

# Discursive Construction of News Values in the Headline: A Case Study of BBC News Reports on Zimbabwe Crisis

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## ABSTRACT

The paper makes a discursive analysis of the news value construction in the headlines of new media news. The data chosen is 59 news headlines on coverage of Zimbabwe Crisis released in the apps of BBC from November 6th to November 18th 2017. The data indicates a chronological variance of the news values in the headlines. Specifically, eliteness and negativity are values constantly occurring in the headlines throughout the crisis report. The value of positivity appears only at the final stage of the news coverage. The value of timeliness emerges at the final four days of the news coverage. The value of suspense appears at the middle stage of the event. The value of proximity is employed when the detention just occurred. In terms of the linguistic realization of those news values, the study finds that the frequent use of some words contributed to the realization of news values. This study is important in that it reveals how language resources are used by newsmakers to construct news value in the headlines and how news values are realized in the context of communication.

## KEYWORDS

Discursive News Value Analysis, News Reports Headlines, News Values, Zimbabwe Crisis

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In this study, we explore the news values in the news headlines by taking a discursive approach to news value construction, known as the discursive news value analysis (DNVA) (Bednarek & Caple, 2017). We take journalistic texts as social and semiotic practice. While admitting the multiple sources of the news value, such as the material reality, the cognitive beliefs of workers and audience, the social constraints on news selection, and the discursive communication of news values (Bednarek & Caple, 2017, p. 43), we are interested in the semiotic realization of news values in the journalistic discourse, specifically in the news headlines.

The concept of news values derives from Galtung and Ruge's (1965, pp. 87-68) discussion of twelve news factors which are at play when an event become news, namely, frequency, threshold,

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unambiguity, meaningfulness, consonance, unexpectedness, continuity, composition, reference to elite nations, reference to elite people, reference to persons and reference to something negative. Four aspects of news values can be roughly discerned from the previous studies: the material perspective takes news values as those qualities inherently lying in the event and people involved (Machin & Niblock, 2006; Palmer, 2000); the cognitive perspective considers news values existing in the minds of journalists (Palmer, 2000, p. 45; Donsbach, 2004; Kepplinger & Ehmi, 2006, p. 27; Schultz, 2007, p. 190; Harrison, 2010, p. 248; Strömbäck et al., 2012, p. 719); the social perspective takes news value as routines and procedures followed by journalists as the criterion for the selection of events as news (Schulz, 1982; Shoemaker et al., 1991); a fourth one takes a discursive perspective, taking newsworthiness as the linguistic treatment and construction of the event (Bednarek & Caple, 2017). In the fourth perspective of inquiry, some studies explore categories of news values of English newspapers (Bednarek & Caple, 2017), while some others investigate voices and news value in the media talk (Bednarek, 2016).

Unlike traditional news media like the newspaper where the news texts are already in the unfolded state, news in the new media is often in a folded state with the headlines ready for readers to choose and click to make a further understanding of the content. Therefore, we consider the headlines being crucial for the construction of newsworthiness in the news presented in new media. Our study focuses on the discursive construction of news values in the news headlines presented in the news app, with the hope to understand how newsmakers construct the event in the headlines to make it valuable for the potential reader. We will define news value and its categories in the next part, and present our empirical exploration of news values constructed in the headlines of news presented in the news app. A preliminary conclusion and implications of this exploration will also be presented in the last part of this paper.

## 2. DEFINE NEWS VALUES

The term “news values” has been applied to designate different aspects in the news production process, “including apparent properties of events or stories, aspects of journalistic practice, elements of content mix, fit with news agenda, and factors relating to business models or economic conditions” (Bednarek & Caple, 2017, p. 39). Bell (1991) defined news values as those manifested in the news text (e.g. brevity, clarity, and color), values in the process (e.g. continuity, competition, etc.), values in news actors and events (e.g. recency, negativity). Considering the confusion of different elements in the news production process in Bell’s classification, Bednarek and Caple (2017) made a distinction between news writing objectives (standard associated with news writing), news selection factors (elements governing the selection of events as news), news values (newsworthiness of events in a community, in the news practice and in the discourse construction). The present study takes a discursive perspective on news values, thinking that apart from other factors, the newsworthiness is realized through semiotic resources form “story conceptualization, story construction, and story position to the evaluation of the reporting” (Bednarek, 2016, p. 28). We specifically define news values as constructed newsworthiness in the discourse by verbal and nonverbal resources.

### 2.1. Classification of News Values

Scholars like Van Dijk (1988), Bell (1991), Montgomery (2007), and Bednarek (2016) all have their own classifications of news values from the cognitive constraints that define news values, news values in the actors and events, discursively constructed news events. For the present study, we adopt Bednarek’s (2016) classification for we take a similar discursive perspective in studying the discursive realization of newsworthiness in the headlines. We take the nine recognized discursive news values as a reference for our study, not as a checklist, for the cultural variation that might exist in the news values. Specifically, they are:

1. **Timeliness:** The indication of the freshness of occurring event by referring to time either explicitly or implicitly;
2. **Consonance:** Evaluation of expectedness of the occurring events to one's stereotype;
3. **Negativity:** Negative expressions of the happening events, emotions, negative evaluations, etc.;
4. **Impact:** Evaluations of significance or consequences;
5. **Proximity:** Reference to a place, nation or other features that brings closeness to the target audience;
6. **Unexpectedness:** Evaluations of unexpectedness or surprise in relation to the usual;
7. **Superlativeness:** Expressions of high intensity or large scale of the happenings by intensifiers, repetition, etc.;
8. **Personification:** References for some personal features as emotions, participants, etc.;
9. **Eliteness:** Markers of the statue, the identity of the participants in the events.

The aims of discursive news values analysis of news story are both to unravel which news values are being emphasized and which are deemphasized, and to identify how news values are linguistically realized in the story. The following example may serve as an illustration of the values constructed, e.g. Russia uses fake images to claim the US is helping IS group.

This is a news headline from Fox news. In this headline, the news value of negativity, timeliness, proximity, and unexpectedness are constructed. The words "fake" and "helping IS group" construct negativity and Unexpectedness. "US" constructs proximity, i.e., the closeness of the news to the US readers; the present tense indicates the timeliness of the news story.

## 2.2. Headlines and News Value Construction

In the news discourse, headlines indicate a special sequence in the news text in which various main contents can be inserted. The realization of this content linguistically acts as headlines. Headlines may express topics of the news and summarize the mains content of the news. The news headline expresses a macro-proposition and has the implicit predicate and several arguments (van Dijk, 1988, pp. 35-36). The headline is the first brief summary of the news content, or can be said is the miniature of the whole news. The importance of headlines in the new media seems to be more important than ever since the entire news text in the news app is folded before the user choose to click the headline to open the whole text, otherwise what left visible is only a catalog of headlines for the reader to browse. Therefore, we can reasonably assume that adequate attention must be allotted to the news headlines in the new media in order to make the news worth to read. Values relevant to the news event have to be constructed linguistically in the headlines first in order to make the event newsworthy and make the news appealing to the readers. News values constructed in the headlines form a miniature of the entire news and the first step for the reading of the whole passage. Therefore, a study of the discursive construction of news values in the new media headlines would shed some light on the linguistic processing of new materials and understand how commonly accepted news values are being communicated through the headlines to the target reader.

## 3. RESEARCH DESIGN

The present research aims to focus on the discursive construction of news values in the headlines of new media news. The rationale lies in the special summarizing role the headlines play in the news discourse, and the different roles of headlines in the new media in comparison to the headlines in the traditional newspaper, for the fact that the news headlines in the new media act as a list of catalogs of news for the users to choose.

For this purpose, our research questions can be further phrased as:

1. What kind of news values is being constructed in the news headlines?
2. Is there a chronological variance in the construction of news values?
3. What kind of linguistic devices is being employed to realize this construction?

### **3.1. Data**

News discourse vary with the news topics they cover, which might, in turn, affect the news values being constructed. For this reason, we confine the news topic of our study to political news. Considering the multiple events which might be covered by the political news, we confine our selection of news to one specific event which can generate adequate news articles. The news coverage of Zimbabwe Crisis was chosen as the discursive event for the generation of news headlines. The crisis arose as a result of party disputes and came to a climax when the president Mugabe was detained by the army on November 15<sup>th</sup>. The event quickly became the focus of media and a series of news reports on the latest development of Zimbabwe Crisis have been released.

The present study selects the news released by BBC in 13 days from November 6<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>. We choose November 6<sup>th</sup> as the starting point because relevant disputes already started and there is already some news relevant to the Zimbabwe crisis. We choose November 18<sup>th</sup> as the ending date for the reason that this was a turning point where the crisis came to an end and few reports were released on this issue. News data are collected in the BBC app site by searching the keyword Zimbabwe in the entire news. three words, Zimbabwe, Mugabe, and Robert were chosen as the searching word since they were indicators of the location and people involved in the news event. After searching the keyword, we do a fast reading of the headlines and news with the aim of excluding news which is irrelevant to the crisis. Both the full reports and the headlines are downloaded and saved as two separate corpuses according the date of their release in order to make a further inquiry into their mutual influence. Hence a selection of 59 headlines from November 6th to November 18th. The concrete information of the corpus is shown in Table 1.

### **3.2. Analytic Procedure**

To analyze the news values discursively constructed in the news headlines, we first use AntConc to analyze the frequency of the word list. Then a semantic analysis is made of the categories of high-frequency words in relation to the categories of news values in the previous section. The linguistics devices used to realize that news values,such as word groups, sentence patterns are also analyzed. We are interested in the question of whether the previously released news has an influence on the subsequent news production in terms of the discursive news value construction. Therefore, an observation will also be made of the relationships of the news headlines in the chronological order. Finally, relevant social and institutional factors that might have an influence on the discursive construction of news values will be analyzed.

## **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In this section, we will report on the results of our investigation in relation to the questions we addressed, i.e., the news values being constructed, the linguistic devices used to realize those values, and the influence of previously reported news on the subsequent discursive production of news headlines.

**Table 1. Number of news released each day**

Date (Nov.)	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Number of news items	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	2	20	14	13	5

#### **4.1. News Values Constructed in the Headlines**

After we coded the news values constructed in the headlines, we summarize the data we have got as is shown in Table 2.

As is illustrated in the table, the most frequent news value being constructed is eliteness. That is to say, people of high status and fame are mentioned in the headlines to make it newsworthy. In our corpus, the most frequent elite being mentioned is the president of Zimbabwe-Mugabe, sometimes with the full name Robert Mugabe. The reason why news reports have Mugabe in their headlines may be determined by two aspects. The first is the determinant role of reality. During the whole Zimbabwe crisis, president Mugabe is core figure related to the crisis. He has been detained for his sack of the vice president and intention to make his wife the successor. Therefore, his actions which result in the detention, the detention itself, his personal situation and whereabouts after the detention, his first public appearance after the detention, the call for his resign of the president, are all the crucial issue in the crisis which in turn influence the production of news. The linguistic realization of the dominant role of Mugabe in the crisis to make it newsworthy cannot be ignored. This might be the second reason for the mentioning of Mugabe in the headlines. To make the story newsworthy and to make the headlines as a summary of the core news values in the news item, eliteness or the mentioning of Mugabe is a main discursive strategy for the newsmakers to make their story worthy and appealing to the readers. Since the detention of Mugabe acts as the symbol for the outbreak of the crisis, the first report provided readers with the happening both through the eliteness and unexpectedness. This report has become the basis for the subsequent news report for the reason that after the first report, the situation of Mugabe has naturally become the concern of the public and any news item with the keyword Mugabe would necessarily feed the readers' desire to get more, which in turn was utilized by the newsmakers as a strategy to make their items newsworthy and appealing in the headlines. Therefore, the president name Mugabe becomes a key strategy in the discursive construction of news values in the headlines. Some other names of elites which are not so frequent as Mugabe, but do appear in the headlines enhance the newsworthiness of the report includes Vice-President Mnangagwa who has been sacked by the president and fled abroad, Grace Mugabe who is the first lady of the country, Kudzai Chipanga, head of Zimbabwe's Zanu-PF youth wing, Zimbabwe military chief Chiwenga who is in charge of the military takeover. One difference between those elite labels and the name of Mugabe lies in the former ones is not so prominent or familiar to the readers. Their role as eliteness appearing the news headlines is to supply the agent of an action or provider of information. They are

**Table 2. Number of news values constructed in the headlines**

<b>News Values</b>	<b>Number</b>
Eliteness	32
Negativity	22
Timelines	18
Proximity	12
Suspense	12
Personification	6
Unexpectedness	5
Impact	3
Positivity	3
Consonance	2
Superlativeness	1

constructed in relation to the negativity of news to arise readers' desire to understand the detail of the event or to understand the ongoing state and consequence of the crisis as a result of those figure's action start to get involved in the event.

The second frequent news value being constructed is negativity. News headlines as "Zimbabwe army takes on Mugabe – as it happened", "Zimbabwe's sacked Vice-President Mnangagwa flees" and etc. indicate events with a negative association such as the president's detention by the army or the vice presidents flee. Negativity constructed in the data of headlines due partly to the nature of news events. For the news reports in our data are about the crisis in the Zimbabwe, reports focused on the negative aspects of the events are a natural occurrence. In those reports, attention can be drawn to the discursively constructed value of negativity in the headlines since "attention for the negative" as the rhetoric of news discourse "satisfies the rhetoric of emotions" (van Dijk, 1988, p. 86).

The third highest news value is timeliness. News reports are being discursively constructed as timely recent. In our data, those timely attributes are being constructed by present simple tense as in "Booing of Zimbabwe's Grace Mugabe lands four in court," by lexical devices like "latest" as in "Zimbabwe latest: Embattled Mugabe in first public appearance Epithet", and by interrogative sentence as in "Coup? What is going on in Zimbabwe?". As news report and most importantly as news reports of a political crisis that is going on in a country, the timeliness is of crucial importance for the news value of the item.

The fourth highest news value is proximity. The definition given by Bednarek is "explicit references to place or nationality near the target audience" (Bednarek, 2016, p. 31). In our data, we have found only one case with the explicit reference to the location of UK in the headline "How UK-Zimbabwe relations went sour" to construct a geographical proximity. What we find most frequent and different from the proximity defined by Bednarek (2016) is cognitive proximity. For instance, headlines like "Zimbabwe crisis: 'There's a feeling people want to celebrate'" contain the term "Zimbabwe crisis" to refer to what has already happened as an access to what is new and to be covered next. van Dijk (1988) describes the mentioning of previous events as a way to the description and prediction of the next event as an important rhetoric. Therefore, we interpret this kind of cognitive proximity as the providence of what has already been known to the readers in order to introduce something new, i.e., laying the cognitive foundation for acceptance of new information. This cognitive proximity is attained as a result of convenience and eagerness provided by the old information to the new. Our study has found there are 8 cases of headline constructed their news values by the format "Zimbabwe crisis: XX." In this format, the phrase "Zimbabwe crisis" serves as an indicator of what the readers have already known to make them cognitively proximal, while the information "XX" after colon acts as the new information provided for the reader in the headline. In this way, news values are constructed like a path, forming what the readers are most familiar with, which is actually a passage for the new information being introduced. Therefore, news values are being constructed from what is proximal to the readers either by explicit reference to some physical features or take news facts to form some items that have been reported as the start point.

The fifth highest news value is what we term as suspense, which indicate the set of suspense by asking questions in the headlines and providing answers or analysis in the body of the news item. In our data, we have found 12 cases of suspense set by questions like "News this week: Can Zimbabwe move on from Mugabe rule?", "Zimbabwe Mugabe: Where do deposed leaders go?" etc. The suspense in those headlines is set by asking a question the reader is interested in and laying the answer or analysis in the decayed body. In this way, readers might be driven by the desire of knowing the answer to further click the headline, thus read the whole news passage.

The news value of personification appeared 6 times, with instances like "Zimbabwe crowds rejoice as they demand an end to Mugabe rule", "Mugabe allies hit out at Zimbabwe army chief location" and etc. The concrete appearance of common people in the news can be "the story of relevance to the reader by characterizing a larger issue in terms of a single individual" (Cotter, 2011, 1894,

cited in Bednarek & Caple, 2017, p. 91). Through reference to ordinary individuals, the abstract occurrences have been dramatized by involving concrete human beings, this makes the news items newsworthy to the reader.

The seventh highest news value constructed in the headline is unexpectedness. In headlines like “Zimbabwe’s military seizes state TV broadcaster” and “Coup? What is going on in Zimbabwe?”, the military seizure of the TV broadcaster and Coup linguistically construct occurrences out of the reader’s usual expectation. The construct of unexpectedness in the news headlines can be explained by quoting van Dijk’s explanation of the novelty in news like:

*The requirement that news should be in principle about new events is fundamental. Readers should not get the information they already know, which is the general requirement of any speech acts of assertion. Cognitively, this means that the model conveyed by a story must contain information not yet present in the current models of the reader. The result is possible updating of present models. (van Dijk, 1988, p. 121)*

Of the rest values constructed in the headlines, there are impact, positivity, consonance, and superlativeness. There are two things worth mentioning here. The first is that in the general negativity of news value being discursively constructed in the news coverage, the value of positivity emerged at the 18th of November to indicate people’s wish for a better change. The second is the value of consonant which lies in two aspects, one being in consonant with readers’ expectation of what should happen in a political crisis and another being in consonant with the formerly released news facts. The concrete examples of four news values constructed in the headlines are as follows:

‘Freedom has finally come to Zimbabwe’ (Positivity)

Zimbabwe yearns for a change of any kind (Consonance)

Zimbabweans in London: ‘Today a comma not a full stop’ (Superlativeness)

Emmerson Mnangagwa: The ‘crocodile’ who snapped back (Impact)

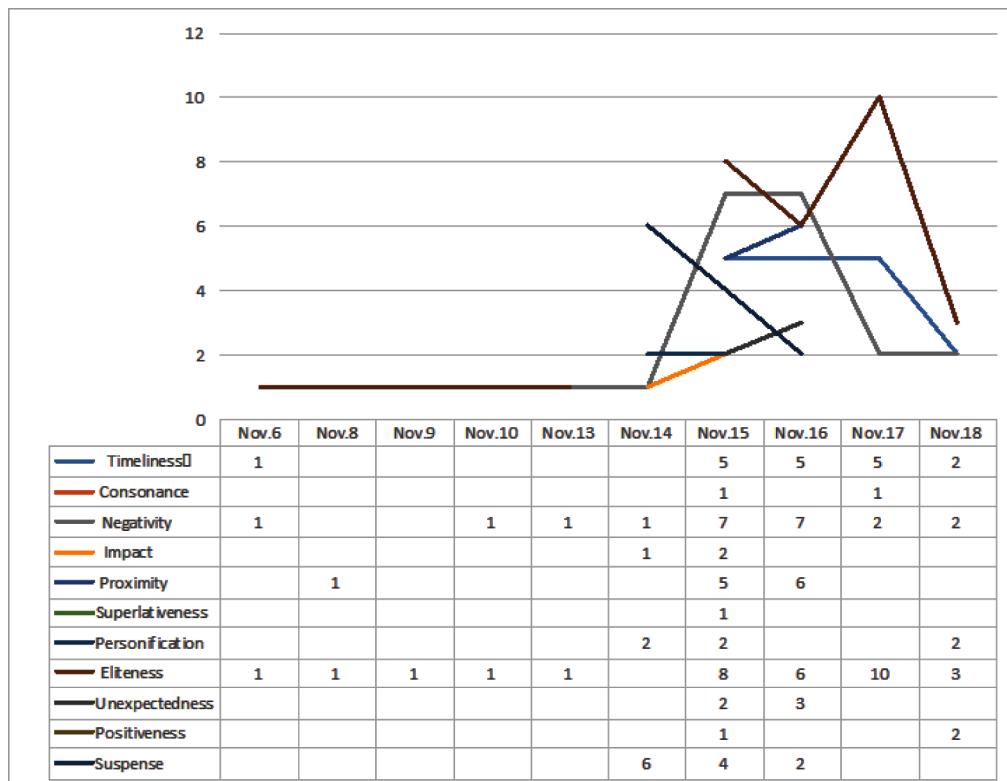
Considering the event—political crisis itself, we can find that, when reporting the Zimbabwe crisis, two aspects concerning media like BBC are worth mentioning: what they cover and how they cover it. By what they cover, we mean that in constructing news values in the headlines, news workers focus on the states and actions of elites involved in the event, negative occurrence and impact related, the unexpectedness of the series of event, the common people’s involvement in the crisis, all of which are being discursively realized in the headlines. By how they cover it, we mean that the timeliness of the report, the proximity of the news in relation to the readers’ physical and cognitive closeness, the suspense set in the headlines for the further clarification in the new body, the consonance with what is usually happening in a political chaos, have contributed to the worthiness of the news in the way how they construct what they cover (the states and actions of elites involved in the event, negative occurrence and impact related to the crisis, the unexpectedness of the series of event, the common people’s involvement in the crisis) to make it worthwhile and appealing for the reader to click to read more.

In this section, we have an overall analysis of the news values constructed in the headlines without considering the concrete date the news item being issued, i.e., the variance of the news values as the event develops. In the next section, we will focus on the micro aspect of how the news values in the headlines vary as the event develops.

#### **4.2. Chronological Variance of News Values in the Headlines**

In this section, we will report the chronological variance of news values in the headlines as they issued each day. Figure 1 shows the news values constructed each day in the headlines.

Figure 1. The chronological variance of news values in the headlines



As is shown in the chart, eliteness and negativity are the values constantly appearing in the headlines from the beginning date to the end. Values like positiveness appeared only at the final stage of the news coverage. Timeliness appeared at the final four days of the news coverage. The value of suspense appeared at the middle stage of the event, where the situation of Zimbabwe crisis was still unclear. The value of proximity appeared at the time when the detention just occurred. Different news values occurred differently as to the events' actual ongoing process, with some appeared constantly from the beginning to the end, some appeared at the crucial point of the crisis, some appeared only at the final stage of the crisis. This shows that news values constructed in the headlines are not randomly distributed but rather is influenced by the actual development of the events being reported.

As to the Zimbabwe crisis being reported and the news values being constructed at different stages, we may infer that eliteness and negativity are the values the news worker constantly trying to deliver to their readers through the headlines. The reason could be the crisis is negative in nature and the president Mugabe is constant the crucial role of the crisis who can not only be avoided in the news report but is where the news value lies in. When the crisis came to a crucial point where the president Mugabe was detained, the promptness of the news coverage seems to be quite important for readers to stay in touch with the event to understand what is next. At this stage, news workers constructed their news by emphasizing their timeliness of report in the headlines using phrases like "Zimbabwe latest," "what do we know so far" and etc. Also, at this stage, for the event is at a crucial turning point of development, the news workers have a priority on the information of latest development, the news values suspense is constructed in headlines to realize their newsworthiness of keeping the readers with the latest development of the situation. By setting suspense and providing the answers

and analysis in the new body, the newsmakers succeeded in attracting the readers to follow their report and keep an interest in reading. The value of proximity also appeared at this time as a result of the frequent release of news reports made the newsmaker keep a line on the progress of the event. The newsmaker used the previously reported news as a start point and background for the production of subsequent news. Put it in another way, the previously reported news is inter-textually linked to the news going to be reported. By drawing words or phrases used in the previous news, an inter-textual link has been formed to forge a cognitive proximity. Getting started from what they have already known, readers are cognitively ready and anxious to obtain new information, which in turn are realized in the proximity discursively constructed in the headlines. The news value of positivity appeared at the last stage of the crisis when president Mugabe was required to resign and people of Zimbabwe are looking forward to a new future of the country. The change of situation provided newsmakers with an opportunity to cover something positive in Zimbabwe, which is, in turn, realized discursively in the headlines like “Zimbabwe rejoices as Mugabe’s long leadership nears its end”. When news of negativity prevalent for some days, a shift to the coverage of some positivity gives readers some freshness to take a new look at the event, especially when this freshness of positivity is constructed discursively in the headlines, news values are realized firstly and foremostly.

The values discursively constructed in the headlines are not fixed but varied as the series of news events are released. This chronological variance of news values in the headlines is influenced both by the development of the event itself and news workers’ intention to process the new material in a way so as to make it newsworthy and appealing.

First, the actual development of the event itself determines what to be reported and what should be provided to the readers to cater for their interest. The different stages of the crisis require special attention to be paid to certain aspects of the event and its participants, with some aspects being the same, some aspects being different. Consequently, this crucial attribute determines its discursive manifestation in the news headlines in the form of news values. However, this does not mean the material aspects of the event itself alone can determine the news value of an event.

Second, the linguistic treatment of the news material, influences the final elements that realized as newsworthy in the news discourse. For the same happenings, different perspectives can be utilized to describe what had happened, different linguistic choices such as the selection of words, sentence patterns, mood structures, modality, nominalization can be used to describe the same reality, and different stances taking by the newsmakers can be expressed to the same event, all of which contribute to the discursive construction of news values in the headline.

Third, in a rather complicated event, not every aspect can be covered fairly, therefore, selective attention paid to the certain aspects is sometimes a necessary manipulation in the report and sometimes a deliberate manipulation of the news facts to make certain one salient for ideological purposes. The material reality of the actual occurrence and the discursive treatment of the news material exist in a dialectic relation in the construction of news values. Referring back to the chronological variance of different news values expressed in the headlines, we may conclude that the different turning point of the crisis is itself the news value which only needs to be realized in the linguistic aspects of the headlines. Besides, news workers’ cognition on what is crucial at this stage of crisis and what the reader desires most at a certain stage of development serve as the basis for the discursive construction of values, such as construction of proximity in relation to what has happened and will come next, the construction of suspense to cater for the readers’ desire to know more about what on earth is there at the crucial point of the crisis.

So far we have discussed that the chronological variance of news values constructed in the headlines and found that certain values appear at a certain development of the crisis, which might arise from the material determination of the event itself and newsmakers discursive construction of news values based on their evaluation of the readers’ state. In the next section, we will focus on the linguistic realization of news values in the headlines.

### 4.3. Linguistic Realizations of News Values

Using AntConc, we first analyzed the frequency of content words appeared in the news headlines. The results are illustrated in Figure 2.

The analysis shows that the group of frequent words can be classified into names of place, names of person, nouns denoting the crisis, adjectives indicating the recent development of the event. The most frequent word appearing in the news headlines is the word indicating place-Zimbabwe, with the frequency of 54 times, for instance, the headlines of “Zimbabwe politics: Mugabe sacks ‘disloyal’ Mnangagwa (Nov. 6<sup>th</sup>)”, “Zimbabwe crowds rejoice as they demand end to Mugabe rule (Nov. 18<sup>th</sup>)” and other headlines. In other words, of all the 59 headlines, there are only five cases in which the word “Zimbabwe” does not appear, for instance, the headline “Respect your elders: Why cultural norms benefit Mugabe”. Of the three words which are names, the first one is the word with a second higher frequency. “Mugabe”, which is the name of Zimbabwe president being detained at the crisis. Another word is “Robert”, with a frequency of 8, which is the first name of the president. The third name is Grace which is used to denote the first lady of Zimbabwe. Nouns which are used to indicate various aspects of the crisis are next frequent ones, such as crisis, army, take over, appearance. Adjectives like “Finally, public, far, chief” ranks the third higher categories.

For the word and discursively constructed news values are not in a simple one to one relationship, we have to further understand the roles those words played in the context to gain an in-depth understanding of the values in the headlines. As is already being described, the word “Zimbabwe” is the most frequent one. To further understand what roles the word “Zimbabwe” played in those headlines, based on Halliday (1985)’s classification of semantic roles, we made a classification of semantic roles it played in the headline structure. To label the roles it played, we use agent when it acts as initiator of an actor; use patient when it acts as the receiver of an action; use goal when something moves toward it; use location when something is happening in the country; use epithet when it is used to indicate some qualities of Zimbabwe are projected on a thing being described; use deictic when the word is used as a possessive noun like “Zimbabwe’s...”. We find the roles it played can be shown in Table 3.

As is shown in the table, mostly, Zimbabwe is used as Epithet to show qualities of other entities that relate to Zimbabwe. The most common form is Zimbabwe plus noun, for instance, “Zimbabwe army takes on Mugabe — as it happened,” “Zimbabwe takeover: Five things you should know”. Zimbabwe is also used as a deictic in the form of “Zimbabwe’s” like “Grace Mugabe: Who is Zimbabwe’s, first lady”. For the roles of agent, location, patient, goal, the relevant examples are as follows:

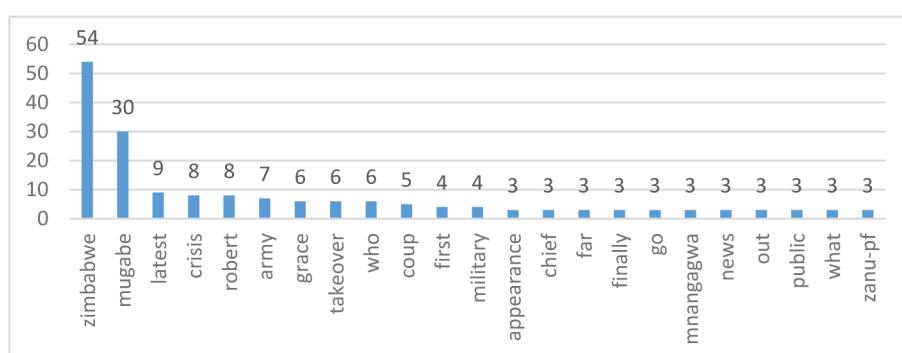
News this week: Can Zimbabwe move on from Mugabe rule? (Agent)

‘Freedom has finally come to Zimbabwe’ (Goal)

Robert Mugabe—revolutionary hero or the man who wrecked Zimbabwe (Patient)

Newspaper headlines: Mugabe’s ‘fall from Grace’ in Zimbabwe (Location)

**Figure 2. Word frequency list of the headlines (with freq. > 2)**



**Table 3. Sematic roles**

Epithet	32
Deictic	9
Goal	2
Location	3
Agent	4
Patient	2

It can be inferred that the keyword Zimbabwe acted as the core reminder of news value in the headlines. Therefore, at the discourse level, the word Zimbabwe is used as agent, goal, patient, location in the headlines to play different roles. In this way, all the things being reported can be linked to the background of Zimbabwe crisis to make them newsworthy and appealing to the readers, especially when the headlines are the only information exposed to the readers with the body text of the news folded. At the cognitive level, the word Zimbabwe serve as the clue to activate readers cognitive background information of the crisis, which laid the foundation for the subsequent desire of wanting to know more and the actual basis for the understanding of new information.

The second word which appeared with the second higher frequency of 30 times is Mugabe, the president of Zimbabwe at the time of crisis. An observation of the data shows that sometimes it occurs solely as the topic separated by colon at the beginning of the headlines, headlines like “Zimbabwe Mugabe: Where do deposed leaders go?” and “Robert and Grace Mugabe: What next for Zimbabwe?” are of this kind; sometimes the word acts as agent in the headlines like “Zimbabwe: Robert Mugabe makes first public appearance” and “Zimbabwe latest: Mugabe ‘resisting calls to resign’” and this is the most frequent one in our data; sometimes word acts as deictic in headlines like “News this week: Can Zimbabwe move on from Mugabe rule?” Since as the president of Zimbabwe, Mugabe automatically gains the elite identity. The elite himself or anything related to the elite will naturally arouse the curiosity of the public. Therefore, the linguistic label “Mugabe” appeared in the headlines in the form of agent, single topic, and deictic either to show activities directly related to the president himself or to show other occurrences that are indirectly related to the elite by projecting some attributes to them. At the discourse level, anytime the word Mugabe appears, the newsworthiness of the item is enhanced by arousing the public’s interest of the elite. A third word that used to indicate eliteness is “Grace,” which is used to denote the first lady of Zimbabwe. The word is used as an indicator of the First lady’s history, the crisis she is involved in, recent development concerning her situation and possible future she is going to face. All those are what people naturally interested in when it comes to other’s affairs, especially when the figure involved is a first lady who is known to the public. Therefore, we may summarize that as to the cases in our data, names of prominent public figures can be used in the news headlines to promote the news values by constructing eliteness.

Of the highly frequent words, other nouns, like the military, takeover, crisis, Zanu-pf, appearance, signify a state of negativity and unexpectedness. In a political news, by indicating some negative occurrences which are out of expectation, those words are of great attraction to the readers. Some adjectives contribute to the construction of eliteness, consonance, and timeliness. For instance, the adjective “latest” constructs a sense of timeliness, and the adjective chief constructs a sense of eliteness of the participants. Although there are proper names indicating people and location, nouns indicating negativity and unexpectedness, adjectives denoting eliteness, consonance, they do not work in isolation to construct a specific news value. On the contrary, they form an organic whole to make the news item worthy for the readers, sometimes with an overlapping of a single word indicating multiple news values and sometimes with a news value constructed by several words together in the form of phrases. A special case used solely in the headlines to construct newsworthiness occurs

when a proper noun or names or location is used as the topic of the news headlines. For instance, in headlines like “Grace Mugabe: Who is Zimbabwe’s, first lady?”, “Grace Mugabe” acts as a topic to construct eliteness directly; the word “Zimbabwe” in the headline “Zimbabwe: Inflation, lack of food and sanctions” acts as a topic indicating proximity to what the readers already know and what is new they can provide to their readers.

As what we have mentioned in the previous section, the value of suspense has been constructed in the headlines. This has been realized in the news headline not by lexical devices, but by interrogative sentences like “Zimbabwe Mugabe: Where do deposed leaders go?”, “Robert and Grace Mugabe: What next for Zimbabwe?” etc. Suspense is set up in the headlines, with either answer to address the questions formed in the headlines, or deep analysis put forward to predict possible development or outcomes of the crisis. This might be explained by the fact that the main communicative purpose of a news is to provide readers with the latest occurrences or something new, which cannot be something brand new or start from something completely unknown. Starting from what the readers already know set the suspense and naturally lead to them the new information the news is intended to provide seem to be a discursive strategy for the treatment of news material. Another factor might be the media the news is being put on. Our data come from the new media news, whose news body is folded unless the reader chooses to click to open the entire passage after reading the headlines which are exposed to them. What is and should be constructed in the news headlines seem to be extremely important for the news to be chosen and reader. Set suspense, therefore, becomes one of the useful discursive strategies to write newsworthy headlines.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The paper makes a discursive analysis of the news value construction in the headlines of new media news for two reasons. Firstly, news values, although determined to a larger extent by the material reality of the news events, are discursively constructed by news workers using news rhetoric (van Dijk, 1988) Secondly, the headlines of news in the new media seem to be different from those in the traditional media in that they are exposed to the audience at one glance for them to read at their choice. In our study, we confine the news topic of our study to political news. We hope to find what kind of news values are being constructed in the news headlines, the relationship between news values and chronological development of the event, and the linguistic devices used to realize the news values. Considering the multiple events which might be covered by the political news, we confine our selection of news to one specific event which can generate adequate news articles. The news coverage of Zimbabwe Crisis was chosen as the discursive event for the generation of news headlines. We select the news reports released in the apps of BBC. All together there is a selection of 59 headlines from November 6<sup>th</sup> to November 18<sup>th</sup>.

The results show that the order of news values constructed in the headlines in terms of frequency is eliteness, negativity, timeliness, proximity, suspense, personification, unexpectedness, impact, positivity, consonance, and superlativeness.

There is a chronological variance of the news values appearing in the headlines. News values are changing according to the context of communication. Since news discourse is to provide the latest occurrence to the reader, apart from the two constant values of eliteness and negativity, the journalists construct news values as to the what the readers do not know and expect to know. For example, the value of proximity appeared at the time when the detention just occurred, the value of suspense appeared at the middle stage of the event, where the situation of Zimbabwe crisis was still unclear, the value of positivity appeared only at the final stage of the news’ coverage.

When it comes to the linguistic realization of those news values, we found that the use of some high-frequency words contributed to the realization of news values. Specifically, we find that the group of frequent words can be classified into names of place, names of person, and other nouns referring to the crisis and adjectives indicating the recent development of the event. We also find that

suspense is set up in the headlines by interrogative sentences like “Zimbabwe Mugabe: Where do deposed leaders go?”, with either answer to address the questions formed in the headlines, or deep analysis put forward to predict possible development or outcomes of the crisis.

The event itself and news discourse are in a dialectical relation with each other. The material reality of the news event determines what reality should be covered on the one hand. The linguistic devices influence what kind of reality at the discourse level should be presented to the reader, which in turn determines the news values of an event.

The results of this study can shed some light theoretically on how news values are constructed in the headlines of new media and how news values are related to the context of communication in the sense that some new values are constant while others emerge as a result of the context of communication. Practically, this study can be insightful for the writer of headlines concerning an event with a series of reports needed. Teaching of news writing can benefit from the present study firstly by instructing the students how to write construct news values in the headlines and how to write news headlines for the dynamic coverage of a news event.

However, the larger topics covered by news make the news value different, which is to say the analysis of discursively constructed news values is context dependent. Our study is a preliminary inquiry into a specific political crisis. Future studies can be conducted on more topics and whole news passages. Since pictures are another entity juxtaposed with the headlines in the new media, their role in news value construction is also worthy of study.

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