Foreword

This volume entitled Political Discourse in Emergent, Fragile, and Failed Democracies is a welcome contribution to emergent and not so emergent, and backsliding democracies across the world. The reactions of politicians, commentators, newspapers and ordinary people alike, not only to political happenings, but also to socio-economic, and even war and prayer conditions in various media, can be described as “political in nature.” The analysis of texts arising from these events and discourses whether in support or contesting the status quo can be said to be “political discourse analysis.” This means there are ambiguities and various facets as to what constitutes political discourse.

Therefore, deciding what is political and what is not is not always that straightforward. Protests of students over high university fees as has recently happened in South Africa has been described by some members of the ruling party as “politically motivated.” The South African Police Services (SAPS) were drawn in to investigate the “third force” allegedly behind the protests designed “to cause and heighten tensions” (Williams, 2015, p. 1). On the other hand, political commentators and opposition parties saw the protests as resulting from deteriorating socio-economic conditions, in which even the middle class are finding it difficult to afford the fees being charged for university education. Thus, there is a subjective element in deciding whether a particular event or discourse is political or not.

Indeed in his conceptualisation of Political Discourse Analysis (PDA) as a sub-genre of critical discourse analysis (CDA), Van Dijk (1997, p. 1) is aware of the ambiguities surrounding PDA but notes that the commonest “interpretation is that PDA focuses on the analysis of ‘political discourse’, although we then still need to determine which discourse is political and which is not.” He further highlights another potential conundrum, which arises when political discourse analysis is equated with critical discourse analysis. He suggests that for effective analysis, it is imperative that PDA should be characterised as both political while retaining the critical edge required to unravel political and socio-economic inequalities, and aspects of the procreation of power and domination embedded in political discourse. In other words, PDA should be analysed critically (van Dijk, 1997; Fairclough, 1995). In terms of analysis, PDA focuses on the generic structure and overall organisation of argumentations (van Dijk, 1997; Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012). This entails that PDA should not dwell so much on isolated linguistic features but on argumentations premised on “the generic features of the whole texts” (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012, p. 1).

PDA and CDA are not the only analytical tools used in the analysis of the chapters. These are complemented and supplemented by a range of methodologies and analytical tools including multimodality, the conceptual metaphor theory, propaganda model, speech act theory and implicatures.

The chapters in this volume are wide ranging in topic selection and the political discourses analysed. The topics and texts used in the analysis include those on ethnic stereotyping on websites during elec-
tions, political party emblems and slogans, parliamentary discourses, political metaphors of nationhood, popular songs as political discourse, sarcasm and irony as political and social discourse, the politics of real-name registration in China, the political rhetoric of ISIS, elite discourse and party hopping during elections, multi-layered political systems in local government, representations of transitional politics in the media, local vigilante groups and Boko Haram, a cross-cultural and linguistic analysis of electioneering news reports, news stories about Afghanistan’s 2009 presidential election, and media representation of the Nigerian 2011 post-presidential election news reports.

The wide scope covered in this volume serves to locate PDA in transnational, multimodal and multidisciplinary contexts, which no doubt helps contribute to and extend our understanding of political discourse analysis. This is particularly the case as the volume is based on discourses from non-Western emergent, fragile, and failed states, and thus provides novel insights to the definition and the study of political discourse analysis.

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**REFERENCES**


