news websites of *The Guardian* and *Mail Online* websites, also giving a justification of the various choices that were made.

Chapter five analyses the broad discursive features of natural disaster reporting; it also looks at uses of metaphor in such texts. Chapter six gives a micro-level discussion of the textual strategies typically used and illustrated in the data on the Malawian flooding. It also gives a representation of the social actors in the local print and international online website coverage of the disaster.

Chapter seven uses the multimodal theory to conduct a visual analysis of the selected images used in the media coverage of the disaster. It focuses on how the layout, distance and point of view of the participants represented in the images was structured to affect readers' interpretation of the text. The chapter gives special attention to gender stereotypes in the media representation of the participants in the images of the disaster.

Chapter eight presents the summary of findings, recommendations and areas of further research arising from this thesis. The chapter examines briefly how the objectives and research questions are addressed in the linguistic and visual analysis of the data.

1.9 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research contributes to the literature on the media representation of the natural catastrophic disaster events and the social actors. Particularly, the contribution is limited to the body of work on natural disaster discourse in an African country that perceives media representation of the natural catastrophe as neutral, without ideologies. The findings of this research contribute to the understanding of the ramifications of media reporting on natural catastrophes which are also crises for humans in the affected areas. The analytical approach, rooted in MCDA, unearths the patterns, ideologies, ambiguities and inconsistencies that arise in reporting crises in an African setting. Thus, based on the findings, suggestions are made as to reasonable counter-positions to address the ideologies which continue negative stereotypes regarding African communities, and specifically attending to gender constructions, and so entrench varying power relations between the communities in focus and the natural environment in which they live.

Chapter 2

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY THE MEDIATISATION OF LARGE SCALE DISASTERS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides background to natural circumstances in Malawi to position the reporting on flooding in the country in relation to natural catastrophic disaster reporting in other parts of the world. The first section examines the geographical location, population and distribution of economic resources in Malawi. This traces the country's position as an African country and considers its current economic status in comparison to globalising trends. The second section explores the trend of reporting on extreme weather-related challenges in other parts of the world for the past decade or so. In the third section, the discussion focuses specifically on the mediatisation of natural catastrophic disasters experienced in different parts of the world, and Malawi in particular. Further, the chapter reviews the dominant discourses that emerged in the media reporting of other disasters in the world. In the last section, the chapter examines the mediatisation of the past natural catastrophic disasters in Malawi, and how this relates to the question of media construction and representation to be addressed in the rest of the study.

2.2 MALAWI: SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Malawi is a landlocked country, situated in the semi-arid region of southern Africa. It borders Zambia to the northwest, Mozambique to the southwest and east, and Tanzania to the north and northeast respectively. The country has a population of around 18 million people with fifty-four percent females as compared to the males.² The distribution of people is sparse although a large percentage is concentrated in the rural areas. Presently, overpopulation has put strain on the management of natural resources, thereby contributing to the variability of weather patterns (climate change), which exposes the communities to various types of disasters such as crop failure and flood damage (Beau, Capra, Van der Heide, Stoneham and Lucas 2001). Economically, Malawi is one of the least developed countries of the world (Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), The World Fact Book 2017) and most often the management of disasters has been a great challenge to the government because of poor rescue resources, as well as weak

²See Malawi national population census report 2008.

policies and rampant corruption. CIA (2017) reveals that 80% of the population live in the rural areas largely depending on rain-fed subsistence farming, and on a smaller scale, on tobacco and tea commercial farming that accounts for almost half of the gross domestic product (hereafter GDP).

The weather is semi-arid in that it comprises of both rainy and dry seasons, the former extending from October/November to April, reaching its peak between December and February each year (Mijoni 2009:490). According to International Food Policy Research Institute (hereafter IFPRI) (2009), ActionAid (2006) and Mijoni (2009), the unpredictability of the weather patterns affects people's livelihoods and the economy greatly. Further, Mijoni (2009:491) contends that Malawi is situated within the tropics and the Great Rift Valley that runs from Kenya, through Tanzania and Mozambique. As such, there are several lakes and rivers that run through the country, the biggest being the Shire River which is a subsidiary to the Zambezi River, which flows Lake Malawi and reaches the ocean in Mozambique. The Shire River is significant to a lot of people along its way to Zambezi, but the pattern of excessive rainfall has many implications to people living along its banks, such as loss of lives and damage of infrastructure for those who have settled alongside it and rely upon the River (Mijoni 2009:492). Conversely, the decrease in the wet season months results to offset of the drier months. Therefore, both droughts and floods are expected, though always with great uncertainty.

2.3 HISTORIC OVERVIEW OF THE NATURAL CATASTROPHIC DISASTERS IN MALAWI

According to an ActionAid (2006:3) report, between 1940 and 2006, Malawi has experienced about 40 massive catastrophic weather related natural disasters, of which most were floods and droughts. Flooding disasters, specifically, have affected a large number of people and caused great agricultural destruction (Pauw, Thurlow and Seventer 2010:5; Mijoni 2009:492). According to the Malawi Department of Poverty, Disaster and Management Affairs report of 2004, there has been a steady increase in the frequency of the occurrence of disasters, which are natural as well as man-made. Mijoni (2009:492) stresses that latest disasters, particularly the floods, have occurred in the wake of cyclones which have caused a great loss of lives, including damage to the infrastructure and economy. Natural disasters have also contributed to malaria and cholera outbreaks, particularly in places where victims are accommodated in deplorable conditions with poor sanitation.

To appreciate the rate of disasters in Malawi, Table 2.1 shows a summary of the natural catastrophes from 2005 to 2015, as identified and documented by the Centre for Research on Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED).³ The summary presents information that helps us appreciate why examining the discursive representation of the disasters in the media is important.

Table 2.1: A summary of the natural disaster patterns and trends in Malawi since 2005

Disaster subgroup	Disaster Type	Year	Number of affected people	Total Deaths
Hydrological	Flood	2005	44 500	1
Climatological	Drought	2005	5 100 000	0
Meteorological	Storm	2005	8	11
Hydrological	Flood	2006	16 000	8
Hydrological	Flood	2007	201 965	2
Climatological	Drought	2007	520 000	0
Hydrological	Flood	2008	16 380	0
Hydrological	Flood	2010	21 290	0
Hydrological	Flood	2011	83 587	4
Hydrological	Flood	2012	90 735	4
Climatological	Drought	2012	1 900 000	0
Meteorological	Storm	2012	6 000	0
Hydrological	Flood	2013	33 000	3
Hydrological	Flood	2014	44 850	0
Meteorological	Storm	2015	350	5
Hydrological	Flood	2015	638 645	278

Source: Emergency disaster database (http://emdat.be/disaster_list/index.html)

Table 2.1 shows a pattern or trend of disasters since 2005. It demonstrates that floods are a perennial disaster that has negatively affected a lot of people, and has at times resulted in deaths. In 2005 flooding caused great damage and destruction when about 44 500 people were affected and one person was killed. In 2006, the floods busted the Ruo River and Shire River banks affecting 16 000 people, destroying 1 794 houses and washing away 24 032 hectares of crops.

³ CRED stands for the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), which maintains an Emergency Events Database EM-DAT. The main objective of the database is to serve the purposes of humanitarian action at national and international levels. It is an initiative aimed to rationalise decision making for disaster preparedness, as well as providing an objective base for vulnerability assessment and priority setting. <http://www.emdat.be/>

The 2007 floods were also declared as disastrous with a lot of damage to livelihoods with almost 201 965 people displaced. Recently in 2015, 278 people lost their lives and 638 645 got displaced. Mijoni (2009), reports that the flooding disasters in Malawi have caused damage to infrastructures and loss of lives annually. Figures of the affected people and the trend of serious natural disasters demonstrates how prone Malawi has been to disasters, particularly floods throughout successive years.

Empirical studies on the causes of flooding in Malawi have noted that such incidents are common in the low-lying areas such as main river valleys and the shores of Lake Malawi (Mijoni 2009:491; UN System 2005). However, Mulwafu (2010:216, 227), as well as Minde, Kowero, Ngugi and Luhanga (2001), claim that flooding disasters have become an annual occurrence because of unsustainable environmental practices, including deforestation. Deforestation is a result of the expansion of farm land for agricultural purposes, as well as a thriving charcoal business, tobacco curing, uncontrolled bush fires and rapid population growth. In her observation, Stansfield (2015) claims that the Malawi floods would have been prevented if more attention had been paid to sustainability practices. Population explosion and unchecked deforestation are singled out as putting enormous pressure and stress on the environmental sustainability of the country.

Other scholars, including Misunje (2008:15), ActionAid (2006:4), Chakanza (2009:32), and Mwale and Adeloje (2014:2) have linked flooding (and droughts) to different environmental challenges such as weather variability, climate change, and unpredictable heavy or erratic rainfall. Similarly, in his investigation into public understanding of climate change, Bakuwa (2015:141) maintains that extreme weather changes such as floods are manifestations of the climate change and instances of global warming. Regardless of the differing perspectives on the causes, Mulwafu (2010:218) and Nsanje District Floods Recovery Framework (2012:61) have criticised the failure of post-colonial governments to implement policies and legislation that could tame the unsustainable environmental practices. Thus, due to the changing climate, topography and various invasive human activities, Malawi continues to experience a high incidence of devastating natural disasters.

2.3.1 A review of the natural catastrophic flooding disaster in 2015

In the months between December 2014 and March 2015, the heavy rains Malawi experienced caused flooding in the lower Shire valley, including some parts of the central, eastern and

northern regions. According to the government's Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (hereafter PDNA) report (2015), the forceful flooding waters affected about 1 101 364 people, displaced 638 645 and caused the deaths of 278, while a large number are still missing and presumed dead. Economic losses were experienced at different levels: damage to infrastructure, crops and livestock, reduction in production due to electricity and water shortage, and disruption of economic systems in communities where people were displaced. For weeks manpower concentrated more on disaster response than any other activities, causing a slowdown in other areas where governmental fiscal transfer was required (PDNA 2015). The PDNA report indicates that floods washed away about 64,000 hectares of planted crops including many homes and livestock. Figure 2.1 is a map of Malawi that shows the different areas most affected by the floods.



Figure 2.1: Map showing the flood affected in areas in Malawi. (Source: OCHA – Office for the coordination of Humanitarian affairs)

The affected districts indicated in Figure 2.1 include Magochi, Machinga, Balaka, Phalombe, and Zomba in the eastern region; Nsanje and Chikwawa in the lower Shire valley and Thyolo, Chiradzulu, Mulanje and Blantyre in the southern region, as well as Nsanje, and Chikwawa in the lower Shire valley. During the same period Ntcheu and Salima districts were affected in the

central region, whereas in the north Rumphu and Karonga were the affected districts. The worst affected districts were Nsanje and Chikwawa in the lower Shire valley due to the rising levels of the waters in the Shire River.

Following the damage of the floods, the president declared a state of emergency on 15th January 2015 for the 15 districts (out of 28). The declaration substantiated the severity of the disaster and was treated as breaking news among the local and international media outlets. As primary sources of information, the media used photographs and textual reports produced by on-site journalists to raise awareness among distant populations about the extent of the disaster. The photographs below illustratively show images that were used to represent the extent of damage that the floods caused in *The Guardian* (a UK daily publication) and *The Daily Times* (a Malawian daily publication), respectively.



Figure 2.2: Photograph showing extent of flooding in Malawi's most southern district, Nsanje. (Source: *The Guardian*, 30 January 2015)



Figure 2.3: A flooded village in Chikwawa district in the south. (Source: *The Daily Times*, 27 March 2015)

Figure 2.2 portrays a large body of flood water with a submerged road, whilst figure 2.3 shows how houses were covered in the rising waters. News accompanying and explaining these photographs appeared not just on the day of the disaster, but also in the days and weeks subsequent to the disaster. Notably, there were varied textual and photographic representations in the media about the floods as reporters and editors selected which aspects of the disaster would receive the additional prominence that a photographic image necessarily gives. These representations are analysed in more detail in chapters five and six.

To put into perspective the severity of natural disasters at a global level, CRED (2016:1) notes that in 2015 there were 346 catastrophic disasters worldwide, out of which 115 were flooding events that caused much devastation around the world, and affected 27.5 million people, 3,310 of whom died. Guha-Sapir, Hoyois and Below (2015:17), rates the natural catastrophic flooding disaster in Malawi as amongst the most severe disasters globally, also due to the large number of deaths. Table 2.2 gives the top ten countries that were affected by different natural disasters, rated according to the number of deaths.

Table 2.2: Top 10 natural disasters by number of deaths in 2015 worldwide

Event	Month	Country	No. of deaths
Earthquake	April	Nepal	8 831
Heatwave	June	France	3 275
Heatwave	May	India	2 248
Heatwave	June	Pakistan	1 229
Heatwave	June	Belgium	410
Landslide	October	Guatemala	350
Flood	November	India	325
Riverine flood	July	India	293
Earthquake	October	Pakistan	280
Flood	January	Malawi	278

Source: EM-DAT (25th January 2016): *The OFDA/CRED, 2015 disasters in numbers*

Thus, in 2015, the flooding in Malawi was reported beyond the local media and featured in a number of international news publications as well. According to Guhar-Sapir, Hoyois and Below (2015:25), the number of deaths from hydrological disasters were significantly higher than the averages of similar cases from 2005 to 2015 at a global level. Following this, The World Bank (2010) report observes that frequent occurrence of natural catastrophic disasters in southern Africa have contributed to the high mortality rate and economic losses. Others have claimed that the severity of the flooding over the years have caused other disasters, such as the unprecedented food crisis which was reported in 2002 and 2004/2005 which followed food crops being washed away (Coulibaly et al. 2015:1621; ActionAid 2006:3). Ultimately, natural catastrophic disaster news gains wider coverage in the newspapers because of the social and physical damage they generate at societal and global level.

2.4 MEDIATISATION OF GLOBAL NATURAL CATASTROPHES

As noted earlier, printed and electronic media continue to be an effective instrument in the reproduction and dissemination of the images and reports about the world's devastating disasters. The public rely on the news media for first-hand information and accurate representations of the damage of the large-scale disasters (Joye 2009:46; Zaheer 2016:75). Without the immediacy of the media to present the disaster pictures or images, it is almost impossible for the public to appreciate the destruction inflicted upon by the particular disasters. During such disaster events, the mass media does not only act as a source of information but

also provides a key role in the way people construe and come to terms with the natural crises. Therefore, media are central in the construction of the large-scale disaster narratives for public consumption; in some cases, it seems disasters only exist when recognized and fully covered by the media.

Following this, it remains to be established whether the media representation of the natural catastrophic disasters are ideologically neutral accounts of reality that do not influence the public perception of the events. Recent studies have argued that even when given the same level of exposure, the impact of natural disasters on people vary along the lines of gender, age, class and race (Gunewardena 2008). Many of the victims worst affected by the natural catastrophic disasters are those socially, politically and economically marginalized because they have limited access to the various resources that would have enabled them to escape and or recover from the crises. In addition, de Waal (2008: xi) observes power inequalities are exercised throughout the different stages of the disaster that include prevention, insurance, protection and evacuation, relief and rehabilitation. Such social inequalities emerge because natural disasters are not purely outcomes of the natural forces, but involve a complex web of social, political and economic activities out of which the asymmetric power relations before and after in the events emerge.

In recent years reporting on natural disasters has become a separate genre in the media, with reporters being trained in what to look out for, what counts as newsworthy in circumstances of (e.g.) a hurricane, and earthquake or flooding, how and when to represent different aspects of a given set of circumstances. However, the professional and organizational intervention to improve the journalists expertise has constrained the news coverage because of the unpredictability of news events (Wilson, Evans, Gower, Robinson, Ginter, McCormick and Abdolrasulnia 2007:6).

The interaction of nature and socio-cultural practices demonstrates that natural disaster studies cannot be separated or divorced from societal, social and economic practices. Hence, critical discourse analysis appears to be an important approach to analyse the inequalities and ideological practices that are embedded in the newspaper articles representing the disaster events. In this section I explore the state of existing research on the media representation of natural catastrophic disasters at the global level, paying attention to the various approaches towards the different disaster studies. I shall illustratively refer to specific, widely covered cases.

2.4.1 The 2005 Hurricane Katrina in US

Research into media coverage of the Hurricane Katrina disaster of August 2005 uncovered many regional disparities in the reporting of the event. The CARMA⁴ report (2006:8) established that the US media reporting of hurricane Katrina was more concerned with economic issues and apportioning the blame to the government for various kinds of neglect, rather than focusing on the status of the victims. Similarly, Katrina was given a large volume of coverage in the UK and Australia, although the UK newspaper articles were highly politicised with anti-Bush sentiments, whereas in Australia reports concentrated on the humanitarian responses to the plight of local people (CARMA 2006:8).

In another study, Dolan, Sonnett and Johnson (2009) considered the representation of the African-Americans in the newspapers coverage of the Hurricane Katrina. They established that many newspapers were supportive of black victims as they criticised the American government for its slow response and failure to provide security to the African-American communities who were attacked by looting mobs. The findings demonstrate how pro-black news media ideologically promoted the agenda of African-Americans and condemned criticisms that were levelled against them for being biased or careless. Similarly, Tierney, Bevc and Kuligowski (2006) established that US media reporting after hurricane Katrina was dominated by controversial representation of the victims' deviant behaviour as being typically marked by looting and lawlessness.

Other studies focused on how US newspapers framed the new and set agendas in their coverage of Katrina. For instance, Brunken (2004) established that the news producers set the agenda to emphasize relief and rescue efforts, economic issues and resilience in rebuilding and repair. For Sommers, Apfelbaum, Dukes, Toosi, and Wang (2006), the news media frames and agendas that dominated the coverage of hurricane Katrina were ones of conflict, economic consequences, and deviant behaviour such as looting and other forms of illegal behaviour, while reporting on the government was presented in a neutral tone. On the same note, Barnes, Hanson, Novilla, Meacham, McIntyre and Erickson (2008) and Rojecki (2009:970) have argued that

⁴ CARMA is a global provider of media intelligence solutions working in 43 countries over 5 continents. It provides media monitoring and analysis across all types of media including print, online, social and broadcast. However, the full meaning of the abbreviation is not provided though this is a well-known institution. <https://www.carma.com/en/>

media reporting of Hurricane Katrina concentrated on criticizing the government with less focus on the individuals and affected communities.

Dill and Denis Wu (2009) used content analysis to compare how the local, regional and national newspapers reported on the harsh realities of Hurricane Katrina, and how their news selection and presentation was shaped to satisfy the needs of their readers. They established that topics and frames which focused on life, property and informational needs were similar at local and regional levels. The stories were often framed in light of unimaginable disaster. The national newspapers addressed a broader audience, also emphasizing concerns about government failure to respond quickly to the disaster. Further, the newspapers made sure they addressed the concerns of readers through constant selection of the citizens (mostly victims) as sources of the news, rather than government officials (Dill and Denis Wu 2009:17). Taking another approach, Fontenot, Boyle and Gallagher (2009) analysed the types of sources used by the five newspapers published in the affected area along the Gulf Coast. Their content analysis found that official sources were more prominent in the government-oriented stories, whereas non-official sources were more common in the stories that focused on the citizen-oriented stories in the disaster. Thus, it seems that various interest groups reported on exactly those matters that were most relevant to them.

Borah (2009) examined the visual portrayal of the two disasters of Hurricane Katrina of 2005 and the Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004. The study gives a content analysis to identify the frames in the photos that covered the Indian Ocean and Gulf Coast disasters. The findings established that the newspapers, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, showed more of a “death and emotions” frame in the tsunami coverage than with Katrina, which was attributed to the conservatism of American readers regarding images of the dead in the media. The tsunami victims were mostly unfamiliar faces, far away from the United States (Borah 2009:55).

In another study, Fahmy, Shin and Lewis (2012) analysed photographs of Hurricane Katrina in six newspapers and noted that they centred on portraying groups of people or individuals rather than the natural environment. The local newspapers depicted images expressing anxiety, compared to the national newspapers that focused on more objective third-party perspectives. In a similar analysis of visuals, Kahle, Yu and Whiteside (2007) examined four US newspapers’ portrayals of race through photographs from Hurricane Katrina. The findings established that the photographs reinforced the negative stereotypes about African-Americans but positively portrayed the Caucasians in the powerful roles. The news media reinforced existing

stereotyping and racism in coverage of the Katrina disaster (Kahle et al. 2007:86). Fahmy, Kelly and Soo Kim (2007:550) agree that African Americans were negatively portrayed as thieves and looters.

Studies have also examined the frequency and extent of coverage of natural disasters. Perkins and Izard (2010) analysed the performance of national and local news media in the coverage of Hurricane Katrina in August 2005 and Hurricane Rita in September 2005, including the lessons learned in the wake of natural disasters. They pointed out how damage was made worse by late and inadequate government responses. They noted that, although the scale and magnitude of damage for Katrina and Rita was far more extensive than the 9/11 attacks of 2001, they did not receive as much coverage as the latter. Besides this, Littlefield and Quenette's (2007) analysis of *The New York Times* and the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* coverage of the Hurricane Katrina, noted that negative and positive terms clustered around federal government, military department of homeland security, President Bush and the local government. Littlefield and Quenette argue that concentration on these particular themes demonstrated that media reporters on the hurricane stepped away from their role as objective observers and assumed the subjective position of blaming those in official positions of authority for their unwillingness to act.

According to the CARMA (2006) analysis of global media news highlights, among other things, the unbalanced way in which large-scale disasters are covered. A study of two disasters that struck a few weeks apart, namely Hurricane Katrina in the New Orleans area and weaker, but also severely devastating Stanley in Guatemala, shows that despite both disasters causing over a thousand of deaths, Katrina received more coverage. CARMA (2006) and Franks (2006) observed that hurricane Stanley was only covered in the news during the first week after the disaster, whereas media coverage of Katrina continued until the city of New Orleans started to recover. Franks (2006:281) attributed the disparity in the coverage of the two disasters to the selfish economic and political interests of media concentrating on events affecting the countries that control the media in the global north.

In yet another study, Cottle (2009) examined the balance between subjectivity and objectivity of the media coverage of Hurricane Katrina of 2005 and the Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004. The study focused on how the media help to shape and constitute the disasters to become global events. Cottle observed that the media, particularly in the global north, gave a lot of publicity to the crises in order to appeal for assistance of the victims.

2.4.2 The 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami

The Indian Ocean tsunami on 26 December 2004 was one of the largest flooding disasters in recent history. It caused approximately 280,000 fatalities in eight countries stretching from Asia to Africa. Skelton (2006) explains that the tsunami was triggered by a massive earthquake under the Indian Ocean off the coast of Indonesia. Just like other large-scale disasters, this was also covered widely by the media. As Bankoff (2001) observed, Indian Ocean Tsunami was the first genuinely globalized disaster that affected so many countries – also due to visitors to the region – and drew the attention of the world media. Hence, numerous academic studies have focused on the various issues in the media reporting of the disaster.

Trckova (2012) analysed the metaphoric representations of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and 2005 Hurricane Katrina in three newspapers published in Western English-speaking countries that included *The New York Times* (USA), *The Guardian* (UK), and *The Globe and Mail* (Canada). The findings showed that the publications largely depicted the natural phenomenon as an animate being, a monster and a warrior. Trckova argues that the metaphors were used to perceive the catastrophes as natural and thereby obscure some of the historical and social causes of the natural catastrophic disasters that are related to human activities (Trckova 2012:148).

The discursive representation of the tsunami in the British media was also examined by Skelton (2006). She used content analysis to understand the way in which the British print media, as dominant voices, construct the representation and discourse of ‘other’ places and peoples. The study noted that the dominant discourses that emerged divided the world into ‘us’ representing the western world as those providing expertise, holders of life-saving knowledge, the giver/donors and saviours, and ‘them’ representing Indian Ocean countries, the receivers of aid, whose organisations are chaotic and foolish). In other words, Skelton observed that the media coverage of the tsunami constructed the world as being made up of binaries, in this case donors and recipients. She concludes that the tsunami affected countries were represented in the media with reference to their positions in the global economy, hence they were portrayed as defenceless, vulnerable and misruled (Skelton 2006:25).

In a related study, Olofsson (2011) analysed how the Swedish mass media constructed Sweden and the Swedes immediately after the Indian Ocean Tsunami. Her study uncovered that the media in Sweden framed the tsunami as a Swedish disaster and focused its coverage on the Swedish victims who had been on holiday in Thailand. Further, the study identified the division

of 'us' and 'them' with Sweden glorified and contrasted to countries like Thailand. Mathews (2009:29) agrees that human interest was the main frame in the tsunami reports and the fervent philanthropy and self-congratulatory messages perpetuated the discourse of 'us' and 'them'. Olofsson (2011:565) concluded that the mediated frames were a reinforcement of pre-existing stereotypes and nationalistic values.

The CARMA report (2006) took on a daunting task of analysing the volume of coverage, and established that the humanitarian dimension gained more attention than the overt economic and political issues in the reporting on the Indian Ocean Tsunami. CARMA further highlights that though the extent of reporting on humanitarian concerns was high compared to other disasters, it was relatively low on the local population. The major source of interest in the high-volume coverage of the Tsunami was the fact that many Western tourists and other international visitors were directly affected in the crisis. This was regardless of the considerably smaller number of western casualties compared to numbers of local victims. The media appeared to be more concerned about the globalised tourism industry that was responsible for the international visitors when the disaster struck (CARMA 2006:13). Ultimately, CARMA (2006:14) and Moller (2006:187) noted that the tsunami coverage had less on the natural disaster itself, and more on politics of poverty and race, culture and community, external efforts to provide relief and commitments in the rebuilding exercise.

Mathews (2009) further conducted a quantitative comparative analysis of the British media coverage of the Tsunami in the first six weeks after it struck, and their coverage of the extended civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (hereafter DRC) which lasted from 1994 to 2003. The results revealed that measured in terms of column inches in the coverage, acute disasters received more media attention in proportion to their actual severity, than long-term disasters. Mathews (2009) pointed out that the media discourse on the tsunami had struck a powerful cord that stimulated unparalleled public charitable giving. The debate on the volume of coverage influencing the amount of humanitarian aid and how it is distributed in the wake of disaster remains a contentious issue in different media studies on various disasters (see Brown and Minty 2006).

Finally, there is a study by Childs (2006) who critically analysed the representation of women in photo-essays created immediately after the tsunami struck. The study noted that newspapers reinforced the gender stereotypes that represent women as helpless and weak victims who are shown mostly in domestic or quasi-domestic settings. Childs (2006:210) argues that disaster

images should avoid portraying women as vulnerable and weak people only, and should also consider diverse other life experiences and the complex roles they play in a society. Ultimately, the study substantiated the need for exploring the gender dimension in the media coverage of the disasters.

2.4.3 The 2010 Earthquake in Haiti

The massive earthquake in Haiti in January 2010 caused unimaginable destruction, and caused the death of approximately 222 570 citizens. According to Pierre-Louis (2011:187), the global media significantly covered of this disaster. Different approaches have been employed in analysing the media representation of this massive event in Haiti. To begin with, Pyles and Svistova (2015) examined how the construction of the Haiti earthquake in the US media influenced disaster recovery. The study noted the presence of hegemonic and disempowering discourse through themes that glorified outsiders' expertise and portrayed the Haitians as helpless victims. The 'Othering' of the Haitians manifested through the newspapers not recognising some of their expertise. For instance, Haitians who assisted as medical doctors and professional workers were hardly noted. However, Pyles and Svistova (2015:69) also found that newspapers carried some empowering discourses that encouraged Haitian participation in the recovery, for instance showing them saving their relatives from the rubble, as well as participating in the micro-credit programs for the start of businesses.

In another study, Brown (2012) analysed the dominant frames in the western media coverage of the 2010 Haiti earthquake, particularly from US, France and the UK. The findings of the study revealed that the two newspapers namely, *The New York Times* (US) and *The Globe and Mail* (Canada), as well as the news agency Agence France Presse (France) incorporated many frames indicative of the benevolence of the West, against poverty, violence, poor infrastructure, cultural difference, history and weak governance of the local setting. However, differences were noted in *The New York Times* and *The Globe and Mail* representations of the ineffectiveness of the government leadership to provide solutions that would bail out the nation from the effects of the earthquake.

Hanusch (2012) conducted a study on the visual portrayal of the dead in media representations of the 2010 Haiti earthquake in newspapers of 15 countries. He did a content analysis to measure the newspapers' display of graphic images of death, through which he established significant differences in the various depictions of death across different countries which he

explained as being the effect of socio-cultural influences such as different religious traditions and societal levels of violence. He indicated that Argentinian newspapers published the most images of death, while no such photographs appeared in Norwegian and German newspapers (Hanusch 2010:669). Ultimately, the study concludes that the variation in newspapers' visual portrayal of the Haiti disaster resulted into audiences in different countries perceiving and construing the earthquake and the reality it represented, differently.

In another study on the visuals of the Haiti earthquake disaster, Fernando (2010) established that repeated use of images portraying a handful of Haitians, allegedly escaped prisoners, roaming around with knives, exaggerated the size of the looting problem. He observed that what some portrayed as looting was in fact the desperate search for food and water by suffering disaster victims. Thus, the media use of images transformed the humanitarian crisis into a law and order crisis. Such inaccurate and stereotypical representation of images of the victims Fernando (2010:4) found, created fear and unfairly justified processes criminalizing and militarizing the affected societies.

Giving a different perspective, Celeste (2010) revealed that use of images in the news media coverage of the Haiti earthquake and its aftermath helped to raise the amount of much needed aid, but also contributed to long-term damage of the country's reputation. She noted that though the disaster presented an opportunity for the news media to respond in an unprecedented way, the coverage depicted highly contentious bodies of children and the elderly, thereby stereotyping and shaping images of the "Third world" country. Celeste (2010: n.p.) writes that, "The focus on poverty, with the repeated tagline 'The poorest country in the Western Hemisphere' and references to crime and unrest, make it hard for the viewers to imagine any other aspect of life in Haiti". Further, the media focused on relatively irrelevant issues such as comparing the literacy rates of Haiti and the US, which were not raised when flooding reports of YK events, or Dresden in Germany (e.g.). This added to presenting the former as a failed state, irrespective of the disaster. In another study on Haiti earthquake, Celeste (2011:375) claims that the images matter because Haitians were shown as lesser humans. She observed that media coverage of the Haiti earthquake disaster was full of sensationalism and reinforced negative stereotypes of the Haitians whose image is associated with hopelessness, danger, poverty and helplessness.

2.4.4 Other large-scale natural catastrophic disasters

The above specific cases have been discussed in detail to illustrate how recent news reporting is rarely unbiased, and is powerful in shaping not only perceptions, but to some extent also the reality of natural events that impact severely on human experience. There has of course been a considerable inquiry into media coverage of numerous other disasters. For example, Poudel, Fitzgerald, Clark, Mehta and Poudyal (2014) investigated the framing of disaster news using content analysis of the 105 natural disaster reports telecast by the state-owned Nepal Television (NTV), from June 2012 – March 2013. They observed that disaster news reports are mostly published in the post-disaster phase, and that then the news content is dominated by “human interest” issues which in this case included stories of affected individuals, casting blame regarding institutional provision and care, and expecting authorities to take responsibility in the response phase. Subsequently, the ‘prevention phase’ was also given considerable coverage. The study found that Nepalese media underreported the natural aspect of the disasters while concentrating on sensationalist and dramatic events. Poudel et al. (2014:217) suggested that media should improve framing of the events to achieve better quality, accuracy, and reliability of disaster reporting.

Fitzgerald, Guring and Poudel (2015) investigated how both the government and private owned media outlets struggled in the aftermath of the 2015 Nepalese earthquake. The findings showed that the government media, particularly Nepal Television (NTV) continued with transmission after setting a temporary news desk in the open Kathmandu as they continued to establish the safety of their buildings. However, the private media stations that were hit hard by the earthquake shut down their TV stations and struggled to bounce back. Fitzgerald et al observed that newspapers continued their publications from outside the buildings, and people also relied on the social media. On the international level, the extensive coverage in the media helped the Nepalese to generate a lot of help and resources (Fitzgerald et al. 2015:3-4).

Other studies on disaster coverage have analysed the visual representation of the devastating floods of 2010 in Pakistan. For instance, Ali (2014) investigated the visual representation of gender in the Pakistan news media representation of those events. The study found that the visual images in newspapers reinforced gender stereotypes and cultural norms of the Pakistani society, particularly constructing the females as weak and helpless victims, whilst males were depicted as strong and enduring characters. The newspapers frequently domesticated the women, portraying them in gender specific roles. Ali (2014) concluded that the media portrays

images quite poignantly to construct the identities of men and women who are rooted in the power, economic and cultural system of the Pakistan communities.

There is also Joye's (2009) investigation of the mediated representation of international crises that occurred in Australia, Indonesia, Pakistan and the USA. In analysing nine news texts, Joye found glaring differences that reflected global hierarchies of place and human life. More specifically, suffering of the victims in the USA, Australia and the western countries overall, was foregrounded whilst the representation of suffering victims in Indonesia and Pakistan were portrayed with much less concern or call for action. Joye (2009) concluded that the western news media reproduce a hierarchy of global order where global inequalities are normalised. Thus, the mediated representation of international crises reflected and consolidated power relations and divisions that characterise our contemporary world.

Scanlon (2014) analysed the Christchurch based journalist reporting in media coverage of the earthquake that ravaged the city in 2011. Particularly, the study focused on how the earthquake affected the journalists' relationship to their community in terms of the news sources and news selection, showing how journalists viewed themselves as part of the disaster story, while still adhering to journalistic values of reporting such as objectivity. For Scanlon it appeared that Christchurch journalists representing the traditional newspapers showed greater identification and attachment with the affected community, but detached themselves at the time of reporting about the crisis, hence the apparently objective representation of the disaster (Scanlon 2014:91-93).

Relatedly, McClure and Velluppillai (2013) examined the effects of two different types of messages that dominated the reports of the February 2011 Canterbury⁵ earthquake in New Zealand. The researchers point out that fatalistic messages portrayed widespread damage whilst more informed messages were particular about the exact damage caused. These authors argued that the news messages about the earthquake had two contrasting effects: on the one hand informed messages facilitated preparedness to earthquakes and other hazards, whereas on the other hand fatalistic messages conveyed thematic issues that included the judgement of the

⁵ February 22, 2011 was a smaller magnitude earthquake in Canterbury because its epicentre had a much larger impact in Christchurch including loss of life. The September 4, 2010 earthquake had its epicentre and large impact in Canterbury and smaller magnitude in Christchurch. Retrieved from (http://ketechristchurch.peoplesnetworknz.info/canterbury_earthquakes_2010_2011#)

causes and preventability of the earthquake damage, fatalism and estimates of the infrastructural damage.

There is also a growing literature on the coverage of the Fukushima disaster, the earthquake and Tsunami in Japan (see Lazic 2013; Imtihan and Mariko 2013; Giannakopoulos 2013; Friedman 2011). To begin with, Lazic (2013) analysis of the news content in *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times* and *US Today* established that the incident was dominated by frames of conflict, referring to disagreements of experts and officials' opinions on responsibility for recovery and for the damage to the nuclear plant. They also debated utility, government irresponsibility and economic consequences, particularly for the United States. Lazic (2013:31) did note that journalists adhered to professional norms of objectivity and impartiality. On the same Fukushima disaster, Giannakopoulos (2013) investigated the news frames in three international newspapers, namely *Der Spiegel* (Germany), the *Japan Times* (Japan) and the *Los Angeles Times* (US). In consensus with Lazic (2013), the study established that media reporting of the Fukushima nuclear disaster evoked frames of conflict, attribution of responsibility and human interest. Further, attention went to variation of the tone of reporting and the kinds of lexical choices in the articles across the countries.

Studies on media representation have further analysed the coverage of Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines on 8th November 2013 that killed almost 4000 people. Haruta (2013) analysed the US news media coverage of the Typhoon and revealed that they diverted from reporting the main issues, and instead concentrated on dehumanizing the severity of the situation. Haruta criticised the US media, particularly the *US Today*, for focusing on the economic damage rather than the human pain and suffering of the victims caused by the Typhoon. She further condemned the stereotyping of Philippines, and minimizing the effects through a repeated tagline phrase that 'the Philippines are no stranger to costly storms'. The study concludes that media reporting of disasters should focus on the people who need their voices, concerns and experiences presented to the public. Further, Hoon, Shen and Mei (2015) compared how the local and international newspapers framed the Haiyan (also referred to as Yolanda) typhoon disaster, finding many similarities in the primary news sources of both media. The study established that mediatization of the typhoon went beyond attention to the natural spectrum, to mobilize philanthropic support for the victims.

In general, the overview given above shows that different studies have adopted varied sociological and anthropological approaches in examining the media representation of natural

catastrophic disasters. Specifically, the studies employed theoretical perspectives typically used in media, communication and sociological studies. There is little attempt to consider the discursive strategies in the representation of the natural catastrophic disasters from a linguistic perspective. Not many studies have adopted linguistic approaches such as critical discourse analysis to interpret the media representation of these natural catastrophic disasters. Some linguistic approaches could bring various important insights regarding how the news media discursively represent and construct natural catastrophes, particularly paying attention to the linguistic forms and visual choices among other features. This study will take a multimodal critical discourse analytic approach and other associated discourse analytic approaches to analyse the mediatisation of the January 2015 natural catastrophic flooding disaster in Malawi, specifically focusing on the portrayal of the social actors and choice of the visual images in the construction of meanings.

2.4.5 Western media representation of natural disasters from the Global South

This section provides a brief overview of how the global north news media have represented natural disasters in the countries referred to as the global south.⁶ Studies have gathered that the global north mediatisation of the disasters in the global south, particularly Africa is predominantly presented in a biased and distorted way, creating images of the continent (Golan 2008; Okere 2004; Wenger 1985). Many of the stories report on negative and highly deviant societal patterns they encounter, including conflicts and disasters both natural and human made (Golan 2008:53). One of the studies, Okere (2004:228) observed that the British press deviated from reporting about the Mozambican floods to coverage of the inter-ministerial disputes that emerged between the Mozambican Ministry of Defence and Department for International development of UK, which in the process disseminated incorrect information. The media misrepresentation of facts (as observed in many GN based media) has led to studies that critically focus on unmasking the notions of power, politics and ideology more and less implicitly given in the reports (Harrison 2006 cited in Joye 2009:46).

Like the above findings, Bankoff (2001:24) observed a tendency in the western media to sensationalize disaster stories of countries belonging to global south rather than North America and Europe. Due to the frequency of the disasters, it is reported that the regions are

⁶ The north-south divide is broadly considered a socio-economic and political divide with many countries in the North defined as richer, more developed and the South as poorer, less developed region among so many factors that differentiates them. The division is not from the geographical locations.

stereotypically given discrediting names such as ‘belt of pain, rim of fire or typhoon alley’ (Bankoff 2001:24). For Franks (2010:71), the western media continue to embed global south, particularly Africa with biased and misinformed attributes because they still lean to the past colonial history. Her study criticises the media failure to provide a balanced coverage of facts. Franks implores the western media reporting to move beyond the colonial stereotypes and raise objective facts (Franks 2010:71).

In consensus with the observations above, Joye (2009) explored the Belgian Television representation of the distant suffering focusing on the natural disasters that occurred in Australia, Indonesia, Pakistan and the USA. The study disclosed that news texts revealed differences that reflected global hierarchies of place and human life. News from the places that are regarded as the global north (such as Australia and USA) was portrayed as comprehensible and close to the audience that identified with the sufferers like ‘Us’, whereas the disaster news portrayal from the global south (such as Indonesia) was represented as no cause for concern or action hence the media distanced itself from the sufferers who were portrayed as ‘Others’. There are also claims that the disaster news from the global south is based on third party sources because the western media rarely visit and have no direct experience of the affected countries (Joye 2009:48; Engelhardt and Jansz 2014:75). In line with Chouliaraki (2006:4), the conclusion is that Western news media continue to misrepresent facts and reproduce a kind of global hierarchy that represents a Euro-American centred world, which ends up reflecting the existing economic and political divisions of the contemporary world.

Another related aspect to the above, is Kim and Lee’s (2008:88) observation that disaster news receives more coverage in contexts where the international media is situated, having a base for their reporters. For instance, the US media concentrates on news in areas where there are many US citizens. The authors argue that the international media coverage of disasters is predisposed to covering events that involve lives of its own citizens. Hence, the nationality of the actors in the international news plays a greater role in the selection and reporting of the news in the media.

Other studies argue that regardless of the location, global north countries have been negatively presented during disasters just because of the poverty status, underdevelopment and consequences of colonialism. For instance, Ulysee (2010:39) revealed that the negative representation of victims during the earthquake in Haiti, which is situated in the Northern hemisphere as typically synonymous with poverty, backwardness and evil, and always in need

of outside assistance traces back to the colonialism, which according to De Sousa Santos (2016:18) naturalised the differences in a way that justifies the oppression of the colonized and domination of the colonizers. Similarly, Potter (2009) contends that the newspapers in the US represented Haiti as a poorest country in the Western hemisphere and a failed state because of numerous social eventualities such as poverty, illiteracy and disease outbreaks. Further, Potter argued that the government was shown as inept, corrupt, a violent or chaotic and one that has failed to govern herself (Potter 2009:216). Ultimately, this substantiates that the historical power inequalities have influence on the media's positive or negative representation of the natural disaster regardless of the location of the countries.

Here I shall briefly sum up how the international media perceives and represents natural catastrophic disasters in the global south. An analysis of reporting has gathered that inequality, misrepresentation of the facts and hierarchical representation constitutes some of the common characteristics of the western media representation of the global south. While this dissertation refers to these observations, it can also be contrasted with them because the study takes a critical discourse approach to explore how the linguistic structures and visual images used in the representation of the natural flooding disaster contribute to the realization of social meanings that reproduce unequal power relations. Thus, unlike the sociological and media communication approaches on which the studies rely, this dissertation uses a linguistic approach to explore the way the media embeds different ideologies and stereotypes in representing the natural catastrophic disaster in a poor sub-Saharan country.

2.4.6 Dominant discourses in the Global North: Media representation of disasters

Previous scholarship has revealed that media coverage of disasters is linked to the existing debates about cleavages of politics and power. In his book, *Disasters without borders*, Hannigan (2012:115) argues that it is entirely delusional and illogical to assume that mediated disaster narratives are free from influence of external effects. Journalists are political insiders that wield so much power in amplifying different stories and damaging the reputation of others (Bennett, Lawrence and Livingston 2007:6), hence there is presence of varying discourses in the representation of the natural catastrophic disasters, but the dominant ones are hegemonic discourses, articulating vulnerability and gender inequality. The sections below will discuss these types of discourses in greater detail.

2.4.6.1 Political discourses

Many articles on natural catastrophic disasters are enmeshed in the discourses of power and politics, arguing that there are not clear definitions on which events qualify to be disasters over and above others (Cottle 2014:8). Many times, there is a question as to who defines the disasters, when, how and with what consequences. According to Cutter (2005:48), arguably, it is the centrality of power and politics in making declarations that qualifies particular events as disasters whereas others with similar characteristics may not. Such decisions embed political subjectivities, favouritism and continued irresponsibility of state, local governments and the elites (Cutter 2005:48). Besides this, the media's selection and prioritization of such pronouncements into the public sphere legitimizes the politicians' authority over the disasters. Therefore, the political discourse in the media coverage of disaster news is manifested in the explicit perpetuation of the directives, interests, opinions and ideologies of the political elite to appropriate the disasters.

In line with the above, most of the disasters are regarded as deliberate machinations of the governments and powerful business elites whose intention is to amass the property renounced by the panicking victims or societies for the sake of expanding their economies through what is known as "disaster capitalism" (Klein 2007:17). He argues that disasters are conspiracies waged by the politicians and the powerful elites who connive with the media, hence they bolster the economic opportunities of the political and business elites in the world (Klein 2007:427). The media surreptitiously masterminded "disaster capitalism" as they partner and align to the views of the powerful elites (Cottle 2014:11; Klein 2007:427). Therefore, media outlets align with the elites in the interest of gaining some political favours and in the process widening their market base, a notion better explained in the political economy theory of the news media.

In some disasters, the media has been used to shield the government from blame for negligence of not protecting its citizens against the effects of disasters. For instance, Wood (2015:12), explains that during the 2007 flooding crisis in UK the British media vehemently defended the government against allegations of negligence and unpreparedness. Wood gathered that the mainstream media, government and other non-state actors exercised the agenda setting powers to depoliticize the massive flooding event. Instead the public discourse in the media about causes of the floods were represented as induced by power of nature and the "Acts of God" rather than as preventable through clear foresight and necessary measures of engineering in low

areas (Wood 2015:17). Hence, such media discourses on the natural disaster were politicized to make the government less culpable.

On the same British flooding disaster, Escobar and Demeritt (2014) analysed the British media coverage from 1985 to 2010. They noted that the government's failure to put in place sound policies to deal with the floods, had contributed to the media's politicisation in the coverage of the tragedy (Escobar and Demeritt 2014:468). At first, the flooding was attributed to poor drainage problems within the agriculture systems but later the media twisted to active politics blaming the government for not implementing climate change policies. The concerns were overloaded with political standpoints from opposing powerful political parties and media reinforced the agenda or interests over the other competing perspectives (Escobar and Demeritt 2014:469).

Therefore, media coverage can also impact negatively on the relationship between the government and the public, especially on political matters. For instance, Rojecki (2009) reports that media criticism of the US government's slow response to hurricane Katrina affected the ruling party candidate performance in the mid-term elections in America. The media applauded particular individuals for their voluntary efforts, and blamed the government for its incompetence and unpreparedness in dealing with the event (Perkins and IZard 2010). Reporters greatly criticized the White House for being more interested in image repair or damage control rather than assisting the victims of Katrina, hence, the government lost considerable public support (Rojecki 2009:970).

The studies mentioned here clearly show that media discourse in the coverage of natural disasters, is embedded in political debates. Apart from embodying politics and power, media reporting of disasters news almost always also exhibits gender stereotypes in representing different participant role, as the subsequent section will discuss.

2.4.6.2 Gender discourses

Media reports on natural disasters are often characterised by reporting on gender disparities, particularly gender inequality, both in the linguistic and visual representation of the social actors. Gender relations and natural disasters are constructed under different geographical, cultural and social conditions, and therefore have complex social consequences for men and women (Enarson 2000:1). In line with this, the discursive representations of the natural disasters in the media have either neglected or perpetuated the existing gender roles. An overview of

media discourses on the issue of gender in disaster events shows that women and children are increasingly constructed as the most vulnerable group that should be targeted when bringing in supportive resources (Bradshaw 2014:70; Höijer 2004). The lives of women and children are more transparent and visible than those of men in the media reports. This perpetuates the pre-established gender roles such as the perception that men are 'strong', whereas women are 'weak' in the face of hardship. However, women have also been constructed as more caring, focusing on humanitarian aspects more than men do (Höijer 2004). Höijer contends that discourses of women in the disasters are attached to emotional reactions and compassion.

Gender has also been analysed from the perspective of visual representation of women, men and children in the disasters. Höijer (2004:528) observed that photographs of the effects invite the moral compassion of a distant audience. Ali (2010:48) pointed out that the gender representations in visual flood coverage of Pakistan print media were deeply entrenched in the persistent cultural hegemony of the society. Ali argued that women were portrayed as subordinate, helpless and passive victims, whilst men were either invisible or depicted in areas of dominance, as leaders, heroes and active agents in rescuing people or disaster philanthropists (Ali 2010:48). As such, the media portrayed women as belonging to weaker positions in society hence perpetuating the perceptions that this is the norm.

In the reports on Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita, Ross-Sheriff's (2007) discussed the media gender representation of the victims and found that many images portrayed the rescue and evacuation of women, children and the elderly to the nursing homes and hospitals. Several images also portrayed weak and exhausted women in endless queues receiving aid or seeking help. On the other hand, men were portrayed as strong as they provided support and assistance in rescuing the women (Ross-Sheriff 2006:5). However, the positive stories about the women who actively worked in the disaster were not told, and Ross-Sheriff (2006) posits that media portrayals of women in both disasters reinforced the gender stereotypes and prejudices. Ultimately, the media was faulted for their selective and limited representations of women in the disasters.

Therefore, typically, the media portray women as the most vulnerable in any disaster as they are likely to be killed, incur severe economic losses, or even suffer from post-disaster stress and psychological symptoms. It is also claimed that most women and girls rather than men and boys die in disasters due to such social and cultural factors including the existing gender norms not biological reasons (Jencik 2010:19). These gender perspectives are topicalised in the analysis

of this study to assess whether similar gendered depictions are reflected in the news media representation of the January 2015 flooding in Malawi. The study also examines any differences in the gender representations between the local print and international online reporting considering cultural difference.

2.4.7 Media representation of natural catastrophic disasters in Malawi

Specifically, the study has found no systematic investigations into the discursive representations of the media coverage of natural disasters in Malawi. Many empirical studies have adopted a sociological and anthropological approach to examining natural disasters, focusing on the causation, impacts, perceptions, disaster management, quantitative risk assessment and coping and adaptation measures of the disaster in Malawi (see Mijoni and Izadkhah 2009; Kaonda 2009; Mwale and Adeloye 2014; Nilson, Shela and Chavula 2010; Shela, Thompson, Jere and Annandale 2008). Hardly any of this research has specifically focused on the media as the source of data. Existing studies on media reports in Malawi pay attention to the representation in political events such as parliamentary debates, political electoral campaigns, politicians and elections coverage (see Mchakulu 2011; Chimombo 1999; Kamwendo 1999; Shame 2016; Kayambazinthu and Fulata-Moyo 2000). Absence of the investigations on general discursive tendencies of media representation of natural disasters have resulted in limited understanding of how the linguistic and visual choices made by the newspaper producers shape the public perceptions of the disasters towards the various prejudices and stereotypes.

Wenger (1985:1) is one of the very few that criticised the content of the mass media on disasters claiming that it gives a distorted, mythical and perhaps inaccurate depiction of what actually transpired. He argues that news media distorts reality as it presents things that are contrary to the event but strive to make them appear real through a focus on dramatic, visual, exciting and sensational images as opposed to the most significant elements. Wenger points out that during the disasters media emphasis is on myths of looting, evacuation, mobilisation of aid and panic and that they exaggerate and overstate circumstances and events in trying to perpetuate the scope of the impact and destructive effects of the disaster agents (Wenger 1985). Whether this observation is accomplished in the news articles representing the natural catastrophic flooding in Malawi remains to be verified in this dissertation. Ultimately, the study analyses the role of language forms and visual choices in the realization of social meanings.

2.7 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented the background and context information for understanding media discourse in global disaster communication. It considered the geographical and weather conditions of the area under study, particularly reviewing the trend and patterns of the disasters that have historically and more recently affected Malawi. The discussion was extended to focus on the mediatisation of other large-scale disasters and the alternative discourses or themes that emerged in such communication. Further, it brings to the fore the key observations that most studies to date have been conducted from sociological, anthropological and media communication perspectives with less inquiry within linguistic and visual theoretical approaches, particularly for the disasters in the global south reported in the media from the global north. Besides this, the chapter has given a closer look at the different discourses reflected in the mediatisation of flooding disasters globally that include political and gender discourses. It concludes with reference to the lack of detailed multimodal critical discourse studies on the media discursive tendencies in the representation of the natural catastrophic disasters from a remote country such as Malawi. In summary, the chapter sets the context and background for analysing some pertinent discursive strategies in the media representation of the flooding of 2015 in Malawi.

Chapter 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) as the primary theoretical framework within which the analysis of the textual and photographic media representation of the natural catastrophic disaster will be done in chapters five and six. Other relevant literature, however, will also be introduced. The first section gives an overview of critical discourse analysis (CDA) particularly its key notions of discourse, power and ideology in order to give the theoretical grounding of MCDA in CDA. This is followed by a discussion on the development of CDA from the earlier critical linguistic approaches and the contribution of different social theories through to various more recent reflections. The third section provides a description and explanation of the main approaches employed in the study of images used more and more pervasively in written texts, namely Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996, 2006) "Grammar of Visual Design" (hereafter GVD), as well as Fairclough's (1992, 1995) dialectical relational approach (hereafter DRA) and van Leeuwen's (2008) social actor model (hereafter SAM). The three approaches complement one another in analysing the social meanings derived through linguistic and visual modes of communication. Further, the section discusses perspectives from the theory of metaphor (Kövecses 2002; Lakoff and Johnson 1980) that is used to explore the prevalence of metaphors in the news articles about the natural disaster. The chapter ends with a review of the prevailing dominant discourses in the existing studies on media representation of the natural catastrophic disasters.

3.2 OVERVIEW OF CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis is understood as a theory and method developed for analysing the often-opaque relationships of power and language. It is a field that challenges enduring social inequalities that are perpetuated through the discursive sources of power, ideology and domination such as the media, and one of its aims is to emancipate oppressed or underrepresented groups in society (Wodak 2001:1; Kress 1996:15). It examines how these discursive sources are produced, reproduced and maintained in the political, social and historical contexts (Fairclough 1993:135). According to Titscher (2000:146), CDA focuses on

the linguistic characteristics of social and cultural processes, linking the linguistic analysis to the social analysis of a particular situation. Thus, the analysis is concerned with the ideological patterning of the discursive events and texts through the relations of power practices in the broader social and cultural context.

CDA as a field provides a mirror on how the media texts are produced by specific institutions which have entrenched ideological, economic and political interests that are expected to achieve certain social effects. According to Fowler (1991) and Richardson (2007), media texts are not independent communicative instruments for they are influenced by various ideological practices either by the producers or the consumers. For this study, the interest is in the way the print and electronic media discourses report on a set of events after a natural catastrophic disaster, how they produce and reproduce social domination, including the possible power abuse of one group over others. Thus, the dissertation examines the notions of power and ideology that are encoded in the local and international newspaper discourses about the devastating flooding in Malawi.

The relationship between discourse, power and ideology is regarded as a central social practice in discourse (Fairclough 1989; Weiss and Wodak 2003:12). CDA studies takes a particular interest in issues that are affected by the relationship between these three key notions (of discourse, power and ideology), particularly looking at how each of them impacts the production and reception of texts. Although the discussion of these elements is isolated in the subsequent sections, they are dialectically connected. Discourse thus is at once a form of power, a carrier of ideology, a mode of institutional existence, and a material practice. (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999:6).

3.2.1 Discourse

Many studies have explored the relations of language, power and ideology from a critical theory perspective with different understandings of the term “discourse”. Apart from defining ‘discourse’ in terms of its communicative function as in Brown and Yule (1983), and Cook (1989), where the notion of language use in context is emphasized, this study considers insights from sociolinguistics and critical linguistics. For Wodak (1996:3), discourse is a form of sociolinguistics which is not explicitly dedicated to the study of the text in context where text is of primary interest. Rather, she accords both text and context equal importance. Similarly, Fairclough (1997) identifies critical language study as an approach to analysis that raises

consciousness as to exploitative social relations, through focusing upon language. Others have defined ‘discourse’ as (i) the study of language-in-use, (ii) language use in speech and writing, (iii) meaning-making elements of the social process, (iv) the language associated with a particular social field or practice, i.e. medical discourse, educational discourse, media discourse, and (v) a way of construing aspects of the world associated with a particular social perspective (see Gee 2011:8; Richardson 2007:26; Weiss and Wodak 2003:12; Wodak and Fairclough 1997:276).

Discourse as a social process and a form of social action is “socially constitutive” and “socially shaped”, with a dialectical relationship to the society (Fairclough 1989:22; 1993:134; 2012). Consequently, it operates in a circular process linking language to specific fields of action that include situations and events, institutional frames and social structures (Wodak 2009:66). Discourses are perceived as social practices that influence texts, via shaping the context and mode in which they are produced; in turn, the texts contribute to influencing society via shaping the view-points of those who read or otherwise consume them. Hence, they are instruments of power that are tied to social relations and identities, inequality and social struggle (Blommaert 2005:25), and their relationship to context is inalienable.

Further, the concept of ‘discourse’ is extended to the area of visual communication, commonly known as *semiosis*, i.e. the creation and communication of meaning in language as well as other modes of interaction. This study necessarily turns to this discursive feature as well. According to (among others) Slembrouck (2003) and Fairclough (2012), the monolithic character of ‘discourse’ is continuously challenged by the recent emergence of multiple modes of communication. For Fairclough (2009:164) and Tenorio (2011:186), ‘multimodality’ is an encompassing way of representing the world, because it incorporates both the linguistic and visual modes of communication. As a result, the perception is that discourse should not only be defined as ways of representing social aspects of the world, but should include all meaning-making resources (Wodak 2013:38). Ultimately, the analysis of reports on the representation of the natural disaster in this dissertation considered discourse as including all the plausible forms of communication that derive meanings, and in this case not only the verbal texts.

Drawing on Fairclough and Wodak (1997:258), the study perceives discourse as potential instrument for advancing ideologies using the relation between language and power. Discourses shape the social reality and take part in producing and reproducing inequalities in society. Following this, the news discourse under investigation in this study are informed by the

journalists who are constrained by the various ideologies operative in their societies and workplaces. Similar to Wodak's (2013:40) observation, the assumption is that discursive practices on catastrophic flooding have an ideological impact of producing and reproducing unequal power relations between the dominant groups and the underprivileged in Malawi. Based on the different conceptions within CDA, I draw on Jorgensen and Phillips's (2001:1) understanding of discourse as "a particular way of talking about and understanding the world". It is an extended stretch of connected textual, social or discursive practices that integratively represent, evaluate and justify the social goings-on of the world (Fairclough 1989, 1993, 1995; Van Leeuwen 2005). Discourse is viewed as being at the centre of these textual, social and discursive practices, hence it is socially influential as it ascribes different identities and social meanings to the world. The underlying observation is that discourse also gives rise to the important issues related to power inequalities, manipulation and exploitation. Therefore, power emerges as another crucial component of the critical discourse analysis (Fairclough and Wodak 1997:258).

3.2.2 Power

In CDA power is a crucial concept, especially social power that concerns the relationship between social groups and institutions. As Fairclough (2015:26) argues, power on its own is not bad, but it becomes suspect when abused to cause harm to people or to social life. CDA is interested in critiquing the relations that exist between discourse and power in a social practice. According to van Dijk (2008:9), CDA primarily studies "the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in socio-political context". Van Dijk refers to power as acquisition of resources such as good employment, position, more wealth, education, knowledge and status (2003:355). The argument is that more powerful groups with privileged access to scarce resources, such as media spaces, control the discourse and communication.

Fairclough (1989:17) observed that discourse is centrally involved in the distribution of power, and in struggles for power through its ideological practices. Language on its own is devoid of power unless it is used or influenced by powerful institutions or groups. The relations of power and discourse are categorized into two classes namely, 'power in discourse' and 'power behind discourse' (Fairclough 2015:73; 2001:46). The notion of 'power in discourse' concerns discourse as a site of power struggle where one or more participant(s) control the contributions of others. It is a matter of some people exercising 'power over' others (Fairclough and

Fairclough 2012:113). The encounters involve participants with unequal powers, and traditionally the less powerful are dominated and controlled in most part of the interaction. In other words, the representation of the proceedings in a particular event, for instance a disaster, are controlled by dominant groups, while less powerful groups are obliged to comply and respond only when requested to do so (Fairclough 2015:73; O’Keeffe 2006:72). Ultimately, CDA is interested to uncover the practices that conceal and naturalise such powers to appear as normal in the texts. For instance, the representation of the 2015 flooding disaster in Malawi would be presented as an inevitable event which is being observed and reported on simply because of human interest. For institutions, such as the media, which is of interest in this study, CDA perceives power in discourse as an ideological phenomenon. Producers of newspaper articles or television programmes are seen as exercising absolute powers over the audience or consumers due to their role of deciding what is included or excluded in reporting, and how the subjects should be represented in the news text (Fairclough 2015:79).

Fairclough (1989) finds that ‘power behind’ discourse concerns (e.g.) deciding who has access to the news in production and in consumption. For instance, editors decide who is used as the source, whose voices will be heard and get quoted in the news articles. The argument is that news sources do not equally represent various social groupings, as the more powerful are likely to be interviewed and their perspectives therefore will be adopted in the news reports. For instance, government officials, experts and high-profile elites feature considerably more in news reports as compared to the ordinary people (Fairclough 1989). Therefore, the media defend and promote the vested interests of the few elite groups and institutions, as they get easy access to the newspapers that exercise their social power (Richardson 2007:31; van Dijk 1996). The interest of the critical discourse analytical exercise in this study, is to do a normative critique of such kind of newspaper texts.

This study considers how the media operates as a mouthpiece in the expression and reproduction of power of the dominant classes, reflecting on how such power in discourse is implicit in the practices of the media institution. According to Johnson and Milani (2010:5), media texts are embedded in relations of power and ideology, with many implications for the way texts are perceived. Consequently, power in discourse and power behind discourse manifests itself through particular ideologically determined lexical choices that leave the relatively less powerful participants, for instance the disaster victims, without a chance of making their own choices on how to be represented, or their own judgements of the text.

Ultimately, the media as an institution dictates the judgement of the audience through the verbal and visual choices made in the development of the discourse.

Though Fairclough (1989) observes that the media produces and maintain the ideological perspectives of those in power, this cannot be deduced prior to analysing the newspaper texts. Observations are that while some newspapers represent the interests of elites, others have criticised and challenged the views of dominant groups, thus aiming to emancipate the less powerful groups. Against this background, the study avoids preconceived notions about the newspapers, but rather takes a neutral stance in exploring the effect of power of the mass media over its audience in the representation of the natural catastrophic flooding disaster.

3.2.3 Ideology

According to Machin and Mayr (2012:24) and Fairclough (1989), the concept of ‘ideology’ is defined as the way the dominant forces in society exercise power over the less privileged groups. CDA is used to examine how this ideology perpetuates unequal power relations in a ‘community of practice’ without such ideology being explicitly given, but in fact being taken for granted as reality. Machin and Mayr (2012:25) elaborates further that ideology reflects the ideas of the more powerful. This study draws on this perspective through an evaluation of the explicit and underlying meanings of the newspaper texts, the truthfulness or objectivity of the news reporting of a disaster with reference to the manipulative ideological behaviour of journalists. The understanding is that ideological practices are rarely plainly prescriptive. But rather are concealed in what is regarded as a normal way of saying things. Fowler’s (1979) statement that news texts are not devoid of journalistic ideologies, is a point of departure.

Other scholars, e.g. van Dijk (1995) and Verschueren (2012), link ideology to cognition, as system of mental representation, without restriction to a particular group. Verschueren (2012:7) argues that ideology concerns underlying patterns of meanings, frames of interpretation, everyday forms of thinking and interpretation, and world views. The socio-cognitive perspective considers ideology as a property of the mind, captured, for instance, in ideas, values and judgements shared by members of the same group with similar economic, social and political interests (van Dijk 1996a, 1998). As such, ideologies are regarded as mental representations of personal experiences of specific actions, events and situations (van Dijk 1995:251). Ideologies are expressed and produced in discourse and communication, including the semiotic non-verbal messages that include images or photographs. This study focuses on

ideology as a central notion of the modality of power that is enacted and maintained at deeper level of meaning through rhetorical means or other forms of expressions.

Despite several conflicting definitions, CDA analysts find that ideology involves obscuring and naturalising the inequalities in the society. This Marxist perspective of ideology concerns the legitimation and sustenance of hegemonic power through the promotion of beliefs, suppression of social reality either by masking or by naturalizing and universalizing certain social beliefs (Verschuere 2012:7). As such, ideologies are found in different in areas of social life, knowledge and institutional practices. Therefore, CDA seeks to uncover the kind of inequalities that are perpetuated explicitly and implicitly in newspaper texts. In this study, the ideological underpinnings in the media news reports about the natural catastrophic flooding disaster in Malawi, are of interest.

This study adopts Fairclough's (2003:9) and Richardson's (2007:32) understanding of ideology as representations of the world that contribute to enact and maintain existing social relations of power, domination and exploitation, contrary to van Dijk's (1995:21) interpretation of the same as abstract mental social systems that organize shared attitudes and beliefs. Fairclough (2003:9) elaborates on ideologies as being enacted in the ways of interacting, inculcated in the identities of social agents and represented in the discourses. This definition is based on the contemporary competitive global nature of the economy which, although it imposes a great deal of competitiveness, is still represented as a particular economic order that cannot be changed.

Following this, the study examines the various ideological inequalities that newspaper texts exhibited in the coverage of the flooding disaster that largely affected limitedly resourced rural people in Malawi. Specifically, it draws on Thompson's (1990) observation that ideologies in the newspapers operate through different modes such as dissimulation, unification, legitimation, reification and fragmentation. Dissimulation refers to the misrepresentation of a person's character, or pretence about the absence of the rules of domination, to deny the existing asymmetries. Unification characterises and represents individuals as part of the whole ignoring the existence of any differences. Fragmentation, the third mode of operation of ideology, represents the other as an enemy. Hence, unification and fragmentation are modes of ideology operation that are the basis of the ideological opposition between 'US' and 'THEM', which involves emphasizing THEIR bad actions and OUR good ones, while backgrounding 'THEIR' positive and 'OUR' negative actions. Thus, these two ideological operators underpin the general strategy of positive self-representation and negative other presentation (van Dijk

1996a). Legitimation, represents asymmetrical power relations as just and worthy. Finally, the reification mode of ideology involves representation of the state of affairs as natural, without being organised by any social order. My dissertation explores these modes of ideology in the news representation about the natural catastrophic flooding. Thus, investigations centred on the media's discursive tendencies in enacting and sustaining the power relations of the privileged and powerful individuals (and countries) who assist to alleviate the suffering of the underprivileged societies affected by the floods in Malawi.

3.3 DEVELOPMENT OF CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a multidisciplinary approach that can be traced back to the work of *critical linguistics* developed during the 1970s. It first appeared in the publication of *Language and Control*, a seminal book by Roger Fowler, Gunther Kress, Bob Hodge and Tony Trew, but was further developed by other scholars that include Norman Fairclough (1989) in the UK, Ruth Wodak (1989) in Austria and Teun van Dijk (1993) in the Netherlands (see also Cervera 2006; Thornborrow 2002; Wodak 2001a). Regarding its understanding of text and grammar, Critical Linguistics (hereafter CL) was most prominently influenced by M.A.K Halliday's Systemic Functional linguistics (SFL). However, the critical linguists distinguished their approach from other formal linguistic approaches as they refused focusing only on form and content, systems and process or use, but concentrated on the analysis of real texts and their relations to contexts (Threadgold 2003:9).

Both CL and CDA emerged as a critique of what could be achieved by the then dominant Chomskyan formal linguistics, which was concerned with the basic ideal speaker isolated from specific instances of performance (Wodak 2001). Prior to CL the basic units of analysis were restricted to describing and explaining units of language no larger than the sentence, also in investigating language variation, language change and structures of interaction. Threadgold (2003) argues that CL and CDA emerged as a methodological and theoretical framework for linguistic analysis beyond formal grammar, to study linguistic action and interaction within the social, cognitive and cultural context. It established itself as the study of language beyond the sentence level, with analysis focusing on both the macro and micro-structures of language. With the passage of time, CDA extended further to the study of semiotics, the non-verbal aspects of interaction and communication that include images, gestures, film and multimedia.

Threadgold (2003) and Wodak (2001) refer to CDA first being used by Fairclough in the 1990s after a conference in Amsterdam, which assembled scholars like Teun van Dijk, Gunther Kress, Norman Fairclough, Theo van Leeuwen and Ruth Wodak, who eventually count as the founders of both the theory and movement that subscribed to CDA as approach and method. It is at the same conference where the journal *Discourse and Society* (1990), including several other publications of the 1980s such as *Language and Power* (1989) by Norman Fairclough, *Language, Power and Ideology* (1989) by Ruth Wodak and Teun van Dijk's book on racism, *Prejudice in Discourse* (1984) were launched (See Wodak 2001a). Wodak (2001a:4) points out that CL and CDA existed before the international conferences, but scholars operated at a more individual level until the annual symposia bound them together regardless of their varied theoretical differences. The label CDA overshadowed CL and emerged as a radically new and different kind of theory to linguistics analysis.

According to Wodak (1996), the emergence of CDA broadened the existing formal approach to methodological and theoretical analysis that could engage with the political and social structures of different societies or institutions. CDA examined the way social inequalities are enacted, legitimized, constituted and expressed by language. She further illustrates that the inception of the theory influenced the focus on the ideological dimensions of texts; how texts represent and construct society; how they reproduce the unequal relations of power, domination and exploitation (Wodak 1996). Hence, CDA emerged from the interest to analyse both transparent and opaque texts with the aim of demystifying the social inequalities that exist through the use of language (Wodak 2002:10). Thus, the CDA perspectives of uncovering ideologies and emancipating the oppressed from the interests of the privileged groups arose from the various social theories that existed before the 1990s.

3.3.1 Social theories' contribution to the development of CDA

CDA as a theory and method has drawn upon ideas of the philosophers and social theorists such as Louis Althusser, Theodore Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Jürgen Habermas, Stuart Hall, Antonio Gramsci, Roland Barthes and Michael Foucault, including the numerous schools of thought they represent, to strengthen its critical foundation of text analysis. The view is that “the analysis of the internal conceptual structure of texts can only become a useful tool in ideological analysis when informed by and positioned within a social theory capable of illuminating the external connections between ideas and social practice as a whole” (Richardson 2007:42). For this reason, the following sections give a brief overview of a selected number of

these social theories, to demonstrate how they impacted on the development of CDA, and contributed to the framework of analysis to be used in the analysis of media reports on the natural catastrophic flooding disaster in Malawi.

3.3.1.1 Hegemony – Antonio Gramsci

The theorist Antonio Gramsci (1891-1941) built on the works of Marxists to construct the concept of “hegemony” that was rooted in the difference between coercion and consent as alternative sources of social power (Stoddart 2007; Pitout 2001). Coercion is the use violence to force those refusing to follow mainstream ideas. Hegemony as social power, on the other hand, appeals to individuals, especially the subordinates, to subscribe to specific values and norms of the ruling class. Richardson (2007:35) described consent as the voluntary submission of the less powerful groups in society without the application of force. The spontaneous consent and voluntarism given by the subordinate classes appear as a common-sense guidance to their everyday life (as directed by the ruling classes). As such, the concept of hegemony translates into an understanding that man is not ruled by force only, but also by the prevailing cultural norms of a society, which many times are ideas from the ruling class (Bates 1975:371; Ricciard 2012). Gramsci postulates that hegemonic power works to convince the individuals or groups to subscribe to particular social values and norms that are inherently exploitative (Stoddart 2007:201). Ultimately, the subordinate classes consent to unequal class relations (Richardson 2007:35).

Gramsci highlights two ways of consolidating hegemony. Firstly, he refers to the elite classes making sacrifices and compromises that appear responsive to the opinions of the subordinate masses, but in a way, that cannot affect their privileges and dominance over the latter. According to Richardson (2007:35), this is the normal exercise of hegemony that usually balances the aspects of consensus and force, so that the less powerful masses appear to be supported. Secondly, everything is publicised to show the ruling class’s honesty, justice and decency, hence their moral leadership (Richardson 2007:35). The ruling class also maintains hegemony through teaching their values and ideas to the general public in strong institutions and other social establishments. Therefore, hegemony is embodied in institutions that are dominated by the ruling classes, such as workplaces, the media, courts of law, social support services, and so on (Richardson 2007:35; Stoddart 2007:203; Dia Rong 2006:4). Thus, it is the achievement of power through consensus without threat or force.

Gramsci conceptualization of hegemony contributes to textual analysis in CDA approach, specifically examining how individuals or institutions achieve power and domination over ordinary citizens through ideologies. This study draws on Gramsci's ideas, as couched in CDA, to analyse how the media represented the elite ideas (with power and ideology) in the disaster that heavily affected the underprivileged in Malawi. The analysis uncovers the possible cultural hegemonies that influenced particular representations of the disaster in both the local and international online newspapers.

3.3.1.2 Ideology – Louis Althusser

Althusser (1918-1990), a French Marxist philosopher, contributed greatly to the development of CDA through his theory on ideology and ideological state apparatuses (Richardson 2007:34; Wasserman 2001:261). He drew upon works of prominent theorists like Sigmund Freud, Antonio Gramsci and Jacques Lacan to elaborate how ideology works in society. Althusser observed that the Marxist understanding of ideology was sketchy and lacked an elaborate supplementary theoretical development because the experiences and procedures were restricted to the terrain of politics. He supported the Marxist concept of ideology that explains state apparatuses as being repressive and controlled by the capitalist ruling ideology in the context of class struggle, and then classified “state” into two kinds of mechanisms, namely Repressive State Apparatus (hereafter RSA) and Ideological State Apparatuses (hereafter ISA), to clearly show how other institutions than direct government dominate and achieve power without violence (Durham and Kellner 2001).

The ISA constitutes institutions within the private domain, for instance the media, churches, families, schools, political parties, trade unions, and others that propagate a wide range of ideologies. Instead of being directly repressive as state apparatuses mostly are, they reinforce the rule of the dominant class predominantly through ideology and symbolic repression (Durham and Kellner 2001:80). The authors posit that Althusser advances two arguments about the practice of ideology, namely that it “represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence”, and “has a material existence”. Furthermore, Durham and Kellner (2001:80) observed that Althusser claims are about how real conditions of living induces people to dominate and exploit others on a falsified world representation, for instance the class based societies are exploitative arrangements that enslave other minds by dominating their imaginations (Durham and Kellner 2001). Durham and Keller conclude that Althusser's ideology exists within material instruments and manifests itself through various individual or

group actions and behaviours that are either conventional or stereotyped. Thus, ideologies are produced and reproduced within the social classes through their conditions of existence, their social practices and experiences of the struggle for power.

Against this background, Althusser's views on ideology impacted on the development of CDA, particularly the approaches that have focused on ISAs such as the media, churches, parties and others social institutions. This gives an impression of the relations between the texts under analysis and various social practices. Following this, there are numerous institutions that played a vital role in the recent catastrophic flooding in Malawi: of special interest, is the nature and extent of ideologies that were advanced in the media through the visual and linguistic representation of the crisis in 2015.

3.3.1.3 Semiotic representation of myths as ideology – Roland Barthes

Roland Barthes (1915-1980), a French philosopher and social critic, interrogates the way semiotics such as visual and audio representations, especially in the news media, convey deeper meanings than the usual expected denotative meanings, to perpetuate and legitimate the values and beliefs of the dominant classes. His publication, *Mythologies* (1972), critically analysed gestures and objects including the everyday practices exposing how myths that surround us in everyday life are veiled as natural social truths. According to Reid (2001:218) and Fourie (2007:164), Barthes argues that what is expected as natural and universal is an illusion. He finds that portrayals of social reality are constructed in ways that encapsulate ideologically inspired myths. For Barthes myths are socially constructed truths captured in cultural texts aimed at maintaining the status quo. Hence, just as ideologies, myths mask the radically different prevailing state of conditions, social or economic, under which the public lives (Fourie 2007:253).

From this perspective, Barthes goes on to show how the dominant ruling classes assert their beliefs and values using the relationship of language to the historical and social context, and power. To illustrate his view, Barthes argues that apart from the fact that semiotics (language) represents the signifier (linguistic representation or word) and signified (the object), it is mythologised with implied meanings that perpetuate the beliefs and values of the dominant classes (Fourie 2007:252). As a case in point, the mass media and its products are mentioned as being controlled by the minority elite. The media is said to construct and promote illusions of social reality to legitimate their power over the readers (Fourie 2007:164). A critical analysis

of cultural texts could expose the otherwise obscured values and beliefs of the dominant classes. Thus, Barthes (1986) primarily introduced a semiotic approach that provides tools for the deconstruction of representations, whether visual or audio, to establish denotative meanings beyond a mere superficial level.

According to Fourie (2007:255), Barthes's 1957 publication '*Mythologies*' shows how ideologies (myths) are reinforced by powerholders through images. His illustrations show that meanings are determined by people in power, and that the motivations for embedding such ideological meanings are varied. However, such texts or semiotic representations are open to criticisms, or contestation to negotiate the meanings. Fourie (2007:164) elaborates on Barthes's position that authors do not maintain custody over their texts after production, and that readers can make objective criticisms, and so challenge existing orders and values that different institutions like the media, churches and schools promote. For Barthes, myths are formed to perpetuate an idea of society that adheres to the current ideologies of the ruling class and its media.

In this regard, CDA is in line with Barthes's ideas on ideologies, especially on the stance that apart from the expected denotative meaning cultural texts are not neutral but carriers of various beliefs and representations that aim to sustain and legitimate prevailing power relations. Just as Barthes, CDA takes a political stance of analysing and demystifying the ideologies to emancipate the oppressed and often voiceless subjects such as victims of natural disasters. CDA strives to uncover hidden meanings in the media, i.e. the mythical meaning beyond the superficial meaning ostensibly being conveyed. The media texts in this study are considered as subjected to various myths or ideologies, hence the critical analysis should help to unearth the various veiled identities that are meant to represent the subjects of the flooding disasters.

3.3.1.4 Concept of Discourse and Power – Michael Foucault

Michael Foucault (1926-1984), a post-structuralist French philosopher inspired various works in CDA through his ideas on knowledge, power and truth. His works included questions on the discipline of knowledge or units of discourse, issue of power and control, and the theory of self-control (Stoddart 2007; McHoul and Grace 1993; Fourie 2007 and Reid 2001). Foucault focused on how relations of power were instituted and maintained through the discourses of different individuals and institutions, such as the media. He perceived 'discourse' as systems of thought that act as resources for interaction with others. For instance, he considered the

discourse of medicine used by doctors and patients in medical settings, discourses of academia in schools, and challenged the common perception that regards this as something to do with language only (Stoddart 2007:203; McHoul and Grace 1993:26). Consequently, Foucault opted for the analysis of the domains of discourses to derive insight into how meanings and power are created and maintained respectively (Reid 2001:220). He argued that mastery of the particular field of discourse produces the unequal social power relations.

Contrary to the structuralists, Foucault argued that meaning does not reside in the statement, but rather in the social conditions of different discursive practices. According to Fourie (2007:164), each discursive practice dictates its own discursive rules which have a great bearing on the topic or subject. Therefore, meanings are the product of the discursive practices and the necessary created conditions. As such, Foucault argued that knowledge about discourse results from the individual background and is imposed by those in power through various institutions (Fourie 2007:165).

Another notable contribution of Foucault on present critical theories is his rethinking of power. Stoddart (2007:204) argues that apart from the coercive form of power implied by the state and capitalists, Foucault offers an alternative conceptualization of power as relational, operating in multiple sites, and not unidirectional – therefore he postulates adequate room for resistance. Foucault sees power not as a thing that some people possess and others not, but as an entity exercised through discourse (Burr 1995:43). As Stoddart illustrates, Foucault regarded discourses as sites of power struggle that are also able to constrain and challenge the exercise of power (Stoddart 2007:205). Therefore, the production and circulation including regulation of various discourses symbolises a form of social power. Besides this, Foucault also illuminates how the time and boundaries within which various discursive practices occur, have constrained and broadened the socialisation and acquisition of new knowledge, thereby affecting our discourses on particular topics over a period of time (Stoddart 2007).

According to Reid (2001:220), Foucault proposed the analysis of entire groups of texts and surrounding languages to establish how power is enacted and maintained. For Foucault, discourse is an important object of social analysis, in and of itself (Stoddart 2007:205). And using the critical approach he questioned the social and historical conditions of the traditional disciplines of knowledge.

In spite of contemporary criticism, Foucault's ideas on power and discourse have inspired very many critical theories, including CDA. Some of his ideas were espoused by Fairclough in his dialectical framework (1989, 1992, 1995, and 2003), particularly the concept of the "orders of discourse" (Fairclough 1998:145), which is explained in the subsequent sections. Together with Wodak (1996), most CDA theorists adopted Foucault's approach of taking a political stance to unmask the inequalities of the social and historical conditions, though they were explicit about their interest language as a discipline, reflecting on language as a conveyor of social meanings as such as an instrument in constructing social conditions (Chilton 2005:20). Foucault's ideas on truth and knowledge have formed the basis of CDA in conducting a linguistic analysis to initiate a social change. It is through CDA that the hierarchies of power are critically analysed and questioned to emancipate those that are oppressed. The foundations of this critical theory are thus closely linked to the work of Foucault. Though the ideas of Foucault are not directly cited in this study, they assist in developing the scope of analysing the media selection and representation of disaster discourse in the construction of social actors during the catastrophic flooding in southern part of Malawi.

3.3.1.5 Adorno, Habermas and Hall

CDA espoused ideas from both Theodore Adorno and Jürgen Habermas the key members of the Frankfurt School of critical social theory in the early 20th Century. According to Spatscheck (2010) and Edgar and Sedgwick (2008:1), Adorno was a Marxist that questioned taken-for-granted issues to expose the various vices and emancipate the oppressed. For this reason, CDA as a theory and method is inspired by some of his ideas to critically analyse some of the current rapid world changes, emerging risks and new challenges to bail out those subjected to inhumane conditions (Spatscheck 2010; van Dijk 1993). Adorno's work adds value to this study's critical framework on the analysis of newspaper texts.

Jürgen Habermas, the German sociologist and philosopher, is another member of the school and his work spanned a number of decades particularly on the concept of the "public sphere". Specifically, newspapers are considered as the public sphere where different views and opinions from the various people are heard. Habermas, in his later work, criticised the modern market oriented media as creators and bearers of contemporary culture and ideology. According to Fourie (2001:139), Habermas argued that contemporary media of the post-World War II era, undermined the public sphere as ideal place for debates, where rational decisions and action can be taken. Fourie illuminates that instead of guiding the public perceptions and

interpretations of reality the media is under the influence of ideologies from the pressure of corporatisation, marketization and commercialization (media political economy) (Fourie 2001:141). Habermas's ideas on public sphere resonate within the traditions of CDA especially in motivating analysis of the media discourse under scrutiny in this study. The preconceived notion in CDA that media content is ideologically infused needs to be substantiated through critical analysis.

In the late 20th Century Stuart Hall, a Jamaican cultural theorist, developed ideas on discourse and representation. Stuart emphasized that images and signs are not neutral, but reconstruct ideologies and practices of those responsible for producing them. His research in the early 80's on visual communication in the media, contributed greatly to the framework of analysis of the images. The images as coded signs are regarded as not transparent representations of reality but a combination of both connotative and denotative aspects; they are ideological and not always represent their literal or universalized meaning (Hall 2001:168). As Scannell (1998:252) illuminates, the works of Hall regarded the concept of ideology as central to the analysis of both broadcasting and print media. His ideas and views of culture and discourse influenced the works of Van Dijk on CDA.

3.3.2 CDA basic principles

Over the years, the CDA theory has undergone several changes responding to research on critical social analysis of texts from different disciplines. Several studies have pointed out particular basic tenets that distinguish the theory and its associated methodology from other forms of textual analysis, such as news commentary, narrative analysis and discourse analysis. The observation is that not all textual analysis practices are CDA, because some avoid principles of taking an explicit position in the critique of the social inequalities. This implies that CDA has to satisfy a number of requirements to effectively realize its goals.

According to Richardson (2007:26) and Fairclough and Wodak (1997:277), the CDA general characteristics or principles can be summarised as follows:

1. CDA is a problem based exercise (for this study media representation of social actors in a disaster),
2. power relations are discursive and CDA studies both power in discourse and power over discourse (this study explores how social relations of power are exercised and negotiated

among the social actors involved in the disaster, i.e. victims, humanitarian/non-profit organisations, politicians including the other donors),

3. discourse is in dialectical relationship with society and culture; society and culture are shaped by discourse and vice versa (how the media shaped disaster news and the vice versa),
4. discourse does ideological work hence necessary to analyse texts to investigate their interpretation, reception and social effects,
5. discourses are historical and can be understood in relation to their context,
6. discourse is a form of social action,
7. discourse analysis is interpretive and explanatory.

However, Fairclough (2010) consolidated this set of principles into three main directives, arguing that critical discourse analysis as a social practice is normative, an explanatory critique, and trans-disciplinary. The normative and explanatory critique involves textual analysis, but Richardson (2007:38) argues further that in CDA the examination of the texts focuses on what is present and/or not present, but expected to have been available. This kind of analysis does not simply describe, but criticizes and evaluates the existing reality. Emphasis is on the existing social inequalities as humanly produced constraints which unnecessarily reduce the human flourishing and exacerbate the human suffering. Richardson elaborates that CDA questions how and why such social realities exist and the possible ways of transforming the status quo. In the textual analysis, the assumption is that the absence of some items in the construction of the text are out of choice. Hence, apart from considering the significance of the form (vocabulary, grammar structures, semantics), critical discourse analysts focus on how the practice of omission impacts on the function and ultimately the meaning of the text (Richardson 2007; Fairclough 2010).

For the normative aspect, Fairclough (2010, 2012) argues that unlike the other critical language practices, CDA has the socio-political agenda of emancipating the oppressed, those that are trapped into the ideologies of the dominant classes. It goes beyond the mere description of texts, but evaluates and assesses the existing realities on whether they are in tandem with the expected material and political standards of decent societies (Fairclough 2012:9). The normative and explanatory principle of CDA criticises the existing social reality seeking to explain the needs for the human wellbeing that are not met, but need to be fulfilled. It seeks to explain the

normative aspect from the effects of posited structures, mechanisms and forces, thus ideologies of the powerful imposed on the lesser become known through various discursive practices. Therefore, the moral and political evaluation of texts done by the critical discourse analysts is aimed at transformation of certain discursive practices to norms that are not selective, but have an emancipatory function.

Apart from the above principles, CDA is interdisciplinary or trans(multi)disciplinary⁷ in the sense that it mediates linguistic and social theories (Weiss and Wodak 2003; Fairclough 2002). Most often CDA is used as an interdisciplinary research design, which means that it functions as a resource for bringing a focus on discourse in its relations with other social elements as a discursive point of entry. According to Weiss and Wodak (2003:7) and Fairclough (2002:121), CDA is transdisciplinary when it operationalises dialogue across social constructions from various disciplines through which can be put to use as a resource for theoretical and methodological development for each of them. Trans-disciplinarity in discourse involves the reconciliation of the linguistic and sociological perspectives without reducing them to one another. Weiss and Wodak (2003:16) observes that CDA deal with debates or dialogues that require interdisciplinary responses such as questions on the interpretation of discourses, definition of context and even those of ‘exhaustive description’ versus ‘abstinence from the theory’. Therefore, CDA brings together disciplines whose primary concern is material aspects with those primarily concerned semiotics.

In line with the interdisciplinary nature of CDA, this study uses resources assembled from different disciplines that include environment, history, sociology, political science and linguistics with the aim of understanding the discourse in media representation of the natural disaster without attempts to bridge them into one or affecting the nature of each discipline. Further, it incorporates the visual images as important in understanding the representation of the social actors in the case under study. Consequently, CDA contributes to a semiotic emphasis and “a point of entry” into interdisciplinary critical social analysis (Fairclough 2009). The subsequent section discusses the multimodal theoretical framework used in the analysis of data in the study.

⁷ Trans(multi)disciplinary research studies are different from interdisciplinary in the sense that the former aims at combining elements from different disciplines as a source for theoretical and methodological development. There are no ulterior motives of fusing the different disciplines into a standalone field of inquiry (see Fairclough, N. 2005. Critical discourse analysis in transdisciplinary research, in R. Wodak and P. Chilton (Eds.). *A New Agenda in (Critical) Discourse Analysis*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. (pp 53-70)

3.4 A FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS – MULTIMODAL CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Coherent with the multidisciplinary nature of CDA as an eclectic approach that does not rely on a particular single theory, many different approaches and methodologies that have different theoretical backgrounds are incorporated (Weiss and Wodak 2003:6). Specifically, the goal of CDA is to investigate the link between language, power and ideology. It aims “to ‘demystify’ discourses by deciphering ideologies” (Wodak 2006:10). CDA views meaning as being ideologically inspired, hence the lexical and grammatical analysis. However, it is observed that CDA in its earlier form was limited to the language level, and inadequate to account for the social meaning making process that incorporates the multiple modes of communication (Iedema 2003). Considering this, Garret and Bell (1998:15) and Iedema (2003:33) argued that increasing uses of visual images in texts prompted a shift of focus beyond language to the different semiotic modes of communication through which meaning is realised.

For this reason, this study incorporates a multimodal analysis to the CDA approach (hence MCDA) to analyse both linguistic texts and visual representation of the flooding disaster. The multimodal approach is founded on CDA, especially the view that modes of communication, whether linguistic or visual are ideological. The understanding is that text producers have varied interests or purposes in the application of multiple modes of communication in an event. Hence, the multimodal framework is deployed as a CDA perspective, because it adopts a socio-political orientation to address the way in which meaning making in the visual images and other resources reflects the ideologies of the producers or meaning makers who have the privilege to control and access different semiotic resources and norms governing semiotic practices (Djonov and Zhao 2014:3; Machin 2016:324). The analytical framework of MCDA includes Kress and van Leeuwen (1996/2006) GVD (for the visual analysis), Fairclough’s (1992, 1995) DRA for the textual analysis, and van Leeuwen (2008) SAM (for discursive construction of social actors). Kress and van Leeuwen (1996/2006) complements Fairclough’s (1992, 1995) textual analysis since most of the texts in current communication are illustrated with visual images. Therefore, the two approaches used jointly to analyse the different aspects of the texts, namely the textual linguistic composition and the images. Further, the section discusses perspectives from the metaphor theory of Lakoff and Johnson (1981), for the analysis of different metaphorical expressions. This framework forms a basis for investigating the media discursive tendencies in the representation of Malawian flooding disaster.

3.4.1 Analysis of visual representation of social actors – Kress and van Leeuwen’s Grammar of Visual Design approach

This section provides a detailed discussion of the theory Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2006) put forward, that provides tools for analysing the visual representation of the participants in the flooding disaster. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006/1996), the Grammar of Visual Design (hereafter GVD) is inspired by Halliday’s SFL (1978, 1985, 1994) which distinguishes three kinds of meta-functions, namely the ideational, which represents the world around and inside us, the inter-personal, which expresses relations among the participants in the situation, and the textual, which makes representations cohere as a meaningful whole. These meta-functions provide a broad framework for the study of different semiotic modes that are found in the texts, and establishes relationships between social structures and texts. Hence, the main goal of SFL is to explore how texts derive meaning in different social and cultural contexts of the event. According to Eggins (1994), SFL prioritizes social context in the meaning making, and explores how language is influenced and or constrained ideologically.

Following this, Kress and van Leeuwen extended the idea of meta-functions to images using a different terminology that include representational (for ideational), interactional (for interpersonal) and compositional (for textual) (2006:41-42). They argue that images do not only represent the world but also play a part in some interaction, with or without accompanying text that constitutes a recognizable kind of text. Each representational category is discussed below to show how it influences the meaning making process and implied in the analysis of the natural catastrophic disaster texts.

3.4.1.1 Representational meaning: Relationship of the social actors

To map out the meanings of the images, the representational meaning is derived from the participants or social actors depicted. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:1), visual grammar (hereafter VG) describes the way in which depicted elements such as people, places and things, combine in visual statements of great or lesser complexity and extension. However, the representational meanings in the image are generated through two patterns namely the narrative and conceptual representations. The narrative representation relates the participants in terms of ‘doings’ and ‘happenings’ of the unfolding events, actions or processes of change, whereas conceptual pattern represents participants as belonging to some category, or having

certain characteristics or components with the change of their essence (Jewitt and van Leeuwen 2001:141).

In narrative representation, the participants are linked to one another or to processes through vectors. These are lines of energy or direction such as gestures or eye-lines that indicate a line of force in a particular direction in a picture. For Jewitt and van Leeuwen, the vector expresses the 'doings' or 'happenings' kind of relations in the image. It is equivalent to the action verb in the verbal analysis. The vector originates from the active participant (doer of the action) also known as 'Actor' towards the passive participant to whom the vector is directed, also called a 'Goal'. In the images, they emanate from the most salient participants through size, colour contrast, conspicuousness that they have for the viewers. These participants assume the roles of the 'Actor' and 'Goal' as directed by the vector. When a picture has both an actor and a goal it is 'transactional', representing an action taking place between two participants. But if the picture has only one participant, who always is an 'Actor' without a goal it is non-transactional because it is not aimed at anyone or anything. However, transactional structures are either unidirectional in which the vector connects two participants in the image, an Actor and a Goal, or bidirectional with each participant playing the role of Actor and a Goal respectively. It is expected in the analysis that some pictures may contain only an actor, without a vector. Ultimately, the narrative representation represents the participants in terms of the unfolding actions and events, processes of change and transitory spatial arrangements (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996:56-58).

However, there are six processes of narrative visual analysis that can help to interrogate a visual text regarding the number and kind of participants involved and these include action, reaction, speech, geometrical, conversion and circumstances. Every 'action' generates 'Actors' from where the vector begins. The resultant reaction produces 'Reacters' of a 'Phenomena'. Therefore, the vector begins from the Actor to the Reactor, and reactions can be transactional or non-transactional. For the speech, it is related to the inner mental processes and comes in form of thought bubbles. They are not openly presented through vectors but mediated through reactor. Conversion is a form of a transactional process that connects two participants, and relays the information with eyeline vector. The circumstance realization focuses on participants but without a vector relationship. These are secondary participants that are related to the main participants but not through vector lines. They might be related because of the setting (foregrounding and backgrounding), means (tools used to realize the action) and

accompaniment (descriptive information). The figure below illustrates the realizations in which the images can represent the world through the narrative structures in terms of ‘doings’ and ‘happenings’.

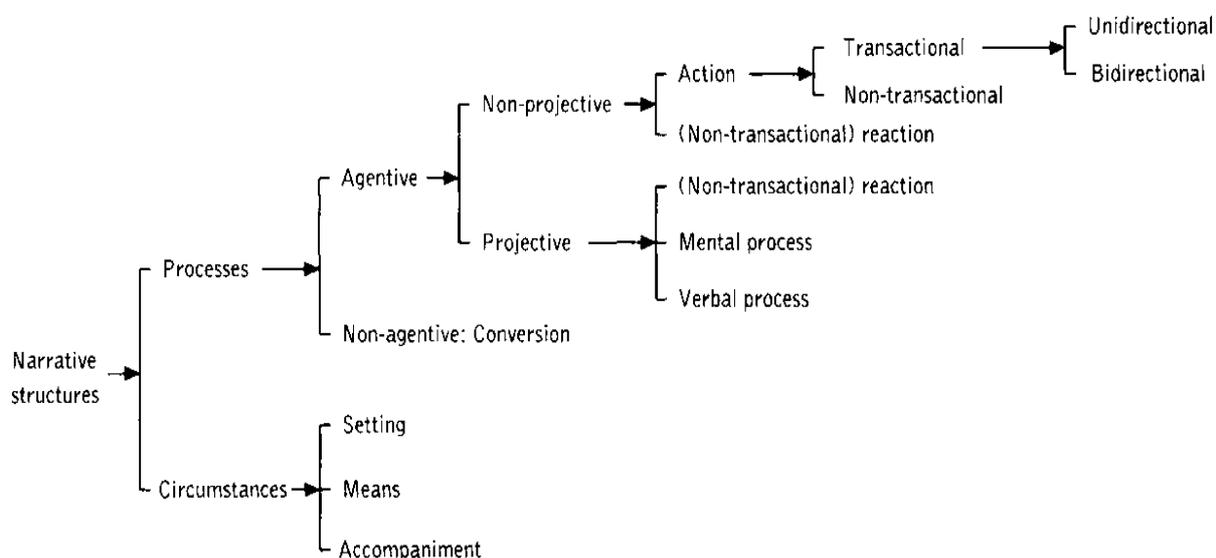


Figure 3.1: Narrative structures in visual communication (Source: Kress and van Leeuwen 2006:74)

In Figure 3.1, the realizations assist to frame questions about the participants who are playing the active role of doing and or looking, and who the inactive or passive roles are being acted upon and or being looked at in the image. Further, the analysis also questions the people who are acting, who are reacting in the visual images about particular issues. The realizations are concerned with the relationships that participants display in the images (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996:61-73). The significance of exploring the narrative structures in the visual analysis is to ascertain the different stereotypes that were perpetuated by the media, for instance creating a sense of superiority, passiveness or activeness and the overall sense of making unequitable society, particular groups or individuals. Additionally, the study examines how the narratives of humanitarian aid as ascertained in the verbal texts were visually represented in the media. Therefore, this kind of analysis is employed in the visual portrayal of social actors to uncover the ideologies, power and inequality in the media coverage of the flooding disaster.

Conceptual structures visually define, classify or analyse places, people and or things. They are images without vector lines and divided into three types namely symbolic, classification and analytical. Symbolic structures define the meaning or identity of the social actors. There are two kinds namely attributive and suggestive. The symbolic attributive representation is achieved through the foregrounding or backgrounding of the concrete detail in the image.

Participants pose for the viewer rather than being involved in some action. It is recognized through the salient characteristics such as size, position, colour, use of lighting, look out of place in the whole, or conventionally associated with symbolic values (Jewitt and Oyama 2001:143-144). For the symbolic suggestive processes, they represent meaning and identity that emanate from within the qualities of the participants (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996:110-112). In this analysis the symbolic representation were examined especially the foregrounding of the male and female participants actions within the image.

In Kress and van Leeuwen (1996:81) analysis, classification process “relate participants to each other in terms of a kind of relation, taxonomy”. The structure distributes different social actors across the picture space that are related to one or more participants according to their inherent characteristics. There can be so many social actors represented with one set as a Subordinate to the other participants, (the Superordinate). In classification process, the social actors can be represented as specific individual or group through the use of visual stereotypes, which can assume either cultural or physical attributes. The more individual features of a person or thing are overshadowed by such stereotypes in a picture, the more they are classified as a type. Therefore, participants are judged to be the members of the same class based on the features they share (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006:79 - 87).

According to Jewitt and Oyama (2001:144), analytical structures relate participants to each other in terms of part-whole structure. The analytical structures are defined by showing the different parts they are made up of including the processes and ways they can be done. Maps and pie charts are good examples of analytical structures. For Kress and van Leeuwen (1996:89), the analytical processes structures have two kinds of participants namely the carriers (the whole) and the possessive attributes (the parts). The carriers are identified in terms of outfit whereas the possessive attributes may make reference to the participants fashion shots (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996:89-91).

3.4.1.2 Interactive meaning: relationship between the social actors and viewers

Kress and van Leeuwen (1996:119) define the interactive meaning as meanings derived from the interaction between the participants of the image and the viewers. The realization of the meanings is dependent on three factors that include distance of the participants in the image (social distance), gaze of the participants (social relation) and the angle from which the participant is seen by the assumed viewer (social interaction).

According to Van Leeuwen (2008:138) and Machin and Mayr (2012:97), in pictures social distance helps to communicate about social relations that include intimate, impersonal and social relationships. The close shot images suggest intimate relationship whereas medium and long shot images portray social and impersonal relationship (Jewitt and Oyama 2001:146; van Leeuwen 2008:138). Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) cited Hall (1964) to provide a precise summary of parameters of social distance, and writes that;

At intimate distance, says Hall (1964), we see the face and head only. At close personal distance we take in the head and shoulders. At far personal distance we see the other person the waist up. At close social distance we see the whole figure 'with space around it'. And at public distance we can see the torso of at least four or five people. It is clear that these fields of vision correspond closely to the traditional definitions of size of frame in film and television, in other words, that the visual system of size of frame derives from the 'proxemics', as Hall calls it, of everyday face-to-face interaction (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996:131).

Therefore, the personal, social and public relationships are conceived from the participants distance from the distance between the participants in the image and the viewers.

Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) also discusses the way contact establishes an imaginary relationship between the participants in the image and the viewers. The camera shots which participants look directly at the viewers symbolically 'demand' something from the audience because the vectors relate with the viewer on a formal level. However, images are also perceived to make some 'offers' especially when the participants look away from the viewer. If the subjects within the image looks away from the viewers, it is instituted that the viewers are invited to participate as 'invisible onlookers' and the participants as objects of analysis or items of information (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996:124; van Leeuwen 2008:141). Kress and van Leeuwen writes that;

... the participant's gaze [and the gesture, if present] demands something from the viewer, demands that the viewer enter into some kind of imaginary relation with him or her. Exactly what kind of relation is then signified by other means, for instance by the facial expression of the represented participants. They may smile, in which case the viewer is asked to enter into a relation of social affinity ... (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996:122–123).

Therefore, a picture shows either an intimate, social or impersonal relationship that makes a demand or an offer to the viewers.

Point of view refers to the objectivity and subjectivity attitudes evoked by the images. Kress and van Leeuwen argues that camera shots which look down on the represented participants

make the viewer to feel more powerful / superior whilst the subject feels powerless and abjectly weak. If the represented participant looks directly at the camera within the same level with the viewers, it demonstrates equality. But if camera shots look up to the represented participants, it makes the viewer feel inferior, the represented participant or subject is more powerful over the viewers. Therefore, from a subjective perspective, high and frontal angle within the picture frame represent power over and involvement of the represented participants whereas the low oblique angle represents detachment and power over the participants. The objective notion is oriented towards the action and knowledge (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996:121-154). Therefore, the full concept of analysing the interactive meaning as regards to participant to viewer relationships in the visual representation depend on the social actor position (Lister and Wells 2001:65). Figure 3.2 presents a diagrammatic summary of the realization of the interactive meanings in the visual representation.

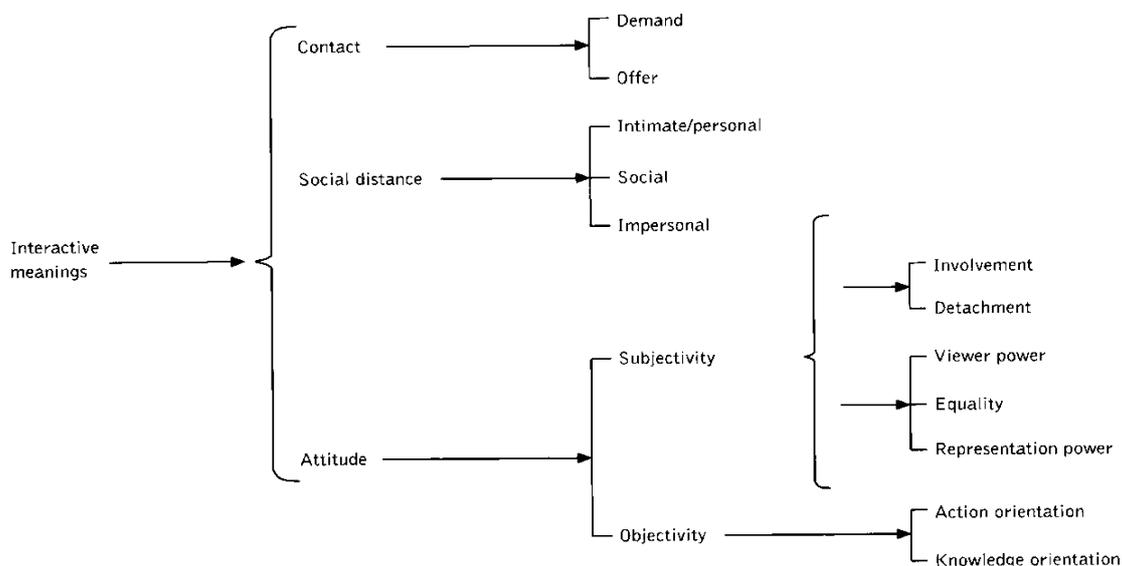


Figure 3.2: Interactive meanings in images (Adapted from Kress and van Leeuwen 1996:154)

3.4.1.3 Compositional meanings: representational and interactive meanings

It constitutes another dimension of analysis of the visual representation of social actors in the study particularly focusing on the layout of the images in the media. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996:183) observed that compositional meaning is derived from the combination of representational and interactive meanings. Rose (2001:37) argues that compositional interpretation remains the useful way of looking very carefully at content and form of images. Particularly, the elements in the image are analysed based on the informational value, salience and framing. Kress and Van Leeuwen argues that social actors can be analysed for the

informational value in relation to their positioning in the image or text for instance left and right, centre and margin, top and bottom. Elements in the top half of the image are regarded as 'ideal' whereas those in the bottom half are 'real'. In layouts organized horizontally, those placed on the left side are perceived as 'given' or already known information whereas elements in the right side are associated with new or contestable information. What is placed at the centre is interpreted as what holds the marginal elements together; everything belongs or depends on it. However, different news media subscribes to different forms of layout and the above represents the western societies writing codes of left-right, top-down) (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996:185-210; Kress and van Leeuwen 1998:189-191).

The compositional meaning also focuses on the salience of the elements that catch the attention of readers or audience. Kress and van Leeuwen elaborate that social actors or elements can be contrasted through colour contrasts, size, differences in sharpness and anything that can make it stand out from its surroundings. Using salience some of the elements or social actors within the image are regarded as more important and worthy attention than the others. In addition, compositional meanings are also realized through the framing. This refers to the presence or absence of devices that connect or disconnects the elements in the image. Framing helps to establish individual characteristics and emphasize the group identities. In other words, the absence of the framing stresses group identity whereas its presence shows individuality and differentiation. Kress and van Leeuwen indicates that framing is realized by frame thick lines, by discontinuities of colour or shape or empty spaces between elements in the image. It is further identified through the connectedness emphasized by the vectors (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996:212-217). The figure below presents the diagrammatic presentation of the meaning of composition that incorporates components of interactional and representational meanings.

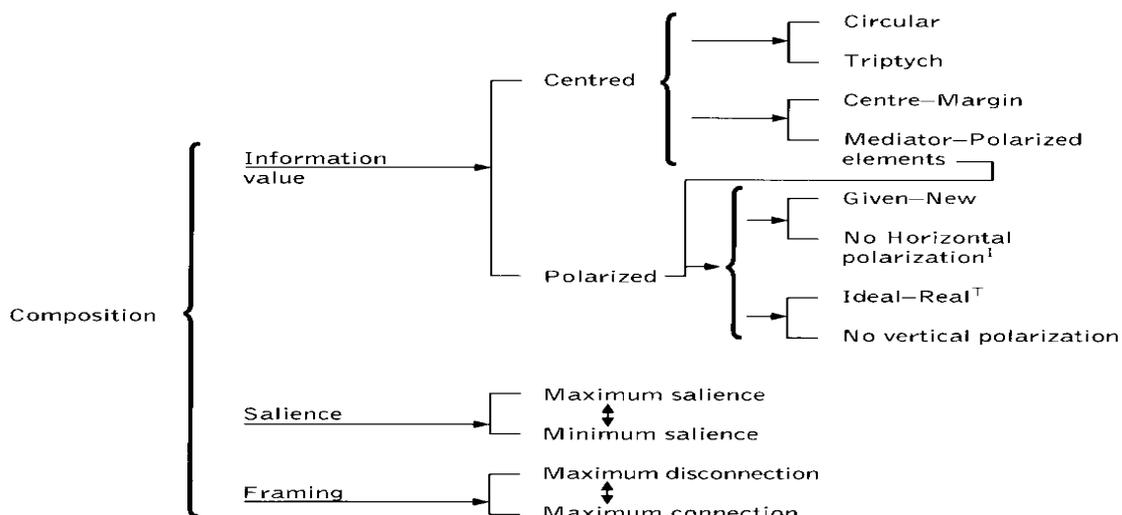


Figure 3.3: The meaning of composition (Adapted from Kress and van Leeuwen 1996:223)

Therefore, when analysing the visual representation of social actors it is important to pay attention to the three levels of meaning in the image namely the representational, interactional and compositional. However, these meanings are derived by focusing on the social distance, social relation and social interaction between the participants in the images and viewers. Similarly, the study has used the dimensions of representation to analyse the probable meanings of images in the local print and international online news websites visual portrayal of the catastrophic disaster. Thus, the provides a historical background to the development of multimodality, and how it has enhanced the description of social semiotic processes. It emphasizes on the approach as an important complement and or counterbalance of the monomodal approaches to meaning making, which challenges the perception that language is crucial mode of communication when talking about meanings of the texts and practices. The chapter has highlighted on the importance of the multimodal approach to the analysis of the images in the media representation of the natural catastrophic flooding disaster.

3.4.2 Analysis of the verbal representations of social actors

This section explores the main theoretical accounts used in the analysis of the verbal representations of the social actors. The study deploys Fairclough's (1992, 1995) DRA, van Leeuwen's (1996, 2008) SAM, and a metaphor theory. The three approaches complement one another in analysing the linguistic representation of the social actors; DRA focuses on the various ideological aspects from media accounts of events, the processes of text production, distribution and consumption, SAM investigates the naming and categorization strategies and metaphor theory assists to uncover the ideologies conveyed in the representation of the social

actors in the natural catastrophic disaster. A detailed discussion of each theory is presented below.

3.4.2.1 Norman Fairclough's (1992, 1995) Dialectical Relational Approach

The DRA linguistic framework draws heavily from Halliday's SFL including perspectives from other social theorists such as Foucault, Gramsci, Habermas, Marxist, and Bakhtin (Threadgold 2003). Just like other CDA approaches, DRA is 'critical' because it embraces the normative aspects of discourse analysis especially the demystification of power and ideology embedded in the discourse aimed at emancipation of the oppressed. In Fairclough's words, the objective of DRA is to "help increase consciousness of language and power, and particularly how language contributes to the domination of some people by others" (Fairclough 1989:4). As such, DRA has focuses on the place of language and discourse in socio-political power and processes of social change using media texts as examples. According to Blommaert (2005:29) and Richardson (2007:37), DRA provides the most elaborate and ambitious approach towards textual analysis, which he claimed as a methodological blue print of analysing discourse. Fairclough developed a social theory of discourse to improve on the existing discourse analysis approaches such as conversational analysis, sociolinguistics and pragmatics that lacked a critical perspective.

For Fairclough (1995) CDA is defined as;

"a discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony" (p. 132).

Fairclough (1992, 1995), perceives 'discourse', both spoken and written, as a form of social practice embedded in context. This meant a dialectical relationship exists between the discursive practices and social practices in which they are embedded. In other words, the situational, institutional and social contexts shape and affect discourses, and in turn the discourses influence social and political reality (Richardson 2007:37; De Cillia, Reisigl and Wodak 1999:157; Fairclough 1995:54). Ultimately, discourse ought not to be analysed as a

stand-alone verbal object but as a social practice, which has a great bearing on the context of cultural, historical, social and political situation.

Following Fairclough (1992, 1995), this study perceives context in three dimensions namely (i) immediate context of text within which the situation is located (ii) the social institutional setting, and (iii) the socio-cultural context. CDA consider the three dimensions of the context in its analysis, hence the use of multi-disciplinary approach in this study.

Against this background, Fairclough's three-dimension model consists of three dimensions of analysis of any communicative event that link the social and cultural practices to the properties of the texts. Drawing from Fairclough (1995:47), Fairclough (1998:114), Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999:113) the three dimensions of the model are:

- (1) object of analysis (verbal, visual or a combination of verbal and visual texts)
- (2) analysis of the processes by which the object is produced and received (discourse practice of text production, distribution and consumption)
- (3) analysis of social and cultural practices which frame the discourse practices and texts.

These dimensions are presented in the figure below in which the dialectical-relational framework is based on;

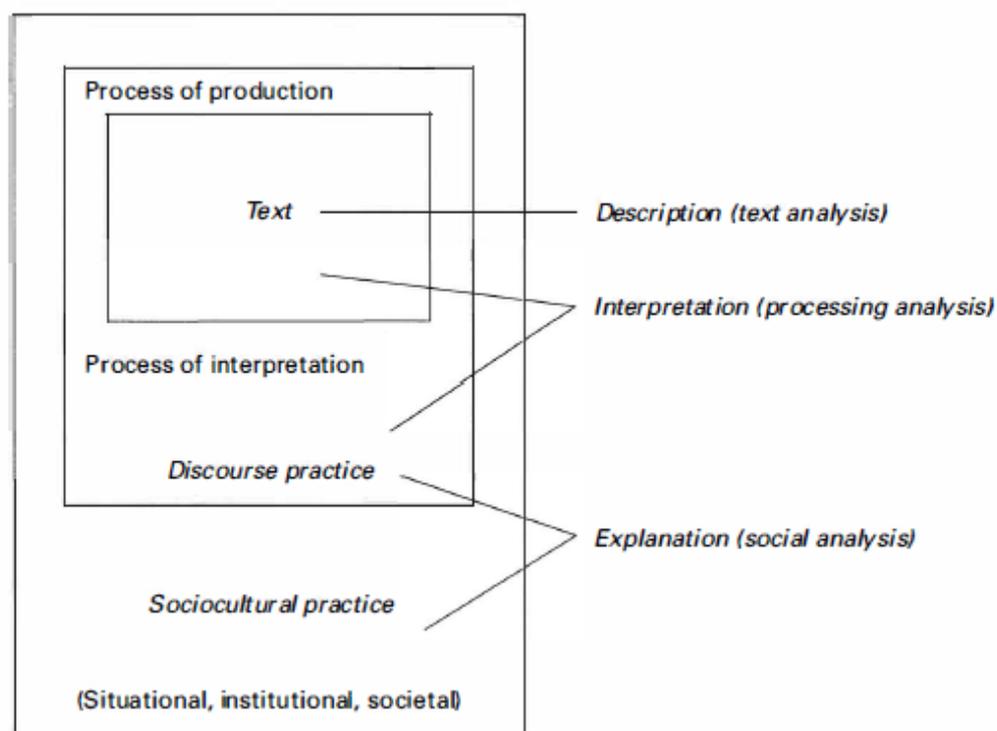


Figure 3.4: Dimensions of discourse and critical discourse analysis (Adapted from Titscher, Wodak and Vetter 2000:152)

Figure 3.4 shows that each dimension in DRA has a different kind of analysis thus description in the textual analysis (focusing on lexical items, grammatical features and cohesion); interpretation in the processes of production and consumption; and explanation for the socio-cultural practices. In the first dimension, analysts engage in a close linguistic analysis of a text, seen as a product of social discursive practice. Focus is on the form and content of both micro and macro level structures of language. The second dimension is the analysis of discursive practice, i.e. the processes of text production, distribution and consumption. The third dimension consists of the analysis of social practice, focusing on social and institutional conditions of the discursive event, and the constructive effects of discourse.

These levels of analysis share the same principle to van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach levels but the difference is that in DRA the discourse practices not cognition mediate between discourse and social practices (Fairclough 1995:59). However, they both view the mediating dimension of discursive practices as involving socio-cognitive elements. On the one hand, Fairclough argues that in text production and consumption people draw the members resources, which include the people's previous knowledge of language, representations of the social world, beliefs and assumptions (Fairclough 1989:24). On the other hand, van Dijk claims that

“concrete text production and interpretation are based on the so-called models, that is, mental representations of experiences, events, or situations”. Therefore, both view the discursive practice level as involving socio-cognitive aspects. The three-dimensional framework of critical discourse analysis is discussed below.

3.4.2.1.1 Analysis of the texts

Fairclough (1995:57) explains that the first dimension involves linguistic analysis of choices and patterns in vocabulary particularly zeroing into the nature of wording and metaphors, the grammar mainly on modality and transitivity, the way sentences are connected together (cohesion), and text structure and the sound system (phonology). On this level, Fairclough proposes a closer analysis of lexical properties because they are potential carriers of ideological propositions. Texts may use agency or passives to embed the ideologies that obscure the real meanings of discourse (Fowler 1991), hence analysis should concentrate on form and function though it is not easy to separate the two aspects. However, Gee (2005:54) describes ‘form’ as designated structures of the language that include parts of speech, types of phrases or clauses, whereas ‘function’ as meanings a given form can convey, for instance an independent clause is a form but may function as a ‘theme’ because it is fronted and treated as a launching-off point. Ultimately, Gee (2005:55) argues that when analysing form (grammar structures) all the approaches to discourse analysis go beyond quantifying grammar structures to consider the patterns across the sentences.

Furthermore, Fairclough (1995:58) observed that textual analysis also uses the functions from systemic functional linguistics⁸ (hereafter SFL). The argument is that texts serve many functions some of which are absent in the text structure, and that lexical choices used are influenced by context (Richardson 2007:38). As such, Fairclough (1995:57) relabelled the SFL functions as representation, relations and identities to analyse the texts and following is the further illustration that Richardson (2007:38) made to each of them respectively;

- (a) representation; particular representations of social practice perhaps carrying ideologies (ideational function)

⁸ “Systemic Functional Linguistics is a linguistic theory associated with Michael Halliday (1978, 1994) concerned with the relationship between language and other aspects of social life and its approach to the linguistic analysis of texts is always oriented to the social character of texts. It’s a valuable resource for critical discourse analysis and most of the major contributions of discourse analysis have developed out of SFL” (Fairclough 2003:5).

- (b) identities and social relations; construction of writer or reader identities focusing on what is emphasized whether the roles, status or identities (interpersonal function)
- (c) cohesion and coherence; relationship between the writer and reader (textual function)

Drawing from the above, analysis of texts involves both traditional and functional linguistic methodologies. The DRA deployed a textual analysis of lexical and grammatical choices in the news articles to establish the possible identities of social actors in the flooding crisis. However, this exercise is complemented by the categories of representation established by van Leeuwen (2008) SAM in order to be more critical. Included in the text analysis are the images to establish the how the other semiotics interact with the language in deriving the meaning. Thus, the media texts on the flooding crisis in this study are interpreted with the accompanying images to uncover the embedded ideological meanings.

3.4.2.1.2 Discourse practices

CDA regards ‘discourse’ as a social practice and that it has a dialectical relationship with the various socio-cultural practices. Fairclough (1995:60) argues that there an indirect link between discourse and textual properties in the sense that sociocultural practices shape texts but through a discourse practice. As such, discursive practices mediate between culture and society on one hand, and discourse, language and text on the other (Fairclough 1995:60). Richardson (2007:100) texts are not produced in isolation because they exist and must be understood in relation to the other texts. This dimension examines the way news media, especially the producers, select and use the pre-existing texts, discourses or voices and genres to create their own texts, and how the readers employ the pre-existing texts or genres in the processes of consumption and interpretation. For this study, it involves how the other pre-existing texts and genres on other catastrophic flooding crises were used in the production and interpretation of the news in the local and international press. Hence, this focuses on the relationship between the discourse structures and social processes through the notions of intertextuality and interdiscursivity in the social practices.

Intertextuality

The notion of ‘intertextuality’ can be traced to Bakhtin’s work on dialogic or heteroglossic texts. ‘Heteroglossia’ is a concept that expresses how multiple voices are incorporated in and speak through a text. According to Allen (2000: 3), the concept of ‘intertextuality’ was first used by Kristeva on the basis of Saussurean and Bakhtinian theories of language and literature

in the late 1960's. The concept 'intertextuality' as developed by Bakhtin, was concerned with the neglect of attention to how a text is constructed from pre-existent texts in a communicative situation (Fairclough 1992: 270). In other words, it concerns how pre-existing discourses contribute to the formulation of new texts. Bakhtin (1980, in Fairclough 1992) writes that;

“Our speech... is filled with others' words, varying degrees of otherness and varying degrees of 'our-own-ness,' varying degrees of awareness and detachment. These words of others carry with them their own expression, their own evaluative tone, which we assimilate, rework, and accentuate.” (Fairclough 1992: 270)

From the above, utterances (texts) are not individual isolated objects but responses to other previous utterances and those that are anticipated. Against this background, Kristeva perceived a given text (utterance) as “a dynamic and intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point, as a dialogue among several writings” (Alfaro 1996: 268) or utterances⁹. Drawing from Bakhtin, Kristeva defined 'intertextuality' as a perspective that texts are constructed as a combination of many quotations, which transform and shape it into another. In other words, Kristeva advanced Bakhtin's perspective that texts are not self-contained systems but a transformation and restructuring of several other prior and immediate present texts. It is an absolute rejection of the principle of textual autonomy, the perception that texts are self-sufficient and can function as a closed system (Alfaro 1996: 268).

For Fairclough, intertextuality “points to how texts can transform prior texts and restructure existing conventions (genres and discourses) to generate new ones (1992: 270). It is understood as the way texts draw on prior texts and conventions to produce other new texts. According to Richardson (2007: 100), Fairclough's CDA model of analysing texts draws heavily on the theory of intertextuality, for it postulates that texts cannot be understood in isolation but in relation to chain of other texts. As such, in the DRA model intertextual analysis focuses on the borderline between text and discourse practice in the dialectical-relational framework (Fairclough 1995: 16). The intertextual analysis done at discourse practice level is more or less a linguistic analysis but differs with the one at the textual level because it is more interpretative whereas the latter is 'descriptive' in nature (Fairclough 1995: 61). Similarly, this study interrogates the intertextual composition of the media news on floods, explaining the explicit and implicit strategies used in the construction of the identities of social actors in the crisis.

⁹ “utterances” is my own emphasis of understanding meaning of the text.

Fairclough (2003: 47) explains that intertextuality may be an attributed (direct speech) or an unattributed authorial account of the journalists (news writers). He contends that attributed reports are relatively faithful for they keep a strong and clear boundary between the speech or writing or thought that is reported and those which do not whereas the authorial account holds the texts true or valid but leaves them open to question. Hence, the study draws from Fairclough (1992: 114) observation that newsworthy events originate from a set of particular people who have privileged access to the media and are treated as potential sources with their voices widely represented to examine the texts authorial or reporter voices to determine the journalist ideological stances in the reports on the flooding crisis in Malawi.

The understanding is that intertextuality provides an interface between the context of culture and the text. According to Allen (2000: 36), the texts are regarded as a compilation of cultural textuality; ways of saying and all the institutional styles of production (Allen 2000: 36). Intertextuality theory explores how the conventions of genres, the use of discourse patterns in a media culture influences the production of the text, using the various discursive strategies. It is such analysis that is embraced in this study to give a broader picture about the meanings of the media texts and the underlying ideologies that are held in the framing social actor in the flooding crisis.

However, Fairclough (1992: 270) also contends that intertextuality as a practice of transforming and restructuring of texts is constrained by the issues of power and ideology. It is determined by the power relations and for the media such power struggles run through the processes of production and consumption of the texts. Against this background, Fairclough (1992) observes that the theory of hegemony is better placed to complement the analysis of the processes of production and consumption of the media texts. As such, this paper uses intertextuality and hegemony to analyse the discursive strategies used in the construction of identities of the social actors in the local and international media where international non-profit organisations, government and the public struggled for power and dominance in the representation of the crisis. Ultimately, this lay bare the power struggles involved in the construction of identities of the social actor actors in the flooding catastrophe in Malawi.

Overall, intertextual analysis is crucial to this study because journalists or news writers use information from different sources, past and immediate texts, to embed it to the other. As Richardson (2007: 106) puts forward, the analysis of this feature is significant in the interpretation of the texts to determine the level of accuracy or ideological inclusions with the actual statements from the sources. Fairclough (1992: 84) also argues that intertextual analysis

in terms of production focuses on the historicity of the texts; how they constitute the additions to the existing chains of speech communication consisting of prior texts to which they respond. In terms of distribution, intertextuality explores the stable networks which texts move along, undergoing predictable transformation as they shift from one text type to another, for instance political speeches transformed into news reports. Regarding interpretation or consumption, intertextuality stresses the significance of the other texts, not the readily available, that readers bring along to their interpretation. Fairclough's (1992) intertextual approach corroborates with this study's perspective of exploring the production, distribution and consumption of the news reports about the flooding crisis. Particularly, it examines the aspects of intertextuality in the three aspects to establish how the media as powerful group influence different agendas to construct particular identities of the social actors in the crisis.

Interdiscursivity

According to Jorgensen and Phillips (2002: 73) and Fairclough (1992: 124), interdiscursivity is a form of intertextuality. It is referred to as 'constitutive intertextuality', and focuses on the connection, intersection and overlapping of different types of discourse, genres and styles in a text (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 37; Fairclough 1992a: 271-272). Reisigl and Wodak (2001) conceptualized interdiscursivity as a form of hybridity; a heterogeneous mixture of different genres or genre features within a particular discursive practice. In media, the practice is common to blur the social boundaries of news, for instance fact and fiction, drama and documentary, news and entertainment. Ultimately, pushing of the boundaries in the interdiscursive mixes affect the social order thereby influencing sociocultural change. However, such interdiscursive practices in the media, the inclusion of existing texts or genres, are dictated by the power relations (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002: 73).

Drawing on the above, the analysis of interdiscursivity reveals the structure and articulation of discursive formation of what is referred to as institutional and societal orders of discourse. Just as Fairclough (1992a: 284) argued, such analyses examine the relationships within and between the orders of discourse shift as part of wider process of sociocultural change. For this study, it uncovers the interdiscursive hybridity of the disaster news reports in the media; establishing the potential heterogeneity of texts drawn in the production of the narratives that are a representation of the social actors in the flooding crisis.

Using both intertextuality and interdiscursivity this study examines the external voices and texts that are included in the development of media discourses on flooding disasters. Thus, the

identities of the social actors in the crisis are better understood upon considering the various foregoing media texts, political, humanitarian and religious discourses, that are related to the flooding crisis.

3.4.2.1.3 Social cultural practices

According to Fairclough (1995a:62), the different levels of sociocultural analysis of discourse involve the immediate social context the event, the wider context of institutional practices or the wider frame of society and culture. From these levels, the analysis concentrates on three aspects of the sociocultural context of a discourse practice; the economic (the economy of the media), political (power and ideology of the media), and cultural (issues of values). These aspects comprise the social and cultural goings-on in which different communicative events are part of (Fairclough 1995:57). However, Fairclough argues that the three levels of analysis may not be exhaustive hence any level might be crucial in understanding a particular event. With regard to the composition of the three levels of analysis, Blommaert (2005:29) observes that the sociocultural dimension of analysis in Fairclough's dialectical-relational model focuses on the ideological effects and hegemonic processes of the communicative event.

Richardson (2007:42) suggests that any sociocultural analysis should consider asking questions such as "What does this text say about the society in which it is produced? What impact do we think the text may have on social relations? Will it help to continue inequalities and other undesirable social practices or will it help to break them down?" At this level of analysis, the questions substantiate the main aim of CDA of uncovering the unequal power relations in the society. As Blommaert (2005) cited in Richardson (2007:42) explains that form-content-function of texts as well as their production and consumption are subjected to critical analysis to expose abuses of power and empower the oppressed. For this study, analysis of the sociocultural dimension interrogates the media construction of identities and the social relations created among the social actors at different levels.

The sociocultural analysis also comes on the backdrop of the media political economy of news production and consumption. Though not a focus of this paper but drawing on Fairclough (1995a:36) and Sheyholislami (2001:9) a political and economic analysis of the news media in the sociocultural dimension establishes the ideological impact of politics and economics during news production and consumption. Focus is on the present market and relationship with the state. These have a direct bearing on the news selection and distribution, for instance Fairclough

(1995a) explains the powerful in the political, economic or cultural aspects have privileged to access media and make their voices heard as potential sources of news. Ultimately, the voices of the oppressed are constrained to maintain the power relations in the media.

For this study, the dimension of sociocultural analysis zeroes to the bottom of social power relations in the media for it has a great impact on the construction of identities of the social actors, of which privileged access to the media is left to a few powerful. It also considers the environment of the crisis situation in which the less powerful are greatly affected and always looking for assistance from the more powerful and privileged. At a national and continental level, the study interrogates questions of construction and representation of the underdeveloped country in the local and western online news websites which are operated and controlled by the more powerful but also developed nations that are home to the many prominent non-profit organisations who were active social actors in the crisis. Thus, the social cultural context of the local and international publications is deemed significant in comparing the construction and representation of the social actors in the catastrophic flooding.

3.4.2.2 Van Leeuwen's (1996, 2008) Social Actor Model

At the same verbal representation level, the study sought to classify the naming choices of participants using van Leeuwen (2008) social actor network model of representation. The model draws its perspectives from SFL classification of social actors and the different ways in which they are represented. It incorporates different lexico-grammatical categories that are used to identify the social actors and establish their sociological and critical relevance of their respective actions (van Leeuwen 2008:23). The model is premised on the perspective that participants possess a range of identities and characteristics that could denote them accurately however text producers often use them to indexes other varied meanings. The van Dijk (1996) the model “analyses how social and political inequalities are manifested in and reproduced in discourse” (Wooffit 2005:137). By offering comprehensive explanation on how social actors are categorised, SAM identifies some of the possible ideological effects the naming or classification may have in the texts (Machin and Mayr (2012:79).

Following this, my dissertation will deploy the established naming categories in the analysis of how the participants in the flooding disaster, namely people and organisations, are referred to lexically. My interest is in how the lexical system employed in the naming of the agents or participants affected the realization of the meaning about the natural catastrophic disaster.

However, as alluded to earlier, the social actors can be identified or named in a particular event using the provided categories from those referred to as a “socio-semantic inventory”.

3.4.2.2.1 Representational categories

The ‘socio-semantic inventory’ constitutes a wide variety of categories of representing social actors in a particular action. Although van Leeuwen’s (1996, 2006) categories of representations are meant for references to people, this study extended them for use in analysing a natural catastrophic disaster. Focus is on a selected number of categories that were applicable to analyse the media representation of the social actors in the natural flooding disaster. Other categories that were not suitable and relevant to this study, have been ignored. Hence, the discussion has been restricted to only six categories of representation deployed in the analysis of the social actors as presented in section 5.3. Figure 3.5 below illustrates all the categories Van Leeuwen identified in the socio-semantic inventory.

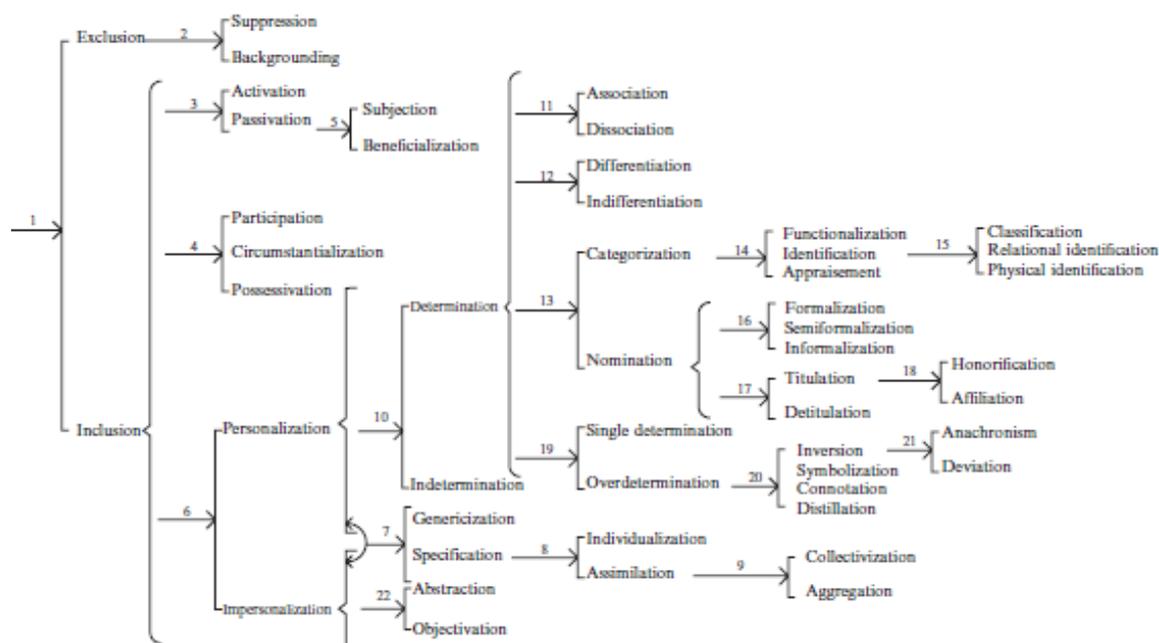


Figure 3.5: Social Actor Network (Source: van Leeuwen, T. 2008. *Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis*, p. 52)

(1) Inclusion/Exclusion

The social actor representation inventory shows that participants can be included or excluded in representations to satisfy the interests and purposes of the audience for whom the text is intended. On the one hand, social actors are included if they are represented as active

participants. They are identified as ‘doers’ of the action. Sometimes they are also represented in a passive role, playing no significant role in the action. The passivated social actors are either beneficialized (thus presented as positively or negatively benefitting from the action) or subjected (treated as objects of exchange) in the representation (Van Leeuwen 2008:34). Further, inclusion is also realised when participants are represented as generic (a whole participants or group) or specific individuals. Grammatically, the inclusion of the social actors is identified through the use of post modifying phrases such as ‘by’, ‘from’, and ‘of’ (van Leeuwen 2008:28-32).

On the other hand, exclusion is the deliberate omission of the actors when representing a social action, and this is realized in two ways that include suppression and backgrounding (Fairclough 2003:143). Suppression refers to a kind of exclusion where no reference to the social actors is made anywhere in the text. Usually there is no trace of reference to the participants anywhere in the text. The naming category is identified through the passive agent deletion and non-finite clauses. Backgrounding refers to an exclusion which is less radical since there are references to the participants which may not be in relation to the given action. van Leeuwen argues that backgrounding can result from ellipsis in non-finite clauses ending with “-ing” and the participles with “-ed” (van Leeuwen 2008:28-32). For this study, the interest is in the inclusion rather than exclusion categories and apart from people these were extended to identifying the natural catastrophic flooding disaster as an agent.

(2) Genericization vs specification

In these categories, participants are represented either as specific individuals or a class of generic type. Van Leeuwen (2008:35-36) argues that genericization is realized through (i) use of plural without a definite article, (ii) adding a definite article to singular social actor (iii) mass nouns without articles, and (iv) indefinite article. If participants are identified using the mass nouns, the articles are absent. Similarly, the country ‘Malawi’ is represented as generic reference if it represents a group of participants.

(3) Functionalisation and identification

Both functionalisation and identification are part of the categorization of the social actors. Functionalisation represents social actors in terms of something they do, the roles, activities and occupations. According to van Leeuwen (2008:42), functionalisation is realized through the following grammatical structures (i) a noun formed from the verb through suffixes, and (ii)

compounding of nouns denoting places or tools closely associated with activity. For identification, this represents what the social actors are rather than their activities. There are three types of identification namely, relational identification, physical identification and classification. In relational identification, social actors are represented in terms of the personal kinship or work relations to each other with a closed set of nouns. Physical identification represents social actors in terms of physical characteristics which specifically identify them in a particular context. In classification, the social actors are categorized by means of institutional or societal given classes (van Leeuwen 2008:42-45).

(4) Nomination and categorization

Nomination refers to the representation of the social actors in terms of their unique identity markers or characteristics. This is typically realized by proper nouns, which sometimes are (in)formalized, i.e. surname with or without honorifics, given names only, given name and surname. Categorization is when participants are identified in terms of their identity and the functions they share with others. (van Leeuwen 2008:40-41)

(5) Individualization and assimilation

Social actors can be referred to as individuals hence individualization. The social actors are specified as entities or represented as individual participants. As such, social actors can represent institutions though identified as single entities. For assimilation, it is divided into two types namely aggregation and collectivization. On the one hand, aggregation is realized by the definite and indefinite quantifier of group of social actors. The participants are represented in statistical form through numbers whether in words or figures. On the other hand, collectivization is a type of assimilation in which social actors are represented as a collective group. It is realized by first person plural and collective identity based words (van Leeuwen 2008:37-38).

(6) Personalization and impersonalization

According to van Leeuwen (2008:46), social actors are personalized when realized by personal or possessive pronouns, proper names or nouns whose meaning denote human beings. Social actors are impersonalized when represented by abstract or concrete nouns whose meaning denote something with impersonal features. van Leeuwen identifies two kinds of impersonalization namely objectivation and abstraction. For objectivation, social actors are

represented using a means of location or specific thing. Abstraction refers to the participants representation that appears with the means of quality (van Leeuwen 2008:46-47).

(7) Role allocation

Social actors are represented either as active or passive agents in an action. They are active if allocated an active and dynamic role in given activities. The social actors perform the role of an actor when given the active role. van Leeuwen (2008:33) point out that social actors are passivated when undergoing a certain activity. In other words, they perform the role of a ‘patient’ when given a passive role, though this is not usual. Social actors are beneficialized positively or negatively when they play the passive roles (van Leeuwen 2008:32-35).

3.4.2.3 The concept of metaphor

Metaphors are described as rhetoric devices of language that represent one part of reality being extended to the other: a condensed and implicit comparison (Conboy 2007:40). From the cognitive theorist’s view point, metaphors are perceived as presentation of one conceptual domain or realm in terms of another conceptual domain (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:3-8; Kövecses 2002:4). Metaphors are familiar areas of experience that construe unfamiliar abstract areas. Lakoff and Johnson argue that metaphors are a property of human thought rather than language for we continuously understand and experience one thing in terms of another (1980:5). The view is that the aspects underlying the metaphor are conceived in the mind independently of the language. Hence, theory of metaphor is premised on the view that metaphor is not just a matter of language but human cognition or thought as well.

Importantly, cognitivists characterised the process of metaphor construction as mapping structure. In the conceptual correspondence of the metaphors, one conceptual domain is understood as a source from which the metaphorical expression is drawn whereas the recipient is understood as the target conceptual domain (the entity being talked about), hence conceptual metaphors (Kövecses 2002:4-6). The mapping structure is based on the similarity of the two domains, the ability to construct one domain in terms of the other and the physical experience with the knowledge of the domains. For instance, Lakoff and Johnson cited by Kövecses (2002:5) and Musolff (2016:17) illustrates about the domains with metaphorical concept that THE ARGUMENT IS WAR. In this case, ARGUMENT is the target domain and WAR is the source domain. Lakoff and Johnson paraphrased the conceptual metaphor as the following linguistic expressions; Your arguments are *indefensible*, He *attacked every weak point* in my

argument, I ‘ve never *won* an argument with him, among others. However, Musolff (2016:17) criticized the expressions particularly words like *win*, *attack* as very loosely connected to the conceptual domain of war. Thus, lack of clear explanation about conceptual structures has raised a lot of problems with the cognitive metaphor theory.

It is necessary to point out that this study is not concerned with discussing the cognitive basis for the metaphors because others have already contested against its perspective of underemphasizing the potential effect of form and processing (El Refaie 2003). Despite the understanding that writers use metaphors to create the mental and physical world and to render the ideologies intelligible, my analysis of the articles views the interpretation of metaphors as largely dependent on its appropriateness and the ideological implication of its features on the discourse in which they are used. The position of the paper is not on making cognitive interpretations of the relations between the metaphors, natural disaster discourse and social relations. Its concern is limited to the effect of metaphors linguistic form on the meanings of the media representation of the natural catastrophic disaster. Similar to the other CDA theories that inspired this study, a materialistic stance is taken to focus less on the cognitive thought in the metaphors. The focus is on the circumstances that the metaphorical expressions produce in the natural disaster discourse and how it affected the meaning-making under the different conditions in which the newspapers are produced. Thus, analysis on the meaning of the metaphors for this study depended on the context of use and the effects of such action.

Metaphors are of significance in CDA because different metaphors embed ideological perspectives. As such, they reflect and reinforce the way people think about the given phenomena. Fairclough (2003:131) has described them as a resource for producing distinct representations of the world. The understanding is that metaphors are deeply embedded into cultures hence their interpretations are different when extended to another reality. According to Conboy (2007:40), most of the news are couched in metaphors to exaggerate them with much emphasis. Furthermore, Machin and Mayr (2012:167) argues that metaphors obscures what actually happens and dramatically simplifies the process. This practice calls into question the neutral claims of the newspaper lexical choices. Conboy (2007:40) argues that metaphorical language in the news act as a bridge between the factual world and the world of ideological persuasion. For Mussolf (2016:4) and Machin and Mayr (2012:168), the metaphors have added pragmatic value that make an emotional and persuasive appeal. Thus, metaphors fit well within the ideological framework because its assumptions are not overtly stated, they remain implicit.

Ultimately, they are tools for analysis of the media discursive representation of the social actors in the natural flooding disaster.

3.5 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an overview of the development of CDA, MCDA and other theoretical approaches relevant to the study. Besides this, the chapter has referred back to the overview of studies done on media representation of natural disasters (see Chapter two), and various discourses have been highlighted. Thus, the framework for the analyses to be given in chapters five and six has been provided. In chapter four details of the method of data collection and procedures followed in setting up the analysis, will be given.

Chapter 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the methodology of this dissertation. It gives an overview of the procedures that were followed to achieve the research aims set in chapter one. Specifically, it will refer to procedures followed in interrogating the selected data and addressing the fundamental questions related to the media construction and representation of people and events after catastrophic flooding in Malawi. First, the discussion will focus on the geographical location of the study, and then considerations regarding the selection of local and international online news reports, the period covered in the study, and size of the data sample will be given. The chapter ends with the procedures taken in the data collection and the framework which guided the data analysis.

4.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA

There are several reasons for conducting the study in Malawi. Firstly, media discourses on natural disasters relatively rarely cover African events on an international, first world platform. An overview of existing studies shows a higher frequency in media studies on disasters in the global north and the eastern (Asian) countries despite similar large-scale disasters occurring in the global south, particularly Africa (Franks 2006:281; Carma 2006; Olausson and Berglez 2014a). Very many natural catastrophic disasters with many casualties in African countries appear to attract limited studies on media representation, in contrast to very many on the coverage of climate change in the global north. Though contestable in some circles, Carma (2006:6) claims that the small number of studies are a result of the inadequate media reports of disasters in the global south. Secondly, the choice to investigate reports on flooding in Malawi is motivated by the view that the 2015 events represent one of the major natural catastrophes that happened in the last decade. Thirdly, the researcher is from Malawi and is committed to working with material relevant to the social and political context in which he lives.

This study explores natural disaster reporting in a geographical region, which does not often get attention from the international media. It also topicalises a geopolitical and socio-cultural context that is not central in discourses of the global north. The study hopes to introduce a new

understanding of patterns of natural disaster reporting in such an under-investigated context. It looks at how various media construct and represent an isolated Malawian community in ways that apparently perpetuate ideological and colonial projections. It investigates the degree of cultural proximity reflected in the representations of the selected newspapers. Local and international online publications reporting over a short period will be used to illustrate the particular kind of natural disaster discourse.

4.3 SELECTING EMPIRICAL MATERIAL

The study is based on two different types of empirical data: articles from the local newspapers and the online international news from websites. I used a desk research method and purposive sampling techniques in the selection of the data.

4.3.1 Selection of local newspapers

The full range of local Malawian newspapers were considered for the study, and eventually a number of factors such as how widely they are circulated, how regularly they are published and how accessible their archives are, were used to select the most suitable ones. Following Bell (1991), these selected titles in the Malawian press were ones that demonstrated characteristics of continuity, consistency and regular reporting during the period of the flooding in 2015. The period in question started before the height of the crisis, continued through a particularly trying period, as well as the aftermath during which reports on environmental affairs after the flooding, continued. The continuous coverage as the story unfolded, is therefore taken into account. I opted for local newspapers that were readily available, easily accessible and widely circulated throughout the country. Then, I also focused on stable news outlets with established archival documentation or library sections for the purposes of easy access to the publications over a three months period.

As the following two newspapers met all the criteria, I selected them as sources: *The Daily Times* and *The Nation* newspapers, are local dailies with the largest circulation and readership in terms of English publications in Malawi. I also included their weekend versions *Weekend News* and *Sunday Times*, and *Weekend Nation* and *Nation on Sunday* despite some differences in the genres covered in the daily newspapers. This choice was deliberately done in order to include as large a sample of reports as possible. Media that disseminate information to large audiences enhance the constitutive effect of discourse thereby shaping the widely shared constructions of reality (Mautner 2008:32). Even assuming the impossibility of objective

reporting, it can be noted that the local newspapers selected in this study do not have an explicit political connection to government or any opposition party in Malawi, that would obviously affect the interpretation of the data. Thus, the selected local print newspapers provided sufficient material to examine the ideological underpinnings of the local media's discursive construction of the disaster.

4.3.2 Selection of international online news

The investigation was extended to include the related discourse in international online news media, considering them as potential sources of breaking news on natural disasters, but to a different set of consumers, namely those interested in global affairs beyond their own boundaries. The interest of international news outlets likely to be explained by the magnitude of the events having a wider than just local effect. Using *Lexis Nexis*, searches of the international online newspaper archives were successfully done across exactly the same period as was done for the local media. Regarding the selection of appropriate online news websites, the sampling process employed similar selection criteria as those used in selecting traditional newspapers in Malawi. I selected the news websites that covered the critical events and were also likely to update the news on this particular disaster and its effect. I considered wide distribution and a good reputation in reporting international affairs. The prominent online newspaper websites selected are UK established daily newspapers, *The Guardian* and *Daily Mail (Mail online)*. The task was to choose online news websites that would be representative of the western English-speaking countries. Also, the history of bilateral power relations that have existed between Malawi and the United Kingdom since colonial times, played a motivating role. As former colonial power, it is likely that the UK would have a greater interest in Malawi than e.g. the USA or India, with implications for media coverage of the disaster. Further, the two online newspapers, *The Guardian* and *Daily Mail*, have different ideological positions in the sense that the former (*The Guardian*) leans to the political left as a mouthpiece for a liberal readership, whereas the latter (*Daily Mail*) is likely to address right wing conservatives as readers (Flashnews UK 2009). Undoubtedly, newspapers bring politics into their styles of coverage, hence my interest was to explore how news media with different ideological underpinnings covered the distant suffering of 'others' in a crisis. Thus, the two-selected online British publications are relatively high profiled ones with well-recognised high standards in journalism. Both cover international issues and circulate widely, even outside of the UK.

4.4 TIME FRAME FOR THE STUDY

The selected publications for the study covered the time span of three months since the flooding disaster occurred, thus from 1 January to 31 March 2015. The period of three months was selected since locally the flooding and its effects remained newsworthy, moving from initial shock at the extent of the rain, flooding and associated damage, to more rational reflection on how to recover and who to hold responsible for relief and repair. All the news articles on flooding published within this period, irrespective of the thematic point of departure, were considered for the study. I divided the period of reporting into three phases, namely (i) the initial/early reporting phase (1 January – 12 February 2015), (ii) the intermediate reporting phase (13 February – 5 March 2015), and (iii) the post-disaster reporting phase (6 March – 31 March 2015). The first phase of the reporting period covered publications that mainly gave attention to immediate emergency issues such as damage assessment, death tolls, resource distribution and rescue activities. The second phase between mid-February and early March covered news reports that were dominated by humanitarian concerns regarding the plight of the affected communities when attention especially went to the poor conditions in rescue camps. The third phase which ran from early March to the end of the month, focused on resilience or recovery processes, particularly activities associated with the victims returning to their respective villages. Of course, certain themes like the responses of the Malawian governance were reported in all the phases, so that they are also analysed within each of these sections. Through these reporting phases, the study could also attend to the ways in which newspapers allocated the blame for the devastation caused by the disaster and for the weak recovery efforts.

4.5 NATURE OF THE DATA

The study used the dates during which the flooding happened and the immediate aftermath as the limiting parameters. As this was the period in which the reporting was most likely to be extensive, this particular set of dates was chosen. For this reason, there was no predetermined size of the data set in terms of the number of reports to be taken into the data-set. To start out, all reports were scrutinized. This was possible due to the time limit that was set. The volume of reports, however, was too large to allow a detailed analysis of them all. Similarly, the range of themes that were touched on, were more than could be covered in a single study. Thus, in a second round of working through the reports, articles were selected that covered particular important motifs or arguments related to the subject of study. In the local traditional print news media across the specified period, 292 reports covered the floods, 221 of which were published

in *The Daily Times*, and 71 of which were published in *The Nation*. There were more articles on this event in *The Daily Times* (n= 221) than *The Nation* (n= 71) newspaper because of differences in editorial choices on the coverage of crisis. *The Nation* covered the crisis as part of regular hard news, features or editorials, but did not specifically dedicate large sections or full pages to the flooding catastrophe. In terms of the frequency, *The Daily Times* had a high media coverage in January (111 reports) and February (54 reports), whereas in *The Nation* newspaper had its highest coverage of 39 articles in January (see Chapter 5, section 5.2.4). The overall high frequency of coverage in both these newspapers in the first two months of the crisis is to be expected, since there was much infrastructure destruction and displacement of people. By March, the coverage was considerably less, since the flooding waters had subsided and many victims were already going back to their villages.

Regarding the size of the data set provided by the international online news coverage, I found 16 articles on the selected websites within the particular time frame, nine of which were published in *The Guardian*, and seven of which were published in *The Daily Mail Online*. Considering that the local printed vs international online news websites target different audiences and have different genres of media communication, the study investigated differences at geopolitical, discursive and socio-cultural level of construction and representation of the disaster. Therefore, coupled with the local articles, in all I collected 308 and analysed 54 articles.

Besides attending to the verbal representations in the various publications, the study also accounts for the visuals published in both local and international news. The impact of such a natural disaster is best illustrated in visual form, thus the majority of the reports were accompanied by some kind of photographic material. In all, there were 313 images in both the local printed newspapers and the online international news websites.

After the identification, downloading and scanning process, the articles were classified according to different genres, such as editorials, feature articles, hard news, opinions and captioned pictures, which were stored in a data bank ready for sorting. The analysis in this study focused on the hard print articles for two reasons, namely (i) they are believed to be the most immediate, delivered by journalist on the ground and therefore directly present (Bell 1991:14), while international sites used images mostly relayed through large agencies such as Reuters or Agence France Press (AFP), and (ii) the online sites used considerably less images. The publications printed during the height of the flooding were not open, persuasive sites of

engagement. The study considered that often journalists skilfully imply meanings in the texts without overtly stating them. It is usual for journalists to ideologically present things as normal, whilst in fact they are open for contestation (Machin and Mayr 2012:137). Looking at the nature of the data, both local and international media used sources that were already positioned in terms of what would hold their attention, and both discursively embedded ideologies to which my analyses in chapters five and six will return.

4.6 ANALYSING THE LINGUISTIC DATA

The analysis of the linguistic data is based on the work of various critical discourse analysts (as discussed in chapter three), specifically Fairclough (1992, 1995), van Leeuwen (2008), van Dijk (1995) and Wodak (1996), and the theorists of metaphor namely Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Charteris-Black (2005). As discussed in section 3.4, CDA has no single framework but follows different approaches depending on the objectives and goal of the research (Phillips and Jorgensen 2002:76). The study used a three-level dimension in the textual analysis, thus giving a description, explanation and interpretation of the material text. The analysis is complemented by tools from Wodak's (1996, 2012) DHA, which assists an interpretation of the devastation in relation to the wider socio-cultural, historical, economic and political context. Further, Van Dijk's (1995, 1997, 2014) concept of ideology in language and material culture is used, particularly in the context of donor humanitarian aid and relief in the crisis. The study draws on the theory of metaphor from Lakoff and Johnson (1980) to further examine the concept of ideology as used in the articles about the catastrophic floods. The analytical steps taken in the textual analysis included the following:

4.6.1 Step one: Documentation of linguistic data

The first stage involved close reading, categorisation and documentation of the linguistic data into small analysable units for easy referencing and retrieval during analysis. This stage largely involved familiarisation with the data and description of broad themes. As such, I manually developed a template which was transferred to an excel sheet, to organize the data according to linguistic patterns and connections within and between the various reports. The template was based on the research questions of the study and other related theoretical information. The objective was to summarize/thematise the information pertaining to a particular category, capturing the similarities and differences within texts as the unit of analysis.

Following are the key features in the documentation process:

- (i) Item page and position (top, centre or bottom),
- (ii) Item size (Whole, >half, < half)
- (iii) Genre (editorial, hard news, soft news, opinion, letters to the editor),
- (iv) Word for word headline(s), font size (large, medium or small), bold or not,
- (v) Subjects covered in the headlines
- (vi) Subjects covered in the lead (reference to elite peoples or nations),
- (vii) News source /Attribution
- (viii) Tone of the article (supportive/neutral/hostile).

Ultimately, the documentation process helped the emergence of common themes about media coverage of the crisis.

Step one draws on Krippendorff's (2004:125) observation that data should be preserved in a medium that is durable enough to withstand constant consultation as analysts compare them across time, applying different methods to them, and replicating the analyses of other different researchers. Krippendorff argues that data vanishes unless preserved in tangible records. Moreover, categorisation helps to organise the fuzzy or unstructured data into more organisable or analyzable units, which suits most of the content analysis studies (Krippendorf 2004:84).

4.6.2 Step two: Selection of texts

As a close reading and content analysis study without computerised corpus linguistic analysis methods, not every text was bound for analysis. The corpus of newspapers collected was narrowed to a manageable number of texts from both printed and online international version of newspapers. My selection of texts for closer analysis was based on consideration of articles that displayed the characteristics under examination in the study. In this stage, the focus was solely on the syntactic, narrative and lexical characteristics, whilst the multimodal features particularly marked in images were reserved for the second phase of analysis. This was done because the selection criteria for images differed from those used for the texts. Therefore, 35 articles were selected for analysis, having matched the objectives of the study and their linguistic characteristics particularly the lexis, narrative and syntax that are used in ideological manipulation. Twenty came from the local printed news and fifteen from the international online version. In order to avert bias and cherry-picking in the selection of the texts, the study

had the total corpus documented in the first stage, and at disposal for constant testing during the analysis.

4.6.3 Step three: Textual analysis

4.6.3.1 Lexical analysis

The first stage involved the analysis of lexis to identify patterns in the choice of individual lexical items. This focused on the items that deliberately invoked the ideological interpretation of the texts. It first considered the verbs and adjectives that have distinctive evaluative meaning and create a negative or positive semantic load or evaluative polarity (Dijk 1998:32; Reah 1998; Mautner 2008:38). The study listed and classified all the demeaning, derogatory or belittling lexical items that promote beliefs and prejudices against a society. The evaluative words were also examined to ascertain how they promoted individualisations, categorisations and generalisations of the actors in the natural disaster, which ideologically affected other members or groups. In addition, they also reveal the newspapers stance on who to blame for the effects of the disaster, thus identifying the ideology embedded to the discursive patterns.

4.6.3.2 Referential/Naming strategies

At the same lexical level, the study sought to classify the naming choices using van Leeuwen's (2008) social actor network model of representation. His model incorporates categories from both the lexico-grammatical and discourse level systems of classification that others have kept separate (2008:53). Van Leeuwen points out that participants possess a range of identities and characteristics that could denote them accurately; in the texts, however, writers often use them to index varied meanings. As such, the study explored representation of social actors and the indexed meanings in the crisis news using the following categories; exclusion vs inclusion, nomination vs categorization, genericization vs specific, aggregation vs collectivisation, functionalisation vs identification, personalisation vs impersonalisation. (Van Leeuwen 2008:52). The table below gives examples of the referential choices of the social actors in the natural catastrophic disaster taken from the local print media, namely *The Daily Times* and *The Nation*, as well as from the online news websites, namely those of *The Guardian* and *Daily Mail Online*. The various referential strategies named in the table are explained in their application in chapter three, section 3.4.2.2.1.

Table 4.1: Classification of social actors both from local print and international online

Naming/referential strategy	Example
Functionalisation	<i>The Vice President of Malawi</i>
Impersonalisation	<i>Malawi government, Catholic leadership</i>
Indetermination	<i>impostors, beneficiaries</i>
Genericization	<i>Malawi floods, survivors</i>
Aggregation	<i>Three hundred thousand victims</i>
Objectivation	<i>homeless, hunger stricken</i>

4.6.3.3 *Metaphors*

In addition to the analytic instruments and procedures mentioned above, the study analysed metaphors and other semantic cohesive devices. According to Fairclough (2003:131) and Richardson (2007:66), metaphors involves perceiving one thing through the characteristics of another. It implies an identity between two otherwise different things (Martin 2014:78). Newspaper writers often indirectly communicate their ideologies through metaphors, to achieve a particular goal. Metaphors may be realised in verbal and visual modes, extending over long stretches of text, creating powerful cohesion, which is a textual and not merely a lexical phenomenon. Consequently, the study explored metaphors used in the newspaper texts to ascertain the ideological stances that journalists embedded to the texts about the crisis.

Through close reading, the analysis sought to analyse the register that attempts to appeal to the audience in the texts. This investigates on how the social actors were constructed in the representation of the natural disaster and who the blame was ascribed to as responsible for the crisis. Reah (1998:99) argues that the pattern of word choice in the text embed ideological message. Lexical choices can reveal so much about the media institutions because it articulates the language of the target audience (Conboy 2007). The use of particular words and phrases is associated with the stance of the news institution. Furthermore, specific reference to the registers will explain the issues of grammatical cohesion within the texts.

4.6.3.4 *Narrative structure analysis*

The analysis also considered the make-up or narrative structure of the news story, for instance the lead, headlines, and captions of images. Bell (1991:186) and Reah (1998:13) argue that headlines are the most important feature in providing the summary of the news, and restrict readers to a particular interpretation of the story. Mautner (2008:38) and Bell (1991:189) argue that most of the headlines are part of the news rhetoric aimed at capturing the reader's attention. They employ common linguistic devices such as alliteration, puns and pseudo-direct quotes (Bell 1991:189), while others print certain words in bold or in larger font size than the rest of the text. In addition, the lead is defined as a micro-story that “summarizes the central action and establishes the point of the story” (Bell 1991:149). Therefore, the lead as summary is a device that articulates the gist of the story from reading the single opening sentence. The study examined the interaction of headlines, captions and photographs in the social meaning making. structuring of both the lead and headlines in the texts that covered the critical circumstances in Malawi. The analysis centred on the uncovering the devices used in constructing the ideologies in the headlines and leads, for they direct or restrict the readers to a particular interpretation of the texts.

Also as part of the narrative structure, the study considered intertextuality, which refers to the presence of different texts within another text, particularly introducing other voices than the author's own (Fairclough 2003:47). Selected texts were investigated for attributed or unattributed reported speech. The following questions guided the intertextual analysis: (i) which texts and voices are included, and are they attributed, (ii) which voices are excluded, and (iii) what significant absences are noted? (Fairclough 2003:192). As Blommaert (2005:46) observes, “intertextuality grounds discourse analysis firmly into histories of use – histories that are social, cultural and political, and which allows the synchronic use of particular expressions to acquire powerful social, cultural and political effects”. Therefore, the intertextual analyses ascertained how voices other than those of the journalist and publishers were textured in relation to the authorial voices, and in relation to the other.

Interdiscursivity is another methodological device of analysis that focused on how different types of discourse, genre and style are articulated in a text (Reisigl and Wodak 2001:37; Fairclough 2003:35; Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999). As discussed in chapter three, it is a form of hybridity, a heterogeneous mixture of different genres or genre features within a particular discursive practice. Journalists often blur the social boundaries of news linking

various news stories to one another. As such, I analysed the ideological underpinnings and effects of linking the different genres to the flooding crisis news. Moreover, the power relations dictate interdiscursive practices, inclusion of existing texts or genres thereby affecting the social order (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002:73). The natural disaster news discourse encompassed many genres that were cross cutting to the issue of the floods, hence the analysis of interdiscursivity.

The study further analysed how language responded to the newsworthiness of the crisis. Durant and Lambrou (2009) cited in Bednarek and Caple (2012:57) argue that, “The language of news is ... adapted to highlight its newsworthiness”. This translates that journalists manipulate the selection and production of the news events to make them appeal to the interest of a particular news audience (Bednarek and Caple 2012; Richardson 2007:91; and Fowler 1991:12). According to Caple and Bednarek (2012:54), various linguistic devices are used to construe news value(s) that make the news capture interests of its readers. These include the use of rhetorical figures for quantification, comparative expressions, references to emotion, negative vocabulary, role labels and the others (Bednarek and Caple 2012:47; Bell 1991:203). As such, using close reading and a functional approach, the analysis examined the linguistic resources that were used to construe news values to perceive how the events on flooding were retold and made newsworthy at both local and international level. Ultimately, the analysis of newsworthiness was significant to relate the crisis news to its broader social context.

At the social practice level, the analysis considered the relationship of the crisis news with the broader context of economic, political practices and other social values. This involves the way media portrayed the social actors in the crisis particularly examining the ideological discourses that maintained the power of the privileged over those that were heavily affected by the crisis. It adopts a materialistic approach of trying to uncover the actors’ interests, for instance the humanitarian and non-profit organisations, participation in many activities of the flooding crisis. Drawing on Richardson (2007:148), the study analysed their origins and the discourses that they produced including social groupings targeted. Ultimately, investigation at each textual level centred on the ideological construction and representation of the underprivileged individuals or groups involved in the crisis.

4.7 ANALYSIS OF VISUAL DATA: MULTIMODAL FRAMEWORK

As discussed in chapter three, the social semiotic approaches to multimodality conceived that the interpretation of language and meaning extend to the various other modes of communication employed in the social context (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996; 2006; Iedema 2003). This approach is based on three theoretical assumptions, which are firstly, the view that a multiplicity of modes account for meaning-making and not language only, so that analysis focuses on the meaning making resources such as visual, action, spoken, written, gestural and others. Secondly, multimodality perceives all forms or modes of communication as shaped within the social cultural environment in which they are produced. The assumption is that meanings of multimodal signs are bound to be culturally and historically affected by their users in different contexts. Therefore, modes of communication can shape the meanings in different mode-specific ways and in-turn differently realized in different social context. Finally, the meanings are realized through an interplay with the other co-present and co-operating modes in a communicative event (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006; 1996).

As a domain of inquiry, multimodality focuses on the meaning making choices from a network of alternative modes and the assumption that all the communication modes can be described in the same way in a social context (Machin 2016:324). It conceptualizes meaning as attached to a number of ways that centres on representation (gaze, scenes in pictures), interaction (eye contact, distance) and composition (page layout, information value, salience, framing and modality) (Jewitt and Oyama 1990). Against this background, the analysis in this study examined on the journalistic choices of modes, particularly the images used in the local and international reporting of the catastrophic flooding disaster in Malawi. It considered the view that images especially in the context of newspapers are potentially ideological with no fixed meanings and open to more interpretations.

4.7.1 Analyzing the multimodal data

This section discusses the steps taken in the collection and analysis of the newspaper images that reported on the disaster catastrophe in Malawi from selected local and international newspapers. The systematic arrangement of the steps and procedures adopted in the study are randomly given, and not in the order proposed by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006). I considered

some of the information from the the social semiotic approaches and developed it into these analytic steps. The data collection and analysis of photographic images went as follows:

4.7.1.1 Step one: Collection and reviewing the images

The full set of multimodal data for the study comprised of the images that were used in the local and international newspapers stretching within the period that run from 1st January to 31st March 2015. As a desk research that focused on newspaper texts and images, the second phase data collection involved purposive selection of images that illustrated and constituted texts covering the disaster. In the selection, the newspaper genres that focused solely on pictorial representation of the crisis were also considered. Images selected in this way were labelled to indicate their date and page number. All were read repeatedly alongside their captions, corresponding news texts (if any) and provisional analytical summaries were made on the image-text relations and overall contextualization of the image participants. The constant engagement with the images helped to recognize some journalistic choices of patterns of visual communication across the period of disaster. Therefore, all the printed newspaper images, including those from the international online newspapers, were electronically scanned, retrieved and stored ready for use in the subsequent steps.

4.7.1.2 Step two: Documenting information of images

In step two, the study considered documenting the information of the images using a template prepared with various categories motivated by Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) analytical framework. The template categories on visual images were devised in such a way that information is gathered into small analysable units for easy referencing and retrieval. The documentation of the information considered the contextualisation of the participants in the image, and the following questions were asked in the process: (i) where and with whom are they photographed, (ii) how much or how little information is included in the image frame? If no participants are included, a summary was written about the contents or happenings in the picture or image. Apart from contextual information, the templates also documented technical information particularly focusing on distance (how much focal length) and projection angle (horizontal or vertical) (see Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006; 1996; Bednarek and Caple 2012:105).

Step two draws on Krippendorff's (2004:125) observation that data should be preserved in a medium that is easy to work with, but also can withstand constant consultation as analysts

compare them across time, applying different methods to them, and replicating the analyses of other different researchers. As such, the excel template I used captured the above and helped to organise the information into more analysable units, which suits most of the content analysis studies.

4.7.1.3 Step three: Sampling the images

It is neither necessary nor possible to analyse all the images that were collected in the study, but a representative sample was selected for the endeavour. The question on the selection process of the images for analysis was the most difficult one, but I considered the research questions and objectives of the study on reporting of the crisis in a remote and underdeveloped country. As a multimodal critical discourse analysis study, the selection of images was based on the conventional and unconventional means of communication as stipulated in the theory (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996; 2006). Ultimately, the violation of expected mode of communication manifested the journalistic ideological reporting of the crisis. Therefore, selection focused on those that stand out as significant for analysis though I always returned to the whole data corpus to test my analysis of the selected texts against it, and probably encounter other significant challenges.

4.7.1.4 Step four: Analyzing data

Following Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996; 2006) framework, the analysis considered the representation (ideational) dimension that concerns the narrative processes as well as the conceptual processes that are all represented within the frame of the image (see also Jewitt and Oyama 1990:141; Bell and Milic 2002:208). Narrative analysis focuses on the transactions and reactions of participants, referring also to their eye contact, direction of gaze, or gestures. This described the people, places or things using the diagonal vector line for possible direction of action for each participant in the image. For the conceptual analysis, the focus was on the general symbolic meaning of the active or inactive participants in the image. It examined whether the images defined, analysed, classified or symbolized people considering that in many instances men and women were depicted as groups in the disaster. Particularly, the conceptual examination of the images focused on the symbolic representation of gender stereotypes within the images. The narrative and conceptual dimensions uncovered the dialogue between the visual and verbal text, thus the intertextual and multi-semiotic play to unveil the journalistic underlying ideologies within the newspaper texts (see also Bednarek and Caple 2010:211).

In the interactive dimension, the study examined the interaction between the viewer and the image. Particular attention was paid to the factors such as the gaze, distance and the angle (whether horizontal or vertical) of the participants from the assumed viewer. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) illustrate how direct gaze at the viewer translates to ‘demands’, whilst looking away from the viewer means making an ‘offer’ to the viewer to be an ‘invisible onlooker’ (see Bell and Milic 2002:209). Besides this, social distance was accounted for as follows: (i) images that depict head and face portray an intimate distance, (ii) head and shoulders represent close personal distance, (iii) from the waist up is taken as far personal distance, (iv) images of whole figure with a lot of space around signify close social distance, and (v) more than two people are seen to represent public distance.

Apart from the dimensions discussed above, the study examined the resemiotization of images in both the local and international news reporting on the disaster. As discussed in chapter three, resemiotization is defined as “how meaning making shifts from context to context, from practice to practice, or from one stage of a practice to the next” (Iedema 2003:41). The study looks at resemiotization to examine the deliberate choices that text producers make in prioritising some experiences over the others. Iedema (2003:50) further argues that resemiotization is crucial tool for recounting the circumstances in the social, cultural and historical nature of representations of recent time. As a result, the study examined how the images shifted the original representations or meaning of the catastrophe, reconfiguring the situation to assume different ideologically loaded meanings. Besides this, the examination of resemiotization assisted in uncovering the historical shift in the explanation about the flooding incident(s), which trace back to so many years ago. From a multimodal perspective, this framework adequately explained the process of meaning making using the images in local and international newspapers that reported on the flooding disaster in Malawi.

4.8 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented the steps taken towards an analysis of verbal and visual newspaper texts on the 2015 flooding disaster in Malawi with a view to answering specific research questions. The linguistic analysis will examine the vocabulary, metaphors, naming and referential strategies used in media reporting. The chapter further explored the processes of textual production and consumption through the aspects of intertextuality, interdiscursivity and

newsworthiness. In addition, analysis also focused on the visuals mainly examining the representation and interaction of the images. The analysis of the images focused on what they show and did not show, and their impact to the whole text. Thus, the study examined the international online and local print newspaper coverage of the flooding crisis using the interplay of two modes of communication in meaning making. The following chapters will turn to the data and give critical discourse analyses intended to assist in finding answers to the questions this study addresses.

Chapter 5

DISCURSIVE FEATURES OF DISCOURSES OF NATURAL DISASTER: MACRO LEVEL ANALYSIS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter offers a close analysis of the dominant thematic and discursive devices used in the construction of the social actors in the Malawian disaster news reports of January to March 2015. First, it gives an impression of the volume of the news reports across different printed media and with attention to the different genres that carried news on the disaster. This will reflect the interest of local and international media regarding the news on the flooding disaster in Malawi. Second, larger textual features of mediated disaster discourses will be identified by attending to aspects of textual organisation and register as they emerged in the media construction of the catastrophic disaster in the news. Third, specific attention will go to the use of metaphor in the Malawian disaster discourse as this offers a poignant window on how the events were made accessible to the various media audiences. Ultimately, this chapter analyses the news reports in a way that uncovers the communicative devices that were used in shaping the impressions and understanding of the readers of the English-language press reports covering the disaster. Thus, the textual analysis offered here is a macro-level analysis centred on participants and interdiscursivity, with the latter relating the disaster texts to its context.

Thus, this chapter gives an investigation of the data described in chapter four, in order to address the first two research objectives as they were articulated in chapter one. For ease of reference, the relevant aims are given here again:

- i. To profile the volume of mediated material covering the floods and their effects in Malawi across the six weeks directly following the most devastating events, and then to classify this material according to genre;
- ii. To identify dominant thematic and discursive features used in the linguistic and visual texts which covered the Malawi floods during the identified period.

5.2 QUANTIFYING THE VOLUME OF COVERAGE GIVEN TO DISASTER ISSUES

The study has quantified the volume of the news reports on the flooding disasters to address the first research objective and the related question about how widely the Malawian floods of January 2015 were reported in the selected local and international, and about which genres were used in representing the people and events. Using close reading and content analysis, all articles in the selected news media (see Chapter 4, section 4.6.2) during and directly following the flooding (January – March 2015), were scrutinized to identify the different news genres that were drawn on in order to report on the catastrophic event. The reports were collected and counted manually. The study used Microsoft Excel to record and categorise the full data sample, thereby illustrating the quantity of reports, as well as the genres (news discourse types) in which they were covered. Also, I used this excel summary to record how prominently reports were accompanied by photographic imagery. This data was then represented as various diagrams, which include bar graphs, pie charts and histograms so that a visual representation of the volume as well as the generic and thematic information is available. These illustrations not only quantify the amount of coverage that the flooding disaster received, but also give an impression of the themes that were selected as being of public interest, and how various role players represented and prioritised in the texts.

5.2.1 Amount of coverage across a period of three months

Table 5.1 below summarises the number of publications and photographs that covered the flooding disaster between January and March 2015.

Table 5.1: Total number of articles and images for each media outlet

Media Outlet	Number of articles on the disaster	Percentage of the full dataset (%)	Number of images	Percentage of the full set of images (%)
<i>The Times</i>	221	72	208	66
<i>The Nation</i>	71	23	58	19
<i>The Guardian</i>	9	3	26	8
<i>Mail Online</i>	7	2	21	7
TOTAL	308	100%	313	100%

Table 5.1 shows that 221 news articles were published in *The Times*, which is a daily newspaper, with a Sunday weekly edition. The newspaper used 185 photographs to accompany the content of the news articles; in some instances, the pictures were the primary content, with brief explanations in the captions. Over the same period *The Nation* newspaper carried 71 disaster stories and 59 photographs. Considering the volume of news stories in various news outlets revealed a small difference between the published articles and photographs used in the local media coverage of the disaster. Including the international publications, the table indicates that, overall, there were 308 stories and 291 images about the flooding in Malawi.

In the period of reporting, due to generic differences between the online media and printed news media, the online media carried proportionately more images than printed text, whereas the local media had more verbal text than images. *The Guardian* had 9 articles accompanied by 26 images, while the *Mail Online* published 7 stories and 21 images during the selected period. On average, the newspapers, both print and online, used a considerable number of images in reporting the disaster. Hence, as with other natural disaster discourses, the visual texts became a prominent feature in this particular mediated discourse on Malawi's natural disaster.

Although the coverage seems relatively high in terms of the count of articles and images, given the trend and pattern of disasters in Malawi (as described in Chapter 2), one could still ask whether the coverage was sufficient in focusing on all important aspects of such an event. The coverage appears to be considerable given the many other newsworthy events happening globally; however, the specific selection of focus in writing about the events, still needs to be addressed – as the following sections will show.

5.2.2 An overview of the genres of selected news texts

The choice of genre of news texts is significant since each genre has conventions which constrain the scope, depth and linguistic devices of the representation. Fairclough (2003:66) observed that genres are varied but in certain areas are well-defined and ritualized. Some genres have well-established names within the social practices which they operate. This study draws on Frow's (2006:10) understanding of a genre as a set of conventional and highly organised constraints on the production and interpretation of meaning. The constraints are not restrictions, but rather effects that shape and guide the production of meaning. For the news media, the genres are already provided frames in the form of regular "templates" into which content is fitted. The template directs the selection of content (theme), the writing style (genre and

discursive features), and the textual format (size of headlines, attached photo, byline placement, etc.). Regular readers get to know these generic features, so that they become necessary parts of the meaning construction. Thus, this study examined the range of genres (hard news stories in the form of, e.g., front page leader, page-three news feature, editorial, etc.) used in the local publications, *The Times* and *The Nation* newspapers, to establish the kind of interest that the domestic media had in the catastrophic event, and how they chose to record news of fatalities, the destruction, and relief efforts in the aftermath of the destruction. The genres this study has isolated for attention were hard news stories, editorials, opinion pieces, feature analyses, and photo reports. Figure 5.1 below represents the distribution of the disaster stories in the local print media in terms of genres.

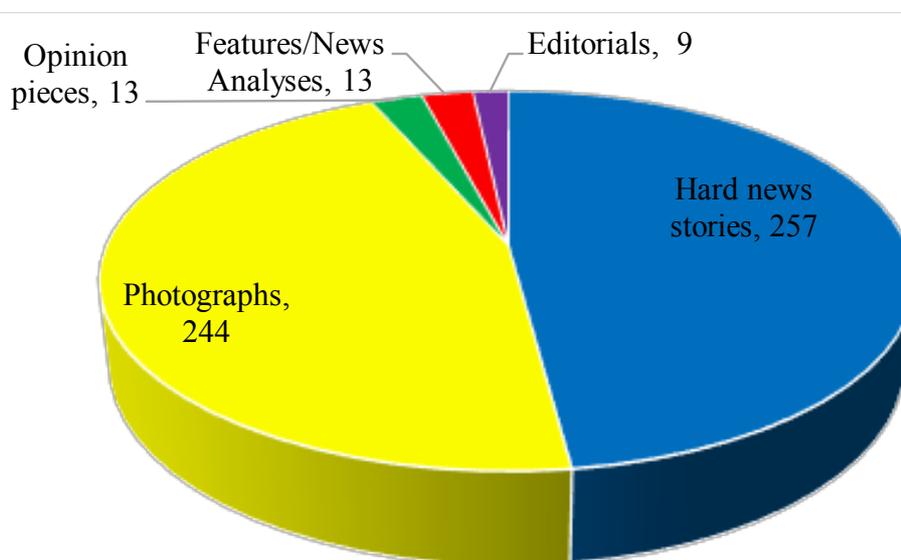


Figure 5.1: Amount of news items in each genre in the local print media

Figure 5.1 reveals that hard news stories and photo reports dominated the disaster coverage in the local print media: there are 257 hard news stories and 244 photo reports that covered the flooding disaster. Van Dijk (1988) proposed that in news ideology it is important to differentiate between proper news articles, background features and editorials to explicitly distinguish between facts and opinion. Proper news articles include the genres that do not explicitly give opinions of individual journalists, whereas background features are given from specific point of view and do involve explicit opinions of the journalist. Though not overtly ideological, hard news genres are identified as sites for covert ideological stance, which the subsequent analysis of various participants' identities will demonstrate.

Taking photo reports as a genre within media discourse, is justified due to the way in which such images added meaning to the descriptive hard news stories that lacked elaborate detail, and often transcended the linguistic meanings. There were some photo reports that appeared with captions, thereby contributing to the mediated construction of the disaster. Therefore, the analysis of images considered also the interaction of the images and language of the captions and headlines to uncover the multi-layered meanings in the images of the 2015 floods in Malawi. In doing this, I draw on Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) grammar of visual grammar, specifically their observation that there are different motives for and ideologies underpinning the use of visual images. Ultimately, the understanding is that the photo reports used in the media do not merely represent the event in "objective" visual form, but are embedded with connotative meanings and ideologies.

The study also quantified the number of articles for the genres that are regarded as openly pre-planned and ideological. Thus, it identified 13 feature analyses that deeply discussed, analysed and interpreted the subject of flooding disaster. According to Bell (1991:14), feature analyses are long articles in the local print written by one of the newspaper journalists or a guest expert. Besides being overtly ideological, feature analyses need more resources and effort to produce them. For this study, the feature analyses bolstered the examination of the ideological stance in the local newspapers because they overtly construct arguments for the respective news media institutions about the flooding disaster event.

In addition to feature analyses, there are 13 opinion pieces and 9 editorials that demonstrate convincingly that newspaper editors considered the disaster issue as worth their attention, and important for readers, also in hearing the expresses opinion of the "editorial voice". Van Dijk (1988:124), has described editorials as dominant in giving explicit opinions of individual journalists or news editors. Editorials are argumentative and persuasive, for they defend the point of view of the news outlet. Against this background, the opinion pieces and editorials, even if relatively low in number, are important genres as ideological sites to be analysed in establishing how the social actors in the disaster were discursively constructed in the domestic media.

Further, the study also explored differences between local newspapers, *The Times* and *The Nation*, in terms of the specific genre coverage of the disaster. Figure 5.2 presents the type of coverage of the disaster news in each publication to appreciate their volume of coverage under the respective genres.

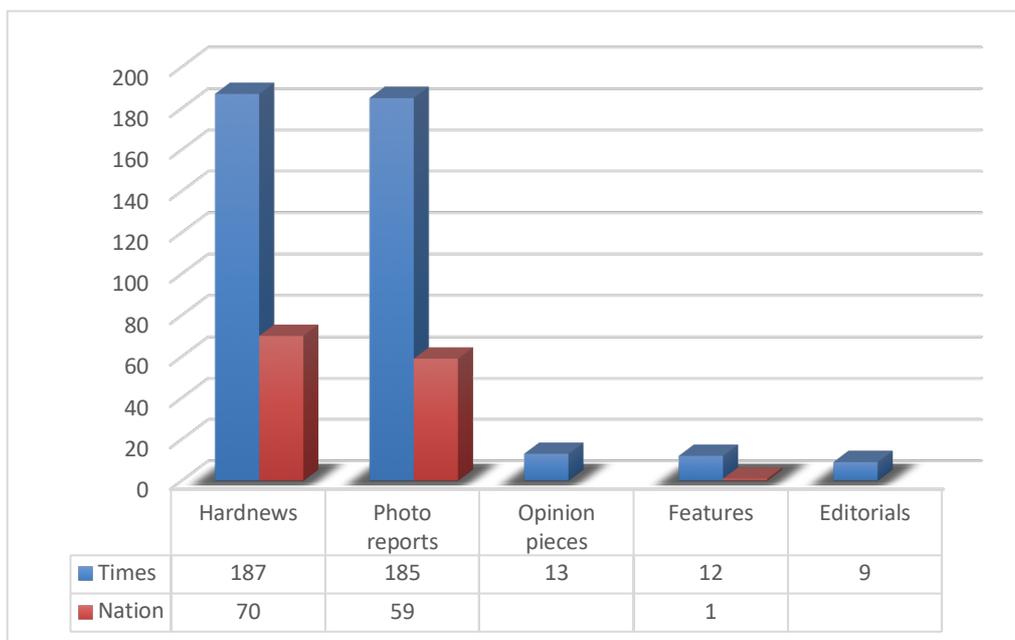


Figure 5.2: Differences in the local print media coverage in terms of genre

Figure 5.2 highlights that *The Times* published 187 hard news stories, 185 photo reports, 13 opinion pieces, 12 feature analyses and 9 editorials, whereas *The Nation* published 70 hard news stories, 59 photo reports, and no opinion pieces or editorials on this topic in the given period. In other words, the coverage patterns differ in the two local dailies: *The Times* covered the events in an array of genres, whereas *The Nation* largely gave hard news stories and photographs. The differences in their reporting could be attributed to the different reasons, that include, but are not limited to the following factors. First, the study established that the Times media group, producers of *The Daily Times*, *Weekend News* and *Sunday Times* own other forms of media outlets that include radio and television, which gives them more news collection resources. Therefore, some of the stories reported on radio and television news bulletins could be developed further in print media. *The Nation* group, producers of *The Nation*, *Weekend Nation* and *Sunday Nation* newspapers, is an independently run family entrepreneurship, hence they are more driven by newsworthiness criteria the claim and hold immediate attention to increase their sales. According to Lwanda (2009:39), their claim of independence or neutrality can be questioned, since all journalists are influenced by the power of the media owners and other political elites. Even so, differences in the number and genre variety of reports could in part be contributed to *The Nation's* news resource constraints.

5.2.3 Type of coverage in the international online news in terms of genres

Attention was also given to in the disaster discourse genres of the two international online news publications of the United Kingdom (UK), namely *The Guardian* and *Mail Online*. Since Malawian independence in 1964, the UK as former colonial master, has offered financial and technical assistance in many areas. Considering such historic relations, this research aims to understand how the UK-based media represented the disaster within the same time frame as the Malawian newspapers. As Fairclough (2003:124) observed, specific aspects of the world may be represented differently in different discourses. Hence, a primary hypothesis in the study was that local and international newspapers would construct and represent social actors in the disaster in different ways. The relevant research question here asks “What are the ideologies that can be shown to underpin identified media representation of the social actors in the linguistic texts and visual images reporting on the disaster? Are there any differences between the local print and international online media? Therefore, Figure 5.3 represents the type of coverage given to the disaster news on the international online news websites, within the same period as in the local media:

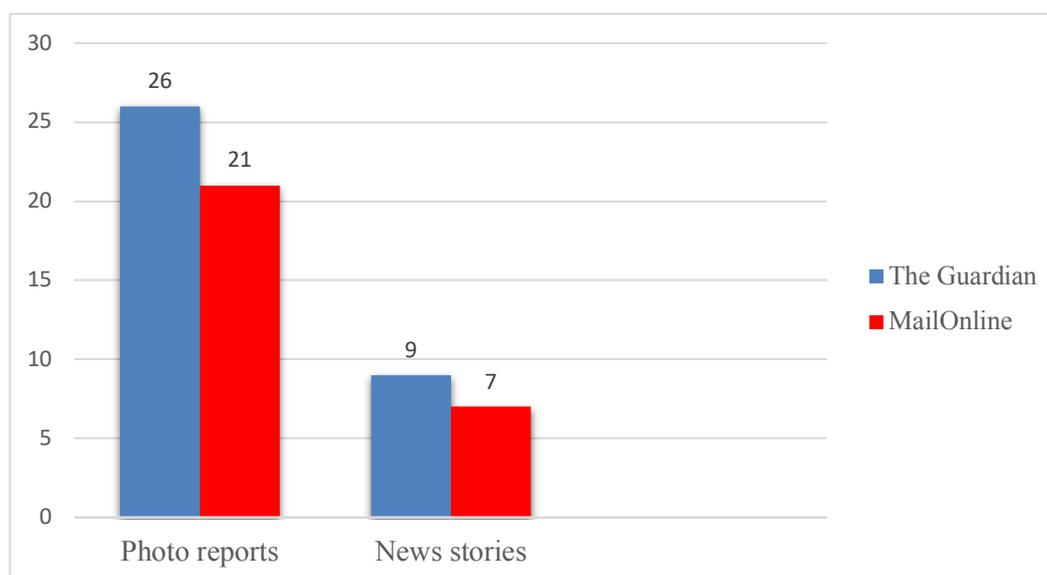


Figure 5.3: Genres in the international online news publications

Figure 5.3 shows that *The Guardian* had the highest proportion of photo reports during the designated period: it used 26 photo reports to accompany the nine hard news stories. The *Mail Online* published 21 photo reports to accompany seven hard news stories. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) were the first to recognize the post 1980 trend of texts increasingly including more semiotic resources than only printed words. Specifically, they refer to visual images that

assist in the realization of meanings. Following them, this study was interested in how language and images worked together to form meanings. In Chapter 6, the study analyses the verbal-visual interaction, focusing on the language of captions and headings on the front-pages. The analysis focuses on how photographs portray social actors in the disaster, notably to examine the gender prejudice and stereotyping embedded in such portrayals. Further, the analysis draws on Chouliaraki's (2006) work on the representation of distant suffering to reflect on the power of international media in presentation of the world to the world. The interest is to understand where and how the 2015 floods in Malawi was classified and or categorized in international media's construction of newsworthy world events. The confronting of graphic images of the devastation and damage shows how the international media portrayed the distant suffering of the victims, and how such crises reflect the polarisation of power, both at local and international levels.

5.2.4 Monthly coverage of the local print and international online publications

Figure 5.4 below presents the number of publications in each news outlet from the onset of the disaster to the recovery or resettlement period in March 2015. This summarises the trend of publication throughout the period of the study.

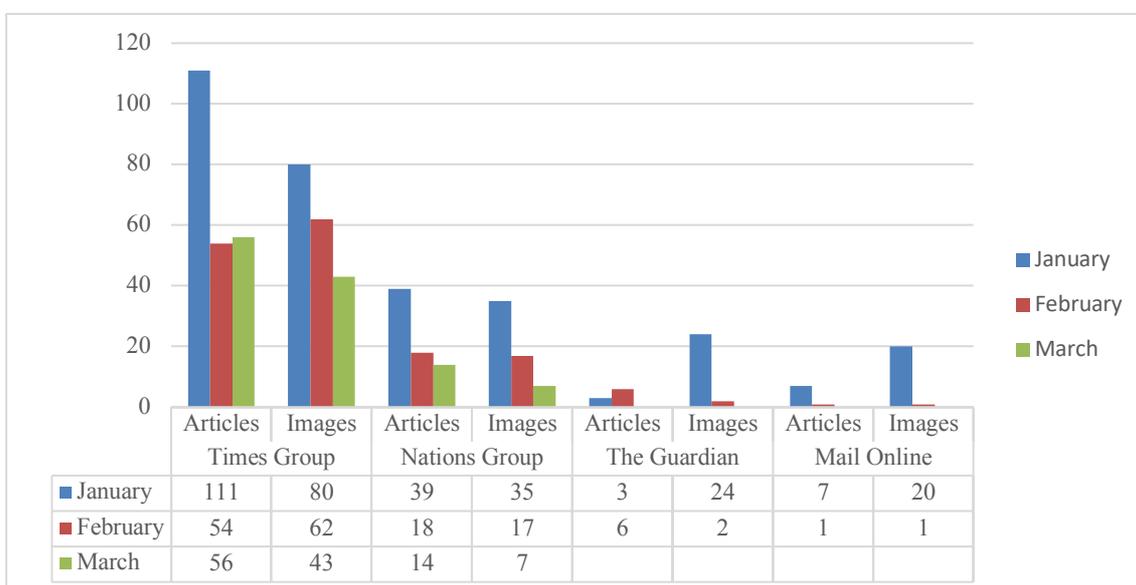


Figure 5.4: Monthly distribution of disaster articles from each media outlet

Figure 5.4 highlights that, in January 2015 *The Times* published a total of 111 hard news stories and 80 photographs, whereas *The Nation* published 39 hard news stories and 35 photographs. In February, *The Times* published 54 hard news publications and 62 photographs whereas *The*

Nation published 18 hard news articles and 17 photographs. The number of articles per publication and overall, decreased in March: although *The Times* published 56 hard news articles (two more than in February) and 43 photographs, *The Nation* published only 14 hard news articles and 7 photographs. Both newspapers covered the disaster extensively during the first few weeks immediately following the disaster, i.e. when it was breaking news and high in terms of broad news values and newsworthiness criteria (Stuart Hall in Fowler 1991:12), but decreased towards the resettlement stage in March 2015, when its newsworthiness, on a general scale, had diminished. There is insignificant difference in the numbers of printed-text reports of February and March in *The Times* newspaper, but there is a marked difference regarding the number of photographs. Similarly, the decrease in the number of the news reports and photographs is noted in *The Nation* newspaper.

The international online news websites registered a relatively large volume of disaster coverage in January. Figure 5.3 indicates that *The Guardian* published 3 hard news reports and 24 photographs, whereas the *Mail Online* published 7 hard news articles and 20 photographs. This differs notably compared to the local print media, with more pictures than text and inevitably less coverage overall. Disaster photographs featured more prominently in January in all the outlets, with much less towards the end of March. Eventually, visuals of the disaster itself disappeared, as did photographs of people involved in the relief work.

In conclusion, considering the volume of coverage, *The Times* gave more coverage to the disaster during the designated period than any other media outlet. An analysis of the number of disaster-related news items in all the news outlets clearly demonstrates variations between Malawian domestic media and international online news websites. However, the coverage in the international online news media was significant, considering that most often disasters in the global south receive no coverage at all, despite the large number of casualties (Joye 2012; Franks 2008, 2010). This study will analyse a few articles and photographs on the disaster coverage to establish how international online media construct and represent victims of devastating events in little known or underdeveloped countries, such as Malawi, in the global south, particularly the sub-Saharan region.

5.2.5 Thematic issues covered in the disaster coverage

News reports are organised around the themes that contain topics or related subjects guiding the readers' understanding of relevant issues. Thematic analysis in news discourse determines

the respective linear and hierarchical relationships within the text (van Dijk 1988:73). News stories may have more than one topic with the media producers emphasizing specific issues that should be regarded as significant, through use of specific discursive or linguistic features. Fairclough (1995:83) argues that media discourses employ various framing features that are manipulative in favour of the preferred interpretation of the reported discourse. Journalists make sense of information by emphasizing a select number of thematically-related attributes which reflect the ideology and agenda of the publication's owners. This section responds to the second research question presented in Chapter 1 on the thematic features that dominate the media coverage of the floods, namely: "What thematic, generic and discursive features such as metaphors, hyperbole and superlatives were used in covering the devastating floods and related to human activity in Malawi?"

This section identifies the themes on which the journalists focus during their reporting, identifying these themes as elements of choice on behalf of the journalist and the publication. For example, journalists could attend to the sheer extent of the natural disruption, they could discuss the high levels of water, bridges and towns that were engulfed or swept away, fields that fell under water, or they could attend to the plight of humans and animals, to the causes of disasters or to personal stories of tragedy or heroism. The selection of one set of themes over another is significant because it demonstrates the interests of the publication and the assumed interest of their readers.

A close reading of the full set of data revealed the themes that were covered in each publication. Themes from the flooding disaster, as derived from close reading of the collected articles, foregrounded the following: extent/dimensions of the flooding, humanitarian interests, issues on domestic politics, material loss, resettlement, warnings, and religion. However, sometimes there is an overlap or intersection of various topical issues. The criteria for identification of the themes are discussed in detail in chapter 4, section 4.6.1. Figure 5.5 presents the distribution of the themes.

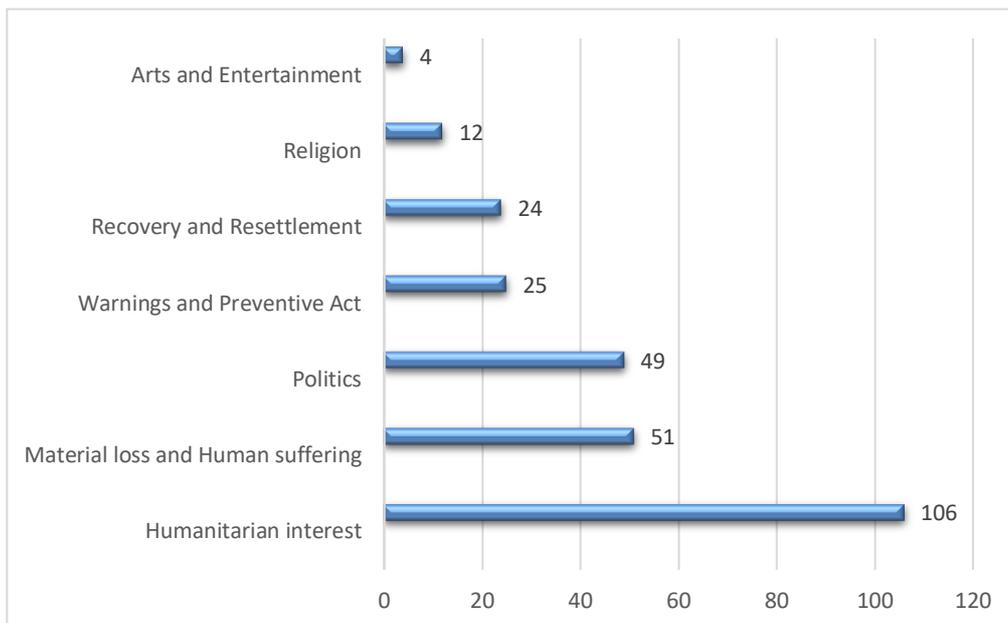


Figure 5.5: Distribution of topicalised issues in the coverage of the disaster

Figure 5.5 shows that the highest coverage was given to ‘humanitarian interest’, i.e. 38% in all, (n= 106 articles). Subsequently, highly published were reports on the theme ‘domestic politics’, at 19% (n= 49 articles), and then ‘extent of material loss’ at 19%, (n= 51 articles). Other themes addressed across the given period, included ‘warnings and preventive acts’ at 9% (n= 25 articles), ‘resettlement’ of people after the flooding at 9% (n= 24 articles), and religion (i.e. inter-denominational memorial service for flood victims – done in honor and memory of those who lost lives due to floods; Church contributions towards the flood victims) at 4% (n= 12 articles). Lowest coverage was given to reports with the theme of ‘arts and entertainment’ (i.e. Concerts organised by Musicians of Malawi in which funds raised were channelled to flood victims) at 1% (n= 4 articles). The frequency percentage proportions of themes have been calculated on the number of articles where a particular theme dominates, against the total number of newspaper articles that covered the disaster. Notably, many reports covered a number of themes, e.g. the media identified some malpractices of corruption and fraud in the distribution of the relief aid and draw parallels with the massive looting of finances in the government which was called ‘Cashgate’; and also the churches intervened in asking God to heal those affected by the floods. Further, the reports that were identified as ones covering the floods, were not exclusively, nor always primarily, on the flooding event; several public issues that were a concern and seemed interconnected with what was happening in Malawi by the time of the disaster, were covered. Hence, the following section deals with some of the discourses

of contestation, dealing with prominent themes identified in the media reporting of the disaster. below are some of the examples of the themes;

Excerpt

(1) Giving birth in the floods (**Headline**)

... For **three days** her family and other villagers were **still trapped in a tree**. Then the worst happened. “I began feeling labour pains”. She says. **Still trapped** in the tree **there was no hope of getting to a hospital**. A few neighbours and relatives **risked their lives**, climbed down the tree and lifted their hands, ready to grab the baby as soon as he was born.

(The Nation, 26 February 2015)

As can be seen in excerpt 1 above, this narrates the story of human survival and miracle. This is unusual story which puts emphasis on the suffering of the woman giving birth in floods after staying in a tree for three days. The expressions in bold reiterates the suffering of the people. Such stories recounted the various challenges that victims encountered during the floods with a sensational tone to heighten the emotions of the audience. Following this, it is evident how the themes also demonized the catastrophe towards the suffering of the victims.

(2) Malawians pray for flood victims (**Headline**)

MALAWIANS from across the political and religious divide yesterday gathered and spent about two hours inside the Robbins Park in Blantyre **to pray for the victims of the floods** that the country experienced recently. While **choirs from different denominations** provided some musical interludes, the **clergy provided prayers**.

(The Daily Times, 9 February 2015)

Excerpt 2 above represents the religious theme, both the headline and the lead paragraph emphasize on the prayers that were organised for the flood victims. The expressions in bold shows that the narrative was about the religious service. The message in the whole article can also represent another theme of ‘political/government response’.

5.3 NATURAL DISASTER DISCOURSES IN THE REPRESENTATION OF FLOODS

This subsection will look at the discourse of mediated natural disasters from a macro-perspective, trying to identify generic features of the discourse by specifically considering how the discourse was shaped in selected local and international media. To identify what is typical

of these kinds of discourses and thus also generic to the discourse type, I refer not only to what is evident across the four publications that provided data for this study, but also similar kinds of reporting on natural disasters, such as the ones introduced in chapter two. Also, I will consider other important interlocking discourses embedded in the news about the natural catastrophic disasters. I shall highlight three other discourses that are interdiscursively and intertextually present in the articles covering the disaster, namely ones identified here as hegemonic discourses, humanitarian aid discourses and discourses of presenting and assessing expertise. These were widely represented in a great number of reports and reported narratives that covered themes of hegemony among various actors, that drew attention to local and international elites in humanitarian relief, and that emphasised the expertise of those aligned to the of the global north as opposed to the purported incompetence of the Malawian government, and portrayal of the Malawian victims as rather helpless actors lacking in agency. The hegemonic themes in the reports on the disaster represented many underlying social issues such as lack of access to food, health services and proper housing for the victims, thereby reinforcing their position as poor, helpless and backward. The discourses are discussed and illustrated in more detail in the subsequent sections.

5.3.1 Hegemonic Discourses

A close reading of the data-set made it clear that hegemonic discourses were pervasive in the media representation of the 2015 disaster in Malawi. Particularly, these discourses could be identified through different themes that portrayed incompetence or ineptitude of the Malawian government and many of its subjects through appeals for expertise or humanitarian relief from foreign organisations or countries. How the hegemonic discourses were made manifest in the two thematic areas, will be illustrated in the sections below.

5.3.1.1 Portraying incompetence within the Malawi government

To start out, one needs to bear in mind the limitations of governments worldwide: currently, governments are largely regarded as strong and successful if they are financially strong. Even in the global north, countries with battling economies (e.g. Greece in the EU since 2015)¹⁰ or with high unemployment levels (e.g. Spain in 2009),¹¹ are portrayed as ones with inept governments where accusations of recklessness and even corruption are endemic. Even so, in

¹⁰ See report: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/business/international/greece-debt-crisis-euro.html>

¹¹ See report: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/25/business/global/25euecon.html>

mediated discourses the complexity of the various circumstances are acknowledged and debated, put into social and historic perspective so that a simple explanation of the various crises is patently challenged. Such portrayal of the Malawian government is largely absent in the media discourses investigated here. There is hardly any recognition that from one perspective the government has financial difficulties, employment concerns, leadership weakness, but from another perspective is the product of complex social issues and a history that disallows simplistic derogation.

Generally, reports made much of the Malawian government's relatively weak performance, following themes of incompetence or ineptitude, concentrating on officials' corrupt activities, late responses to the crisis, unpreparedness and weak leadership. Specifically, the hegemonic discourses in the media weaknesses of the government were exposed, while at the same time the NGOs associated with foreign aid organisations or western countries' interventions with expertise or relief aid were positively acknowledged. The study found three kinds of utterances or characterisation that include (i) lack of preparedness, dependence on aid (ii) helplessness (iii) corruption issues. First, the expressions in excerpts below illustrate how the Malawi government was exposed for its lack of preparedness for the heavy rains and resulting natural and humanitarian hardships, as well as for its dependence on foreign countries for aid.

- (3) Chilima *called for support* in terms of boats, helicopters, tents, food, chlorine for water purification, kitchen utensils, mosquito nets, dignity kits for women, lighting facilities and firewood, among others.

(The Daily Times, 15 January 2015)

- (4) "We thank *our partners* who have *already started assisting us* and *we are appealing* to all *well-wishers to help us* assist the people who have been affected," he said. Mutharika said this when he addressed the press at the New State House in Lilongwe.

(The Daily Times, 14 January 2015)

- (5) Mozambique's government announced last year that the country has set aside up to \$32 million of the national budget to cover disaster response efforts ... *Malawi's government said it is still working on a disaster preparedness strategy ...*

(Daily Mail Online, 16 January 2015)

- (6) About two weeks after the devastating floods hit 15 districts killing about 176 people and displacing thousands others in the process, President Peter Mutharika has disclosed that the cabinet will convene in few days time to discuss *the prospects of coming up with the first ever natural disaster policy ...* Although the country has the department for disaster preparedness, *there*

is no comprehensive framework to guide disaster preparedness and impact mitigation measures.

(The Daily Times, 23 January 2015)

- (7) Malawi needs over K5 billion to rehabilitate and provide relief to the flood victims of floods and hailstorms that have wreaked havoc in the country, killing 176 people and displacing 174,500, Vice President Saulos Chilima disclosed yesterday.

(Weekend Nation, 17 January 2015)

Excerpts (3) to (7) give citations from the Malawian *Daily Times*, *Weekend Nation* and from the UK-based *Daily Mail Online* in which the writer's own voice is given only in (5). In the other excerpts the reporters elect to give their own rendering of the events by foregrounding the voices of the two topmost Malawian government officials, the president (Mutharika) and the vice president (Chilima), who are quoted as calling for support (3), and appealing for assistance from the 'well-wishers' (4). The media narratives in excerpts (3) and (4) articulate these pleas in terms that speak of desperation rather than more dignified statements of need, portraying the two officials and the government as overwhelmed and at a loss in how to deal with the disaster. The list of specific needs given in (3) is not interpreted as engagement or indication of governments awareness of what material support a disaster of this kind calls for. Rather, the "partners" and "well-wishers", i.e. the external social actors, are presented as those already taking responsibility. Further, excerpts (5) and (6) topicalise the government's slow response to the crisis, referring first to its limited preparedness compared to neighbouring country, Mozambique, and second to a cabinet meeting being held only two weeks after the need for intervention had arisen. These media are apparently simply stating observed circumstances and official responses, but in fact are giving thinly veiled criticism of the government for bringing upon themselves the severe impacts of the flooding by not having prepared a disaster strategy in advance.

The media focuses on a stereotype of post-colonial entities tending to look for external assistance rather than taking own responsibility, showing behaviour that is rooted in the colonial times of depending on the "mother country" or foreign organisations from the global north. Electing this angle, the media discourse is one of government incompetence and weakness, reflecting the unequal power relations not by attending to financial constraints as much as to the effectiveness of the external social actors in the intervention of the disaster management. Ultimately, it negatively portrays the Malawian government as ineffective and instable and positively reinforces outsiders who come in as charitable "well-wishers".

Second, in constructing the Malawian government and its officials, the discourses portrayed the government as desperate and helpless, as is highlighted in the excerpts below.

- (8) Floods, storms overwhelm government
(Headline *Malawi News*, 10 January 2015)
- (9) Government says it has *limited resources to support* people who have been made destitute by floods and stormy rains in 17 districts since last month.
(*Malawi News*, 10 January 2015)
- (10) Meanwhile, Chikwawa District Commissioner, Alex Mdoko, has urged *government to declare the situation in the area a crisis ... “It’s a disaster beyond our control* and it needs national attention. We cannot estimate how much aid is needed because every minute we are getting new stories of houses falling and assessment cannot be done as some areas are inaccessible,” Mdoko said.
(*The Daily Times*, 14 January 2015)

Excerpts, (8) to (10) published in the Malawian newspapers, demonstrate how the Malawian media and government constructed their own position as being unprepared to deal with the crisis. This is evident in their use of self-identifying words or phrases such as ‘overwhelm’, ‘limited resources’, ‘beyond our control’, and ‘declared the situation in the area a crisis’. In (8), the *Malawi News* identifies the government as overwhelmed. In (9), the government is collectively cited (thus we do not know whose voice specifically is being presented). The self-identification here is of a government unable to support its citizens due to limited resources and the extent of the devastation over 17 districts. In (10), a local government official of one of the severely affected districts, acknowledges the crisis to be “beyond our control”, and appeals to the government to take responsibility by declaring the situation an emergency. Such a declaration would transfer primary financial concern to the national rather than the regional government.

In chapter 2, Table 2.1 highlights that the floods are a perennial event of varying intensity, hence the implied expectation that the government would be prepared. The media discourse in the representation of the disasters reinforces the position that the government is ineffective in being prepared and having a contingency plan in place to deal with flooding. The impression of government reduced to managing natural disasters by going out with a begging bowl, appealing for more international relief aid is forefronted.

Third, and quite seriously, the discourse on the natural catastrophe also topicalised criticism of the government for the financial mismanagement of funds, some which would have helped in the relief activities. The excerpts (11) to (14) below directly or indirectly refer to the alleged corrupt activities of government that affected the relief activities in the aftermath of the disaster.

- (11) The disaster has led to accusations that the Malawian government's response is *being hampered by the decision of Britain and other donors to freeze direct aid following the so-called "cashgate" corruption scandal that engulfed several senior officials. Western donors have channelled support to NGOs on the ground instead.*

(The Guardian, 30 January 2015)

- (12) Malawi's president, Peter Mutharika, has said the damage will cost 23.9bn kwacha (34 million pounds) and declared half of the country a disaster zone. His government has been working alongside the UN and NGOs on recovery efforts, but some believe *its response has been too slow*, citing western donors suspension of direct aid, which made up 40% of the national budget.

(The Guardian, 30 January 2015)

- (13) The decision in 2013 to *freeze direct aid* followed the 'cashgate' affair in which *leading officials were arrested* and accused of exploiting a loophole in the government's paying system to divert millions into their pockets.

(The Guardian, 30 January 2015)

- (14) Interestingly, there are accusations that some fraudsters have taken advantage of the floods to cash in. The Department for Disaster Management Affairs (DoDMA) has pushed the responsibility of dealing with such fraudsters to District Commissioners.

(The Malawi News, 31 January 2015)

Referring to the "cashgate" affair, an unfolding scandal regarding serious misappropriation of government funding in 2014, the disaster reporting related this to possibilities of gaining government support, by casting doubt not only on the ability of the government to give the necessary resources, but also on its trustworthiness in being granted foreign financial support. The excerpts above illustrate descriptions of the Malawian government as having burdened the country and compromised the relief project after the flooding due to corruption, instability, and irresponsibility. The discourse refers directly to the culpable mismanagement of finances by government officials as having contributed to relief aid donors freezing their contributions and re-channelling it through other organisations established in Malawi.

While the excerpts (11) to (13) from *The Guardian* cast doubt on the government's ability to give reliable support and wisely manage donations for the current crisis based on a past, vaguely

related incident of a year earlier, the excerpt (14) from the Malawi News casts doubt on the government based on accusations of current fraudulent abuse of support. The local publication mentions accusations of fraud which they directed to a senior government official, whose voice is then relied on in referring complaints of fraud to the local police. The relatively long diatribes on endemic corruption questioned the morality of government officials and proposed strict monitoring of the relief funds, hence the reliance on the UN and international NGOs. Such media discourses reinforced the idea that the leadership of the country is weak and lacking in financial discipline, that they therefore could not take responsible and reliable decisions on their own, and also that they were over-reliant on the foreign aid.

Contrastively, the same media discourse that put down the Malawian government, favoured the foreign countries and NGOs, presenting them as effective and accountable. In other words, the media discourse perpetuates negative constructions of the minimal involvement of government in the provision of services to the public, as well as positive constructions of foreigners as people who are key to avoiding corruption and mismanagement of finances. Particularly, *The Guardian* was most vocal about this aspect of constructing the government as the most corrupt with the local media being more careful and others silent on the issue, perhaps in denial, or not wanting to offend the government. Ultimately, the local papers have less, or not refer to the “cashgate” scandal at all.

Without claiming that complaints regarding the specified government corruption and incompetence are completely unfounded, a close reading of the selection of focus in media discourses reinforced the idea that external social actors were more active and responsible than the Malawian government. Richardson (2007:35) referred to the hegemony by which the ruling class considers the interests and tendencies of the more vulnerable group in a community, but still responds patronisingly rather than encouraging emancipation. The media discourse here perpetuated a colonial perception that countries of the global south are typically inclined to corruption, and are over-dependent on the countries or NGOs from the global north. In their study of the news coverage of the Haiti earthquake, Pyles and Svistova (2015) made similar observations regarding criticism of the Haiti government in media discourse, denouncing it for its absenteeism, weakness, ineptitude and corruption. They argued as well, that media discourse perpetuated the hegemonic discourse that portrayed paternalistic relations between the US and Haiti, since the former once occupied Haiti militarily (Pyles and Svistova 2015:71).

5.3.1.2 *Humanitarian Aid Discourse*

In the media coverage of catastrophic natural disasters broadly, the need for humanitarian aid is a dominant theme. In line with this, immediately after the flooding disaster struck in Malawi, there were many news reports, editorials and commentaries about the need for and provision of relief aid. Discourses of Humanitarianism in reference to humanitarian aid, have worked with two dichotomous perceptions. Barnett and Weiss (2008; 2011) posit, on the one hand, the position that in order to be effective (particularly in contexts of conflict) humanitarian aid has to be strictly a-political and impartial; on the other hand, they refer to a perception that “it is impossible for humanitarian agencies to be apolitical” (Barnett and Weiss 2008:4) Two things are obvious from an analysis of discourses of natural disaster in Malawi, namely (i) that although largely covertly and indirectly, these discourses were not a-political, and (ii) the political positioning of the media in the particular dataset investigated here, followed a “Northern understanding of the “humanitarian” label” (Pacitto and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013:7)

Specifically, the news articles constructed and portrayed social actors who played a role in relief and recovery efforts in varied ways, mostly perpetuating views of the various foreign NGOs and western countries of the global north as honourable and effective in the disaster relief distribution. The following excerpts are given to demonstrate this perspective.

- (15) WFP [World Food Programme] *relieves* Chikwawa flood victims
(Headline *The Nation*, 20 January 2015)
- (16) The *United Nation's World Food Programme* says it *is mobilising resources* for the disaster declared by President Mutharika in flood affected districts in the country last week.
(*The Nation*, 20 January 2015)
- (17) *Drop of Compassion* trustee, Irfan Chhatbar, *will raise funds* among Africans living in UK to go towards implementation of projects in areas affected by the disaster.
(*The Nation*, 4 February 2015)

Excerpts (15) to (17) refer to humanitarian aid organisations, specifically the WFP and “Drop of Compassion”, in terms that give a positive appraisal of these social actors. As has been observed, most of the organisations or foreign governments active in giving aid, were portrayed as being very effective as givers, especially compared to the Malawi government which most frequently came across as passive and a receiver. This demonstrates how the “Humanitarian Aid Discourse” intersects with the “Natural Disaster Discourse”.

5.3.1.3 *Discourse of expertise*

A third kind of discourse that can be distinguished from the Discourse of Natural Disasters as they have recently been mediated, and are manifest in this study as one instance of the latter kind of discourse, is identified as “Discourses of Expertise”. Excerpts (18) to (21) below are presented to show how those bringing relief and suggesting future interventions in disaster stricken areas are constructed as professional experts in disaster management and improved agricultural practices following the disaster. The media discourse in the publications I investigated, emphasized the expertise of these outsiders, mentioning hardly any that are evident among Malawians themselves. Various relief support agencies are presented as effective and caring organisations. These can be related to other discourses that have also praised the positive actions of external social actors or NGOs for responding quickly to the crisis, and are then compared to internal actors who are put forward as ineffective and detached.

- (18) *Japanese Ambassador to Malawi Shuichiro Nashioka* says Malawi can learn a lot from Japan in terms of disaster management.

(*The Nation*, 5 March 2015)

- (19) Geoffina Gilison of Kutulo village in Chikwawa commended the Malawi Red Cross Society for making haste in moving them to a safer place in Nchalo.

(*The Nation*, 11 January 2015)

- (20) It *took only 12 hours*, however, for Concern Universal to get *the nod* from Britain’s Department for International Development for urgent funding. Unicef, the UN children’s agency, has *also received contributions* from Britain, the EU and other donors towards its £9.6m budget for the relief effort.

(*The Guardian*, 30 January 2015)

- (21) *The Asian Muslim Relief Aid (Amra) and the United Kingdom (UK) based Drop of Compassion* have emphasized the need for flood victims to explore winter-cropping and irrigation farming to move away from the culture of handouts.

(*The Nation*, 4 February 2015)

Excerpt (18) refers to a foreign diplomat who implied Japanese responses to the 2011 earthquake and associated tsunami disaster as an example for Malawi in circumstances of natural event destruction. This excerpt is taken from a Malawian newspaper that uses the voice of the Japanese ambassador without any reference to an extensive list of differences between the two affected communities. Excerpts (19) to (21) refer to aid organisations: The Red Cross

in Malawi, Concern Universal and UNICEF, as well as Amra and the UK based Drop of Compassion. In the various publications investigated here, stories of humanitarian relief were always positive when representing the foreign NGOs' intervention. The voice of one of the flood victims is used to praise the 'Malawi Red Cross Society' for rescuing and moving them to a better place. The UK and EU as well as the UN's Unicef (notably all from the global north) are praised for their swift response in releasing money towards the relief of the victims. Therefore, the media hegemonic discourse reflected the power of the external social actors that included NGOs and countries from the GN.

5.4 DISCURSIVE FEATURES OF MEDIATED DISASTER REPORTING – REGISTER

Register refers to the use of particular type of language in a particular context (Conboy 2007:41). Registers reveal much about the media as an institution and about the news receiving audience. In case of disasters, the media is entrusted with providing the public with information about the crisis, and the formation in which the information is presented is significant because it is critical in shaping the reader's perception of the reality. Crystal (1991) defines 'register' as a concept in stylistics and sociolinguistics, which functions as a marker of variety, also as a contextual marker which reflects situational attitude. Register therefore distinguishes between (e.g.) formal and informal discourses, and responds to who the producers and receivers of texts are. Crystal (1991) further indicates that register is linguistic form associated with social situations and discursive functions. Thus, in the case of disaster discourses in the media, we expect a register that places the text in its institutional context and is marked as such to guide the audience as to authenticity, reliability, etc. of the information conveyed in the reports.

First, the register of the media representation of the flooding disaster is cast in a scientific register. Consider the excerpts below illustrating the scientific register as represented in the media:

- (22) He added that government would advocate for **water harvesting** and **planting more trees along river banks** to tame the problem.

(The Nation, 18 January 2015)

- (23) Floods disaster hits **GDP** [Gross Domestic Product]

(The Nation, 29 January 2015)

- (24) The region is likely to face at least two more days of **torrential rain** carried by late summer storms, according to meteorologists

(The Guardian, 14 January 2015)

In excerpts (22) to (24) above, the expressions in bold illustrate terms that mark a scientific register used in the news to signal how the media institutionally expects to be taken as being accurate and sophisticated in reporting on natural phenomena and their effects in climate, agriculture and financial matters. Both ‘water harvesting’ and ‘planting of trees along river banks’ (in excerpt 22) are scientific methods that are advocated in agriculture as farming practices to prevent run-off water that causes floods. Excerpt (23) highlights and uses an economic register, using terms (GDP) widely understood in the field of economic growth. ‘Torrential rain’ in excerpt (24) is a scientific term for heavy downpours, as it is copied from the field of meteorology. Ultimately, the use of these relatively formal scientific registers assist in the cohesion of the text, and in matching the professional identity of authors with that of imagined readers. The use of a scientific register was generic, especially to the local media news pages that covered the impact of the floods from the perspectives of its impact on the economy and agriculture of the affected regions.

The news media also typically use a register that is formal and distancing in that it creates an impression of objectivity and ‘saying it as it is’. The aspect of distancing is associated with the attribution of information to external sources, and this is realised through reporting verbs and or use of scare quotes. Consider the following excerpts that discuss and illustrate examples of formal registers and that have the effect of distancing. These excerpts are from the introductory paragraphs to the particular reports, and show how in each case the publication distances itself from the sources it cites.

- (25) Speaking after flying in a military helicopter over the worst affected Lower Shire districts of Nsanje and Chikwawa in the south, **he said** the country faces ‘**a big challenge**’.

(Daily Mail Online, 16 January 2015).

- (26) The government **has said** it will soon conduct a mapping exercise in areas which are usually affected by floods in the country to reduce the impact of the floods which it says drain over K300 million annually in assisting victims.

(The Daily Times, 13 January 2015)

In excerpt (25), the *Daily Mail Online* uses a formal register and distances itself from the views of the vice president, not only by citing him without stating their agreement, but also by using

scare quotes when his reference to the disaster names it as a ‘big challenge’ to Malawi. This shows that the expression is not an exaggerated view of the reporter. In excerpt (26) The *Daily Times* reporter uses a formal register and the reporting verb phrase ‘has said’ to distance himself from the statement. The study identified many instances of formal register and distancing in the four newspapers because none wanted to take responsibility for the sentiments of the reported views. By attributing the information to external sources and use of formal registers, the journalists wanted to take a stance of neutrality and objectivity. Further, this is a way of achieving impersonalisation in the news. Ultimately, the attribution strategy is generic and used as a strategy for presenting ideological statements that are political in nature in the reporting of the disaster.

5.5 METAPHORICAL REPRESENTATION OF THE FLOODS

Much of the media reporting on the conditions in Malawi conceptualized the flooding disaster metaphorically. This chapter chooses to discuss metaphors as structural features in some detail because they were such a salient aspect of the discourses. The metaphors are of interest in this CDA study because they have different ideological attachments. Fairclough (2003:131) referred to metaphors as words or expressions that represent one part of the world being extended to another part of reality. For instance, competition between different companies can be represented as a ‘race’, a lexical item that denotes physical competition between people. The essence of metaphor is the understanding and experiencing of the reality of one thing in terms of another.¹² As Charteris-Black (2004, 2006) has noted, metaphors are sites of ideological communication and persuasion that represent and reinforce various beliefs and prejudices. Though not informed by CDA socio-cognitive theories, the study draws some perspectives from theory of metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Kövecses (2002) to examine the different metaphorical expressions in the news reports on the flooding disaster. Drawing on Musolff (2004:3), this analysis looks beyond the explicit utterances to investigate the different underlying conceptual metaphoric themes through which the media constructed and interpreted the natural phenomenon in Malawi in 2015.

The significance for analysing metaphors in the disaster reports lies in the belief that the metaphors influence how the readers feel and think about the flooding disaster. It forms the basis through which the readers construe the message about the natural phenomenon. As such,

¹² Lakoff, G and Johnson, J. (1980). *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 5.

the metaphors construct the mental models through which the readers are made to comprehend the event. The two main types of metaphoric representation discussed here, include representing the flooding as a MONSTER and as a CRIMINAL/WARRIOR. These are discussed and illustrated in the subsections below.

5.5.1 Flooding as a MONSTER

One of the major metaphor themes identified in both local print and online news media is the representation of the natural phenomenon as a MONSTER. These metaphors represented the flooding disaster with the lexis or tone that is emotional and or threatening. It portrays the natural disaster as having abnormal physical power through the various verbs that denote force and destruction. In other words, the natural phenomenon is described as a powerful, cruel, frightening and violent creature. There is a generic and consistency negative description of the floods in all the media types, particularly the effects it rendered. Just as noted in the section 5.3.1.9 on the referential strategies, the metaphors activated the natural phenomenon as a dynamic force doing the action. The media exaggerated the presentation of the floods through hyperbolic lexis and word choices that attached emotional sense. Consider the following excerpts that directly or indirectly portray the flood disaster as a MONSTER.

- (27) The rains may have stopped and water levels in areas that were recently **hit by floods** last month have subsided but the disaster could leave **a deadly** trail as cases of cholera outbreak have been reported in Nsanje and Phalombe.

(The Daily Times, 16 January 2015)

- (28) The death toll from the **floods ravaging** Malawi has risen to 176 with many more missing and 200,000 homeless, Vice President Saulos Chilima said Friday, as more heavy rain was predicted.

(Daily Mail Online, 16 January 2015)

- (29) The floods which have **wreaked havoc** on half of the country's 28 districts, have **disrupted** power supplies, **plunging** some areas into darkness

(Daily Mail Online, 16 January 2015)

- (30) A dark cloud of human desperation has engulfed the beautiful plains of the Shire Valley as the **rage** of heavy rains continues to **roar** across the country.

(The Nation, 13 January 2015)

- (31) Geoffina Gilison, 90, of Kutulo 1 Village, Traditional Authority (TA) Lundu in Chikwawa curses the night **raging waters hounded** her family forcing

her and her grand-children to seek refuge at Sammy's Camp for flood victims

(The Nation, 16 February 2015)

(32) Floods **drown** education.

(The Daily Times, 20 January 2015)

(33) Rain water harvesting could **tame** the floods.

(The Daily Times, 16 January 2015)

(34) Homes **swept away** like matchsticks, vast plains turned into mud, fields of precious crops drowned ..., reveals the full devastation wreaked by Malawi's worst floods for half a century

(The Guardian, 30 January 2015)

The excerpts 27 to 34 incorporates metaphors that characterises the floods with elements of a MONSTER that include violence, destruction and fearless. In these excerpts, the violent metaphorical expressions such as hit, drown, rage, ravage, tame, roar and wreaked havoc are lexical choices often associated with monsters that are expected to be forceful, kill or destroy. The newspapers depict the natural phenomenon as having a great destructive force, attacking and hurting people in the process. For instance, in excerpt (27) and (34) the floods are described as something extraordinarily powerful because they sweep and drown big things like houses and people. Therefore, the power of the floods is embedded to the verbs used in the different metaphorical expressions. This evokes emotions and dramatizes the whole situation which in the end influences the readers reaction towards the crisis. Thus, the metaphorical description of the floods as a monster, which is a generic characteristic in both local print and international online websites ascribes the responsibility of the death and destruction to the natural phenomenon, diverting attention from other possible causes such as human activities and socio-historical factors.

5.5.2 Floods as a CRIMINAL / WARRIOR

Another portrayal of the flooding disaster provided by the local print and online websites is metaphorical description of the crisis as a CRIMINAL. The different stories characterises the floods as a thief, a killer and murderer who goes about terminating lives of the people or putting it in a danger. The conceptualization of the floods as a criminal intensifies the perception about its evils aspects on destruction and damage. Consider the following excerpts accounts that metaphorically describe the floods as a CRIMINAL.

- (35) Floods **stole** my husband.
(*The Nation on Sunday*, 18 January 2015)
- (36) Malawi floods **kill** 176 people.
(*The Guardian*, 17 January 2015)
- (37) Malawi **deploys military** as floods leave 100,000 homeless.
(*Daily Mail Online*, 15 January 2015)
- (38) Alubeloto’s family has all reasons to breathe luck as the **rampaging floods** have either caused death or the missing of hundreds of people apart from displacing thousands across the country with the Lower Shire being the worst affected.
(*The Sunday Times*, 25 January 2015)
- (39) Mlauli’s prayer is like that of many survivors of the disaster in Nsanje, Chikwawa, Zomba, Blantyre and Karonga, among others, that they should pick themselves up from the **rubbles** of the 2015 floods.
(*The Nation*, 18 January 2015)
- (40) Barely 30 minutes after I had returning into my house, and while on our bed, had I heard **a strange sound like that of the running truck**.
(*The Nation*, 18 January 2015)

In the excerpt (35), the victim views the floods as a thief because it ‘stole’ her husband. However, the victim elaborates that the floods killed her husband hence ascribing the natural phenomenon the criminal act. Excerpt (36), a headline from *The Guardian* newspaper, activates the action of the floods as a deliberate killing. Similarly, in excerpt 37 the deployment of military in the disaster is likened to fighting against the criminal that is murdering a lot of people. The involvement of the military action demonstrates how the natural phenomenon is ascribed the criminal attributes with which the civilians given no chance of succeeding against it.

For excerpts (38), (39) and (40), the floods are metaphorically described as a WARRIOR whose aim is to cause death and destroy. Excerpt (38), the floods are referred to as ‘rampaging floods’, which literary means they were uncontrollable rioting, destructive and running violently as a warrior, killing everyone along the way. In excerpt (39), the aftermaths of the floods are ascribed the characteristics of the effects of the war thus the ‘rubble’ that caused by the intense fighting and destruction. Similarly, excerpt (40) the eyewitness account likened the movement of the water to that of running truck which in this case is dangerous because it can

kill once one is run over by it. The eye witness draws parallels to the sound of the track which the readers are familiar with so that they easily construe the victims experience.

The data reveals that the natural phenomenon is portrayed as having a desired target of killing and destroying people's property. As such, the floods are represented as hostile and aggressive, which means that they are metaphorically portrayed as peoples' enemy. The CRIMINAL/WARRIOR metaphor in the media created animosity against the floods as the cause of death, destruction and suffering among many people. Ultimately, there is no harmonic relationship between the people and nature in both the local print and online websites representation of the flooding disaster in Malawi.

5.5.4 Discussion of the metaphorical representation

The data reveals that the floods are conceptualized through three major metaphorical themes namely; as A MONSTER and as a CRIMINAL. The media representation provides the view that the flooding was very powerful, cruel and destructive, hence the blame is solely on the natural phenomenon regardless of the view that human activities might have also induced the crisis.

The negative portrayal of the floods is generic in almost all the four newspapers analysed. As the metaphors appeal to the emotions of the readers or audience they fulfil an interpersonal function of language. The audience sympathises with the victims of the catastrophe and commit themselves to assist through relief aid. The metaphors also evoke fear in the public through the lexical colouring hence the demonization of nature. Though the local print and international online news targeted different audiences, there were no differences in the ideological representation of the metaphors including the respective practices of production and consumption.

5.6 SENSATIONALISATION OR DRAMATIZATION AS MEDIA DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES

This subchapter investigated dramatization and or sensationalisation as other discursive strategies that news media used to represent the natural catastrophic flooding disaster. Media studies have established that the news articles so much appeal to the people's emotions than reasoning during disasters hence it is significant to explore the sensational features or strategies that newspapers deployed in the representation of the natural catastrophic flooding. As earlier

identified, the different representational strategies and metaphors are part of the discursive strategies that news media employed in the representation of the crisis. Specifically, this section focuses on the sensationalisation and or dramatization strategies as discussed below;

5.6.1 Rhetoric of exaggeration or hyperbole

One of the common significant discursive devices used in the news representation of the natural catastrophic disaster is hyperbole. Richardson (2007:65) and Conboy (2007:76) defined hyperbole as a rhetoric device of excessive exaggeration that is used for the sake of emphasis. The discursive strategy is used to characterise and exaggerate the impact of the natural phenomenon on the victims. As earlier observed, the natural phenomenon was metaphorically portrayed as wicked and threatening; an animate monster and criminal that was exaggerated as killing everyone along its way. Consider the excerpts below for the discussion and illustration of exaggeration in the expressions:

- (41) *Homes swept away like matchsticks, vast plains turned into mud, fields of precious crops drowned. An aerial view from a helicopter, rain hammering on its roof after delivering food ... Rescue workers tell of seeing children swept to their deaths and picking up floating backpacks only to discover corpses attached ...*

(The Guardian, 30 January 2015)

- (42) “Most of Nsanje and East Bank are submerged under two to three meters of water, *which has transformed these vast plains into a giant lake engulfing houses and bridges*” said Amaury Gregoire, Doctors Without Borders mission head in Malawi’s south.

(Daily Mail Online, 16 January 2015)

- (43) “We have *nothing*,” said Bright Chipojola, headmaster of one of the flooded schools. “We *lost everything*. The schools *lost everything*.”

(Daily Mail Online, 19 January 2015)

- (44) And every time clouds gather in the sky suggesting yet another downpour, the melancholy among the victims in the *shelters* deepens as that signifies a longer, more torturous stay in what some of the victims have described as “*prisons*”.

(The Daily Times, 19 January 2015)

- (45) Villagers here speak of climbing up anthills or trees and *waiting for three days without food or water*, drenched in rain and fearing attack by crocodiles. Families describe how they have lost *everything* ...

(The Guardian, 30 January 2015)

In the above excerpts, the expressions exaggerate forcefulness, impact and overall characteristics of the floods. To begin with, excerpt 45 from *The Guardian* portrays the intensification and horror of the devastating floods as they wash away the houses as if they are match sticks and also sweeping away the children. In the *Daily Mail Online*, excerpt 46, ‘giant lake’ is a hyperbole that seeks to emphasize the extent of the floods in the area. In excerpt 48, the use ‘nothing’ and ‘everything’ does not have hedges to show the impact of the disaster but still sensationalize the news. Similarly, excerpt 49 likens the ‘shelters’ in camps to the conditions in ‘prisons’, this intensifies the horror and shock of the natural catastrophic disaster, and dramatizes it. Excerpt 50, from *The Guardian*, ‘waiting for three days without food or water’ is more of a hyperbole that portrays how the crisis affected the victims. Richardson (2007) and Conboy (2007) argued that a hyperbole is used deliberately by the media to emphasize or reinforce the news to the audience. Likewise, in this natural catastrophic flooding disaster reporting, the news media used exaggerations or hyperbole rhetoric devices to foreground the destructive effects of the floods rather than its potential causes.

5.6.2 Numbers or Figures

Figures or numbers are also used for rhetorical effect, emphasizing the destruction that the flooding phenomena caused. They aim at emphasizing on objectivity and credibility against different opinions and impressions. The news media used figures to denote the number of people who were displaced, killed, lacked relief items and trapped in the crisis. Consider the following excerpts for illustrating sensationalisation or dramatization in the use of numbers or figures.

- (46) *Dozens of families* displaced by the floods in Chikwawa and Nsanje have asked government to expedite the deployment of relief items to save lives.

(*The Nation*, 11 January 2015)

- (47) *Nearly a quarter of a million people*, more than originally thought, have been affected by the devastating floods that ripped through Malawi a month ago, and with rains still falling, *many of the 230,000* who were forced to flee their homes have been unable to return and rebuild their lives, the UN said.

(*The Guardian*, 10 February 2015)

- (48) “The death toll is now *176* and *over 200,000* have been displaced after their houses were destroyed by the floods,” Chilima told a news conference. “*At least 153 people* are missing”.

(*Daily Mail Online*, 16 January 2015)

- (49) At least *Over 230,000 people* were displaced and 104 killed according to the details from the Department of Disaster Management Affairs (Dodma).

(*The Daily Times*, 18 February 2015)

The excerpts above present examples of the expressions that dramatizes the disaster event through the use of numbers. The amount and kinds of numbers are rounded with expressions for instance; excerpts 51, '*dozens of families*'; excerpt 52, '*nearly a quarter of a million*', excerpt 53 and 54, '*over 200 000*' and '*over 230 000*' respectively. Frequently rounded numbers are employed in the media because they are easily to recall and intensify the real numbers involved. They do not clearly represent the facts about the number of affected victims in the disaster. However, the statistical figures are used to speak for themselves about the credibility and invite uncritical views from the audience. As Conboy (2007:75) observed, numbers move beyond reasonable debate to emotive demonstration of potential effect or impact of an event. Despite the emphasis on objectivity and precision, numbers undermine credibility claims because they are used to express the news value (Bell 1991:203). Thus, the ever-increasing use of numbers in the newspapers is a way of reinforcing their appeals and intensifying the threat of the disaster which contribute end up with sensationalisation or dramatization of the crisis.

5.6.3 Superlatives

The media discursively represented the natural catastrophic disaster through the superlatives that compared with the other previous disasters within and outside Malawi. These featured more frequently in the news discourse not only to represent the extent of the flooding but portray it as the worst comparing to the previous experiences. Consider the extracts below that illustrates the superlatives as discursive strategies in the media representation of the natural catastrophe;

- (50) An aerial view from a helicopter, rain hammering on its roof after delivering food aid, reveals full of devastation wreaked by **Malawi's worst floods for half a century**.

(*The Guardian*, 30 January 2015)

- (51) UN rate Malawi floods **as worst** in living memory

(Headline, *The Nation*, 5 February 2015)

- (52) "... People say **there hasn't been anything this bad since 1964** and the area is quite immense ..."

(*The Guardian*, 30 January 2015).

- (53) Aid is arriving in Malawi, where communities were **cut off by the country's worst floods in 50 years.**

(The Guardian, 3 February 2015).

The superlatives in excerpts 55, 56 and 57 above are used to portray the natural catastrophic disaster as a villain which is very destructive compared to the referenced time period. The comparisons maximized or intensified the impact of the 2015 flooding event, and these were common from the narratives of the eye witnesses and victims. In excerpt 55, the floods are referred to as the 'worst' in half a century, whereas in excerpt 56 the 'worst' as one cannot remember. Similarly, in excerpt 58 they are shown as the 'worst' in 50 years. Whilst excerpt 57 refers to the floods to 1964. The superlatives in these excerpts portrays the floods as more destructive and violent. Furthermore, the other superlative expressions in bold below re-emphasize on the gravity of the floods;

- (54) Residents of several villages interviewed by *The Guardian* said **they had never seen such rains in their lifetime.**

(The Guardian, 30 January 2015)

- (55) The two districts were **worst** hit by the floods which have **ravaged half of the 28 districts** in the poor southern African nation, with neighbouring Mozambique also battling the rising waters.

(The Guardian, 30 January 2015).

The superlatives focused on intensifying or maximizing the negative consequences of the natural disasters. This feature is generic in both types of media because they wanted to show the extent of destruction by the 2015 floods. Thus, the rhetorical way of showing the destruction contributed to the sensationalisation and or dramatization of the natural disaster news.

5.7 DISCUSSION OF DISCURSIVE MACRO-STRATEGIES OF NATURAL CATASTROPHIC DISASTER

Reflecting on the discursive macro-strategies shows that media representation of the natural catastrophic disaster revolved around the asymmetry of power that is reflected and consolidated the economic and political divisions between various participants. The external social actors comprising of countries and NGOs, particularly from the global north, and who formed a large part of donors, were represented as more effective, responsible and caring than the Malawi government which was criticised for its late response. Both the victims and government were labelled as beneficiaries as if they simply waited for assistance from these external social actors, and took no own initiative in finding relief. Though it is inevitable that in every disaster

situation victims rely on assistance of concerned outsiders, the mediated discursive representation reinforced the colonial perspective that African countries are unduly dependent on their colonial masters. The victims are constructed and represented as passive recipients of the relief items whilst the western countries or donors as active givers. Stories of local initiatives, of communities supporting one another, of officials using limited means creatively, appear to be silenced.

The study also established the divisions upheld by the media in discursive representation of the natural catastrophe focusing on human suffering and natural causes of the floods. The media represented the devastating floods as agents of the suffering and destruction, whilst the people are involved as innocent victims of the circumstances. Specifically, the media constructed the natural events as villains for causing a lot of infrastructural and property destruction and deaths (of both people and animals). By representing the natural flooding disaster as active agent responsible for the damage, the media ignored the possible human activities that might have exacerbated the effects of the heavy rains. The media in this case gave no detailed account of the possible social, historical and economic factors that might have induced the emergence of the disaster. Ultimately, coverage in the three newspapers has largely blamed the natural circumstances leading to the flooding disaster for the suffering of the innocent people.

The exposition above has revealed that metaphors were used to represent the natural catastrophic disaster as a monster and criminal which attacks people and destroys all their property. The natural disaster is given animated characteristics to override the representation of the victims, who are indirectly challenged and portrayed to have lost the battle. Such representation created a 'myth' that faulted the natural phenomenon as a villain at the same time portraying the people as innocent victims without accounting for some of their activities that could have contributed to the crisis. Following the explanation in Chapter 3 section 3.3.1.3, Barthes observed that myth is a socially constructed truth in cultural texts that aim at maintaining the status quo. It masks the radically different conditions, social or economic under which the public lives in (Fourie 2007:253). Perhaps the minority elite that control production of the newspapers, both print and online, try to mythologise the natural catastrophic flooding disaster in order to mask some of the human activities that are believed to be a source of their largest economies such as cutting down of trees which cause environmental degradation and failure to confront the causes of climate change. Therefore, the myth of the floods became

naturalized, constructing the victims as innocent bystanders and distancing themselves from any responsibility of its cause and effects.

The analysis also investigated the various discourses that cross cuts the representation of the flooding crisis. The study established the overarching hegemonic discourse which was characterised with thematic issues such as incompetent government and concerned humanitarian relief and expert assistance. Specifically, the incompetence of government emerged from perceptions of their ineffective leadership, massive corruption of state finances and dependence on external social actors. The media criticised the government's ineffective approach in responding to the floods, but at the same time praised and glorified the external social actors for their swift response immediately after the disaster. This perpetuates a hegemonic discourse that faults African states in the global south as rooted in the colonial practices of depending on their masters. In addition, officers within the government of Malawi were portrayed as retrogressive because of the corrupt activities which were said to affect support of the disaster victims and further undermined the development of the country. Following this, the western social actors together with NGOs were shown as progressive and caring.

Similarly, the media representation of humanitarian relief activities texts attached ideologies that were to appeal to the audience to sympathise with the victims of the disaster. However, the external sources of aid that comprised countries in the global north were represented as active givers of relief. Media, both local print and international online portrayed the victims and Malawian government as passive receivers of aid. Though the government was overwhelmed by the circumstances during the crisis, the expectation was that it should have been prepared beforehand since it had experienced similar flooding disasters over a number of years. Therefore, the media integrated different discourses in the representation of a natural catastrophic disaster that included hegemonic and humanitarian issues.

5.8. CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed salient discursive macro-strategies that the local print and international online media employed in the representation of the social actors in the flooding crisis. The analysis reveals that in most cases the media discourses presented the natural catastrophic disaster as being causal of the destruction of property and death to people. In some cases, particularly in donations of relief, the victims were passivated whereas the donors and

other external social actors were activated. Scientific and formal registers that were identified in the disaster reports contributed to these effects. The investigation of the metaphors established that news media employed animate, criminal and monster referencing towards the flooding disaster to portray it as a villain in the damage it caused. News media also employed sensationalization and drama through hyperbole, statistics and superlatives in the representation of the disaster to appeal to the emotions of the readers.

Chapter six will turn to micro-level reporting strategies used in mediating the natural disaster discourse of 2015 in Malawi.

Chapter 6

DISCURSIVE FEATURES OF DISCOURSES OF NATURAL DISASTER: MICRO LEVEL ANALYSIS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives an analysis of linguistic features identified in the literature as ones that typically carry ideological meaning in mostly covert ways. It looks at items on a micro level in that it is often in word choices, even in the choices of function words rather than content words, that stereotyping and author prejudice is articulated. Following suggestions from various theoreticians introduced in chapter three, a set of features that discursively represent actors in the unfolding news stories of the flooding disaster, will be introduced, illustrated and discussed.

6.2 DISCURSIVE REPRESENTATIONS OF THE NATURAL DISASTER

This chapter describes the linguistic representation strategies of the social actors as they occurred in the local print and international online media disaster reports. Reisigl and Wodak (2009:94) defined discursive strategies as processes through which participants in texts are systematically referred to and constructed by the text producers in order to achieve specific linguistic, ideological and social purposes. The linguistic discursive features used to construct and represent the identities of the participants in the disaster are in focus to understand the strategies journalists choose for naming participants. The selection of certain forms out of a large array of choices will get attention, as a means of evaluating the ideological stance of a publication in the representation of the social actors. The key social actors or participants identified in the texts are the affected communities, individual victims, the government (president and other officials) responsible for disaster relief, politicians and non-profit organisations (both local and international). Each of the participants is represented differently and by different names and forms. The assumption is that journalists consciously and unconsciously select linguistic features that convey ideologies and articulate power relations when representing these participants.

More specifically, the analysis here draws on theories from the critical discourse paradigm starting with Van Leeuwen's (2008) social actor model of several discursive strategies to evaluate the ways in which participants were manifested in the disaster reports. The framework

highlights the connection of linguistic and social practices in examining the representation of the different participants in the disaster event. Van Leeuwen (1996:38) argues that text producers represent social actors “to suit their interests and purposes in relation to readers whom they are intended”. Hence, the social actor approach offers a varied range of linguistic possibilities to refer to social actors. Exclusion and inclusion are taken as the main categories. Exclusion is represented by suppression and backgrounding, with the former referring to complete erasure from discourse, whereas the latter moves certain actors from the front to the back, from the centre to the periphery of a scene. Section 6.3.1 below will illustrate how actors are represented according to the roles assigned to them (functionalisation, genericization, nomination), their voice in discourse (activation or passivation), or constructions through personalization or impersonalization. The categories offer different meaning potentials about the social participants. As Reisigl and Wodak (2001) observed, the referential strategies derived in the socio-semantic inventory are a great resource for examining the language used to name participants ideologically and derogatorily. Thus, referential strategies help to analyse how text producers shape the image of the participants in the way in which they want them to be construed by the audience. Ultimately, this study focuses on how the referential strategies constructed an image of great concern, intermediate concern and lack of concern about the devastating flooding crisis and those who suffered as a result.

The study applied analytical tools from various Critical Discourse Analysts, such as Fairclough’s (1992) DRA model and Richardson’s (2007) concern about news media to illustrate further the discursive strategies in the representation of the participants (see Chapter 4). The understanding is that no single approach can adequately analyse the naming and categorization strategies of the participants, employed by the newspaper. The diversity of approaches triangulation in mind (see Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999:17; Wodak and Meyer 2009:5). Hence, the analysis focuses on both form and content of the disaster texts, to assure no important linguistic features are overlooked. Specifically, the following linguistic discursive features were identified: naming and referencing such as genericization, aggregation, functionalisation, nomination, collectivisation etc. The findings of the study will demonstrate the biased representation of positive and negative attributes that constructed the participants.

6.2.1 Representation of the social actors: naming or referential strategies

Names and references in the news media are rarely neutral. They convey stereotypes and ideologies of the writers and the news corporations. Machin and Mayr (2012:77) and

Richardson (2007:49) argue that names have a significant impact on the public perception of people's roles, characteristics and identities. Naming involves choices that are functional and associated with the ideological work among the journalists of the news media (Reah 1998). For this reason, this study considered examining the naming choices chosen in the construction of the community and individuals during the catastrophic flooding. This draws attention to the key mechanisms that are used in the construction of identities of the participants in the event. Several elements given in van Leeuwen's (2008) framework are identified in the news reports on the disaster, including functionalisation, nominalization, genericization and aggregation. These linguistic discursive strategies are each discussed and illustrated below.

6.2.1.1 Functionalisation and identification

According to Van Leeuwen (2008:42) functionalisation occurs when social actors are represented in terms of their role or occupation in a society. They are described in terms of what they do, rather than who they are, and this has different effects on how people perceive them. Illustrative, such use of names and occupational status of social actors that feature in the corpus of selected articles will be discussed.

Excerpt(s)

- (1) *PRESIDENT* Peter Mutharika yesterday described as disaster areas 15 districts throughout the country that have been badly hit by floods where at least 48 people have been killed ...
(*The Daily Times*, 14 January 2015)
- (2) In response, *Vice-President*, Saulos Chilima, and World Vision Malawi officials launched a food distribution program ...
(*The Nation*, 18 January 2015)
- (3) *Health rights activist*, Martha Kwataine of Malawi Health Equity Network (Mhen), said there is high likelihood of campers falling victims to waterborne diseases such as cholera due to congestion.
(*The Nation*, 4 February 2015)
- (4) *LEADER of Opposition* in Parliament Lazarus Chakwera has said there is need for the country to observe a national day of mourning in honour of the people who died due to heavy rains and floods that prevailed over the past week.
(*The Daily Times*, 19 January 2015)

Excerpts 1 to 4 from *The Times* and *The Nation* demonstrate functionalisation: in adding either a title or a description of professional affiliation to names such as President Peter Mutharika, Leader of Opposition Lazarus Chakwera and Vice President Saulos Chilima, their importance as authoritative figures who have legitimate roles, is signalled. Such titles authenticate subsequently mentioned actions. Peter Mutharika is not represented in his personal capacity but as the President elected to lead the country, hence his declaration of the 15 districts as disaster areas gains authority. Similarly, Saulos Chilima's roles as the Vice President and a government official, referred to only in identifying him, become visible. He is the governmental official responsible for disaster preparedness and relief. Attaching his title to a food distribution programme, signals that the government is taking the necessary responsibility. Mentioning "World Vision Malawi officials" (see <http://www.wvi.org/malawi>) in the same utterance without personifying any of them by naming, underplays their role, foregrounding the vice-president and government and backgrounding others engaged in the same relief action. The reports continuously refer back to the roles of Mutharika and Chilima, thereby emphasising to their readers the government's efforts in assisting the victims. Further, the reference to Lazarus Chakwera's function as "Leader of opposition in Malawi Parliament" in his calling for a national day of mourning in the country, represents him not in his personal or individual capacity, but as a leader and representative of various opposition parties. Thus, although the representative of a groupings with different party affiliations than that of the ruling party, he is still a significant figure. Naming him thus implies solidarity in care for the affected communities.

Foregrounding the occupation or official position of a participant is a widely used media strategy. In the examples above, specific roles are assigned through giving titles that are also job descriptions. Government officials are signified as having power and authority to discharge particular duties in response to events that affect their citizens. According to Machin and Mayr (2012:77), functionalisation can serve an ideological, psychological and sociological purpose for the readers and writers. In (3) for example, the comment on need for medical attention to people living in the flood area, is given not by a government official, nor by a health care professional such as a nurse or a doctor. Martha Kwataine is functionally identified as a health rights activist working for the Malawi Health Equity Network (Mhen). The noun "activist" refers to a person who campaigns for political or social change. In the context of the floods, it is not insignificant that Ms Kwataine is identified as such. Following this, *The Nation* newspaper is appreciative of the role that Ms Kwataine is doing by pointing out what health

threats are there in the aftermath of the floods and the appropriate timeous care that should be taken; this added to the positive connotation to her activism. Ideologically there can also be a thinly veiled criticism that she is interfering with government's interventions and also cannot advise properly on health issues since she is not a nurse or health profession, who is more knowledgeable of the waterborne diseases

That naming people according to specific societal roles they have, is widely used, is demonstrated in that similar patterns of naming participants are used in the international online discourses, as in *The Guardian* (UK) and the *Mail Online*. For example, in (5) below, the functionalisation strategy to identify social actors is used by *The Guardian* in exactly the same way as in the local Malawian media.

- (5) In mid-January, *President Mutharika* declared half of the country a disaster zone and estimated it would cost 23.9nb kwacha (\$51m) to repair the damage.

(The Guardian, 10 February 2015)

Notably, men and women were often treated differently in terms of role assignment. Men whom were named, were more often than not specifically identified by their title or a job description, whereas in terms of their functional status, women were identified with their proper names only. In chapter six gender disparities in the identification of the social actors will be addressed in more detail. However, the excerpts below give illustrative examples of how men are denoted in terms of their roles and particular activities in the disaster or what they do in the day to day life, whereas women are simply identified by their names:

- (6) The survivors share their horror stories of the sudden torrent of water and the stream of floating bodies that followed. "I could not believe what I saw," said *fisherman Jossam Mangawe, 44*. "I am still haunted by this." *Eliza Gift, 21*, said Malawi had seen floods before, "but this time around it was hell"

(Daily Mail Online, 19 January 2015)

- (7) *National Director for WVM Bob Kisyula* said the food distribution program is part of the response to the recent food crisis that had left 174,114 people displaced with 176 dead by Friday.

(The Nation, 18 January 2015)

- (8) *Meteorologist Jose Savanguani* of the National Meteorological Institute told AFP that the coming week would see less rain in the centre of the country, "but moderate heavy rains will continue in the north".

(Daily Mail Online, 19 January 2015)

- (9) *Regional coordinator for Africa Network Campaign on Education for All (Ancefa) Limbani Nsapato* said in an email response to a questionnaire on Thursday that the Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB) should shift the examination calendar for Standard Eight, Forms Two and Four classes until the flood situation normalises.
(*The Nation*, 25 January 2015)
- (10) *Chikwawa district commissioner (DC) Alex Mdoko* confirmed the development in an interview this week, saying burial took place on Monday.
(*The Nation*, 4 February 2015)
- (11) It is great relief to hear that sound of the helicopter because we know its bringing food” said *58-year-old Modesta Basikolo* as she made her way through the crowd of about 1000 people.
(*Daily Mail Online*, 19 January 2015)

In Excerpt 6, *Jossam Mangawe* is identified by name and the functional status of *fisherman*, but there is no similar reference to any professional or societal status of *Eliza Gift*. Excerpts 7 to 10 all name men and give their societal position as well, e.g., both *Bright Chipojola* and *Matemba Bauleni* are categorised as *headmaster* and *National Director of WVM* respectively. Then, in excerpt 11, *Modesta Basikolo*, is identified according to her age and not according to her role in society.

Identifying certain social actors according to the functions that they perform in society has the effect of constructing them as important and authoritative. The level of authority the same actors may have, diminishes once the functional statuses are removed (see Machin and Mayr 2012:81-82). A content analysis of the disaster reports shows that this strategy works to construct men as more active social actors, while women (who are not functionalised in the same way), are constructed as passive social actors in the circumstances of the crisis event. Thus, where the roles of male participants are foregrounded, it appears to fit a strategy which signifies men as making marked contributions to the social good, whereas women who are simply identified by name, come across as less significant contributors. The findings demonstrate that the two genders were not represented in a balanced way, hence existing gender disparities in Malawi appear to be re-inforced.

Some of the functionalisation statuses can be tagged as honorifics in the identification of the social actors. Machin and Mayr (2012:82) indicates that honorifics suggest the degree of seniority that requires particular respect. As an extension to functionalisation, they signal the importance of the social actors in the society. In other words, using honorifics in the texts, can

have an ideological function. For instance, the strategic use of honorifics in excerpts 5, 7, 9 and 10 identifies the speakers as more important than would've been the case if they had simply been named, e.g., Peter Mutharika, or Bob Kisyula. This seems to justify a finding that in using functional descriptors and honorific titles, the text producers manipulate the meanings attached to the participants statements cited in the disaster reports. Not only the meanings of statements change, but the attitudes of readers towards the actors and their discursive contributions, are likely to be affected.

6.2.1.2 *Nomination*

Nomination is a process in which participants are typically realised using proper nouns. Machin and Mayr (2012:81) argue that participants are nominated in terms of who they are or what they do. The study noted that participants were identified with either given name or surname only without including their functional status of the participants. As van Leeuwen (2008) argued nomination can be realized through informalization (given name only), semi-formalization (given name and surname), and formalization (surname with or without honorifics) that indicates the unique identity of the social actors or participants. Examples of the nomination referential strategy are illustrated in excerpts below;

- (12) *Tiyanjane Rodrich Lino*, 20, is nursing a swollen jaw after her house of mud and straw collapsed on her while she slept.

(The Guardian, 30 January 2015)

- (13) As a result, he cannot attend classes with his colleagues,” said *Theresa Brighton*, the boy’s mother who was displaced from her home at Kaleso Village.

(The Daily Times, 3 March 2015)

- (14) *Mlauli*, in an interview four days after the floods from Soche Hill swept away their home in Chimwankhunda Township, said their strength was coming from the fact that three members of the family out of four survived the calamity.

(The Nation, 18 January 2015)

In excerpts 12 to 14 above, the nomination referential strategy uses proper names such as *Tiyanjane Rodrich Lino*, *Burton Garden*, *Theresa Brighton* and *Mlauli*. There are no functional statuses attached before the names hence the participants are not functionalised. The newspapers used specific particular given names to denote the participants. titles are attached to the proper names in the same excerpts, it realizes the formal nomination strategy. Excerpt 14

uses the informalization nomination by using only the first name of the participant known as ‘Mlauli’. The corpus showed that instances of nomination were not rare in any of the the disaster reports. Specifically, eye witnesses accounts accompanied nominations of the victims of the floods. It is common practice in these kinds of discourses to source individual participants whose experiences articulate events in a very personal manner. Also, when experts’ opinions about the disaster are given, it is customary to authenticate the report by naming the individual who contributed a particular insight. Scollon (1998) refers to the strategy of naming experiencers or observers personally, in order to shield the reporter against contestation. The writer is obscured if s/he cites the president or the district commissioner, e.g.; also the writer does not need to be 100% accurate about what people have lost if s/he can cite victims/experiencers who give their own impressions or recollections of what transpired.

Nomination can employ descriptivisation (either occupation, status, roles or age of the participants) attached to their given names. This categorisation is an extension of functionalisation but typically nominate the participants in the initial position of the expressions. This is illustrated in excerpts 15, 16, and 17 below.

- (15) “The government is urging people living in flood-prone districts to urgently relocate to upland to avoid losing more lives.” Said *Paul Chiunguzeni*, principal secretary for Disaster Management Affairs.

(*Daily Mail Online*, 16 January 2015)

- (16) *Martin Kausi*, programme manager for Blantyre Agriculture Development Division (ADD), which has seven districts, including Neno, Blantyre, Thyolo, Chiradzulu, Mulanje and Phalombe, said 28 242 farming families have been affected

(*The Nation*, 19 January 2015)

- (17) “I am still haunted by this.” *Eliza Gift*, 21, said Malawi had seen floods before, “but this time around it was hell”.

(*Daily Mail Online*, 19 January 2015)

From the excerpts under consideration above, the proper names of the participants are realised through a nomination strategy. The examples use additional information to describe or identify the participant. However, the attached occupation, status or roles are extensions to the proper names used in the initial subject position. Excerpts 15 and 16 have attached occupations of the participants to further describe them as sources of the information. Similarly, excerpt 17 denotes the age of the participant to describe her further. In these statements, the nomination has the effect of foregrounding the unique identities of the social actors. The study established that the

local newspapers nominated more participants than international news websites, particularly the eyewitnesses to recount their experiences of the floods. Perhaps the nominations were a result of local newspapers attention to explore the different experiences and opinions from victims on the ground. In addition, the use of nomination and descriptivisation of roles, statuses or occupation were generic in all newspapers when providing details of the participants.

6.2.1.3 Aggregation

Van Leeuwen (1996:49) and Machin and Mayr (2012:83) mention aggregation as a type of assimilation that quantifies a group of participants. The process of aggregation is realised by numbers and figures that treat the participants as objects. The strategy dehumanises, depersonalises and objectifies the social actors. The news reports on the Malawian flooding disaster used linguistic devices which are emblematic of the referential strategy of aggregation. According to Van Leeuwen (2008:38) the definite and indefinite quantifiers used in aggregation occur as “enumerative or head of the nominal group”. Consider the excerpts below as illustration of aggregation in selected texts:

- (18) *Dozens of families* displaced by the floods in Chikwawa and Nsanje have asked government to expedite the deployment of relief items to save lives.
(*The Nation*, 11 January 2015)
- (19) *Nearly a quarter of a million people*, more than originally thought, have been affected by the devastating floods that ripped through Malawi a month ago, and with rains still falling, *many of the 230,000* who were forced to flee their homes have been unable to return and rebuild their lives, the UN said.
(*The Guardian*, 10 February 2015)
- (20) With its still standing solid buildings shorn of all the lavish, corporate comforts they had when Mota-Engil used the site during its construction projects in the district, the place is now a dreary, untended location overflowing with *hundreds of flood-stricken people* from Nyachikadza and Malemia areas.
(*The Daily Times*, 19 January 2015)
- (21) *Over 230,000 people* were displaced and 104 killed according to the details from the Department of Disaster Management Affairs (Dodma).
(*The Daily Times*, 18 February 2015)
- (22) “The death toll is now *176* and *over 200,000* have been displaced after their houses were destroyed by the floods,” Chilima told a news conference. “At least 153 people are missing.”
(*Daily Mail Online*, 16 January 2015)

- (23) The two districts were worst hit by the floods which have ravaged *half of the 28 districts* in the poor southern African nation, with the neighbouring Mozambique also battling with the rising waters.

(Daily Mail Online, 15 January 2015)

- (24) *HUNDREDS of flood victims* in Nsanje's East Bank area, currently struggling to access food, clean water and adequate medical care, remain cut off after the recent devastating floods damaged weather roads.

(The Daily Times, 26 January 2015)

The excerpts (18) to (22) above, illustrate the aggregation strategy in cases where participants are quantified and presented as some kind of statistic. In these excerpts, the extent of the damage is portrayed in the form of giving numbers of people devastated by the disruptive floods. Interestingly, however, except only when the numbers of deceased are given (in 21 and 22), all numbers are aggregated: 'dozens of families', 'nearly a quarter of a million people', 'over 200,000', 'at least 153 people', 'many of the 230,000', 'over 230,000', and 'hundreds of flood stricken' provide numbers that represent the victims who were displaced, missing, or battling to access basic means of livelihood. Bell (1991:203) and Attia (2007:61) have made the point that numbers form a firm basis for creating impressions of objective and empirical certainty in the news. As van Dijk (1991:84) observed, the media tends to use statistics when they want to impress and persuade the audience about the precision and credibility of the news. In other words, the aggregation strategy is used to impress the audience and give assurance of the truthfulness and plausibility of the news. In fact, it has become a strong generic marker of discourses of disaster: the heavier the rainfall, the stronger the winds, the greater the region that is affected, and perhaps most importantly, the larger the number of people devastated or even killed, the more newsworthy the event seems to be. Giving statistics shows that reporters have somehow investigated and found firm evidence of the seriousness of circumstances. They serve to indicate the gravity or scale of the event. Thus, numbers are a means of representing facts against opinions and impressions.

However, a closer look indicates that this can also be misleading. One report says "over 200 000", another says "over 230 000", while another in virtually the same breath, says "nearly a quarter of a million". This gives a flexible number of 50 000 – thus no precision, but an approximation which will in any of the cases be justifiable. The only thing a careful reader could take from this with certainty, is that a very large number of people had lost homes and were in serious need of relief. Aggregation in these reports, thus is a useful strategy to convey

enormity of the disaster, even if precise statistics are not available and suggested numbers are not confirmed.

Most reports modified round numbers using expressions such as ‘at least’, ‘over’, ‘more than’, ‘about’ and ‘around’. Yet, some instances of aggregation gave round numbers without modification, as in excerpts (29) to (32) below.

- (25) Across the border in Mozambique, *300,000 people* across four provinces in the centre and north of the country found themselves without electricity when power lines collapsed in the flooding waters.

(Daily Mail, 15 January 2015)

- (26) Frantic scenes greeted the military helicopter as it landed to deliver aid in a village after severe floods left *176 people* dead and *200,000 homeless* across Malawi.

(Daily Mail, 19 January 2015)

- (27) Unicef said *276 people* had been killed or were missing, while *645 people* had been injured.

(The Guardian, 10 February 2015)

- (28) Phiri said, so far, *100,000 people* have been affected by the floods with *10,000 stranded* with neither shelter nor food.

(The Daily Times, 14 January 2015)

This strategy of using large numbers without any modification has a dramatizing effect and does have the potential to manipulate meaning in that it generalizes and could either exaggerate or underestimate the real state of affairs. Using such numbers has the potential of representing social actors as objects and an unvarying group in which all members have similar attributes. The high occurrence of numbers in referring to participants in the disaster, certainly contributed to the dramatizing, if not sensationalising this the news event. As Mautner (2008:37) observed, the media use figures that sound ominous in order to manipulate news meanings. In this study, high incidence of rounded figures is confirmed. The strategy had the effect of representing social actors as greatly affected by the heavy rain and its effect. It could also have had the effect of presenting large numbers of people as an amorphous group, helpless and without their own resources. It is possible that journalists simply followed convention in citing numbers aggregatively. It is also possible that they intended such figures to alarm readers, to convince of the magnitude of the disaster and to evoke sympathies that would bring sooner and more effective relief. In any case, it was certainly good for their newspaper’s circulation.

In spite of Bell's (1991:203) claims about numbers being used to make objective, empirical claims, such a practice can simultaneously undermine the very principle it wants to serve. Roeh and Fieldman (1984), cited in Bell (1991:203), called this "the rhetoric of numbers". For van Dijk (1988:90), numbers are a means towards the end in telling good news stories, as they can be used to perpetuate ideologies that suit powerholders and leave others without claims to repair. Similarly, KhosraviNik, Krzyzanowski and Wodak (2012:289) observed that the aggregation strategy uses numerical modifiers such as "enormous", "many", "huge", and "over" thus removing the obligation for them to give more than estimated round numbers. This raises doubts about the precision and credibility of the facts. Alert readers will note that such numbers remain speculative and inaccurate, and that their function is to signal enormity not an accurate count.

6.2.1.4 Personalization and impersonalization

Personalization as a discursive strategy represents human beings by means of personal or possessive pronouns, proper names or nouns. The participants are represented through features that are human. First personal pronouns used in personalisation, e.g., would include "I", "mine", "our" and "we". On the other hand, the impersonalization strategy represents participants by means of abstract or concrete nouns of which the core meanings do not include the feature 'human' (Machin and Mayr 2012:79). For van Leeuwen (2008), impersonalization is divided into abstraction and objectivation. Abstraction occurs when social actors are represented by a quality assigned to them in the representation, whereas objectivation is realized by metonymical referencing (Van Leeuwen 2008:46). Consider the following excerpts from media discourses in the data that illustrate examples of personalization.

- (29) *Tembo*, a 28-year-old lactating mother at Sammy's camp in Chikwawa said waterborne diseases is a major worry among the campers after successfully escaping the wrath of the floods.

(*The Nation*, 4 February 2015)

- (30) *Chiunguzeni* said about 1,180 flood victims stranded on the patches of high ground had been evacuated since rescue missions with military helicopters and boats were launched Thursday.

(*Daily Mail*, 16 January 2015)

- (31) "This may not be enough but *we* pledge that *we* will continue working with other stakeholders and indeed government to see how *we* can help out as individuals and institutions ...

(*The Daily Times*, 19 January 2015)

- (32) “*The Malawi Defence Force* is on the ground, *we* have opened accounts for people to deposit money which will be used in these operations, there is also a foreign account which has been opened for all our friends and well-wishers in the diaspora.”

(*The Nation*, 16 January 2015)

In the excerpts above, personalisation is achieved with the proper names of the speakers and some personal pronouns. For instance, in excerpts 29 and 30, the statements of specific people are personalised by giving their first name and surname respectively, Tembo and Chiunguzeni. Similarly, the participants in excerpts 31 and 32 use the pronoun ‘we’ as representatives of the individuals from the institutions they are speaking for. In 32 a full noun phrase “the Malawi Defence Force” is first used to identify an institution for which some representative is speaking; anaphorically, “we” is used to identify the speaker/spokesperson with the larger military institution. Fairclough (2003:150) observed that personal pronouns such as ‘we’ are often elusive, shifting and vague in meaning. Instead of a single speaker taking personal responsibility, he finds that the more inclusive first person plural marker is used to at least share if not shift personal responsibility to others or to an organisation. In the above excerpts, the personalisation strategy is used in citing speakers to whom the reported claims to have spoken. That gives a first level of distancing: awareness of and concern about possibly devastating disease is topicalised, but on the authority of Tembo (29) – not on the reporter’s own authority. Or in (30) e.g., a second level of distancing comes through personalization: the reporter cites a spokesperson (thus the reporter does not take responsibility for what is being promised), and the spokesperson uses the distancing “we” (thus taking only shared responsibility for assuring that promises about accounts being managed, are kept).

The disaster reports also used the impersonalisation strategy to represent the participants using abstract or concrete nouns that do not have ‘human’ as a semantic feature. Machin and Mayr (2012:79) argue that impersonalisation is used when text producers want to conceal certain issues and give extra weight to others. Unlike in personalisation, this strategy is aimed at concealing who believes in what and who is responsible (Machin and Mayr 2012:80). Hence the media can report or attribute the personal actions of the leaders to the government or institutions, either in supporting or opposing the ruling ideology – thus also promoting their own ideology. Actions ascribed to powerful institutions generally carry more weight than those of individuals who are more easily replaced. Typical examples are included the following excerpts:

- (33) *The Malawi government* has declared half the country a disaster zone and appealed for international humanitarian help after torrential rains killed at least 48 people, left 70,000 homeless and destroyed bridges and roads.

(*The Guardian*, 14 January 2015)

- (34) Thousands of flood victims in Chikwawa and Nsanje are stranded, surviving without proper food and safe water as local politics and government delays continue to derail their relocation to upland areas, *The Nation* can reveal.

(*The Nation*, 23 January 2015)

- (35) When *The Daily Times* visited the camp on Saturday, hundreds of men, women and children lay about the grounds of the site desperate for relief supplies that were long in coming.

(*The Daily Times*, 19 January 2015)

In the excerpts above, “the Malawi government” (33), as well as “*The Nation*” (34) and “*The Daily Times*” (35), illustrate the impersonalisation of important social actors: both the government and the newspapers/publishers are institutions whose decisions are taken and executed (or not) by people. Rather than naming the persons responsible for what these powerful institutions decide and do (or neglect to do), these impersonal powers are invoked. The high status or official utterances of spokespersons are given an institutional character. For instance, citation in excerpt 33 refers to a statement Peter Mutharika made, but through impersonalisation it is ascribed to ‘the Malawi government’. Machin and Mayr (2012:79-80) describe such use of impersonalisation to perform ideological functions. Hence, *The Guardian* used impersonalisation in reporting the declaration of the floods as a disaster zone’, which constructs the Malawian government as an institution that is interested and concerned. It does however also construct the government as relatively weak, as they appear not to have sufficient own resources to address the crisis and are appealing for international humanitarian aid. The need for attention and more relief resources is thus brought to public attention – which could be commended, and is not necessarily ill intended. Still, it does carry implications of governmental incompetence that, at least in the reporting, are substantiated with the corrupt practices. Apart from impersonalising the government officials, the two publishers namely *The Daily Times* and *The Nation* also quite habitually used impersonalisation in referring to themselves. Rather than naming the reporter who took statements, e.g. the name of the publication is used as if the institution has a voice of its own. For example, in (38) and (39) respectively, *The Nation* and *The Daily Times* are named so that the particular person who would be responsible for the statement, is concealed. This strategy is particularly useful in contested matters, e.g. where

government official proclaims that government is taking good care, calling for additional resources, and acting on its promises and responsibilities, while at the same time those in need of support complain of poor relief (as is cited in 38 and 39). In not disclosing the names of individual reporters because the information and claims would not go down well with the government, which claimed of tremendous progress in assisting the victims of the floods, the relative power of state vs independent media is illustrated.

According to Fairclough (2003:150), impersonal representation can be a demeaning and dehumanizing way of reference to human actors. In cases where people are doing really well, this could remove attention from them as individuals and represent them as organizational instruments or structures. Also, in an alternative example, the very general reference to “flood victims in Chikwawa and Nsanje” (38) has an impersonalizing effect, removing awareness of personal plight of individuals or even families. However, here the media do often use another strategy (33) and (34) above, where people to whom the journalist has spoken are personally named and cited. Finally, impersonal representation is a crucial linguistic resource that is widely applied in the disaster reports to conceal details of persons inside of institutions by transferring responsibility to institutions. This is used to achieve particular ideological interests, which by implication support or criticise others by invoking the power of the institution.

6.2.1.5 Collectivization and individualization

Van Leeuwen (2008:37) and Machin and Mayr (2012:80) define collectivization as a form of assimilation in which participants are referred to as groups that are realized by a mass noun or a noun denoting a group of people. In collectivisation, participants are referred to and constructed as one uniform and homogenous group of which the members share similar attributes such as background, intentions, motivation, economic status, and thereby reducing them to a purely functional status. For individualization, the social actors are referred to as individuals by their names or personal pronouns, instead of as groups (van Leeuwen 2008:37). However, both strategies are used to represent the participants in meaning-making expressions. In the reports this study investigated, a few cases of collectivisation and individualisation were identified in the local print and international online media. The excerpts below illustrate some examples of collectivisation.

- (36) *Malawians* have shown impressive amount of solidarity with their fellow stricken citizens and the international community has demonstrated that Malawi is not alone in the crisis.
(*The Daily Times*, 16 February 2015)
- (37) *Flood victims* make their way to a relief station with their salvaged belongings at Bangula.
(*Mail Online*, 18 January 2015)
- (38) The *survivors* share their horror stories of the sudden torrent of water and the stream of floating bodies that followed.
(*Mail Online*, 19 January 2015)
- (39) *Impostors* invade flood victims camps.
(*The Daily Times*, 5 March 2015)
- (40) *Malawians* from across the political and religious divide yesterday gathered and spent about two hours inside the Robins Park in Blantyre to pray for the victims of the floods that the country experienced recently.
(*The Daily Times*, 9 February 2015)
- (41) Lewis Chiwalo, executive director of Economic Empowerment Action Group, who was also present at the briefing, said it was high time that *Malawians* started looking after themselves and it is in times like this that the nation has to show the world the love and unity that exist.
(*The Nation*, 15 January 2015)

In excerpt (36), as also in (40) and (41), the collectivisation strategy is realised using the mass noun ‘Malawians’ to represent the citizens of the country who showed solidarity in assisting the flood victims (36 and 40), or a community who jointly should better prepare for handling disasters such as the flooding (41). Similarly, excerpts (37) and (38) carry references to groupings of people displaced by the floods, but with different kinds of connotation, namely as “victims” taking initiative in making their way to a relief station, as opposed to “survivors” having to battle with shared horror stories. Interestingly, when the term “victim” is used here (37) it projects less sense of victimhood, than when the supposedly more positive constructive term “survivor” (38) is used. In excerpt (39), “impostors” is used as a mass noun for those that apparently did not deserve to receive the relief aid in the camps, but allegedly were abusing the opportunity. Further instances of collectivisation were identified in the use of mass nouns such as “beneficiaries”, “homeless” and “displaced”, which represented the flooding victims in different social contexts. The use of the collectivisation strategy has various functions, such as

stressing the scale of the disaster, and identifying particular categories of participants within the scenario, such as those displaced vs those providing aid.

The collectivization strategy of representation is also realised by the use of personal pronouns such as “we”, “us” and “them”. According to Machin and Mayr (2012:84), text producers use pronouns to identify themselves and their own ideas (us/we), and to create the collective “other”, notably those who are objectified in the reports (them/they). The pronouns are used to share similar attributes amongst a particular group. For example, in (42) below the writer uses collective “we” to give assurance of the source’s intentions, while in (43) a government official uses “our” and “we” in collective self-identification, vs “them” in collectivising citizens affected by the floods. Conversely, in (44) Gilison, a representative of those who survived but are battling to find sufficient aid, uses “us” to construct solidarity with all who suffered losses, and “them” in collective reference to those abusing what limited relief is available.

- (42) “This may not be enough but *we* pledge that *we* will continue working with other stakeholders and indeed government to see how *we* can help out as individuals and institutions ...” Chakwera said.

(*The Daily Times*, 19 January 2015)

- (43) A lot of people have been affected by the floods and some have lost lives. *Our* prayers are with *them* that may God console *them* and give *them* courage. *We* want to assure *them* that *we* will not abandon *them*,” he said.

(*The Daily Times*, 19 January 2015)

- (44) But Gilison maintains her stand, and insists government need to get to the bottom of the issue. “If government does not want *us* to starve to death then it must protect *us* from those taking advantage of the disaster to enrich *themselves*,” she implores.

(*The Nation*, 16 February 2015)

In individualisation strategy, participants are represented by persons or institutions whose specific names are used. Alternatively, individualisation is realised through first-person singular pronouns such as ‘I/my’, and second-person singular pronoun ‘you’. In naming first names, surnames or full names are used, as in (45) to (47) below. Excerpt (14) above, illustrate use of a last name only (Mlauli) – also illustrating the functional overlap between nomination and individualisation as strategies in the news, and specifically here in natural disaster discourse.

- (45) In response, Vice-President, *Saulos Chilima*, and World Vision Malawi officials launched a food distribution program ...
(*The Nation*, 18 January 2015)
- (46) Health rights activist, *Martha Kwataine* of Malawi Health Equity Network (Mhen), said there is high likelihood of campers falling victims to waterborne diseases such as cholera due to congestion.
(*The Nation*, 4 February 2015)
- (47) LEADER of Opposition in Parliament, *Lazarus Chakwera* has said there is need for the country to observe a national day of mourning in honour of the people who died due to heavy rains and floods that prevailed over the past week.
(*The Daily Times*, 19 January 2015)

The individualisation strategy was used in presenting direct information solicited from individual participants in the flooding disaster. Often the strategy was employed when updates, opinions and experiences of participants were in focus. In the above excerpts a widely used practice is demonstrated: individualised referencing by specific naming is embedded alongside phrases that name the roles or functions of the particular social actors.

Examples of individualization through the use of the first person and second person singular, are given in (48) to (50) below. Excerpt (50) illustrates the generic, impersonal use of the second person singular form, where the “you” indexes an unspecified other, and not necessarily the addressee. In some instances, they are named and tend to be identified by age and the location they came from. For illustration consider the excerpts below.

- (48) “*I* know it is hard to wait, but be patient with us because the items will soon come,” said Mutharika.
(*The Nation*, 23 January 2015)
- (49) “From everything *I* lost, *I* found a Holy Bible; *I* picked it and gave it to *my* wife. And *I* saw Madalitso, *my* nephew. Now missing *my* son, Patience”.
(*The Nation*, 18 January 2015)
- (50) *Phiri, 31*, said: “*You* could see bags in the water. *You* picked it up and there was a body attached ... *I* saw more than 10 bodies, most of them children. It was terrible. When *I* sleep, *I* still have a vision of them.”
(*The Guardian*, 14 January 2015)

In the above excerpts, the realization of the individualization strategy is done through pronouns ‘I’, ‘you’, ‘my’ which in each case is anaphorically related to a proper name. This kind of referencing is common in the expressions that give direct quotes of eye witnesses, victims,

relief workers, governmental officers and philanthropists giving their opinions and experiences of the flooding. This strategy allows the publisher to distance itself from sentiments or opinions that are expressed by others, but that at the same time they may agree with and covertly want to promote. In addition, the strategy assists in foregrounding human social interests by personalising stories. This heightens involvement and makes a special appeal to the audience or readership (Fairclough 1995). Individualization in the mediated disaster discourse largely presented the victims as powerless actors with the various stories and experiences in the disaster reports. Ultimately, the particular naming and foregrounding of some social actors in the newspaper, for instance president Mutharika discursively reinforced their powers.

The results of investigating collectivization and individualization strategies in the data demonstrate that both strategies were common in the representation of social actors in the disaster reporting. Collectivization is used more often to identify the group of victims and emphasize the gravity of the flooding situation in the little-known country. Specifically, the international online media commonly refer to ‘Malawi’ as the affected area and ‘Malawians’ as the victims without specifying the actually affected parts or districts and distinguishing between various victims. The individualisation strategy was common in reporting the comments and opinions of powerful people, whether in government or non-profit organisations, whereas the victims were much less featured in giving individualised comment. However, examples of individualisation referencing of the victims do occur, mostly as a means of demonstrating more vividly than otherwise the plight of many. The individualisation strategy humanised the victims and brought them closer to the readership of the newspapers or website. Thus, it appears that the four news media outlets in this study collectivized and individualized participants in the disaster depending on the type of information that they wanted to put across to their readership.

6.2.1.6 Genericization and specification

The choice between generic and specific strategies is another important aspect identified in the representation of participants in the media disaster coverage. Van Leeuwen (2008:35) defines genericization as a strategy in which participants are represented as entities, classes or non-specific. This strategy represents social actors as made up of identical features hence a homogenous group. There are four ways of identifying the genericization strategy: (i) use of plural without an article (as in excerpts 51, 52 and 53 (western donors)), (ii) attaching a definite article to singular forms of social actors (Excerpts 53 and 54), (iii) adding an indefinite article

to singular social actors (Excerpts 55 and 56), and (iv) mass nouns without articles (Excerpts 57 and 58). The excerpts below give additional examples as they were used in all of the various publications, thus emphasising the strategy as one generic to mediated disaster discourse.

- (51) *Musicians* have understood that their job is not merely to entertain but also to stay in touch with the society that supports them. (Strategy (i))

(*The Nation*, 20 January 2015)

- (52) *Victims* of floods in the Lower Shire have described as unfair the sentiment taking root in the country that people in this valley opt to stay in the flood-prone areas to benefit from relief handouts when floods hit. (Strategy (i))

(*The Daily Times*, 27 January 2015)

- (53) The disaster has led to accusations that *the Malawi government's* response is hampered by the decision of Britain and other donors to freeze direct aid following the so called 'cashgate' corruption scandal that engulfed several senior officials. *Western donors* have channelled support to NGOs on the ground instead. (Strategy (ii))

(*The Guardian*, 30 January 2015)

- (54) Mayor of Blantyre City Noel Chalamanda hailed *the Chinese Business Community*, for the assistance which he said will help people who are living in dilapidated houses. (Strategy (ii))

(*The Daily Times*, 4 March 2015)

- (55) "As *a musician*, I have a duty to reach out to those in need. I cannot reach out to all people but I decided to play a part by reaching out to a few. (Strategy (iii))

(*The Daily Times*, 20 January 2015)

- (56) Ben Kaluwa, *an economics professor* at University of Malawi's Chancellor College said he is not surprised that government is contemplating revising downwards GDP growth rate. (Strategy (iii))

(*The Nation*, 29 January 2015)

- (57) Nearly a quarter of a million people, more than originally thought, have been affected by devastating floods that ripped through *Malawi* a month ago, and with rains still falling, many of the 230,000 who were forced to flee their homes have been unable to return and rebuild their lives, the *UN* said. (Strategy (iv))

(*The Guardian*, February 2015)

- (58) He said *government* is going to set up telephone lines where up-to-date information about the floods is going to be availed on daily basis. (Strategy (iv))

(*The Daily Times*, 14 January 2015)

Genericization as a strategy in the various publications is a widely used practice used in statements to show that even individual opinions and experiences could be applied to larger groups. Further, the use of this strategy could have the effect of presenting the disaster situation as worse than it necessarily was, for the sake of empathy from the media readership (as excerpt in 55).

On the other hand, the specification strategy represents participants as distinguishable individuals with special characteristics in the context of reality. The media made such specific reference in the representation of the government officials, experts and a few victims of flooding who were asked to share their experiences and opinions on the crisis. According to van Leeuwen (2008:35-36), the working-class oriented newspapers are likely to more frequently refer to socio-economically lower actors, whereas in the middle-class oriented newspapers “the bourgeoisie” that comprises government officials and experts would be referred to specifically more often. Contrary to this expectation, my study found that both the working-class (that included victims) and middle-class (for instance politicians and NGOs officials) were featured in equal measure. Consider the following excerpts that illustrate instances of specification in the disaster reports, many of which also featured as following the functionalisation strategy. This also illustrates the co-occurrence of more than one strategy in the very same utterances.

- (59) *Assistant District Disaster Risk Management Officer, Humphrey Magalasi*, said while relief supplies are trickling in for the district, the swelling numbers of people in the camps is stretching the resources further.

(*The Daily Times*, 19 January 2015)

- (60) In response, *Vice-President, Saulos Chilima*, and World Vision Malawi officials launched a food distribution program ...

(*The Nation*, 18 January 2015)

- (61) *Health rights activist, Martha Kwataine* of Malawi Health Equity Network (Mhen), said there is high likelihood of campers falling victims to waterborne diseases such as cholera due to congestion.

(*The Nation*, 4 February 2015)

The excerpts above, apart from identifying actors by their proper names, specify them by referring to the official roles they fulfil in the society. For instance, Health rights activist, Martha Kwataine is specifically named as a campaign rights activist on health issues. Similarly, the media has specified the positions of the vice-president, and of a risk management officer to

distinguish their contributions uniquely. By particularly specifying the social actors, the newspapers reinforce powerful status and foregrounds the contributions of these actors.

6.2.1.7 Inclusion and Exclusion

Another category worth exploring in the study is the inclusion/exclusion strategy. According to van Leeuwen (2008:28-32), text producers include or exclude social actors to suit their personal interests and purposes, thereby manipulating the meaning and determining what the intended reader has to work with. Van Leeuwen defines exclusion as one means of disguising the identity of powerful actors, or discouraging the interrogation of their actions. Contrastively, inclusion of a reference to a person or event, is likely to draw special attention to an actor or to particular circumstances, also signifying the higher, more powerful social standing in some cases. Exclusion could mark social actors as inferior, powerless and undesirable. Other social actors are excluded because their identities are obvious. In this study, the inclusion/exclusion strategies have been investigated for their use in the representation of the flooding crisis, i.e. of the natural phenomenon in the media. Particularly, I examined how the natural phenomenon/floods are included or excluded in the discussion of extensive destruction of human infrastructure and the economy. My interest was in how inclusion and exclusion reveal the more or less justifiable ways that relate floods to human activities. Specifically, I considered the lead paragraphs in news reports here, following Bell's (1991:185-87) pointer that lead sections summarise the story. This is a section at the beginning of an article, i.e. in larger lettering with a part of it in bold. The illustrative excerpts given below are headlines or lead paragraphs from the local print and international online websites.

- (62) Malawi deployed military helicopters and boats Thursday in a bid to rescue desperate flood victims stranded on the patches of high ground **after raging waters** killed at least 48 people and left 100,000 homeless.

(Daily Mail Online, 15 January 2015)

- (63) The Malawi government has declared half the country a disaster zone and appealed for international humanitarian help **after torrential rains** killed at least 48 people, left 70,000 homeless and destroyed bridges and roads.

(The Guardian, 14 January 2015)

- (64) The rains may have stopped and water levels in areas that were recently hit **by floods** last month have subsided but the disaster could leave a deadly trail as cases of cholera outbreak have been reported in Nsanje and Phalombe.

(The Daily Times, 16 February 2015)

- (65) The number of households displaced **by** the *current floods due to heavy rains* has risen from 13,000 to 19,000, Vice president Saulos Chilima has said.

(*The Nation*, 16 January 2015)

The excerpts (62) to (65) above are lead paragraphs as they appeared in each one of the publications reporting on the disaster. These statements represent the inclusion of the natural phenomenon as causative in the devastation of the land, displacement and stranding of people, as well as in being responsible for deaths. In all cases post-modifying phrases introduced by prepositions ‘by’, ‘as’, ‘from’, and ‘after’ were used. Bell (1998:97) indicated that lead paragraphs contain important information which is given as early as possible so that the essence of the story is captured before people who just scan the article don’t miss it. By inclusion, the natural phenomenon and its effects are foregrounded. For example, in 12 out of 16 lead paragraphs of the international online media, *The Guardian* and *Daily Mail Online*, the flooding is included in this way. Ultimately, this shows how responsibility for the destruction is assigned to impersonal natural processes, while destructive human practices that may have aggravated the effects, are excluded.

Ascribing responsibility to the rain and flooding, is done in three ways syntactically, namely identifying the floods (i) as actor in active statements (ii) as actor in passive statements using by-agent, and (iii) as an agent of a destructive process in time bound subordinate clause, as (e.g.) in a headline (66) below, and in the above excerpts (64), and (65), respectively.

- (66) *Floods* kill at least 176, displace 200,000 in Malawi.

(Headline in *Daily Mail Online*, 16 January 2015)

Representing the floods in an active role (66), as an agent responsible for the killing of people, illustrates a regularly used strategy. Similarly, the flood is an agent in the passivised forms used in excerpts (64) and (65). Excerpts (62) and (63) articulate the role of the floods as an agent in a subordinate time bound clause that give the action in nominalised form as part of a prepositional phrase. Here Fairclough (2003:145) is relevant in that he refers to how particular subjects are activated to control others and make things happen, and at the same time passivised in relation to other phenomena so as to show their subjective connection to these. Thus, the various newspapers relied on strategies that reinforced the myth of nature alone being responsible for the devastating crisis in this poor country. The text producers excluded reference to the related human activities and foregrounded the natural phenomenon, on the one hand denying or at least obscuring the role of poor agricultural practices and the failure of

government to support better agriculture, and on the other hand to suit their interests and purposes of gaining sympathy and material support for relief and reconstruction efforts (see van Leeuwen 2008:28).

Contrastively, there are instances when the media excluded the natural phenomenon from the text despite outlining some of the destructive effects. This is identified in the passive statements where the agent is deleted. Excerpts (74) to (76) below illustrate this.

(67) Displaced people want to return home.

(Headline from *The Nation*, 23 January 2015)

(68) Tents have been set up for those left homeless, and many have found refuge with friends and neighbours whose homes remain habitable, Doctors Without Borders said in a statement. The international medical organization said it was concerned that displaced people were so vulnerable to waterborne disease due to unsanitary conditions.

(*Daily Mail Online*, 16 January 2015)

(69) Bridges have collapsed in the country and the newly elected government there has declared a "red alert" for the central and northern parts of the country and was sending rescue boats and aid to stricken areas.

(*Daily Mail Online*, 14 January 2015)

The excerpts (67), (68) and (69) above are from articles that covered the flooding, but in these instances, they avoid directly mentioning the natural phenomenon in relation to the events that are named in the sentence. The natural phenomenon is directly mentioned earlier and the responsibility for the destruction is already established earlier in the texts. The aspect of natural disaster is not suppressed, but backgrounded in these texts. Van Leeuwen (2008:29) and Fairclough (2003:145) argue that backgrounding is a less radical type of exclusion because the social actors may not be mentioned in relation to the given activity, but appear elsewhere in the text. Finally, such exclusion does not obscure the responsibility of the natural phenomena for the destruction; by mentioning the immediate effects of the excessive rains, causality is still assigned. However, in many cases references to poor planning and execution of sensible agricultural methods, assigning these to informed services, government support or negligent farmers, are completely excluded.

6.2.1.8 Role allocation: Activation versus Passivation

Another representational category often used in the natural disaster discourses, is one of role allocation to social actors. This involves strategies using the active or passive form when roles

are assigned. According to Van Leeuwen (2008:33), activation occurs when social actors are represented as dynamic forces in activity, whereas the participants in passivation are represented as ‘undergoing’ the activity or as being ‘at the receiving end of it’. For this categorisation, some of the excerpts analysed earlier in the study have shown the natural activation and passivation of the natural disaster. Consider the following examples;

- (70) *Floods* kill at least 176, displace 200 000 in Malawi (= 73 above)
(Headline in *Daily Mail Online*, 16 January 2015)
- (71) *Floods* stole my husband, child. Chilobwe woman mourns husband and child
(Headline in *Nation on Sunday*, 18 January 2015)
- (72) President Peter Mutharika yesterday described as disaster areas 15 districts throughout the country that have been badly hit *by floods* where at least 48 people have been killed.
(*The Daily Times*, 14 January 2015)
- (73) Government says it has limited resources to support people who have been made destitute *by floods and stormy rains* in 17 districts since last month.
(*Malawi News*, 10 January 2015)

In excerpts 70 and 71, the floods (natural phenomenon) are represented as active and dynamic force performing the action, also using the active sentence form. For excerpts 72 and 73 the natural phenomenon is given as actor in the passive form, while the land (mentioned as districts) and the people are represented as the actually passive entities in the events. Overall, in newspaper headlines, the natural disaster phenomenon is more activated than passivized. For instance, 7 out of the 16 international news articles analysed, cast the natural catastrophic disaster in an active role. Often, the use of passive or active voice plays a significant role in achieving the ideological interests of the publishers. As Reah (1998:83) observes, news writers can foreground social actors in prominent positions or delete them entirely to manipulate the meaning of the statement. Thus, although not entirely dependent on active or passive positioning to give more or less responsibility to the natural circumstances, journalists do achieve directing attention more or less to one party than to another using these strategies.

On the part of the flood victims, the texts mostly identified them in passive positions. According to Van Leeuwen (2008:33), a passivised social actor can be represented as a subject (a subjected) or a beneficiary (one who is beneficialised). A subjected participant occupies an object position whereas the beneficialised is the one who benefits from the action. The flood victims were passivated with the intention to ‘beneficialise’ them. The excerpts below illustrate

examples of flood victims that are passivized in headlines, and at the same time the different donor organisations are activated – regardless of which sentence structure has been chosen.

- (74) **NBM** gives K20m to *flood victims*
(*The Daily Times*, 23 January 2015)
- (75) **Volunteers** join grim search for Malawi *flood victims*
(*Daily Mail Online*, 17 January 2015)
- (76) **Chinese business community** donates to *flood victims*
(*The Daily Times*, 4 March 2015)
- (77) **AMRA** spends K500 million towards *flood victims*
(*The Daily Times*, 4 March 2015)
- (78) *Flood victims* need permanent houses
(*The Daily Times*, 4 March 2015)

In excerpts (74), (75), (76) and (77) the flood victims are represented in passive roles and ‘beneficialised’. The same excerpts have activated the different organisations such as NBM (74), Volunteers (75), Chinese business community (76) and AMRA (77). The passivized victims are positioned as ones in need of sympathy and support. The verbs ‘gives’, ‘donates’ and ‘spends’ indicates the agency of the organisations in the action towards the object or goal (which are the victims). These reports passivized the victims, sometimes representing them as dependent on handouts. The donors and NGOs were given agency, emphasising them as more caring than (e.g.) the passivized government. Such representation dominated the reports that included emotional appeals to individuals, non-governmental organisations (NGO’s) and donor countries for help.

Contrastively, sometimes the victims are activated when they are shown to need replenishment of basic items such as food, housing and or shelter. Thus, although not entirely passively presented, they remain constructed as passive receivers of aid. Van Leeuwen (2008:32-35) notes that passivized social actors are treated as being at the receiving end, as objects. The NGOs are represented as the active and in an agency position, whilst victims and the Malawian government were largely represented as inactive and in passive roles. Though Fowler (1991:79) observed that analysts should not read too much into passivation for in headlines it is regularly used for brevity, this study regards the use of passivation or activation as indicative of the

ideological interests of the writers who presented the victims as helpless, the government as largely inept, whilst NGOs were constructed as active givers and responsible social actors.

6.2.1.9 US versus THEM/IT constructions

The reporting on the disaster constructed two groups of people, that can be identified as insiders and the outsiders. Those relaying the stories were mostly observers of the events; curiously, they were the insider-group in terms of control of what kind of representation was mediated. Those most directly affected, thus came across as an outsider group. The data illustrates the ideology that constructed the victims as ‘others’, the so-called “them”-group. At the same time, those further removed from the effects of the disaster, the donors and readership of the news media became the ‘us’-group.

In the newspaper articles on the flooding crisis, those that were not affected by the natural phenomenon/flooding included the readership of the news who were also constructed as belonging to ‘us’, whilst THEM/IT represented the victims of the catastrophe and or the natural phenomenon of the flooding itself. This ideological strategy created what van Dijk (1996) referred to as ‘ideological square’ of ‘US’ versus ‘THEM/IT’, which assumes the two different groups, the insiders and outsiders. It generally functions in the positive self-representation of speakers and negative other representation of those being objectified. To achieve this fit, the practice generally is to emphasize OUR good actions and emphasize THEIR bad actions, de-emphasize OUR bad actions and de-emphasize THEIR good actions. According to Richardson (2007), ‘our’ positive characteristics and actions are foregrounded while the negative ones are suppressed or backgrounded. Other studies demonstrating how this effect is achieved, have focused on racism such as Richardson (2004), the Iraq war (Richardson 2007; Chovanec 2010) and immigration (Silveira 2016; Krzyzanowski and Wodak 2008). Data for this study reveals several ways in which, on the one hand, the disaster victims and on the other hand, the Malawian government and government officials, were constructed and portrayed as ‘others’, hence treating them as distant from the readership and responding poorly or inappropriately to the testing circumstances.

Though the media empathized with those devastated by the flooding, an ideology that portrayed the victims as inactive, passive and lazy while depending on handouts even after the water had subsided, can be detected. Similarly, the government was criticised for corruption and mismanagement of the state economy as such donors provision of social services, particularly

relief aid, is shown to have been diverted and channelled through the GN based NGOs during the flooding disaster. In the last phase of reporting, some of those reporting for relief supplies were labelled as impostors and undeserving beneficiaries who were not genuine victims of the flooding. My analysis of the reports is that, particularly in the last phase of media reporting, victims and government officials are groups that were collectivized and genericized, adding some negative connotations. However, positive representations are given of the donor organisations, countries of the global north and others who contributed to improving the victims' welfare, whether materially or financially. In other words, the media emphasized positive representation of the people and countries that helped the victims and Malawi as a whole.

First, the study considered examples about the negative representation of the government.

- (79) **Government delaying support** – flood victims
(Headline *The Nation*, 11 January 2015)
- (80) Floods, storms **overwhelm government**
(Headline *Malawi News*, 10 January 2015)
- (81) **Government says** it has **limited resources to support** people who have been made destitute by floods and stormy rains in 17 districts since last month.
(*Malawi News*, 10 January 2015)

Excerpts (79) to (81) illustrate how the government is negatively portrayed as unprepared and overwhelmed by the natural phenomenon. It is blamed for not providing quick support and solutions to the problems of the flooding. Notably these extracts are taken from the local Malawian media. Similar criticisms were identified in the international online media but they were more careful in casting the blame on Malawian government. Thus, the media distance itself and the audience away from the various negative characteristics to 'other' the government.

Negative representations were also often incorporated into the descriptions of the victims. Consider the following extracts that illustrate the 'Othering' of the victims.

- (82) Some community members from villages close to temporary shelters for people displaced by floods in Chikwawa are reportedly sneaking into the camps and **posing as principal beneficiaries of relief items**.
(*The Daily Times*, 5 March 2015)

- (83) **GENUINE OR FAKE?** Flood victims at a camp in Chikwawa
(A picture caption, *The Daily Times*, 5 March 2015)
- (84) **Bogus flood victims** invade camps
(Headline, *The Daily Times*, 5 March 2015)
- (85) Zomba Chilwa displaced villagers **cry** for relief items
(Headline, *The Nation*, 20 January 2015)
- (86) “The health care system will be disrupted as people will not get services and some might have **lost their drugs such as ARVs**. Children will not be vaccinated,” said Malawi’s health ministry spokesman Henry Chimbali.
(*Daily Mail Online*, 16 January 2015)
- (87) Medical charity Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) said the disaster was likely to create long-term health **challenges in the region where one in seven adults is HIV positive**.
(*Daily Mail Online*, 23 January 2015)

Excerpts (82) to (87) refers to community members who present for relief supplies as untrustworthy, “fake victims”. In doing so the writer foregrounds not the plight of many, but the possible opportunism of a few from villages in the poor and devastated areas. Quite a number of negatively connotated words such as ‘fake’ and ‘bogus’, are used to doubt the authenticity of the flood victims. Specifically, in excerpt 86 the voice of high ranking government official is ‘othering’ the victims of the catastrophe. In excerpt 85, the victims’ cries for assistance negatively represent them as reliant on donors for relief and hence as not pro-active. Excerpts 86 and 87 refer not generally to a shortage of medical supplies, but find it necessary to foreground the needs of HIV positive patients, thereby implying that this is a major and primary need. For excerpt 87, the voice of aid organisation is used to ‘Other’ the victims. Considering the way in which HIV and AIDS are stigmatised in Malawi (as in many African countries), this highlighting of the plight of such patients is particularly telling. The study established that local print newspapers were more critical of the government than the international online news websites to provide the checks and balances for the sake of the better welfare of the citizens.

Contrastively, the descriptions of the non-profit organisations, donors and other individuals who assisted the victims used much more positive representations. The emphasis was on the donations that were made materially or financially, directly or indirectly and the moral support towards the cause. The excerpts below demonstrate this.

- (88) Catholic Bishops under the **Episcopal Conference of Malawi** (ECM) are today visiting flood victims **to show solidarity and give the message of hope** ... According to the statement signed by ECM's acting secretary general Emmanuel Chimombo, during the visit the bishops are expected to **present some of the relief items** which were collected from all the parishes and institutions in the country and the caritas family to cater for flood affected dioceses.
(*The Nation*, 10 March 2015)
- (89) **CICOD nourishes** flood victims
(Headline *The Nation*, 21 March 2015)
- (90) Japanese ambassador to Malawi Shuichiro Nishioka says Malawi **can learn a lot from Japan** in terms of disaster management.
(*The Nation*, 5 March 2015).
- (91) **Red Cross intensifies hygiene** in flood victims' camps
(Headline *The Nation*, 4 March 2015)
- (92) The **United Nations World Food Program** said it plans to airlift more than 100 metric tons of food to the southern African **to feed at least 77 000**, but added in a statement that accessing Malawi's southern districts has been 'extremely difficult.'
(*Daily Mail Online*, 16 January 2015)

In the excerpts above, different social actors are represented or self-constructed as generous and helpful to the victims of the floods. Excerpt 88 to 92 positively represents the organisations as supportive and caring towards either the victims or government. The financial, material and moral support that they offered the victims or government is emphasised. For instance, excerpt 88 shows how the Catholic Bishops are portrayed as caring as they prepare to present relief items and offering moral support to the victims. Relief organisations such as The Circle for Intergrated Community Development (CICOD) (89), Red Cross (91), United Nations World Food Program (92) were foregrounded and highly praised for their efforts to help the victims of the flooding. Even if well-intended such reporting comes across as patronising and is in no way emancipating to the Malawian community. Excerpts 88, 89 and 91 are the voices of the reporter incorporating the positive representations of the relief aid organisations, whereas excerpt 92, the voice from the organisation is 'othering' the victims and explains that it is difficult to get to their respective areas because of poor road network.

According to Machin and Mayr (2012:84), participants are represented with either 'WE'/ 'US' to position them alongside, or against specific ideas. Though 'WE'/ 'US' and 'THEM / IT'

operate to represent a collective identity, it also represents the division of an in-group (US/WE), and an outgroup (THEM/IT) in the study. Thus, US/WE are represented positively whereas THEM/IT as already alluded in the earlier section above represented the participants negatively. However, supporting organisations/donors referencing to ‘THEM/IT’ carries a positive representation. Fairclough (2000:152) observed that writers use the possessive pronouns ‘US’/‘WE’ and ‘THEM/IT’ to obscure the facts by concealing their powers and make vague statements. In the data, the participants are constructed with such division of ‘WE’/‘US’ and ‘THEM/IT’. Excerpts below illustrate how the use of the possessive pronouns in the representation of the victims and natural phenomenon as ‘THEM/IT’, and the rest of the people including the donors as ‘WE/US’ defined them as ‘in-group’ and ‘out-group’.

- (93) ... “This may not be enough but *we* pledge that *we* will continue working with other *stakeholders* and indeed government to see how *we* can help out as individuals and institutions. There is really need to join hands, and if each *Malawian* or even churches contribute, *we* can pool together enormous resources as *a nation*, that will help *our needy brothers and sisters*,” Chakwera said.

(*The Daily Times*, 19 January 2015)

In the above excerpt (93), the Malawi government official expression positively represents an in-group media emphasized the constant use of ‘we’ as an imagined collective in the negotiations of complex possibilities such as what basic assistance is needed to help the public affected by the floods. Chakwera, the government official speaking, distances the Malawians not affected with the disaster as ‘we’, from those affected who were labelled as ‘our needy brothers and sisters’. Hence, the latter can be referred to as ‘THEM’. This created clear boundaries in as far as identification of the two groups within Malawi, the division of ‘US’ and ‘THEM’.

Similarly, in the excerpt (94) below the speaker using pronoun “we’ represents the government making a positive representation of themselves as saviours through assurances to the flood victims who were complaining of lacking basic items.

- (94) ‘... *we* want to assure **them** that *we* will not abandon **them**’ ...

(*Daily Times*, 19 January 2015)

In the excerpt above, ‘them’ refers to the victims of the floods. However, ‘We’ creates the impression that it is the group that the speaker belongs, the ‘Self’. ‘We’ is giving assurance that victims will be taken care of and not abandoned. The expression creates a division between the

‘self’ and ‘other’ social actor groups to re-emphasize the differences between the victims and the rest of the audience, to which the speaker belongs. Overall, various strategies deliver a picture of the victims as “others” who are passive actors, heavily dependent on aid from benefactors identified as different individuals and or organisations who in the process of giving aid are also gaining media attention that will promote them as highly ranked social agents.

6.2.1.10 *Positive and negative connotation of words*

Journalists consistently make linguistic choices in communicating messages whether about an individual or a group of people. They convey both denotational and connotational meanings which are the imprint of the society (Conboy 2007:37). This section offers a critical analysis of terms that were used in referring to the government and donors to establish how they were depicted in the media. Consider the excerpts below illustrating the ways in which government and non-profit organisations were differently constructed:

- (95) Floods, storms *overwhelm* government
(Headline *Malawi News*, 10 January 2015)
- (96) Government says it has *limited resources to support* people who have been made destitute by floods and stormy rains in 17 districts since last month.
(*Malawi News*, 10 January 2015)
- (97) Meanwhile, Chikwawa District Commissioner, Alex Mdoko, has urged *government to declare the situation in the area a crisis ... “It’s a disaster beyond our control* and it needs national attention. We cannot estimate how much aid is needed because every minute we are getting new stories of houses falling and assessment cannot be done as some areas are inaccessible,” Mdoko said.
(*The Daily Times*, 14 January 2015)
- (98) Perennially *short of resources*, it is no longer a matter of question that the Department of Disaster Management is *overstretched*. **That is to say, while the government is expected to provide the resources that it has, it cannot be expected to do this alone. But that is no excuse for it to stop looking for resources and, at best, ensure that it sufficiently prepared for future disasters.**
(*The Daily Times*, 19 January 2015)

- (99) The disaster has led to accusations that the Malawian *government's response is being hampered* by the decision of Britain and other donors to *freeze direct aid* following the so-called "*cashgate*" *corruption scandal* that engulfed several senior officials. Western donors have channelled support to NGOs on the ground instead.

(*The Guardian*, 30 January 2015)

The excerpts show that negative terms were common when constructing the government and its authority figures rather than the NGOs. The negative terms used to describe the situation of the government identified in the texts above include overwhelmed, limited resources, beyond our control, overstretched, sufficiently prepare, hampered, and corruption scandal also known as 'Cashgate'.¹³ The terms identified indirectly (and routinely) characterize the government deficiencies about the management of the flooding disaster. Articles from both the local and international media used negative terms condemning/criticising the government response towards the disaster. Though comparatively low against the local print media, the international online news media, for instance *The Guardian* (UK) (in excerpt 99) used negative terms to characterise the Malawi government as corrupt and dependent hence lacking capacity to support the flood victims. The negative lexical choices used in the text include, freeze direct aid and corruption scandal are a reference to the Malawi government. In support of Littlefield and Quenette (2007) observations, this study established that specific registers in the disaster reports portrayed that the media ignored the role of an objective observer in a crisis but assumed the powerful position itself of criticizing and assigning blame on the authorities handling the disasters, particularly the government's slow response.

However, the news media used less negative terms on the corporate / non-government / non-profit organisations including other individuals. The NPOs and NGOs were commended for their positive response and assistance of the flood victims. Some of the positive terms associated with the NPOs/NGOs include 'mobilized', 'deployed', 'delivered' and several others. Positive terms were also used in the news reports associated with the government actions particularly focusing on how its officials were making efforts to help the victims of the catastrophe. Some of the terms that were used to identify the NGOs included verbs and verb phrases carrying negative connotations, such as 'deployed', 'urged to evacuate' and 'appeal'. However, these

¹³High level corruption that was characterised with massive looting of public funds from the Malawi government which forced the African Development Bank, several European countries, International Monetary Fund and the US to withdraw and froze the budgetary support amounting to \$150 million due to lack of trust in the government financial management system and civil service. Most of the budgetary support frozen which amount to 40% was channelled to the various non-governmental organisations (local and international) who were active in the disaster period.

were minimal in relation to the positive terms denoting them. Table 5.4 below illustrates some of the negative expressions identified to describe the government and NGOs performance in responding to the disaster.

Table 6.1: Selected negative terms clustered around government versus donors / NGO's

Newspaper	Government and its authority figures	Corporate organisations, Donor countries and Non-Profit Organisations
<i>The Times</i>	Overwhelmed, unorganized, fruitless efforts, inadequate, inefficient, poor, limited, totally unprepared, struggled, cashgate and floodgate, overstretched, corrupt, yet to provide,	Pledged support, yet to honour
<i>The Nation</i>	Puzzled, challenges, urged, rectify, inadequate, desperate, lack resources	Inadequate, yet to get response, fears
<i>Daily Mail Online</i>	Delayed, racing against time, facing big challenge, poorest, international support	Delayed, inadequate
<i>The Guardian (UK)</i>	Stranded, hampered, corruption scandal, *cashgate, aid freeze, damage, suspension, too slow, accused, arrested, diverted millions, struggled, unaccounted,	Inadequate, yet to respond

6.3 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed a set of discursive strategies that the local print and international online media employed in the representation of the social actors in the flooding crisis. The analysis reveals that in most cases the media discourses assigned agency to the natural conditions in causing the destruction of property and death to people, obscuring human agency in the process. In some cases, particularly in donations of relief the victims were largely assigned passive roles of dependency, whereas the donors and other external social actors were assigned active roles of agency, taking initiative, acting as strong, charitable supporters. An investigation of the connotative and denotative characteristics of words in all the media outlets reveals considerable blame being assigned to the government officials.

Together, the macro-structural and micro-structural features of the media discourses studied here, give an overall impression of continuing stereotyped constructions of a devastated African

community, with minimal recognition of the complexity of longer term effects of a colonial past, impoverished rural communities, limited access to information and resources that all interact in producing a range of roles among social actors within all of the groupings. Chapter seven will turn attention to aspects of the visual elements of the mediated discourses in focus in this study.

Chapter 7

MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS: VISUAL IMAGES IN THE REPRESENTATION OF SOCIAL ACTORS IN THE NATURAL DISASTER REPORTS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The objective of this chapter is to analyse the photographic representations of the social actors featured in the media reports after the exceptionally devastating floods in Malawi. The chapter seeks to address how the media's visual portrayal of the social actors offered multiple ways of understanding the event, the people engaged and the context of reporting. Using Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996/2006) Grammar of Visual Design (GVD) as well as van Leeuwen's (2008) Social Actor Model (hereafter SAM), the study analyses the main visual characteristics that the media used when presenting social actors. The focus will be on the images' representational meanings (the content of the images), the interactive meanings (the kind of relationship created with the viewer) and the compositional meanings (interpretations made from the layout of the image) (see Jewitt and Oyama 1990; Kress and van Leeuwen 2006; van Leeuwen 2008).

A fundamental premise of this research is that visual images form a symbiotic relationship with written aspects of the texts (see Chapter 4, section 4). The previous two chapters have highlighted that particular verbal aspects of the text construct western countries, non-governmental organisations and individual elites as effective social actors, while the government is presented as unprepared, incompetent and even corrupt. Further, the media used a varied range of possibilities that language offers to refer to the social actors (see sections 5.3; 5.4; 5.5 and 5.6). Specifically, an analysis of metaphors generically used across the four publications established that the natural events of rain and flooding were represented in personalised terms as if monstrously responsible for the destruction. Also, the government was vilified for its inadequate preparedness. Victims were not confronted regarding a history of unsustainable agricultural and environmental practices that might have contributed to the severity of the disaster. Against this background, attention to visual images goes to how social actors are represented, and whether these representations contradict or support the verbal representations highlighted in the previous chapters.

According to Kress and van Leeuwen (1998), the semiotic modes in the texts relate to the visuals and writing in different ways, complementing one another. Machin and Mayr (2012:17) and van Leeuwen (2008:136) noted that images sometimes communicate ideas more extensively, giving detail than verbal texts cannot accomplish. Unlike the linguistic texts, images are less fixed and open to more varied interpretation. Rose (2001:15) argues that image meanings are not entirely reducible to their context because their own effects are embedded in the social practices of production and consumption. In Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006:1- 14) opinion, the images provide meanings through direct impressions and connotations that vary depending on society and culture. They are regarded not as precise representation of reality, but as manipulated renderings that are socially constructed to derive a meaning in a particular social context. Then, the words in the caption and accompanying text work as supplements, commentary, footnotes and elaboration of the images (Kress and van Leeuwen 1998:187; van Leeuwen 2008:136). Ultimately, this study explores the meanings construed from the semiotic modes that transcend the textual explanations in the reporting of the flooding disaster. As Pieterse (1992:x) writes, "[e]very picture tells a story: visual imagery too has a narrative character and structure". The analysis given here focuses on selected narratives that emerge from the disaster images.

Drawing on Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:20), images just like language fulfil what Halliday called the three metafunctions of language, namely the ideational, interpersonal and textual functions. As explained in section 3.4.1, the ideational function of images is to provide a representation of the world around and inside us, the interpersonal function expresses social relations among the participants in the situation, and the textual function of images makes representation cohere both internally and with its environment. As highlighted in section 3.3.1.3 images are not a mirror of reality, but potential ideological tools that are controlled by the elite classes and reinforced in the media. Therefore, a critical analysis of the photographs focuses on ideology as one of the key features to understand the functions that different images serve in a given social context.

In this chapter, the first subsection discusses the dominant themes that emerged in investigation of the visual coverage of the disaster. It also discusses the different visual images placed on the front-pages of the media reports on the disaster, and how they consolidated the themes that were identified. The second section explores the visual characterisation of the social actors, particularly 'typical African communities', children and the aged, and various providers of

‘relief aid’ that include the government and non-governmental organisations. The final section of the chapter analyses stereotypes of gender and desperation from the visual characterisation of men and women in the disaster news. This explores the reinforcement of prejudices especially focusing on the media’s visual portrayal of men or women during the period of reporting investigated here. Thus, the thesis perceives photographs as powerful ideological tools in the media that are used in the social construction of newsmakers to promote particular meanings that serve the interests of the elites.

7.2 GENERAL ANALYSIS OF THE VISUAL CHARACTERISTICS IN THE MEDIA

This section highlights the general salient characteristics of the images from the data corpus that is used for analysis. The first part of this section describes the dominant themes in the photographs whilst the second part explores the relationship between the images and language used in the surrounding headings and captions to investigate the ideologies attached to the visual representation of the flooding disaster.

7.2.1 A thematic analysis of images in the disaster reports

During a thematic analysis of the images, three dominant themes emerged, namely human-interest, economic and political themes from the images that represented the disaster. At first, each image was classified as a member of emergent category of topical issues that were uncovered in the visual representation of the flooding disaster in the media. The content analysis involved examining each image, accompanying caption and associated headline to determine the presence or absence of a particular topic. The topical issues in photographs included related stories of destruction, aid distribution, moral panic, political contestation, death and despair. These topics were synthesized and or condensed into more different themes to respond to the research question on; ‘what are the dominant themes of the flooding disaster from the visual images that were portrayed in the local print and international online media’. These were grouped and conflated according to the respective themes that include social interest, economic and political themes. There were less number of themes in the visual coverage of the floods compared to the textual. Table 6.1 below shows the number of photographs that covered a particular theme in the local print and international online media.

Table 7.1: Frequency of photographs on visual thematic analysis in the media

Theme(s)	Times	Nation	Guardian	Daily Mail Online	Total
Economic	61	18	9	8	96
Social interest	91	26	15	13	145
Politics	50	6	-	-	56

Table 6.1 presents the number of photographs for each particular theme. The most frequent theme was a reference to social interest, particularly on the emotional suffering of the victims which was portrayed in 145 photographs. Next most frequent photographs were representations of economic theme with 96 photographs and 56 photographs portrayed the political theme. The social interest theme overrides all the other topical issues and it was sustained throughout the period of the study in all the media outlets. However, it is evident from the findings that the photographic coverage of the dominant visual themes gradually decreased overtime as the effects subsided. Perhaps, this can be attributed to the fact that disaster stories are widely covered immediately after the event because of urgency for assistance and they fade with the passage of time.

7.2.1.1 Social interest theme

The study established that the social interest theme is most dominant in *The Times* with 61 photographs, followed by *The Nation* with 26 photographs, *The Guardian* has 15 photographs and 13 photographs in the *Daily Mail Online*. Social interest theme photographs were one of most important elements because in every disasters people tend to be interested in seeing the effects on the other people's lives (see Figure 7.1 below; image 1). The theme revolved around the negative effects of the flooding disaster on the community, property damage, people drowning, heroes, rescues and adverse health impacts of floods on the victims. Specifically, the photographs portrayed the destruction of homes, the salvaging of family members, inadequate necessities, and missing or death of the victims. The photographs concentrated on the emotional and intimate human elements that were aimed to arouse the empathetic response from the news readers. In other words, the social interest theme photographs featured strong emotions, particularly portraying the suffering, death and loss of property of the flood victims.

The social interest photographs had much local media attention perhaps due to easy access to first-hand information and their ability to directly witness the effects of the disaster in different areas. The photographic coverage of the floods gave more attention to social interest matters than to the economic and political issues, also because the visuals became an effective tool for persuading donors and gaining public support for the flood victims. The social interest theme focused on people as the main subjects in the images, the victims of circumstances, whilst presenting the destruction as having been virtually maliciously caused by the natural disaster. However, it did not mention the probable human factors or activities that induced the catastrophic flooding. Thus, the photographs on the social interest theme from the corpus heightened the involvement of the audience by means of evoking empathy or sympathy.

7.2.1.2 Economic theme

The analysis also established the presence of an economic theme in 96 photographs with 61 photographs in *The Daily Times*, 18 photographs in *The Nation*, 9 photographs in *The Guardian* and 8 photographs in the *Daily Mail Online*. This theme comprised photographs that portrayed mobilisation of finances for aid and destruction of public infrastructure and crops in the flooded areas (see Figure 7.2 below; Image 2). Although direct association with the global economy is lower in the flooding disaster reports, the coverage was dominated with concerns over the high costs of the charitable giving and the strategic importance of the agricultural industry on the local economy of Malawi.

Another important feature in the economy that was affected and covered in most of the photographs was the infrastructure damage. Most of the photographs portrayed the concerns about the cost of reconstruction of the damaged infrastructure considering the poor economic conditions experienced in the underdeveloped country. Furthermore, media images showed that the floods swept away vast hectares of crops, which meant a low crop yield was expected and an imminent economic downturn. There were also fears of looming hunger that would cost the government a lot of money to replenish the food reserves. In addition, the theme also had images of victims being accommodated in classrooms, which disrupted the education system. Similar to the social interest, the economic theme was dominated with the emotional photographs that showed the impact cost of the flood damage that strained the ability of the victim and country to support themselves. It comprised of instances that demonstrated costs of the distribution of relief items and infrastructure rehabilitation, and reconstruction of bridges and roads including other valuable infrastructure. Thus, the media representation of the economic theme still

attached the ‘myth’ of natural disaster that was criticised for the damage caused without confronting the attitudes of the victims who fail to construct strong flood resilient structures.

7.2.1.3 Political theme

The political theme was less covered in the photographs comparing with the human interest and economic themes. There were only 50 photographs in *The Times* and 6 photographs in *The Nation* that portrayed topical issues on politics. The theme centred on photographs that portrayed party leaders briefing meetings, parliamentary debate and visits to flood ravaged areas to bring comfort to the victims.¹⁴ Other images showed political party members interacting and distributing the relief items. Perhaps, these were a strategic political agenda to give the disaster more attention and elicit positive responses from other countries. Furthermore, the disaster happened during a highly sensitive period when the government was accused of corruption and gross mismanagement of public resources. In chapter 5, the textual analysis has argued that the media demonstrated its national interest through a critical reporting of the humanitarian relief efforts reminding the responsible officers and the flood victims to desist from corruption and mismanagement of the public relief funds and items, however the photographs portrayed nothing in relation to the issue. The alleged corrupt practices in the distribution centres of relief items evoked the channeling of the external aid through various western based non-governmental organisation. The disparity between the photographs and texts shows that the local media made a critical textual reporting unlike the photographic portrayal of the concerns about the government humanitarian relief efforts.

The international online media did not address political issues but concentrated more on issues that affected the victims, such as inadequate food and lack of shelter. The study established that some of the photographs that featured in the international media were sourced from the local based photojournalists of the different respective local media outlets. Moreover, coverage of the disaster took a shorter period than expected in the international online media whereas a considerable amount of coverage came from the local newspapers.

The findings agree with those of several past studies that examined themes derived from the news photographs and established that during crisis the media visual coverage concentrates on the social interest theme rather than economics and politics. For instance, Shin, Fahmy and Lewis (2012) analysis of the six-newspaper comprising of four regional newspapers namely

¹⁴ See *The Nation newspaper*, 3 February 2015, p.1

Hattiesburg American, *The Clarion-Ledger*, *Sun Herald* and *The Times Picayune*, along with two newspapers with a national audience, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* in the coverage of hurricane Katrina found that topics centred on the groups of people or individuals rather than the environment. Furthermore, Borah and Bulla (2006) comparative analysis of the photographs from *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* on the coverage of the Indian Ocean tsunami and the Hurricane Katrina reveals that the newspapers focused on the frames of human interest (sympathy gaining), economic (aid acquisition and economic destruction) and politics.

However, the media images did not refer to the causes of the disaster. The photographs that carried implicit criticism of the human activities that contributed to the disaster, were not identified as such in the accompanying text. In other words, the newspapers concentrated on the impact of the disaster on the social welfare of the people without explicating the causes of the disaster and how to mitigate them. As mentioned in section 6.2.1.1, previous studies have also established that disaster coverage includes little or no elaboration on causes or what influenced responses, thereby presenting a weaker disaster narrative (Houston, Pfefferbaum and Rosenholtz 2012:619). Similarly, the study argues that the media outlets that covered the flooding disaster focused on the impact of the disaster on humans, disaster economics and political bickering without attending to the most excruciating topics of how the various attitudes of the victims and elites have contributed to the floods as a perennial crisis in Malawi.¹⁵ The study assumes that the images in the different themes could evoke several emotional and attitudinal effects as a result influenced the public opinion formation, comprehension of the disaster, and evaluation of the issues.

Overall, the critical investigation of the themes shows that the photographic representation of the disaster is not very different from representations given in the verbal texts. As observed, the texts and images complements one another in the social meaning making. The study noted less thematic issues from the photographic coverage but in-depth illustration of different ideologies.

7.2.2 Reading the disaster through front-page images, captions and headings

The study analysed the disaster images, captions and headings on the front-pages to uncover the different visual narratives that were embedded within the photography of the 2015 floods

¹⁵ See Chapter 2, table 2.1, on the trends and patterns of disasters in Malawi. There are so many flood disasters occurrences yearly.

in Malawi. Front pages are known to contain the most significant information of different events on any given day. Also, the images published on the front pages are selected to attract attention and have a strong impact on the readers.¹⁶ Kress and van Leeuwen (1998) suggests that front-page placement of things, people and places coupled with the language use in the headings and captions has a lot of value in the realization of meanings. Ultimately, the analysis front-page images, captions and headlines assisted in construing the meanings of the narratives captured in the visual representations.

A central argument of this study is that the interaction of the visual and verbal elements on the front-pages of the media reports construct powerful narratives about the natural catastrophic flooding disaster as an agent that caused the human suffering and economic desperation without an account of the overall government preparedness and the potential human activities that triggered the crisis. The analysis established that a critical reading of the visual images coupled with the critical analysis of the language in captions and headings on the front-page revealed the many multi-layered ideological narratives of the images with some related to the issues of national concern such as ‘Cashgate’¹⁷ that took centre stage at the same time of the disaster. Therefore, several photographs conveyed very powerful stories that echoed the respective themes common in the photographic coverage of the flooding disaster. The study suggests that, although front-page photographs included images that are likely to illicit sympathy, they still constructed narratives related to economic desperation, human suffering, donor aid dependency and a disaster-stricken country.

Using analytic procedures suggested by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006/1996) and van Leeuwen (2008), I have identified the elements of meaning realization from the compositional, interactive and representational functions to explain how the participants and the floods were visually and linguistically constructed on the front pages. Specifically, this highlights how the front pages could affect the reader’s interpretation and evaluation of the social actors in the catastrophic events. Furthermore, it gives a clear picture of the journalists’ reactions to the event. What follows is a detailed analysis of the narratives embedded in the front-page visuals

¹⁶ Pasternack, S. and Utt, S. 1995. “America’s front-pages: A 10-Year update,” *Newspaper Research Journal* 16 (fall, 1995): 2-12; Hyun-Joo Lee Huh 2003. “*The effect of newspaper picture size on readers attention, recall and comprehension of stories*”, Paper presented at the annual meeting of the AEJMC, Kansas City, MO, August 2003.

¹⁷ “Cashgate” is the term coined for referring to the looting of government funds by the civil servants and business people through dubious contracts and corruption between 2012-2014. A forensic audit in 2013 established that K550 billion Kwacha (about USD 660 million) meant for various public developmental projects had been looted from the government coffers. Eventually, this also affected perceptions of the government response to the crisis.

and language used in the captions and headings that reinforce the themes identified in section 6.2.1 above.

7.2.2.1 Images as narratives of economic desperation

Economic desperation on the front-pages of the local newspapers is portrayed through infrastructural destruction (roads, bridges and structures), government economic instability and inadequate food aid. The analysis established the images of economic desperation reflected panic of rescue activities, food and resettlement of victims within the affected societies and the government. The images constructed and represented government officials and victims as destitute due to their continuous calls for emergency funds from the NGOs and countries belonging to the global north. In addition, the photographic portrayal of long queues of flood victims at food distribution centres demonstrated the country's lack of financial capacity to procure adequate food aid. Figure 7.1; Image 1 analyses the image, caption and heading of the front-page article in *The Daily Times* to establish how the news media constructed economic desperation.

Image 1 (below) portrays a large expanse of land and houses inundated by the rising flooding water with one of the houses destroyed completely. The article appeared on the front-page of *The Daily Times* of 13th January 2015.

From the compositional meaning point of view, the photograph portrays infrastructural damage, specifically the house placed on the right side of the photograph. In the background other houses are also shown surrounded with the flood waters. The image is medium sized covering almost a quarter of the front page of the newspaper, a relative size capable of attracting the attention of the audience. The image is anchored in the headline that shows the costs the disaster titled '*Floods drain K300 million,*' and the caption that acknowledges government spending on the flooding disasters as it reads, '*Government is investing a lot of money through floods like this one*'. The disaster is criticised for the government loss of money in both the headline and caption with an illustration in the image of the damaged house. The study suggests that the photo of the damaged house, caption and bold headline heighten the readers emotions and pity



Figure 7.1: Image 1, Front page from *The Daily Times*, 13 January 2015

on the disaster because of the amount of expenses incurred in the reconstruction of such damaged infrastructure. The salience of the information on economic desperation is also achieved through the colour contrasts between the water and structures.

Within the article, the photograph is placed to the right side of the article, which means it is a valuable 'new information' for the audience. For Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 1998), anything placed on the 'right' side of the newspaper stands for a 'new information' hence very significance for the readers. Moreover, there is a damaged house within the right side of the image which the readers should focus on as 'new information'. Both the image and the article are framed in a rectangular thick red border separating the flooding story from the one placed at the bottom. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (1998:203), framing connects or disconnects a story from the others that are regarded as less important. This signifies that the article on flooding is constructed as separate and independent from other stories within the page. Van Leeuwen (2005) and Machin (2007) discuss the meaning potential of the use of borders and spacing. Both argued that thicker as opposed to the narrower borders connote great separateness on either side. Hence, the maintenance of strict boundaries in the article under analysis. Therefore, the compositional layout on the page creates a hierarchy of salience out of

which the article and photograph about the flooding look more important and worthy than others. The study suggests that the impact of the disaster on the economy is made more salient through the bold headline, framing, coloured contrast and the placement of the photograph in the ‘ideal’ position.

Similar images on the front page that conveyed the narratives of economic desperation portrayed ministerial statements in parliament explaining about the government expenditures¹⁸. Economic desperation could be noted from the disconnect of the figures that government reported to the media about government using K300 million kwacha by 13th January whereas the news of 3rd February from the same government sources indicated that K96 million kwacha was used (see *The Daily Times*, 3 February, page 1 in appendix). The study simply noted the differences to substantiate the economic desperation of the government and the flood victims. Perhaps, the inconsistency of the government financial reports about the disaster expenses might have influenced the countries of the GN to suspect some fraud activities hence divert their relief funds and channel them through the home based international NGOs as discussed in Chapter 5, section 5.

Similarly, **image 2** (below) from the *Weekend Nation* newspaper portrays a desolate scene of a collapsed roof that was washed away from one of the houses in part of Blantyre town, and the desperation of financial need in the headline.

From the compositional meaning perspective, the image is placed on the right-side of the article and front-page. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), this position is area for ‘new’ information hence the picture is a point of focus compared to the article. The left where the article is positioned is an area of ‘given’ information. According to Oyama and Jewitt (2002:147), placement of things, people and places in a picture space or page have a significant value to the realization of meaning. Different elements are interpreted depending on whether they are placed on the right, left, centre or margin, top or bottom of the picture or page.

Moreover, the image is made salient with the different colour contrasts that are aimed to make clear the collapsed roof. Saliency helps to make some elements more important than the other. It creates the hierarchy of importance hence in the picture readers are first to recognise the roof

¹⁸ *The Daily Times*, 3 February 2015, Govt spends K96 million on flood victims.
The Weekend Nation, 3 February 2015, Disaster status stirs debate.



Figure 7.2: Image 2; *Weekend Nation* newspaper, 17 January 2015. **The caption reads;** A roof of a house that was washed away in Chilobwe, Blantyre

through its shiny colour and deduce the need for emergency financial assistance for rebuilding the destroyed houses. The background shows a house that stained with mud and perhaps a deep gully close to the roof is the water way used by the floods. The readers can perceive a sense of economic desperation from the government and victims through the bold headline twice the font of the original text which reads that, ‘K5BN NEEDED FOR DISASTER RELIEF’. The government call for immediate emergency relief funds signifies its financial desperation and lack of preparedness for the disasters. The subheadings give a clear impression about the impact of the floods, thus the death of 176 people and displacement of 175 000. These figures captured from the sub-headlines are used for rhetorical emphasis of the impact of the floods to show the need of the K5 billion Kwacha to serve as an emergency fund in rescuing the displaced. Perhaps, the image, its caption and the headline give an illustration of the destructive nature of the floods and the need of funds for recovery and reconstruction.

For interactive meaning, the focus is on the person standing towards the far right of the image with arms folded probably in disbelief about the damage caused by the catastrophe. Though the face is unidentifiable, the position shows that the participant directly faces the camera perhaps

making a ‘demand’ to the audience to assist with finances for the reconstruction of what is presumed as his or her house. In terms of distance, it is a long shot which means that there is no close relationship between the participant and the viewers. Apart from the government economic desperation, individuals were also financially constrained to attend to the impact of the unanticipated flooding disaster.

The study established that several images on the front-page of newspapers were characteristic of the multimodal texts that narrated about economic desperation. The in-depth analysis of the photographs revealed the narratives that highlighted government unpreparedness and dependency on aid in emergency situations. The media selected images that represented collapsed buildings or sunken under water, roadways ripped up and make-shift flood camps to demonstrate the economic desperation of the government in the reconstruction of the damaged infrastructure. Other front-page images, headlines and captions on the same economic desperation had political contestations and ministerial statements about the finances spent in managing the disaster.¹⁹ Hence, the media narratives focused on images that could move the emotions of the people within and outside the country to bailout the government with emergency relief funds. Just like any other social cultural institution of representation, the media outlets produced and institutionalised the economic discourses and ideological narratives through the images portraying damaged infrastructure, inadequate relief food, and rhetorical headings and captions that influenced the audience interpretation and evaluation of the flooding disaster. The media portrayal of the economic desperation through visual based ideologies reinforced the dominant beliefs in assistance from the western donors and other local oligarchies, whilst at the same time playing down the government efforts to assist the victims.

7.2.2.2 Images as narratives of human suffering

Narratives that relate to the social interest theme were conveyed by images attached to different stories explaining about inadequate food and housing resources including the various health threats brought by the floods in the affected areas. The image below illustrates the media representation of human suffering. **Image 3** shows a woman lying flat on her tummy on the ground with the other participants not fully visible because they have been cut.

¹⁹ *The Nation*, 3rd February 2015. ‘Goodall allocates K1b for disasters’, and ‘Disaster stirs debate’. Both articles appeared on the front page of the newspaper.

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) explain that informational value in compositional meanings is derived from the placement or position of the news elements within the space of the picture or page. The image of the flood victims appears on the right side of the page, it represents ‘new information’ that the reader is not familiar with. The image is made more salient with the colour contrast that highlights the women’s bare feet and worn out clothes, signifiers which re-emphasize their poverty. Moreover, the readers can notice the contrasting colours of the clothes that each one is wearing which highlights the sense of individuality drawing away the collective idea of ‘flood victim’.

MALAWI'S PREMIER DAILY

The Daily Times

Established in 1995 For News You Can Trust URL: www.dailytimes.com Monday, January 26, 2015 K300

'Private media houses are not allowed to take pictures here'
Police bar private media from taking pictures—P4

'We mostly rely on power to operate'
Power outages worry MCCC—P9

'We will also work with the police and G4 Security'
3 shows, 3 cities in aid of flood victims—P63

MPs grill Mec

BY MACDONALD THOM

THE Legal Affairs Committee of Parliament on Thursday took to task the Malawi Electoral Commission (Mec) on issues relating to last year's presidential, parliamentary and local government elections. A delegation from the country's electoral body, which had in its Chairperson of Electoral Services, Commissioner Emmanuel Chinkwira Phiri and Chief Elections Officer Willie Kalonga appeared before the committee. Although Kalonga explained to the committee factors which led to some problems faced in the elections, most MPs were interested in the results of the elections. They wanted to know what happened for a decision of a vote recount to be made and why in some cases, the commission had to change names of people who had won in some constituencies. Kalonga explained to the committee that some problems arose from how the results were being written on results sheets. "We were able to detect some anomalies. And when we managed to, we had to release the results based on the corrections that were being made. Just imagine, some results sheets had upper (erasers) in them, yet we do not provide that. These elections have taught us enough lessons," he said. He added: "Currently we have 20 cases in court, but we believe the complaints cannot make much difference on the

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Hunger torments flood victims

BY WHYGHSTONE KAPASULE

HUNDREDS of flood victims in Nsanje's East Bank area, currently struggling to access food, clean water and adequate medical care, remain cut off after the recent devastating floods damaged weather roads. While the road through Makwas in Thyolo is in very extremely pathetic condition, the weather road that connects East Bank to Thabwa via Fatima has been badly damaged by the floods making the eastern side of



HUNGER-STRICKEN—One of the flood victims sleeps on the ground desperately awaiting relief food—Photos by Whyghstone Kapasule

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Figure 7.3: Image 3, The Daily Times, 26 January 2015. The caption reads; HUNGER – STRICKEN – One of the flood victims sleeps on the ground desperately awaiting relief food

The image interacts with the bold headline that reads ‘Hunger torments flood victims’, narrating the visual representation of participants. It uses the verb ‘torments’ to demonstrate the kind of suffering that participants are going through. Similarly, the caption also emphasizes this with the noun phrase that describes the woman lying on the ground as ‘HUNGER STRICKEN’, which is presented in capitals. The rest of the caption explains that the flood victim is ‘desperately waiting’ for relief supplies, indicating that they are struggling to survive without food. The compositional meaning of the picture through its informational value and salience emphasizes attributes that clearly narrates the story that the victims are poor and finding it difficult to survive from the effects of the flood.

As far as interactional meaning is concerned, the focus is on the woman lying passively on the dusty ground in a horizontal position and facing away from the camera. She is placed in a ‘low’ position, signifying her availability and desperation. She invites the readers to critically scrutinise and make a conclusion on her situation. In Kress and van Leeuwen (1996:124) terms, the picture treats the readers as ‘invisible onlookers’ urging them to contemplate what the picture has to offer. Besides this, such placement at the low position is a demand towards the viewers to respond to the appeal for more food since it is construed that the victims are hunger-stricken. The characterisation of the women as barefoot and hungry are concrete signifiers of extreme poverty, which reflect the inability of the women to deal with the instances of natural disasters. The image is a clear example of collectivisation because the women victims are represented as a group of victims and not isolated individuals. Thus, embedded within the image, headline and caption were the narratives about the suffering of the participants.

Though the international online websites had no front pages but the stories reflected similar narratives of the local print media. The study considered analysing the images that represented the narrative of human suffering from *Daily Mail Online* news website published on 16th January 2015, which was headlined ‘Malawi floods death toll rises to 176; 200 000 homeless’ (see appendix for full website page). The website has a number of small separately framed photos on its far right with their own list of news snippets from other pages of the website. However, the focus is on the story and image on the centre of the page.

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) argue that part of the narrative analysis interrogates the roles of the participants in the images. For the representational meaning, the image features visibly desperate participants comprised of both mothers and young girls who carried cups, plates and bowls in their hands queueing for relief food. It represents the participants in a form

transactional process because the directed goal is to receive food. Among many, there were a few participants who stand out and the first one is the baby on the back positioned on the far right of the picture. There are also a few young women carrying babies on their backs. Also noticeable are the young girls on the queue. Most of the participants are spotted walking on bare foot similar to what is identified in the previous **Image 3**, the potential signifier of poverty. Ultimately, based on the compositional meaning readers can deduce that the phenomenon impacted heavily on a poor society that comprised of many women and children hence needed extensive support.

Regarding interactive meaning, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and Machin and Mayr (2012:97) argue that distance and angle (or gaze) are the most important features in deriving meanings about its relationship with the viewers. In this image, the gaze of each of the social actors create vectors that goes into different directions, both direct and away from the camera. Those that face into the camera make a ‘demand’ picture whereas those facing away invite scrutiny from the readers (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006). In this image, two young girls are identified looking directly into the camera, the ones holding a shiny bowl and a green cup.



Figure 7.4: Image 4, Picture from the *Daily Mail Online* (from; <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp>)

The two young girls look directly to the readers hence making a demand to the audience, although the others that faced away from the camera are evaluated. The girls are subjects in the image and one extend the bowl in her hand towards the camera as if she is making a direct appeal to be given food. By doing this, the young girl draws the attention of the news audience to make an effort and assist the victims suffering from the impact of the floods. From the distance point of view, the image is taken at a closer to the participants. This means that the viewers create an imaginative personal relationship with the participants in the image. As Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) observed, any image taken from a close angle construes a close social relationship between the represented participant and the viewer. Perhaps, this image demonstrated that readers should assist the victims as brothers and sisters.

In terms of the compositional meaning, the picture is considered as presenting transactional process of waiting with a directed goal of receiving food. However, what is ideologically important about the photo is its position on the centre of the page. The centre is presented as the nucleus of information that other elements are subservient to (Kress and van Leeuwen 1998:196). Items placed at the margins are ancillary, dependent elements. Thus, the centre elements gives meaning to and provides coherence for the elements surrounding it.

Moreover, within the image itself, the right side of the image introduces the readers to the new information, the child who is strapped on the back of her mother. Further, it is noticed within the image that two young women have children strapped at their backs. Both the placement of the image and participants within it connotes a specific message about suffering of women and children, which the media wants the readers to interpret. This gives sense that the women and children are greatly impacted with the effects of the floods. They are characterised surviving on handouts and the walking on bare foot including the young mothers demonstrates the element of suffering for the poor victims

The multimodal analysis considered interaction of the image with the headline that reads, ‘Malawi death toll floods rises to 176; 200 000 homeless’, and the caption, ‘Malawian people left homeless due to heavy rains queue for food at Chimwankhunda primary school in Blantyre on January 15, 2015’. Both enhance the impression of the suffering captured in the image. The figures used in the headline have the rhetorical effect to ideologically emphasize the numbers of victims (see Mautner 2008:38). For the photo caption in this image, suffering of the victims is demonstrated in the emphasis that the victims are ‘homeless’ and ‘queueing for food’, they are genericised and classified as poor.

Overall, the critical analysis of the web based images shows the presence of similar narratives to that of the local print newspapers. Specifically, this image made a representation of appeal that were also identified in other images, i.e. image 3. The media used the photographs as a means of binding people together for sharing the emotions that victims were going through. Through the media, the audience had a common cause to assist those affected with the disaster. However, despite such representations the study establishes that media ideological reinforced the poverty in the community through the various signifiers such as participants walking on bare foot, numerous children and dependence on NGOs. Much as the news media sympathised with the victims they indirectly used their powers to entrench the differences between the victims and the audience or the elites.

7.2.2.3 Discussion on reading the disaster through headlines, captions and images on the front pages

The analysis of the images on the front page of the newspapers focused on the issues of power, inequality and exploitation in the representation of participants in the media. Though the media visually sympathised with the participants as suffering victims, they collectivised and genericised them as poor and dependent on the local and international organisation. Particularly, the media used identity attributes that were restricted to the reference of the victim's country of origin. Nationality was an issue in identifying the victims because it classified them as from a poor state incapable of providing basic relief to its affected citizens. Thus, media portrayal of the sufferers in terms of cultural attributes such as national identity creates the hierarchy of life in the pieces of news.

From previous findings of Chouliaraki (2006:4) on distant sufferings, the observation above indicates media thematised and consolidated the economic and political divisions existing within and beyond Malawi. It visually constructed the power asymmetry of presenting the participants in the image and readers as belonging to the category of 'them' and 'us' respectively. The narrative of human suffering as foregrounded in the image, caption and the headlines explicitly revealed the existence of the power asymmetry between the participants in the image and those who sat comfortably in their homes reading the newspaper.

The image presented the entrenched narratives that reflected and consolidated the existing dichotomy of 'us' and 'them'. The media visually portrayed both the affected country and victim as 'them', 'Others', the 'third world', which were visually characterized mostly in terms

of helplessness, negativity and as inferior. On the other hand, the participants in the ‘us’ category included the readers and potential donors, particularly the local and international non-governmental organisations. The narratives reflected the unequal economic and political power relations and divisions in the world, which is perceived in terms of the global north and global south. The media discursively produced visual images that created hierarchies of human life hence classifying the world into categories of ‘us’ and ‘other’. Similarly, the previous studies such as Joye (2012) observed that the press is rooted in the colonial history that use pre-established images driven with incomplete and stereotypical portrayal of people affected by disasters in developing countries. The global south is associated with or identified as inferior, out-group and the ‘other’ whereas the global north is the superior, in-group or ‘us’. Joye argues that the media reporting of suffering has always categorised the helpless and passive victims (foreign) from the heroic and active western relief worker. Thus, the study finds that the narratives of human suffering in the visual coverage of the disaster in the media focused on graphic images that portrayed negative events such as starving women and children including the elderly.

The analysis disclosed that the representations reflected and consolidated the unequal economic relations and divisions of our world. plight of the flood victims excluded men hence the question of the invisibility. The linguistic analysis on gender representation observed that the exclusion of men ideologically reinforced the perception that women, children and the elderly were the most vulnerability victims. Though other previous studies have observed this, this present study extends the exclusion is apparent in the visual portrayal of the disaster victims in the media that covered the 2015 flooding disaster in Malawi. Similarly, across the international online reports of the disaster, the women, children and elderly were regarded as the ones who needed assistance. *The Guardian* and *Mail Online* used many pictures of women and children in requesting for more food aid in Malawi compared to which men are involved.

Basically, conclusions can also be drawn that the ‘humanization’ of the photographs sometimes can ideologically lead to the distorted picture of the flooding crisis. Media have different ideologies in the selection and use of the photographs. As observed in image 3, the media cropped the picture to amplify the plight of the disaster victims particularly lack of food. Similar observations were made by Scanlon (2011:244) that human interest stories are staple items for ideologies in the disaster coverage. Ultimately, the sense of agency cultivated by the photographs portraying the suffering victims on the front-page of the newspapers was

ideological with the aim of appealing to the emotions of the audience. Without the newspapers ideological visual portrayal of the suffering victims in construction of the catastrophe, it was doubtful that people would assist the victims with urgency.

7.3 THE VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF THE SOCIAL ACTORS

This section gives a discussion of how the images represented the social actors that include the ‘typical African communities’, children and the aged, and the providers of aid (non-profit organisations). The study considered analysing the images portraying these social actors because they formed a significant proportion of the visual coverage of the flooding crisis across all the media outlets under study. The analysis established that the social actors were characterised in complex and divergent ways that do not belong to one interpretation.

7.3.1 Visual portrayal of ‘typical African communities’

The analysis of photographic representation of the African communities intersected through the various contexts that included class, economics and history. The findings of the study identified that societies affected by the floods were negatively portrayed in two ways; (i) as typical lazy and over-dependent people, and (ii) as comprised of large families. The first image of interest in representation of societies as ‘lazy and over-dependent’ is from *The Daily Times*.



GENUINE OR FAKE?—Flood victims at a camp in Chikwawa—File photo

Figure 7.5: Image 5, *The Daily Times*, 5 March 2015

At representational meaning, the image accompanying the article titled ‘Impostors invade flood victim camps’ generates a narrative meaning involving the flood victims particularly women

and children. Interest is on the right side of the picture in the area of the ‘new information’ Kress and van Leeuwen (1998:189), and for this picture the netball action is portrayed as something new. The women in this picture are involved in a transactional process because the vector lines connect the different participants as they make moves towards the ball. The goal for everyone involved in the match is to win the ball from the opponent. Apart from the action on the right side of the photograph, the left presents women sitting around and others taking care of children. The vector begins from them towards the netball players. The participants are following eagerly the action in the netball game and this is the goal for everyone. However, it is inconceivable to believe that the women are among the victims for they look not worried with the effects of the floods.

This view is supported in the interactive meaning. There is no direct gaze towards the camera from the participants and they look more detached from the readers. Images that portray participants facing away from the camera invite the readers to scrutinise them (Machin and Mayr 2012; van Leeuwen (2008). Likewise, the readers are interested in the flood victims playing a netball match and sitting around taking care of the children. It is expected that the victims would be active looking for basic items instead of playing around and sitting passively. They lack many basic things and wait upon relief aid organisations to donate to them. Due to the passivity and dependence of the victims, the media portrayed the relationship with the audience as distant and impersonal relationship (see chapter 3, section 3.4.1.2). The picture is taken at a distance and with high elevation meaning that the audience is more powerful than the participants in the image.

The compositional meaning portrayed the participants as fake, passive and dependent. The placement of the image and article provides more information about the ‘given’ and ‘new’, the ‘ideal’ or ‘real’ (Kress and van Leeuwen 1998:189-94). This image appeared on the front page and is placed on the right side of the story signifying that it is ‘new information’ that is not yet known to the people. Furthermore, placement of the women playing netball on the right is another ‘new information’. In this case, both the image and the action of playing netball placement on ‘new information’ implies that the victims are not genuine but the typically lazy societies who waited for handouts. They are characterised as too relaxed and could not make initiatives to find own food apart from the relief aid. Similarly, the ‘given’ information within the image show women sitting around watching the netball match. They are portrayed as passive spectators and busy caring their children. Such characterisation in the image integrates well with the bold headline that takes up greater much space proportionally on the news page

and reads that ‘impostors invade flood victims camps’, which could also illustrate the information that about the dependence on NGOs.

The study suggests that media used the image to ideologically demonstrate that African communities that lack the spirit of hard work and self-reliance to liberate themselves. Particularly, the image portrays the communities affected with the floods as ‘typical’ of lazy people who during disasters avail themselves to the relief camps to benefit from the freely distributed food aid. Indirectly, the media characterises the attitude as entrenched in most of African societies hence they sustain a living through handouts. The visual characteristics of the victims such as playing of netball and sitting around as spectators transcend the mere linguistic explanation to portray evidence of how the members of the communities behave even during the crisis situations when they are expected to be active looking for better housing and food.

Besides communities portrayed as passive and dependent, the media characterised them as made up of large families. Image 6 from *The Guardian* news website illustrates the perception that families are large in African communities. The image shows a woman and with about five children standing next to a house inundated in the flooding waters.



i A family wait outside their home for relief teams in the district of Chikwawa, near Blantyre. Photograph: Thoko Chikondi/AP

Figure 7.6: Image 6. A picture from *The Guardian* online news, 17 January 2015 (Source: www.theguardian.com/world/2015)

Representational meanings in the image relates to the participants 'doings' and 'happenings' in an event or action (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006; Jewitt and Oyama 2001:141). In this image, the woman and her five children are standing near a dilapidated grass thatched house without windows and a door. The study assumes that she is a single mother because of the absence of her husband who fathered her the children. Regardless of the wet and rainy conditions, the children are not well covered as they trudge through the water on bare foot. This signifies the abject poverty and lack of adequate parental care. However, the vectors are realized in the eyes of the participants direct into the camera. With the direction of the vectors, the participants make a transactional process though the goal might be the reader or someone outside the photo.

The participants gaze in the image, particularly the woman and her to kids, direct towards the camera derives an interactive or interpersonal meaning that make an intent statement to the audience to feel sad and sympathise with them. The woman seems visibly hopeless and confused about next course of action with many children around and the dilapidated house in the background. The participants make a 'demand' towards the audience, perhaps a request to rescue her to better conditions. However, this picture is taken from a distance to indicate an impersonal relationship with the readers. Though the audience can empathise with them, the media still produced and sustained the power differences existing between the audience and the victims. Thus, it consolidates the distant relationship that exists between the audience and victims of the floods.

In the compositional meaning, the image is positioned at the centre of the page. As earlier indicated, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) argued that the centre is the nucleus of information. Martin and Rose (2004) also observed that images can be organized in terms of margin or centre principle within the page space or image, with the margin being subservient to the centre which forms the nucleus of the information. The placement of other news around this article and picture has no significance since it is a website page. However, the exclusion of other nearby houses draws audience attention to question the newspaper representation of isolated cases. Further, the exclusion of men from such pictures also call for questioning the emphasis on the plight of women and children.

For the large families, previous studies such as Dogra (2012) commented that crisis images give the common characterisation of the 'third world' or global south women as mothers who always celebrate in over-reproduction. She writes that

‘... images also reflect the colonial discourses of the ‘fecundity’ of ‘Other’ women which were transformed within the development discourse into the over-crowded MW with its over reproductive women who have a ‘tendency to breed like rabbits (Dogra 2012:41 quoted from Palmer 2003:289).

Though the above statement sounds strong and discriminate against African women, it explains better the image portrayed by *The Guardian* website. The media characterised the flood victims, particularly women as vehicles of reproduction. The online page is still stuck in the colonial perception that communities in Africa, and Malawi in particular still regard over-reproduction as an achievement. Similarly, image 4 also explicitly showed the young women with babies strapped on their backs, which ideologically represent that young mothers epitomizes the problems of poverty and overpopulation in the ‘typical African communities’. Image 5 supported the dominant stereotype of “‘typical’ African communities” that they are overpopulated as demonstrated with a lot of family members. In addition, the images portrayed that communities are passive and overtly dependent as they keep on ‘waiting’ for relief aid instead of first finding means of helping themselves. Thus, the visual representation became crucial in the process of ideologically characterising the ‘typical African’ communities.

The study suggests that in terms of class, both the local and international media reports on the flooding disaster constructed and represented the affected communities as poor and dependent on the western donors including other local corporations. Historically, studies on the representation of ‘African communities’ have been controversially criticised of cultivating negative stereotypes particularly for labelling them as dependent, donor driven and uncivilized (see Dogra 2012). Most of the photographs portrayed the victims in a passive mode such as on a queue, sitting or sleeping awaiting for the relief items. The photographs enhanced the pre-existing images that are levelled against the ‘typical African communities’ as surviving on ‘handouts’ (Dogra 2012).

The visual analysis on the ‘typical African communities’ draw a conclusion that the photographs were ostensibly sympathetic of the flood victims but still reinforced the pre-existing negative stereotypes about the African communities. They portrayed the African communities as overpopulated, impostors, beneficiaries, or dependent on foreign and local donors. The findings support the previous visual studies on Africa – American communities and all the blacks involved in the Katrina disaster event who are portrayed as helpless victims in crisis situations (see Kahle, Yu and Whiteside 2007). However, the difference is that visual

characterisation of the flood victims in this study did not change during the whole three months of the crisis coverage.

7.3.2 Visual characterisation of children in the disaster news

A scrutiny of the images established that images of children formed a significant proportion of the visual coverage of the flooding crisis across all the media outlets. The analysis established that such images were used as symbolic metaphors that evoked the following (i) helplessness and universal appeal for aid (iii) state of childhood (connotations of innocence and neutrality)

Image 7, the first image that evoked a characteristic of helplessness and appeal for aid representations appears on the front-page of local print *The Nation newspaper* (see appendices). It shows a girl child with her arms on the head and baby strapped on her back trudging through the flooded waters.



A little girl wads through the floods with a baby strapped on her back in Chikwawa yesterday

Figure 7.7: Image 7, *The Nation Newspaper*, 13 January 2015

The representational meaning of the image portrays a young girl with a baby strapped on her back attempting to cross the flooded waters. The image visually characterises the helplessness situation of the girl for taking such a risky attempt. She is isolated from other people who could

potentially help her. The vector line can be traced from the baby on her back direct to the goal outside the photo, probably the audience. For the interpersonal meaning derived in the image, the young girl faces away from the camera, which attracts the audience to evaluate her. Perhaps, the audience feel sad about the isolated helpless girl who is entrusted with responsibility over a baby in the precarious conditions of devastating floods. The girl appeared alone with the whole background empty with no other person but a dilapidated wall of what used to be a house. She rests her hands over the head completely clueless and hopeless of how she is going to cross over the flooded area. The media visual characterisation ideologically isolates and decontextualizes her thereby foregrounding the overall sense of need and urgency.

The critical visual analysis established that children idealised and objectified to mobilise assistance in the coverage of the flooding disaster. Many images of children individualised or isolated them to remind the audience on how the disaster has broken out families, with children taking huge responsibilities like in the picture. To substantiate this, numerous NGOs that include UNICEF, Save the Children Fund UK, WHO and Medicines Sans Frontieres were associated and targeted children in the disaster. The NGOs were quick to respond in the areas where the disaster affected the children heavily. Regardless of the assistance, the media created image narratives that criticised the impact of the disaster on innocent children without any focus on the behaviour patterns that could have trigger the disaster.

The image is illustrated with a large font catchy headline that reads '*Raging Floods*'. The media uses an 'animate being' metaphor with the attributes of anger and destruction to portray the villainous nature of the disaster. Following this, the isolation of the child and lonely background of the photo objectifies her, and heightens the vulnerability news of all the children. Likely such image portrayal evokes the emotions of the audience to assist the victims, particularly the children in the crisis. Furthermore, the representation of the girl is symbolically linked to the poverty in her community, which in the end benefits through relief aid from the various donors to recover from the catastrophe. Therefore, media portrayal of the children as helpless and isolated from their parents in the disaster turned them into 'ideal' objects for finding assistance.

There were also contrasting ways in which the media presented the images of the children. The visual representation of the children categorised the children into those belonging to 'GS /third world' attributes and others largely attached to the 'GN/ Western world' point of view. It divided the children into 'US' and 'THEM', with the portrayal of children from the victim

families as hopeless and receivers of aid, whereas those rich families as the ‘givers’ of aid. The image below shows the differences in the characterisation of the children.



Figure 7.8: Image 8, A HELPING HAND— One of the pupils (second from right) handing over some of the gifts (*Malawi News*, 7 March 2015)

Image 8 shows a presentation of aid to the children who are victims of the disaster. The representational interpretation shows glaring differences in the characterisation of ‘givers’ and ‘receivers’ of the aid. Children giving aid are dressed in modern school uniforms, wearing school shoes, white socks, hairpins, well-made braids all typically worn by children attending expensive and affluent schools in Malawi. On the other hand, the child from the poor victims’ community is quite basically dressed, and kneeling in a position of deference. The gaze of the giving girl is directed not at the person she is/should be interacting with; rather it is in the direction of the camera, or perhaps of the directing adult. Media characterised the children victims from the poor families as ‘them’ whereas the givers were part of ‘us’, aligned with the readers or audience. This created the ideological square of ‘us’ and ‘them’ construction of news in the media.

In terms of the interaction or ideational meaning, the victim squatting is placed in a lower position compared to the school girl whose eyes are on the same level with the camera. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) argues that when a participant is placed in a low position it symbolises availability and servitude. For this image, the school girl is accommodated as on the same level with the audience, ‘one of us’ since her eyes are at the same level as the viewers whereas the

lower level angle for the boy signifies ‘one of them’. Besides this, the squatting of the receiver demonstrates the power difference that existed between the ‘giver’ and ‘receiver’. Though children distribution of the gifts to fellow children demonstrates their innocence, the photo ideologically characterises their background differences. In the process, the poor young children are being taught to value dependence syndrome whilst the elite children are oriented to the hegemonic practices of suppressing the underprivileged. From the context of gift presentation, the caption illustrates that the pupils are offering a ‘*helping hand*’ which signifies that victims are more disadvantaged compared to them. The expression ‘helping hand’ is demeaning and looks down upon the potential of the receiver’s capability to sustain themselves. Ultimately, at the deeper level children images are portrayed as embodiments of state of need, a way of requesting for more and quick aid.

Image 9 below illustrates further the way children were portrayed in the media visual presentation of the crisis.



Figure 7.9: Image 9, HELP US FAST – Pupils waiting to go back to school (*Sunday Times*, 25 January 2015)

The representational meaning of the picture shows children of school going age sitting on a dusty patch of ground. Obviously, these are children of flood victims, depicted in tattered clothes, unkempt hair and bare feet, as embodiment of the poor community. The vectors run

from their eyes in the direction of the photographer, even if the impression is meant to be one of a naturally captured stance. It is unidirectional, since the eyeline is not reciprocated by any participant within the picture (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006:74). In the representational meaning, images 7 and 8 give an explicit example of the differences between the children of the audience and victims, represented as ‘US’ and ‘THEM’ respectively. Whilst image 7 shows children of the audience or readers (the ‘US’) enjoying their right to education, the children of the victims in image 8 are portrayed as sad and hopeless, sitting bored on the dusty ground.

In terms of the interactive or interpersonal level meaning, the readers look down upon the children captured in the picture demonstrate the power differences. It is a close shot image that is taken at a higher vantage point. Though it establishes a personal relationship with the children, the higher vantage point renders the viewers look down on the participants hence representing a symbolic power over them (see van Leeuwen 2008:139). However, participants look directly into the eyes of the audience which makes an intent statement of appeal to the authorities and audience to assist them go back to school. The image interacts well with the caption on the image that reads *‘HELP US FAST – some school going pupils in need of going back to school’*. The children are demanding their right to education. The reports of the flooding disaster indicate that several schools were destroyed apart from some being occupied by the victims as camps for the displaced. It is ideological that media used the image of the children because despite the declaration of the floods as a national tragedy, other children particularly those regarded as belonging to the in-group – ‘US’ category were still enjoying their right to education in expensive schools whilst those from out-group – ‘THEM’ could not be provided alternatives.

For the compositional meaning, the image is positioned on top of the news article in the inside pages of the news. This re-emphasizes the importance of the image in clarifying the information that goes beyond the verbal text. The text – image interaction is clear since the views of the children in the picture are incorporated in the text. In other words, the image corroborates with the texts as the participants raises their views to go back to school. Further, the use of contrasting colours in the picture give salience to the worn-out clothes of the boys hence characterising them as from a poor background. The boy close to the camera has a torn short and this is captured well in the picture. Media ideologically used the picture to characterise the children’s background and its importance in the flood narrative. As Dogra (2012:37) argues,

children images are idealised to mean the lack something or a sense of being happy, engaged in play.

7.4 PORTRAYALS OF GENDER AND STEREOTYPES IN THE VISUAL COVERAGE OF THE DISASTER

Besides the analysis of general visual characterisation of the participants, the study is interested in how the crisis situation affected (or do not affect) the portrayals of gender in the local print and international online media. Specifically, the study assesses whether the gendered depictions were also evident in media coverage of the disaster in Malawi. The findings show that media used a significant number of pictures that incorporated gender biases or prejudices. These were either the societal or cultural constructs that have existed before or institutional stereotypes that the media wanted to reinforce in their coverage. The content analysis of the photographs representation of gender was undertaken to respond to the following research questions; ‘how are the male and female subjects portrayed visually in the selected newspapers covering the disaster’ and ‘what were the differences between the local and international online news media portrayal of gender during the disasters’. Following this, the analysis focuses on the different institutional, societal and cultural stereotypes that media reinforced in representation of the disaster. First the study quantified the photographs that portrayed the various gender differences in the photographs based on the dominance of male and female subjects, frequency of male and female roles, and women activities in the pictures. The second subsection analyses the visual portrayal of the women. Finally, the visual analysis will focus on the characterisation of men in the disaster.

7.4.1 Quantifying the images characterising gender portrayal of the disaster

First, the study explores how frequently were the subjects portrayed dominantly in the visual images of the floods to determine the issue of gender representation. It quantifies the number of images that were dominated by either male or female subjects. Since the focus is on gender portrayal, this part of analysis excludes the photographs with absence of human beings. In other words, the gender analysis of dominant subjects in the images considered photographs that portrayed men, women or both whether in action or not. The initial content analysis found that the media used 313 photographs (from Table 5.1), however only 251 images portrayed human beings. Table 7.2 below shows the number of images that portray the dominant presence of male and female subjects in the different media outlets.

Table 7.2: Number of images portraying dominant presence of male and female subject

Type of image	<i>Times</i>	<i>Nation</i>	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Mail Online</i>	Total
Dominant presence of women	59	29	11	5	104
Dominant presence of men	106	22	8	8	144

Table 6.1 highlights that, overall, the male subjects were dominant than the female in the photographs that were used in the news reports of the flood in 2015. It was found that 144 photographs portrayed the male participants dominantly compared to 104 photographs that represented the female subjects. There were 3 blurred photographs that could not clearly show the dominant subjects in the image. However, on specific photographic coverage for news media outlets shows that *The Times* portrayed more men (106) than women photographs (59 photos). Contrary to this, *The Nation* newspapers had significant number of images that were dominated by women (29 photos). For the international online news websites, *The Guardian* had 11 photographs dominated with women whereas *Mail Online* showed 8 photographs dominated with men. The study did not establish consistent differences. There were significant differences among the newspapers portrayal of the photographs, however these were not always in similar direction. For instance, *The Times* print media and *Mail Online* website has more photographs with numeric dominance of males whereas *The Nation* print media and *The Guardian* online website present more photographs with dominance of women. Both the print and online media are dominated with photographs of each gender. The images of women were equally dominant in one of each print and international online media though with less number of photographs. Therefore, the dominance of men photographs does not absolutely rule out the visibility of the women and potential gender stereotypes in the disaster photographs.

There were less prominent photographs for women compared to the male participants. Since they appeared in fewer dominant photographs than men, the photographs are gender stereotyped. Apart from appearing in many photographs, the men dominated the interaction in the images that included women. The latter were shown passive. It may be argued that the media portrayal of males as the most popular group represented in the visual images reinforced the ‘masculinisation’ of the messages about the disaster. Particularly, the ‘masculinisation’ is common in the stories that revolved around assisting and saving the lives of the victims. It seems likely that media decision making in reporting played a key role in selecting more images portraying male’s heroic efforts in the disaster event since society has continuously constructed

them as leaders or heads of the families. Mkandawire (2012) and Kamlongera (2008) observed that Malawi is a patriarchal society which construct males as superior to women.

The study proceeded to document the roles of the female and male subjects as portrayed by the different photographs. The subjects were framed either as active or passive participants, hence the analysis examined the roles to determine the gender stereotypical portrayal of the participants. In this regard, the analysis documents the different roles of the male and female subjects portrayed in the visual images to understand the gender stereotypes that the media reinforced in the construction and representation of the participants in the disaster coverage. For clear illustration, table 7.3 categorises the photographs into active or passive according to roles or activities of the male or female subjects during the catastrophic disaster.

Table 7.3: Description of men and female roles in the media visual disaster coverage

Description of items	Number of photos	Percentage (%)
Role of Female Subject		
Active Role	41	16
Passive Role	64	26
Role of Male Subject		
Active Role	87	35
Passive Role	56	23
Total	248	100

Table 7.3 shows that 35% (87 photos) of male subjects are framed in active roles such as saving and salvaging the flood victims especially the women, children and aged. On the other hand, 26% (64 photos) of women participants are portrayed in passive role as largely dependent, sitting around and waiting for the relief supplies. About 16% (41 photos) women are framed in active role that involved rescuing the household property, cooking and caring children and the aged. However, the active roles are confined within the domestic sphere that is stereotyped as belonging to women. For the male participants, only 23% (56 photos) are framed in passive role. Thus, the passive roles of the male subjects revolved around instances such as sitting around after a long day rescuing fellow flood victims.

The prejudices embedded to the rendering of women victims in the representation of the floods send a message about the power of the influence of patriarchy in the societies in Malawi. Men

wield so much powers in traditional Malawi societies hence not often portrayed as weak and passive (Mkandawire (2012). In addition, the role of females and males are known from the time they are born and gradually framed according to the cultural and societal practices throughout time (Kamlongera 2008; Mkandawire 2012), which is repeated by the media.

The difference in the portrayal of gender stereotypes between the UK online news websites, which are seen as relatively liberal and sensitive to gender role casting, and the local Malawian print media that are considered as conservative and subscribing to traditional gender role casting turned out to be insignificant. This emphasizes another stereotyping by the international online newspapers, portraying an African community as dependent and backward, still stuck in traditional gender inequality practices. The images were most probably selected to enhance the power of the visual material to persuade, as well as to emotionally claim audience sympathy for the women who are shown as passive and weak.

Using content analysis, the study quantified the different activities that women were characterised with in the reporting of the disaster. The study wanted to ascertain whether the media repeated the characteristics that are ascribed to the women such as dependent, weak and passive, the study continued to examine their different roles portrayed in the different media outlets. Table 7.4 below quantifies the visual images that portrayed women in different range of activities during the catastrophic disaster.

Table 7.4: Number of images that depicted women roles in the media

Type of image / Newspaper	<i>Times</i>	<i>Nation</i>	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Mail Online</i>
Women preparing food	7	5	2	2
Women giving Aid	8	2		1
Women receiving Aid	26	3	4	3
Women feeding children	4	-	-	1
Women with children	7	12	5	1
Women in domestic setting	8	7	4	1

Table 7.4 shows that *The Times* published 26 images of the women receiving aid, 7 images of the women preparing food and 7 of women taking care of children. In contrast to this, *The*

Nation published 3 images of women receiving aid, 5 images of women preparing food and 12 images of women taking care of the children. Significant images of women involved in gendered activities were also identified in online news websites, for instance *The Guardian* showed 4 photos of women receiving aid, another 4 photos of women in a domestic setting and 5 photos of women with children. The *Mail Online* had 3 images of women receiving food supplies and preparing food. Therefore, most of the photographs as shown in the table 7.4 characterised women with domestic activities.

The analysis established that the media repeated the stereotypes that demarcate women to the domestic roles in the society construction of women. There were not many images of women giving out aid or doing physical labour unless they were accompanied by men. Moreover, apart from representing less visual images of women in the distribution of aid, the media outlets did not portray women engaged in jobs that are demarcated as for men. The activities for men centred around strenuous jobs such as saving and salvaging the lives of the victims. Ultimately, most of the media visual images show women doing domestic chores thereby raising the issues about gender inequality as women are restricted to activities of what is regarded as ‘their place’. Ultimately, both the local print and international online website representation of the women upheld and perpetuated the stereotypes of gender.

7.4.2 Analysis of visual images portraying women in the disaster reports

The purpose of this section is to investigate whether the gendered depictions were evident in the coverage of the flood crisis in Malawi. The study has raised the many stereotypical practices that are employed by the media in the portrayal of men and women during disaster (see Chapter 3, section 3.5.2). Specifically, this section focuses on the semiotic visual analysis, investigating how the images relate to texts in the portrayal of men and women during the disaster. Previous studies have concentrated on one mode of communication, either the visual or linguistic representation without attempting to combine the two. Therefore, with the semiotic analysis this study focuses on both linguistic and visual portrayal of gender in the news stories. Apart from images, the analysis also focuses on accompanying headlines, image captions and texts. The sampling and selection of the images is explained clearly in Chapter 4, subsection 4.7. The first image of analysis is from the front-page of *The Daily Times* newspaper.

Image 10 below for analysis was published on the front page of *The Daily Times* (19 January 2015), during the disaster.



Figure 7.10: Image 10: LIFE AWAY FROM HOME – Some of those rescued captured here at a camp at Nsanje Boma – Picture by Charles Mpaka

The representational meaning of the above image shows a group of traumatised women and children in a very congested camp. This is a narrative representation image because the social actors are engaged in various processes or activities in the image. There are many ‘transactional processes’ within the image but the study identifies that a good number of women were busy cooking meals, others have sat idle whilst some standing with arms folded seemingly dejected with the destruction and disruption of the catastrophic flooding. The vector(s) start from the women and children and goes forward to unknown directions. Only a unidirectional vector can be realized in the image because there are unspecified goals for many women. Apart from the women facing away from the camera, most of the members are looking in the same direction. This is referred to as action process without a goal. Further, the narrative image portrays the inhumane and deplorable conditions of the camp. The place is used as a kitchen too and looks filthy, dusty. It is very small to accommodate the large number of women and children shown in the picture. Only women and children are noticeable from the picture which perpetuate the stereotypes of confining the women to the kitchen. Still the representational meaning shows that the billowing smoke is irritating the women as shown on their faces.

In terms of the compositional meaning, the image appeared on the front page of *The Daily Times* to suggest the salience of the story. Drawing on Kress and Van Leeuwen (1998:196) and McLoughlin (2000), anything placed at the centre of the newspaper page represents the nucleus of the information for all other related elements in the media. In this case, the image is placed at the centre of the newspaper. This is the ‘nucleus’ for the audience to quickly notice the ‘informational value’ of the suffering of the women and children as it tries to appeal to their emotions. Furthermore, its salience is also anchored in the bold front-page headline that reads “*FLOOD DISASTER AFTERMATH. Nightmare in camps*”, which is larger than the normal font of other sentences in the newspaper text. As Mautner (2008:38) suggests, layout is used for rhetorical purposes and emphasizes the effects of the disaster. The headline can be construed as revealing the not so pleasant experience of the living conditions in the camp. Besides, the word ‘nightmare’ in the headline heighten the sense of urgency and crisis, thereby appealing to the public for help the women and children.

Further, the use of the deictic expression ‘*here*’ in the caption of the image means that the reporters personal experience and first-hand information about the vulnerable conditions of the camps experienced by the women and children. The reporter must have interacted with the disaster victims and witnessed the conditions or environment at the camp on his own. The poor conditions are also highlighted by the inadequate food in the camps since the image shows three small pots on the fire to carter for the whole group of the women and children at the camp.

About the informational value, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006:177) explains that compositional meanings are derived from the placement of elements. The positioning of elements on the left means something that is already known or given, as information that can be agreed upon, or taken for granted as shared whereas anything on the right represents ‘New information’. This image is placed on the right side of the article signifying that the audience should be familiar with the new information about the vulnerability women and children in the camps. Within the image, the placement of the elderly woman standing on the far right of the image presents her as ‘New information’ that is not yet agreed upon. Perhaps, the ‘New information’ presented as contestable and not overshadowed by the given is that the victims of the floods are absolutely overwhelmed and hopeless of normalcy in their day to day lives.

For the interactive meaning, the study takes contact, distance and point of view as salient dimensions for analysis. The participants look weak, traumatised and dejected probably due to the evacuation process, loss of property and death of relations in the deluge. The face of some

of the participants are identifiable, particularly the women and children who are captured directly looking into the camera. The direct eye contact of the participants expresses a 'demand' statement to the readers (see Jewitt and Oyama 2008:145). The women and children in the image implore the audience of the newspaper to assist them with basic relief items considering the conditions of the camp. The analysis also establishes that the participants were in close-shot distance from the camera. Machin and Mayr (2012:97) and Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) argue that in closer shots participants look directly at the photographer giving the impression that the image conveys the experiences and feelings of the social actors. In this case, the close shot appears like the victims are lobbying for a close friendship with the audience thereby appealing for help. From the interpersonal point of view, in this image the media wanted the audience to empathise with women and children by maintaining a close distance and a direct contact with the camera.

In the analysis of this image, the study noted that the image corroborated with the text in lobbying for more non-profit organisations and the corporate sector to assist the women and children. Pictures showing women accompanied by children feature prominently in the media texts to demonize the natural phenomena but also as a gender card for mobilisation of more relief resources. In this image, similar to other previous linguistic findings, women are shown in passive mode sitting around, waiting for help at the camp. This placement of the women supports the idea derived in other disaster studies that women are constructed and portrayed in ritualized positions of subordination such as recumbent on the floors, performing submissive gestures among other gender stereotypes (Bell and Milic 2002:204; Bradshaw 2014:54).

As argued earlier, the image confined the responsibilities of the women to the kitchen that included preparation of food for the children and the elderly that are sitting around aimlessly. Similar to Bradshaw (2014), there is so much 'feminisation of responsibility' in the photos representing the flooding disasters that reinforces rather than challenges the gender stereotypes. The conceptual representation of media photographs in the flood disaster coverage constructs that female participants as passive and weak. In previous studies Mkandawire (2006) and Kamlongera (2008) found the same stereotypes of laziness, weakness and passiveness as dominant characterisation of the women in Malawi. However, in the semiotic representations these characteristics were ideological hidden through mass pictures that genericized and collectivized the women. In some cases, their captions read 'thousands of,' 'hundreds of', to

allocate similar attributes to all. Thus, they are depicted through stereotypical representation that fits them all into the ‘typical black women’ category.

The study collectivises and generically represents the participants as ‘victims’ who typically as black people are passive and dependent on handouts, incapable of exploring other means of helping themselves. The image objectifies the participants as typical rural traditional women, the majority of them without shoes, wearing tattered clothes and otherwise a bit run down. The images homogenize those they depict by repeatedly emphasizing such external features of the subjects. Van Leeuwen (2008:144) shows how some images characterise participants to fit into a certain social type through their way of dressing, hair style, grooming, and so on. Ultimately, such attributes connote negative or positive values and diminish the prevailing individual differences, which creates a ‘they are all the same’ impression.

In addition, the common characterisation of the women in the image is that of mothers who are confined to the kitchen taking care of their families. Dogra (2012:40) observed that most mothers appear in disaster appeals where they are shown in camps taking care of the children. For this image, the compositional meaning of the image ideologically portrays gender stereotypes that characterise women in different African societies. The framing of the image in the media reinforces ideas of Africans, in this context Malawians, as helpless and dependent on aid organizations to whom they appeal when affected by any kind of disaster.

The verbal part of the article complements the image in illustrating that the women were passive as they sat idly waiting for relief supplies. Reading through the article, one of the individuals identified as *Pesiti* actually complains that they are passively ‘*sitting idle doing nothing*’ despite them wanting to move “... *to get some fresh air*”. The women are afraid of missing their share of the promised supplies as indicated in the excerpt below.

Excerpt (1)

“This is a nightmare,” he said. “We are just sitting here doing nothing. We fail to move away to get some fresh air because we are told someone will come to register us or that we may miss out on relief supplies,” said Pesiti.

(The Daily Times, 19 January 2015)

The excerpt emphasizes the situation portrayed in the image, which illustrates and gives evidence of the verbal reporting in the article. According to Bednarek and Caple (2012:115), images have a capacity to engage the public to bring about significant changes, and so are often used as evidence to present a truthful and objective picture for stakeholders to take note of

different social conditions. The image of the women and children in camp engages the audience, non-profit organisations and other donors by making directly evident the need for significant change to the poor conditions of the camp. It is also presented as realistic evidence that women were passively waiting for the various non-profit organisations to assist them with aid in the form of food and other basic necessities. An expectation that the media would start challenging such observations and publicize positives aspects of the women, is disappointed. Ultimately, the media (un)consciously reinforced the usual above-mentioned famous stereotypical representations of the women victims. Thus, the study suggests that the images portrayed in the disaster representation should be used to renegotiate the position of the women in future reporting, which can be done without denying the personal and structural weaknesses.

Image 11 below from *The Nation* newspaper, continues to illustrate the different stereotypes that were embedded to the media representation of social actors in the disaster.



Figure 7.11: Image 11, Displaced people at Ngabu in Chikwawa in their temporary ‘home’. (*The Nation*, 13 January 2015)

In the image, Figure 7.11, the compositional meaning are derived from the placement of the participants within the image. He stands prominently among the women holding one of the poles erected to support the make-shift tent. The child is thinking seriously and looks sternly into unknown direction. He stares passively at the viewers or readers just as an embodiment of

appeal to the different non-profit organizations for the support of relief aid. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), something presented on the right stands for 'New information', hence the child is new information not yet agreed upon. However, the perception is that for every disaster coverage the children images likely evoke different emotions regardless of the notable differences with the audience. Hence, this study suggests that the saliency of the boy child in the image and the direct interaction with the readers bring the suffering of the distant victims closer to the public who are capable to offer assistance.

For the interactional meaning, the image is a 'demand' and 'offer' photograph. The participant is looking directly to viewer or reader. He is making a statement of intent that pleads with the audience to assist the vulnerable children and families that are victims of the floods. Nederveen Pieterse (1992:131) argues that direct focus on the camera conveys 'need', request for assistance. There is a direct interaction with the reader which is an appeal for help. As Dogra (2012:33) observes "a single child's face, seemingly caught unawares, staring passively, and without any clear expression, at the camera is the quintessence of many sponsorship appeals". At the same time, other social actors in the background of the image are facing away from the camera. There is no social interaction with the viewers and as van Leeuwen (2008:140) and Jewitt and Oyama (2008:146) observed, the participants are offered to audience for the 'dispassionate scrutiny' as though they are specimens in a display case. Thus, media objectified the representation of the women in the coverage of the flooding disaster in Malawi.

Except for the child foregrounded in the image, other social actors are captured in the background from a long shot. Van Leeuwen (2008:138-141) argues that a long shot pictures visually represents the participants as strangers, 'others', 'not like us', 'not close to us'. The study established that media deliberately presented the participants from a long shot in so many photographs to conceal their identities and keep them at distance. Further, it also wanted to portray them as subordinate and or from the lower class compared to the audience of the newspapers. However, the social distance might represent the participant in the image as victims of circumstances. Against this background, the study suggests that much as the media wanted to sympathise with the plight of the victims by bringing them closer it also emphasized the distance that existed with the audience.

On the gender perspective, the study noticed that the colour contrasts employed in the photograph highlighted the sense of undifferentiated African women that are characterised as passive, lazy and dependent on aid. The women in the photograph are homogenised and

categorized as victims that are living in dire poverty. There is also a good colour contrast between the child and the surrounding environment which portrays the inhabitable or appalling dusty conditions of the camp. Ultimately, the study feels that the visual portrayal exhibits the several preconceived stereotypical weaknesses attached to women at the societal and cultural level.

The study also established that most of the images in the local print and international online media depicted women taking care of many children in camps or relief aid centres. The disaster images projected common universal gendered values of womanhood and or motherhood that are typically associated with the 'third world' women. The media propelled the belief that every 'third world' woman is a mother of many and confined to the duty of carer (as images depict them in company of children and busy preparing food in the kitchen) and at times a victim of circumstances. The same observation is made by the previous studies on humanitarian aid interventions in less developed countries (see Dogra 2012:333). Further, women are also portrayed with prominent characteristics such as sadness, helplessness, emotional, weak and down cast eyes, particularly for those that faced away from the camera. This re-emphasizes some of the gender stereotypes that are cultivated or ingrained according to the discursive and social practices throughout time.

The study noted that though women subjects were depicted or portrayed in subject active positions that suggested agency and action in the textual representation. They were disempowered through their portrayal and framing in the visuals as inadequately incapacitated to take action without the assistance of the NPO's, corporate organisations and the government. In other words, the visuals disenfranchised or relegated the flood victims to positions of passive recipients of relief aid. They were also objectified as survivors, victims and evacuees among other names. Ultimately, complemented with the textual reports the women and children were depicted and acknowledged through alternative subject positions as courageous and enduring survivors.

While majority of the visual images in the media collectivized the women as a similar group depending on the commonality of their problem(s) in the disaster, other women especially the professional working women were portrayed as powerful and independent figures thereby distancing the two sets of women. The study noted that media portrayal of the professional women erased their traditional roles, but flagged such attributes in the representation of majority unemployed women. The media visual representation of the disaster classified the

women themselves based on their roles in the society. The image below from the inside pages of *The Nation* newspaper illustrates the differences as it portrays two women framed in contrasting roles, juxtaposed alongside each other.

Disease scare grips flood victims as child dies

WATIPASO MZUNGU JNR
STAFF WRITER

Flood victims in Chikwawa are living in fear following the death of a child on Sunday, a few days after some camps registered an outbreak of communicable diseases.

Chikwawa district commissioner (DC) Alex Mdooko confirmed the development in an interview this week, saying burial took place Monday.

But Mdooko could not commit himself on the actual cause of the death.

Some of the victims *The Nation* talked to last week suspect poor water, sanitation and hygiene conditions in the camp as a possible cause of the death.

One of the flood victims, Maria Tembo, while expressing gratitude for the food items, noted that government and the donors overlooked issues of water, sanitation and hygiene in their rescue efforts.

Tembo, a 28-year old lactating mother at Sammy's Camp in Chikwawa, said waterborne diseases is the major worry among the campers after successfully



Kwataine: There should be mobile clinics

escaping the wrath of floods. Noel Bayela, one of Malawi Red Cross Society (MRCS) volunteers in Chikwawa, confirmed receiving reports of disease outbreaks in the camps, with scabies taking the toll due to the congestion.

He said the victims could also be at risk of contracting malaria, dysentery and cholera.

Mdooko said health workers



Tembo: We need better sanitation

were already on the ground to establish what might have caused his death.

Health rights activist, Martha Kwataine of the Malawi Health Equity Network (Mhen), said there is high likelihood of campers falling victims to waterborne diseases such as cholera due to congestion.

She suggested the introduction of mobile clinics to cater for the campers. ■

Figure 7.12: Image 12, Article from *The Nation* newspaper, 4 February 2015

The two images in Figure 7.12 were published in *The Nation* newspaper under the headline of the article that reads ‘*Disease scare grips flood victims as child dies*’. According to the compositional meaning, both pictures appear on the right side of the page, positioned strategically in the area of ‘New’ information within the page. The left side is the area for ‘Given’ information, the less important than those appearing on the right side. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:181), readers concentrate attention on the right side where the new information is located. Therefore, it is clear that the two images are strategically positioned as not known to the viewers. The pictures depict two different women within the frames that are juxtaposed alongside one another.

On the representational meaning perspective, the first image conveys information from one single participant. The vector starts from the participant into the direction of presumed audience of reporters since it is a press briefing. She is presented as a woman of class in terms of her attire or dressing. The participant looks a modern woman in her earrings, necklace, thick framed eye glasses, well done hair and clean white teeth. The colour in the background contrasts well with the clothes and face of the woman. It manipulates the way she looks giving her great vividness and expression. The image shows a personal reaction. The study assumes that it is a press briefing about how the poor sanitation in the flood victim camps has aggravated the cholera outbreak as illustrated in the headline. The goal is not specific for this image.

For the interactive meaning point of view, the social actor is in the higher position than the reader. Her head and neck are framed on the centre of the photograph. The audience can see the shoulder and head of the participant from a lower position. This means the participant is more powerful than the rest of the audience. Further, the participant looks directly into the camera. Probably, she is looking at the news reporters in the press briefing hall. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006/1996), this a demand or offer picture. The study suggests that the article being about the poor sanitation in the camps the participant might be demanding various organisations to help with facilities that could improve the hygienic conditions of the flood victims' camps. At the same time, it is a close-up shot that demonstrates that the audience have information about her and the role she performs at the Malawi Health Equity Network (WHEN). Hence, the image portrays a close but yet impersonal relationship with the audience.

In the second photograph, the representational meaning conveys information about the woman with her child strapped at the back as the social actors. The image derives a narrative meaning because she is breastfeeding the child who is drawn from the back. The awkward positioning of the child to the front consists the narrative. The vector starts from both of them towards the direction of the photographers. From the conceptual meaning point of view, the picture contrast sharply with the first image because the woman is characterised with dirty attire, brown teeth and unkempt hair. She looks desolate and lost possibly in retrospect of the danger paused by the sanitation problems alluded in the caption. The child's face looks sad and needy. The representational meaning is reinforced by the colour contrast of the background of the picture. The media used darker colours that shows the makeshift camps in the background behind the woman, which substantiate that she is a victim of the flooding.

On interactive meaning point of view, the participant does not look directly into the eyes of the viewers or readers but focuses into a distant future. It is a long shot image that distances away the participant from the audience. The image portrays the identity of the participant as a poor traditional ‘third world’ (hereafter TW) victim of the floods. Against this background, the study noted that media use of the images in the disaster perpetuated some social inequalities among the women themselves. The image evoked the dominant ideological perception that traditional TW mothers celebrate having a lot of children. As observed in the picture, the modern professional woman is portrayed without such traditional attributes despite the fact that she may be a mother too. Therefore, the media portrayed TW mothers with their children in disaster images to appeal to the public for assistance. The children are idealised to project the state of ‘need’.

The study establishes that women were portrayed differently in the coverage of the flooding crisis, particularly the career or professional women and the traditional women. The media visually attached traditional attributes to the flood victims and detached the same from career women who comprised of the aid distributors and other policy makers. The career women were identified with common characteristics of women from the developed world (hereafter DW). For instance, the woman in the first image is too close to the camera and this portrays that she is friends with the audience of the newspaper, one of ‘us’ whereas Tembo’s half-body picture though close-up is associated with strangers or ‘them’, for it is characterised as hurt, sad, appealing and complaining of the sanitation problem therefore distancing such kind of people from the readers or audience. For van Leeuwen (2008:146), distance is symbolic as people shown close-up are identified as ‘one of us’ and those in long shot are defined as ‘strangers’. Ultimately, the image distances the victims as not closer to the audience or readers but belonging to their own group.

From the verbal text, media employed the functional and individual ways of identifying the participants in the article. The first image is identified as *Martha Kwataine* a *Health Rights Activist* working for *Malawi Health Equity Network* whereas the second image is identified as *Maria Tembo*, a *28 year old lactating mother at Sammy’s camp in Chikwawa* district. In this regard, the text-image analysis shows that the media reinforced the stereotypical differences between the modern and traditional women. Despite the perception that the woman in the first image can be a mother too, media chose to characterise the second woman in a demeaning way, as *28 year old lactating mother*. The referential strategies to the woman in the second image

largely relate to her domestic status and physical attributes, which is not present in the linguistic or textual identification of the first image. Reah (1998:63) noted that referential strategies of women most of the times relates to their roles particularly those that are attached to their families. The visual image clearly complements the message in the verbal text by showing the woman's breast and the baby. The analysis have identified many inequalities in the media representation of the women particularly between career or modern women and the traditional women or victims of the floods. Ultimately, the study suggests that images of the career women who comprised of donors and politicians were functionalised whilst the flood victims who largely consisted of traditional women were individualised and in some instances categorised with particular stereotypical characteristics. Drawing from Van Leeuwen (2008), Kress and van Leeuwen (1996/2006) dimensions of visual analysis, table 6.1 presents a breakdown of visual characterisation of the two images analysed above.

Table 7.5 (below) summarises the visual characteristics that media used to differentiate the modern and traditional woman. The differences were identified in so many images across all the selected media outlets that covered the 2015 flooding disaster in Malawi.

Apart from the difference between the modern and traditional women, this study also established that media naturalised the disaster through the raw portrayals of physical and emotional bonds between mothers and children. In most cases, mothers were portrayed alongside children because they stereotypically regard them as homogeneously weaker group of innocent victims of problems that 'just happen to be'. On the images portrayal during disasters, Dogra (2012:39) posits that most of the crises are projected with mother and child images because both are regarded as weaker vessels. For this study, the media portrayed the disaster through victim like figure of traditional women and children.

The question of gender becomes crucial in relation to the images analysed in this section. The gendered nature of the photographs is that they all consisted of the female victims – sometimes with their little children. The study observes that the gender stereotyping question in the media played a crucial role in the context of humanitarianism in the sense that portrayal of the vulnerable third world women and child(ren) is a potential way of mobilizing support for relief aid and or humanitarian intervention (see also Johnson 2011:1030). In feminist terms, passiveness, vulnerability and voicelessness is predominantly associated with the female body,

Table 7.5: Visual characteristics of the images in analysed from The Nation newspaper

Visual characteristics	Image 1. Martha Kwataine	Image 2. Maria Tembo
Background	Bright; it contrasts well with the face and clothes	Bright but shows some makeshift tents, a flood victims camp
Informational value (placement)	Full face appears at the centre of the image.	Given and New; mother appears on the left side in the margin near top corner and a child strapped at the back on the right of the frame
Salient element	Big size image, foregrounding of the face, colour contrast,	Child breastfeeding whilst strapped at the back, dark colour
Facial expressions	Open eyes, and a cheerful smile	Serious, worried, thinking and staring in a distance as a hopeless person
Gaze (interaction with the reader or audience)	Her eyes look directly into the readers. She engages them	No direct eye contact with the audience. Looks into far distance like she is meditating on something
Colours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Light skinned ● White necklace ● Clean white teeth ● Bright clothes ● Black kempt hair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dark skin ● Dirty clothes ● Unkempt and dusty hair ● Brown teeth
Frames	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strong 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strong

but the images in the flooding have shown that media can challenge this perception because some of the women managed to break the boundaries to do jobs that are regarded as for men. Following this, the study considered the question of ‘gender blindness’ particularly to understand the reason why men were not visible and regarded as less vulnerable, potential threats and less need for protection in the flooding disaster; hence the analysis of the images portraying men below.

7.4.3 Analysis of visual images portraying men in the disaster reports

As observed in the previous section, men are identified with agency as they engage in the work of saving and salvaging. They are not described as victims, vulnerable or passive but with their professional trades/names, for instance fisherman, farmer and survivors. The study established that there was numeric dominance of female images that portrayed as victims of the catastrophe. Though males appeared in some of the pictures, they were not often portrayed or characterised as vulnerable or passive victims. They were represented with agency and always in action unlike the women victims who were portrayed sleeping or taking care of the children.

Image 11 shows men who are also referred to as ‘a rescue team’ unloading a bag of maize from a canoe as one of the things that were rescued.



Figure 7.13: Image 13, A rescue team unloads goods from a canoe as it arrives in Chambuluka village on the banks of the flooded Ruo River in Malawi's southern Nsanje district on 18 January 2015 (*Mail Online*, 18 January 2015)

Image 13 published on *Mail Online*, the representational meaning identifies the group of young men as a *rescue team* that is busy saving and salvaging the items and lives of the people. The picture shows men unloading a bag of maize from the canoe. The vectors are realized from the participants eyes that focus into different directions in unknown destinations. The men in the image are actors and the goal(s) are in different directions. The image is not a demand picture because the eyes of the participants are not looking directly into the camera. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) argue that the ‘demand’ pictures are those which participants look directly at

the viewers or readers. In this picture, the participants are in the position that readers should evaluate them. There is no direct contact with the readers and the image is shot from a reasonable distance. This creates an impersonal relationship with the viewers or readers.

The image ideologically refers to men as a rescue team, foregrounding women as inactive and men as invisible if they are not in workers' roles. The media avoided identifying the men as victims, as done with women in most of the pictures, though they were affected by the floods too. This arises from the traditional perception that men are brave and strong to survive the cruel weather conditions like the flooding. Hence, the media reinforced the stereotypes that exposes women's weaknesses and at the same time conceals the men's vulnerability.

Image 14 below illustrates the gendered constructions that media perpetuated in the coverage of the flooding disaster.



Figure 7.15: Image 14, Fishermen transporting villagers with their belongings across flood waters in Phalombe, southern Malawi. (*The Guardian*, 30 January 2015)

The transactional process and compositional meaning of the image presented above is that men are presented as active doing the work of saving and salvaging. Unlike the women, the men are identified by what they do for a living, e.g. as in the caption above, as *fishermen transporting villagers*. The image shows destroyed houses as evidence of the damage caused by the water mass. Women in most of the pictures are identified in traditional roles as mothers caring for children, and no other possible identity. The perception is that men unlike women are regarded

as strong and not vulnerable to the hazards of the disasters. Media therefore repeated the gender stereotypes that regarded women as weak and passive characters.

The study established that local print and international online news differed considerably in the visual framing of the disaster in the three months of reporting, for instance immediately after the catastrophe the local media sympathized with the people characterising the disaster as an ‘Act of God’, something not anticipated, and the people as victims of the circumstances hence survivors and helpless victims. Further, the local media’s portrayal of the affected people changed during the resettlement period when some were accused of being fake victims, undeserving beneficiaries of the food aid. The visual characterisation presented the suffering of the affected public in relatively demeaning terms. The international online media’s visual characterisation focused on the campaign and distribution of humanitarian aid throughout the period of coverage.

7.5 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter has shown how the three themes of social interest, economic devastation and political intervention were articulated in images. It has also illustrated how the affected rural communities are visually represented, particularly alongside Malawian politicians and more independent relief organisations. Finally, the chapter has considered how the media reinforced existing gender stereotypes in the representation of men and women in disaster news. The semiotic account of the portrayal of gender in the disaster establishes that women and children were objectified as in need of humanitarian relief. They were often characterised with demeaning status, particularly as weak and passive, confined to the domain of domestic chores. On the other hand, men were often invisible and given stronger attributes. The study indicated that often the women are collectivized by presenting them as not individualised, but part of a mass who all have similar attributes. My analysis suggests that the position of women in the images of disasters should be revisited, and that the media should reconsider how such representations need to be done if they are intended to mobilise assistance and at the same time afford dignity and respect to the complexity of roles.

Chapter 8

CONCLUDING REMARKS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This study has investigated discursive linguistic and visual strategies used in the media reporting of the Malawi flooding of January 2015. Specifically, the purpose of the research was to examine the discursive strategies that represented the events, the covert and overt meanings that each medium put to the respective audiences, as well as how the various groups of participants were represented. To this effect, the first chapter of the thesis provided general background information, the problem statement and the objectives of the study. Chapter two centred on the situational context of the media reporting of disasters in Malawi, as well as further afield in the world where several previous cases of natural disaster reporting had been done. These studies were discussed and in the process questions that arose were identified, particularly regarding natural resources and sustainability related to climate change and human activity in Malawi. The chapter also reviewed the discourses dominant in the media representation of natural disasters at local and international level. Chapter three discussed the MCDA theoretical framework that combines several approaches within CDA (Fairclough 1992, 1995; Kress and van Leeuwen; 1996, 2006; and van Leeuwen 2008), as the guiding framework for the study. It also explained perspectives from the cognitive theory of metaphor (Kövecses 2002; Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Mussolf 2016) to assist in demystifying the ideologies embedded in linguistic and visual texts on disasters in the media. Chapter four presented the methodological framework, particularly explaining how the data was collected and which tools were used to prepare the raw data for analysis in the study. Following this, chapters five, six and seven discussed various aspects of the analysis and the findings that this delivered, referring particularly to the objectives of the study given in chapter one. This chapter now will summarise the key findings of the study, refer to the limitations it has and then discuss the suggested areas of further research regarding the media representation of disasters in countries belonging to the global south, particularly Malawi.

8.2 REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research was interested in sociolinguistic data gained from news articles, particularly media reports on a flooding disaster. The following were the specific research objectives:

- i. To profile the volume of mediated material covering the floods and their effects in Malawi across the six weeks directly following the most devastating events, and then to classify this material according to genre;
- ii. To identify the dominant thematic and discursive features used in the linguistic and visual texts which covered the Malawi floods during the identified period;
- iii. To examine and analyse a selection of the reports and visual images listed in i. above, with a view to disclosing how local actors in the area where the flooding was experienced, are discursively constructed or represented;
- iv. To analyse, specifically, the textual and photographic representations of gender during the 2015 floods in Malawi.

The subsequent section summarises the most significant findings of the study based on the objectives above and the research questions (section 1.5) that were formulated for each specific objective. It highlights the extent to which the study has met each of the research objectives, particularly focusing on the points that expand on or contribute to the previous studies on MCDA of disasters, particularly with regards to media representation.

8.3 SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

As indicated earlier in section 1.3, the original problem addressed in the study is one referring to the linguistic and visual discursive strategies used in the local print and international online media in representing the Malawi flooding disaster of January 2015. The research findings and associated conclusions related to each objective, are given below.

8.3.1 Profiling the volume of the mediated material on flooding disaster discourse

The first objective sought to profile the volume of mediated material in the local print media and on international online media websites and the respective genres that carried this material. This question is related to matters of newsworthiness and how the scale of disaster in events of natural emergency contribute to these events being mediated more or less extensively. Here, the study focused on the interest of two different types of media in reporting of the disaster, namely local printed media based in Malawi, and internationally distributed online media based in the UK. Against this background, the observation is that the scale of the flooding was of such enormity that it did actually gain coverage in the international press. In spite of earlier mentioned perspectives that such news in countries of the global south do not receive adequate

coverage from the media outlets based in the global north (Moeller 2006; Joye 2009), this particular event did get attention, albeit it less in volume and themes addressed than in the local media. The consideration of the local print and international online media reporting provided a basis for comparative analysis aimed at revealing the pattern and volume of coverage in the two types of the media. Three differences between the two kinds of media were pertinent, namely (i) the volume (quantity) of reports, (ii) the variety of topics addressed and the kind of detail that was selected as of interest to the readership of each kind of publication (see 8.3.2 below), and (iii) the ways in which relatively stereotyped images of the country and people affected (as people suffering loss or attempting to alleviate after the losses), were projected.

First, the study quantified the volume of the reports published in the local print and the international online websites over a set period of time, to determine coverage at local and international level. The general observations and conclusion presented in chapter five, is that each media outlet had a relatively significant coverage with large volumes published in the initial stages and a gradual decrease during the recovery stages of the flooding disaster. The early reporting phase in the immediate aftermath of the deluge received a wider coverage, perhaps also as an instrument in facilitating the rescue and relief services (see Figure 5.4). Following Bell (1991: 156-57), and Bednarek and Caple (2012: 42), the choice and prioritization of disaster news in the initial stages could be attributed to the newsworthiness values of negativity, proximity and timeless values of the event. Negativity is represented in the death, injury and displacement of large numbers of victims across a vast area of the country, hence more coverage was given in the early stages. Regarding proximity, the two local newspapers, *The Daily Times* and *The Nation*, had more articles on the disaster because of their geographical closeness, whilst the lesser number of the same on the two international online news websites can be attributed to, among other reasons, the distance readers would have to the region. One can further assume that familiarity of the country as a former colonial state of the UK prompted the coverage of the news on their online news websites. Considering the amount of coverage, the conclusion has been that the media extensively covered the disaster in the first few weeks when it was ‘breaking news’, but diverted their attention to events that referred to recovery efforts and the limited intervention of the state, due also to the court trials of the ‘Cashgate’ accused during the resettlement stage.

In quantifying the number of articles covering the rain and flooding, I also considered the genres that carried the various kinds of news. The range of genres observed comprised of editorials,

hard news, feature analyses and photographs. The analysis revealed that there were more hard news stories on 2015 flooding disaster coverage than any other genres in the local print news media (see figure 5.2). This is explained by the fact that hard news represents reports on unscheduled recent events such as disasters, conflicts and accidents (Bell 1991: 14). As such, the study found and also used a large number of data from the hard news genre, first because it relied on van Dijk's (1988) claim that hard news embeds covert ideologies, and second simply because it is the most pervasively used genre in the reporting on the disaster. For the online media, the genre of photographic feature article comprised the largest amount of coverage. Perhaps the basic reason for this is that photographs provide a direct way of bringing the extent of overwhelming natural forces home to a distant audience. Also, using images is the most common way to make an emotional impact in the coverage of the disasters. Specifically, photographs can transcend the textual meanings. Therefore, the general conclusion here is that hard news and photographs were the most significant genres in the reporting of the floods in the local print and international online media, respectively.

8.3.2 Identifying the dominant thematic, generic and discursive features in the disaster

The second objective examined the dominant thematic, generic and discursive features used in the media representation of the flooding. Specifically, the study explored the cross-cutting topical issues raised in the reports. It also investigated the generic and discursive features, particularly referential strategies, metaphors, registers and dramatization / sensationalisation that characterised the reporting of the disaster news.

8.3.2.1 Themes

The study investigated main topics around which the articles on the disaster were organised. It revealed that many debates in all the newspapers were on human-interest issues that included requests for relief in terms of funding, goods and services, also rescue services and others directly related to the immediate social welfare of the victims. This primary theme is followed by the political theme which largely comprised the criticism against politicians and government officials and departments whose approach towards the event was said to be slow and ineffective. As Cottle (2009: 45) observes, mediated disasters open opportunities for discursive contestations on a national and international stage. Further, the other themes included human suffering and material loss, resettlement, warnings, and relatively few on how religion and entertainment in the country referred to the losses. Overall, the conclusion is that media

coverage of the disaster is dominated by the human-interest theme, which raised awareness of the needs of the victims.

8.3.2.2 Referential strategies

The study explored the different ways in which the social actors were positively or negatively represented in the four newspapers. Several different referential or naming strategies were identified in media representation of the social actors. The naming practices exposed particular covert and overt ideologies of role players wanting to influence the public understanding of the texts. Richardson (2007) argues that journalists have several choices in portraying the image of social actors. The choices emphasize or de-emphasize different aspects of identity. Some of the discursive strategies, as discussed in detail in chapter six, included functionalisation and identification, genericization and specification, collectivization and individualization, nomination, aggregation, inclusion and exclusion, role allocation, relational identification, and the in-group 'US' and outgroup 'THEM' constructions.

Despite the differences in the volume of coverage, the four newspapers used functionalisation as a strategy by which journalists foregrounded the official positions of governmental and other participants such as 'President', 'Vice President' and 'Meteorological Department spokesperson' to indicate their authority in making announcements and discharging their particular duties. An important observation here is that this strategy reproduced and maintained power and agency for the elites, experts and other influential role players, whilst the victims were passivized in most cases and constructed as people without initiative in their own efforts towards repair. In functionalisation, those with power used their roles in the society to make decisions that ended up largely favouring the already privileged. Further, journalists found ways of distancing themselves from many statements they made in the newspapers. This was mostly done by attributing words and perspectives to people they reportedly interviewed. Publishing pictures that are supposed to "speak for themselves" is another strategy in anonymising the author and obscuring the voice of the reporter.

The study also concluded that the use of many discursive strategies conveyed an ideological representation of power relations between the western donor countries or international aid organisations on the one hand, and the victims and the country, Malawi, on the other hand. Such strategies included (i) genericization in representing the victims or in constructing impressions of the country, (ii) aggregation in representing the victims of the floods, (iii) personalisation in

representing government officials, experts or eye witnesses, (vi) the collectivization of victims or Malawians more generally, and (v) in-group “US” and out-group “THEM”, where the in-group is generally generous and effective while the out-group is passive in the face of misfortune and dependent on charitable efforts without any contribution of their own. This is of course highly ironic, considering that the out-group here is constituted of Malawians living in Malawi, and the in-group is constituted mostly of foreign aid representatives. The study deduced that media use of these generic strategies reproduced and maintained power relations that hark back to colonial times, in which the victims are subjects without agency, and elite individuals or countries of the global north are dominant agents who indeed bring relief, but not in an emancipatory and collaborative way.

The analysis on nomination revealed that victims or eyewitnesses, officials, and countries were referred to using their proper names. To illustrate, on the international websites whole reporting of the catastrophe, ‘Malawi’ was nominated in 27 instances in the Daily Mail Online and 23 instances in The Guardian, hence it appeared a total of 50 times online. The Guardian made 12 nominations of officials and experts, and 5 nominations of the victims and eye witnesses. On the other hand, The Daily Mail Online made 23 nominations of officials and experts, and 7 nominations of eye witnesses and victims. Both these websites named lower numbers of victims and or eye witnesses than did the local press, probably due their absence on the ground and their consequent reliance on secondary sources for the news. The study concludes that the online websites avoided to mention the specific areas affected by the floods, particularly in the Shire river valley districts. Further, I deduced from the data that the media also nominated the eyewitnesses, victims, government officials, and experts to foreground selected characteristics of interest to the publication, and to distance itself from any controversial debates emerging from such contributions. A similar argument could be made for the individualization referential strategy.

Another representational strategy that occurred in all the four newspapers, is inclusion and exclusion. The four media outlets foregrounded the impact of the natural phenomenon, particularly in their headlines. Specifically, the inclusion of the floods in the news stories overwhelmingly ascribed blame to the floods, an impersonal natural force, for the destruction, displacements and deaths of many people. At the same time, all four of these media excluded people and their attitudes or behaviours that could have contributed by triggering or exacerbating the disaster and its effects, for instance by unsustainable agricultural and

environmental practices. The causes and impact of the disaster were generically similarly constructed throughout the local print and international online news websites.

Concerning role allocation and regarding the active and passive construction of participants, the study finds that agency in bringing about the natural flooding disaster, is similarly done in all the newspapers. The activation of the floods seems to be ideologically inspired, perhaps to heighten emotions of the audience to assist the victims, who were largely portrayed as innocent, helpless people. In this case, the victims were passivized or ignored, excepting at one stage when the relief turned out to be limited and the distribution efforts uncoordinated. Then many who had suffered loss were presented as chancers, profiting from handouts not due to them. No numbers and no specific individuals were identified in such reports. The study thus revealed that countries and organisations belonging to the global north were presented as active and pro-active, showing them as sympathetic and effective in opposition to Malawian government who were often passivized to portray them as incompetent and lazy. The conclusion regarding this observation is that the newspapers reified the pre-existing power relations and perceptions that African countries are heavily dependent on the global north, so that even well-intended support is given in relatively condescending terms.

A very significant finding is that the ideological square of in-group 'US' referring to the audience or readers (and those not affected) and the out-group 'THEM' referring to the victims, was created. The study concludes that people, particularly victims are referred to as out-group when condemned for being passive, hopeless, poor and dependent beneficiaries. In such cases, only the readers of the newspaper are presented positively and with agency.

The ideological square referencing in all the four newspapers at some point extended to the natural phenomenon, in which case in-group 'US' reference changed to denote the suffering people, whereas 'THEM/IT' identified the natural disaster, the rain and floods. The disaster was condemned as a criminal and sometimes wicked agent (monster) for its acts of destruction, damage and killing of the people. The natural phenomenon was attached to the negativity referencing whilst the positive referencing was made to the people with no criticism of the unsustainable practices that might have triggered the catastrophic disaster. Such perceptions reinforced the 'myth' of floods as a 'natural phenomenon' that disregards the influence of human induced factors. The number of articles on the international news websites, The Guardian and Daily Mail, which explicitly bemoan the unfortunate catastrophic flooding, is 10 out of the 16 articles.

The emphasis on the global north countries as rich and at the same time charitable and generous, contrasted with the poverty and hopelessness of the victims, is also highlighted by means of the referential strategies.

8.3.2.3 *Metaphoric representations*

The study shows how the four different media draw upon well-known categories of metaphor in their portrayal of the disaster phenomena. The analysis revealed the use of metaphors from the natural world that include a representation of the disaster as a CRIMINAL /WARRIOR and a MONSTER. The study concludes that these two dominant metaphors were used ideologically to portray the disaster as a villain that kills people. The newspapers constructed the disaster as people's enemy; the victims were represented as isolated from the world of the living – not part of the nature. In addition, the use of metaphors in the representation of the flooding disaster most likely contributed to heightened emotions in the audience though their reactions were not heard of. The conclusion is that the three metaphors were veiled, negative representations of the floods both in the local print and international online websites.

8.3.2.4 *Dramatization / Sensationalisation*

The study further found that the newspapers, especially local print media employed dramatization and or sensationalization strategies in portraying the participants in the disaster. Several forms of dramatization were realised, for instance the use of numbers or figures and hyperbole (or exaggeration). Hyperbole was used by all four newspapers in a way that was likely to manipulate the audience and even go against their rational thinking. The conclusion is that dramatization or sensationalisation, often presenting exaggerated information or showing worst cases that are in fact not generally applicable, is a means regularly used by news media to convince the audience of the veracity of reports so that further questions become unnecessary.

8.3.2.5 *Register*

The study investigated the lexical choices for representing (e.g.) the Malawian government and the NGOs or countries belonging to the global north. The intention was to establish the specific vocabulary that described whether the participant(s) are commended or blamed in the representation of the disaster. The study concluded that positive register clustered around NGOs or countries belonging to the global north for being effective and generous social actors. On the

other hand, the affected victims and Malawian people cluster around lexical items that negatively portray them as passive beneficiaries of relief aid. The negative register also criticised the Malawian government for lacking preparedness for the disasters. Though this cannot be refuted, the newspapers reify the hegemonic divisions of the power relations between the global south and global north.

8.3.3 Linguistic and visual discursive construction of the local actors

The study has found that visual portrayal of the local social actors, particularly those badly affected, constructed them as **passive recipients** of relief aid. First, images in the news portrayed women, children and elderly as ‘ideal’ objects for requesting aid. In chapter six, this study shows how the local actors were represented negatively, as lazy, passive and overly dependent on the western social actors. The visual texts confirmed, and in fact amplified, the verbal portrayal people with such characteristics. Using Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) GVD approach, the majority of the images portray social actors looking directly at the audience, thus making demands on the audience for improvement of their welfare. The study concludes that the visual representation colluded with the verbal text to reiterate the generic features of children, women and the elderly as weak, destitute and vulnerable, thereby appealing to the public to echo such a perception of the extent and effects of the disaster.

The Malawian government and its officials are portrayed as **incompetent** and **ineffective** based on poor management of the disaster. The textual and visual analysis revealed the presence of different discourses related to the government approach to the management of the social and economic consequences of the floods. For instance, reference was made to the government officials massive corruption and looting of funds in what is known as ‘Cashgate’ scandal. Media reported that due to this unrelated earlier scandal, countries in the global north had withdrawn and re-channelled their aid (through home-based NGOs) to avoid the mismanagement of relief funding, a decision with consequences of many victims. Such decision also affected the powers of the government in assuming authority and taking responsibility for interventions after the disaster. Furthermore, slow and inadequate government response signified a lack of preparedness for the disasters. The media were found to have used hegemonic discourses to portray government as too weak to attend to the disaster.

8.3.4 Gendered representation of men and women in disaster reports

The final objective of the study was one that sought to investigate the linguistic and visual representation of the male and female social actors in the disaster reports. Specifically, it explored how crisis situations affect (or do not affect) the portrayals of gender in the news. First, the study revealed the numeric dominance of pictures with the presence of men compared to women (see Table 7.2). It was established that photographs depicting women restricted them to the gendered domestic roles such as cooking and taking care of children. Not many women were included in the photographs that portrayed activities of actually salvaging property or transporting food and other resources, while men were objectified in such a way in the aftermath and during the rescuing exercises. As demonstrated in Table 7.3, more photographs portrayed the women as passive, compared to men. Against this background, chapter six concludes that media representation of gender in the disaster reifies the masculinisation of messages in the disasters.

Secondly, the data revealed that women were identified by their names, number of children and age, whereas men were functionalised. They were also collectivised and genericized in order to objectify them as masses of victims all with the same prominent features of needing quick relief. Women are largely stereotyped as weak and emotional, and men as both physically and emotionally strong. It is concluded that the visual framing of women and children in natural disasters reifies their hardships in discursive and material ways.

Thirdly, the study found no difference in the portrayal of gender stereotypes in both local print and international online news websites. Although the UK based online news websites are regarded to be relatively liberal and sensitive to the inaccuracies of gender role casting, they were hardly different to the local Malawian media which is regarded as conservative and subscribing to traditions. Chapter seven has shown that photographs in both media outlets displayed gender stereotypes. The study concludes that this particular stereotype contributes to the online news websites' portraying Malawi as a backward country that is stuck in traditional gender inequality practices.

In conclusion, the finding is that women were represented negatively, as weak and passive sufferers in the flooding. The stereotypes in many of the photographs were apparently used to appeal to the emotions of the audience – most probably effectively.

8.4 CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIELD OF STUDY

This study is the first multimodal critical discourses analysis of the media representation of a disaster in Malawi. It adds to the very limited literature on disaster risk management in Africa, but specifically also in southern Africa. It offers a foundation for further semiotic studies that focus on the media representation of disasters in remote countries, particularly in the global south. The study differs from previous studies in its multimodality approach which considers the interaction between language and visuals in social meaning making during disasters, and investigates media outlets not previously studied in relation to Malawi.

The study also contributes to the question of mediated gender portrayal in crisis situations. Regardless of reporting during a crisis, the study shows evidence that existing societal and cultural constructs of gender are perpetuated in the media. Further, there is no difference between local print and international online representation of men and women. Hence, the study concludes that for the disaster in Malawi, patterns established in the international media are replicated in the local media; also, colonial perceptions of dependency of African countries are preserved and continued.

This study contributes to existing studies that investigate the role of ideology in the representation of national and international issues (i.e. Richardson 2007; Fowler 1991; Brookes 1995; Conboy 2007). However, it also departs from the above mentioned work in examining ideologies captured in the portrayal of natural disasters. With regard to the main objective of the study, the conclusion can be drawn that the local print and international online media did not represent the flooding disaster neutrally, but attached hegemonic ideologies using both visual and linguistic means.

8.5 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study focused on the question of media representation of social actors in a flooding disaster. There are some questions regarding the issues that have been presented or that were only limitedly in focus in this study, that need further research.

First, the study concentrated on the two types of data namely local print and international online media. There is need to widen the scope of research by including reports from the other types of media such as the radio and television broadcasts. Recorded programmes and news bulletins can be critically examined for the different portrayals of various role players and for ideologies

that media houses embed to their news representation. Photographs used in television broadcasts can also be considered for examination. Ultimately, this can establish the different ideologies and stance of the news media outlets.

Secondly, this study is limited to secondary data but further investigations can be complemented with primary data from interviews with the journalists who wrote the stories and the concerned victims, helpers, government officials and community members. Such more direct engagement can explore the underlying ideologies, also determining why journalists opt for particular linguistic and visual choices. Interviews can help to establish how the public (particularly those who suffered and are managing loss) perceive the significance of media in disaster issues.

My study has concentrated on the hard news genre and photographic feature articles. Further investigations can pay attention to other genres, for instance editorials or investigative journalistic features, to examine what kinds of content get foregrounded and what is obscured. Audience responses to reporting should be scrutinized to check whether intended messages actually come across. The role of human activity in curbing the effects of natural disaster and climate change, and how this is communicated, opens a further area of research.

In all, this study has turned attention to a single disastrous event in Malawi, spanning a couple of months. It is merely a window on natural disasters such as droughts, floods, landslides, and storms that are a regular occurrence, and how they affect individuals and communities. To cite the World Bank research *On the road to resilience: Reducing disaster and climate risk in Africa*, this research is important exactly because it needs to have an effect on human responses – in the media as well as in civil society:

“Climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of such weather-related hazards. Since 1970, Africa has experienced more than 2,000 natural disasters, with just under half taking place in the last decade. During this time, natural disasters have affected over 460 million people and resulted in more than 880,000 casualties. In addition, it is estimated that by 2030, up to 118 million extremely poor people (living below \$1.25/day) will be exposed to drought, floods, and extreme heat in Africa. In areas of recurrent disasters, this hampers growth and makes it harder for the poor to escape poverty”.

(Ijjasz-Vasquez and Pusch 2016)

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Addendum A:

REC letter - research approval notice



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Approval Notice New Application

29-Mar-2016
Chikaipa, Victor Patson V

Proposal #: SU-HSD-001023

Title: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Environmental Discourse in the media reporting after catastrophic flooding in southern Malawi.

Dear Mr Victor Patson Chikaipa,

Your **New Application** received on **07-Mar-2016**, was reviewed
Please note the following information about your approved research proposal:

Proposal Approval Period: **23-Mar-2016 -22-Mar-2017**

Please take note of the general Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

Please remember to use your **proposal number** (SU-HSD-001023) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your research proposal.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

Also note that a progress report should be submitted to the Committee before the approval period has expired if a continuation is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary).

This committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research, established by the Declaration of Helsinki and the Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes 2004 (Department of Health). Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

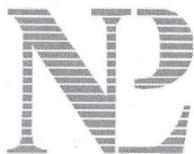
National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number REC-050411-032.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research.

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at 218089183.

Addendum B:

Permission to access Nation Publications Limited library archives



Publishers and Printers of
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Nation on Sunday and Fuko

21st April 2015

Mr. Victor Chikaipa
Department of General Linguistics
Arts and Social Sciences Faculty
Private Bag X1
Matieland, 7602
South Africa.

Dear Sir

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO ACCESS NATION PUBLICATIONS LIMITED LIBRARY ARCHIVED REPORTS FOR LINGUISTIC RESEARCH

Reference is made to your letter of 21st April 2015 and attachment on the above subject.

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I wish you all the best.

Yours faithfully

Alfred Ntonga

Deputy Chief Executive Officer

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Addendum C:

Illustrative front pages, Malawian newspapers

MALAWI'S PREMIER DAILY The Daily Times

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For News You Can Trust

Tuesday, February 3, 2015 **K300**

'The other suspect was later arrested at Mzuzu Police Station'

Two teenagers arrested for duping magistrate—P5



'Wage bill consumed much of the money in the budget'

Budget not as rosy - experts—P9



'I appeal to sympathisers to join us in preparing Levi's trip to Turkey.'

Mua wood carver to exhibit in Turkey—P35

Govt spends K96m on flood victims

BY NTCHINDI MEKI

GOVERNMENT yesterday presented a statement in Parliament on the flood disaster which among others indicates that over 380,000 people (66,942 households) will require food assistance for the next six months.

According to the statement, which was presented by leader of the House Francis Kasaila, government has so far solicited at least K99.5 million from local and foreign donations from which K96.2 million has been spent to purchase fuel, blankets, maize flour, sugar and cooking oil among other items.

"Government has committed

to provide 14,000 metric from the Strategic Grain Reserves as a contribution towards the food assistance response. An estimated 47,921 flood affected households will require food assistance until April, 2015 when their harvest from winter cropping would be expected subject to flood waters receding in time to allow winter cultivation and agricultural inputs provided," he said.

Kasaila further told the House that the floods have affected approximately 415 schools, adding that 350,000 learners have been disturbed.

"Out of the 415 schools, 181 are currently being used as relocation sites for internally displaced persons who have

lost their homes and, out of the other 234 affected schools, 40 are currently inaccessible," said Kasaila.

Commenting on the three worst affected districts of Nsanje, Chikwawa and Phalombe where 174,000 people have been displaced, Kasaila disclosed that 3,350 tents will be required to provide emergency shelter in the areas and that only 1,170 tents have been so far been provided.

The statement also paints a gloomy picture of the nutrition status of children in the 15 districts affected by the floods as cases of acute malnutrition are expected to increase considerably due to



Turn to page 3 **MADE THE STATEMENT—Kasaila**

Cashgate convict wants to refund money

Judge turns down request for 10-day extension

BY MACDONALD THOM

ONE of the two recent convicts in the ongoing Cashgate trials, Maxwell Namata, has

said he wants to refund the money for which he was convicted.

Namata was convicted two weeks ago of theft and money laundering involving K14.4 million while businessperson

Luke Kasamba was convicted of laundering K24.1 million.

When the court reconvened yesterday, Namata's lawyer, Wapona Kita, asked for 10 more days, so that he "prepares for

some facts before sentencing."

But Judge Annabel Mtalimanya adjourned the case to Wednesday.

"It is important that the convicted persons know their

sentences as soon as possible. I, therefore, reluctantly adjourn the matter to Wednesday 4th February 2015," the judge said.

Turn to page 3



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REGISTERED AT G.P.O. AS A NEWSPAPER VOL. 22 NO. 24 TUESDAY, 3 FEBRUARY 2015 WWW.MWNATION.COM PRICE: K300

Goodall allocates K1bn for disasters

SUZGO KHUNGA
NEWS ANALYST

Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development Goodall Gondwe has allocated an additional K1 billion towards the disaster relief programme following flooding and damage to property in 15 of the

country's 28 districts. The extra money, which comes after the initial K500 million that government pumped into the programme, will be factored in the revised estimates that Gondwe is expected to present on Friday as part of the Mid-Year Budget Review report. However, the expected

allocation towards disasters is far below the required K38 billion (about \$81 million) for a full response which could leave the 200 000 displaced people vulnerable and at risk of hunger and diseases in the camps where they are seeking shelter. According to the fifth disaster situation report

jointly compiled by the Department of Disaster Management Affairs (Dodma), as of January 30 2015, the Preliminary Response Plan (PRP) only had 21 percent of the required funding, which includes resources from government and other partners. "The PRP has been funded

at 21 percent, with big gaps in critical humanitarian sectors, which needs confirmed financial support in this first stage of the emergency response," the report reads. But Gondwe said in an interview yesterday, government was assured



Goodall clarifies on Ifmis software
—National P3

DISASTER STATUS STIRS DEBATE

Chakwera insists on State of Emergency

SUZGO KHUNGA, NEWS ANALYST

Members of Parliament (MPs) started their business of the Mid-Year Budget Review Meeting with leader of opposition Lazarus Chakwera insisting that the President should have declared a State of Emergency instead of a State of Disaster.

Responding to a ministerial statement which Minister of Transport and Public Infrastructure Francis Kasaila delivered in the House at the start of the four-week meeting, Chakwera argued that a State of Emergency in floods-ravaged areas could have made a difference in the response to those affected.

He said government should have involved Parliament to give it the necessary powers to act quickly.

Said Chakwera: "More could have been done by Parliament or the relevant committee to declare a State of Emergency."

Government earlier reacted to Chakwera's sentiments on

» PAGE 2



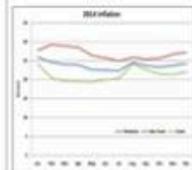
Chakwera: More could have been done



Kasaila: People in need of immediate response



Women's Caucus targets flood victims
—National P4



Govt cautioned on budget performance
—Business News P9

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REGISTERED AT G.P.O. AS A NEWSPAPER VOL. 22 NO. 9 TUESDAY, JANUARY 13 2015 WWW.MWNATION.COM PRICE: K300

Heart breaks as floods keep anxious relatives guessing

EPHRAIM NYONDO
NEWS ANALYST

A dark cloud of human desperation has engulfed the beautiful plains of Shire Valley as the rage of heavy rains continues to roar across the country. The valley, which comprises Chikwawa and Nsanje districts, is experiencing the worst wave of flooding since

1997.

As of yesterday, in Chikwawa District alone, nearly 1 500 households had been rendered homeless, according to Frank Kadzokoya, an officer for the Department of Disaster Management Affairs (Dodma).

The figure, he fears, is likely to double by today as the two waiting safety camps that government

put in the district, continue to experience, with each passing hour, troops of drenched hundreds running away from ravaged homes searching safety.

But the desperation is not just evident on the pale and hungry faces, pleading for a space in the tents that are already occupied.

In Chadula Village, Traditional Authority (T/A) Mulilima, four

families are praying for the flooding waters to tone down so their dearest, trapped in the trees, should come.

"My wife and two children left for the garden early in the morning. I had other issues to attend to, so I did not join them. But sometime around 9 o'clock in the morning, I began to notice that Likhubula River was starting to swell.

By the time I realised it were floods, the river had already spread its fury," Austin Mwanyenga, a local in the village, told *The Nation* yesterday.

When *The Nation* visited Mwanyenga's house at around 2pm yesterday, the mood among the six relatives we talked with was dark and eerily

» PAGE 3



Govt for dialogue with CSOs on funds
—National P2

RAGING FLOODS

- Death toll reaches 11
- Planes fail to land at Chileka
- No funds at DC's offices

EDWIN NYIRONDO, NEWS ANALYST

incessant rains continue to cause havoc in the country as five more people have died—four in Zomba and one in Karonga—taking the human toll to 11 since the flooding disaster hit the country roughly two weeks ago.

Six others died last week—four in Mangochi and two in Zomba.

This is in addition to thousands that have been

» PAGE 2

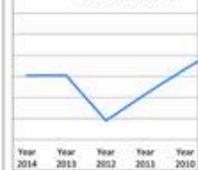


A little girl wads through the floods with a baby strapped on her back in Chikwawa yesterday



Thugs set ablaze Area 23 Police Unit
—National P3

Growth rates



Mw economy grew by 6% in 2014—RBM

—Business News P9

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The Daily Times
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For News You Can Trust

Monday, January 19, 2015 K300

'Kyungu initially refused to be part of the trip'

Govt facilitates CSOs visit to Kayerekerera — P3



'We need to work together to tighten the security'

Police, banks' meeting fails — P10



'He has entertained Malawians for years'

Chiradzulu sings Happy Birthday to AGide — P47

FLOODS DISASTER AFTERMATH

Nightmare in camps

BY CHARLES MPAKA

ONE week after floods laid siege in 15 districts across the country, the water levels in Nsanje which is the worst-hit district are slowly receding but not the grind of life and the gloom among the flood victims in the camps.

And every time clouds gather in the sky suggesting yet another downpour, the melancholy among the victims in the shelters deepens as that signifies a longer, more torturous stay in what some of the victims have described as "prisons".

Already grappling with the pain of losing their hard-earned property and, for some of them, loved ones in the worst floods to have battered the district in decades, victims at a camp at Nsanje Boma have found themselves being lumped at a place that has no any source of water.

Since their arrival, the victims had been falling back on a borehole at a nearby school for water.

But management of the school ordered them to no longer use the



LIFE AWAY FROM HOME — Some of those rescued captured here at a camp at Nsanje Boma — Photos by Charles Mpacka

Mozambique repatriates 13 Malawian children

BY MACDONALD THOM

GOVERNMENT last week successfully negotiated with their Mozambican counterparts on the repatriation of 13 Malawian children who were detained at Moanze in Mozambique.

Minister of Gender, Children Disability and Social Welfare Patricia Kaliani on Friday said the process was a tough one, attributing the success on the matter to the involvement of Mozambique High Commissioner to Malawi.

"Her Excellency High Commissioner of Mozambique to Malawi is the one who facilitated the process of bringing the children back to Malawi. Initially, Mwanza District Commissioner and Police Officer-in-Charge of the district went there but they were sent back.

"But with the assistance of the High Commissioner, we have been able to bring back the children. They were handed over to Malawi Government on Thursday," Kaliani said.

She said currently the children are receiving counselling at Youth Net and Counselling (Yoneco).

"They look traumatised and they need to be counselled. They are currently at Yoneco in Zomba, where they are being counselled before they go back to school," Kaliani said.

She said government will investigate the matter further.

"We would like to get to the bottom of the matter. They cannot all be related to each other. Something fishy took place and

Turn to page 3

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