A Discourse Analysis of Ethnic Conflict and Peace in the Editorials of English Newspapers A Case Study of Sri Lanka[1]

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Abstract

Discourse constitutes power in constructing ideational, textual and interpersonal constructs which are ideological. It can transmit and even legitimize power in society. In the post-war development scenario, the editorials of Sri Lankan national newspapers should develop constructive discourse on politics and development to make a positive impact on legislative changes. This paper reveals subtle representation of ethno nationalism in the editorials in the Sri Lankan English newspapers. The study focuses on whether the media has been a part of the problem or a part of the solution to the Sri Lankan conflict. Since newspaper and editorial discourses are the constructions of journalists and editors of the elites, community biased ideologies are traceable in the linguistic expressions which are often 'revealed in mild forms'. This case study uses Social Constructionist approach (qualitative), mainly discourse analysis, which aims at the shared meanings and on how they are produced on ethnic conflict and peace by investigating the themes, structures and strategies of an editorial of a national newspapers to arrive at its linguistically embedded ideological and attitudinal positions.

Key Words : Discourse Analysis - Ethnic Conflict - Freedom - Peace - Social Construction

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Introduction

This paper makes an attempt at tracing cultural and linguistic nationalism in the editorial constructs of the Sri Lankan English newspapers. The prevalence of these ideologies in the Sri Lankan texts has been studied and confirmed (Abeyasekara, 2002; Balachandren, 1999; Bartholomeusz, 2002; Bartholomeusz et al, 1998; de Silva, 2006; Devotta, 2004a, 2004b, 2007; Dharmadasa, 1992; Gunawardena, 1990; Kearney, 1967; Little, 1994; Manor, 1994; Obeyesekere, 1970; Ponambalam, 1983; Smith, 1978; Tambiah, 1986; Uyangoda, 1996; Wilson, 2000 etc,).

The Editorials in English Newspapers have been generally commented as ethno-nationalistic (International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 1996; Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2004). Media Monitor (2006) reports that "eighty seven per cent (87%) of Sri Lankan journalists believe that the Sri Lankan media is failing to provide accurate, balanced and fair information. Media Monitor (1997) of the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) published a report giving the results, after monitoring English, Sinhalese and Tamil newspapers over a three-month period in 1997. In it, The Sri Lankan press has been accused of "war mongering, racism and ignorance about the country's ethnic conflict."

This study focuses on the editorials published during the negotiation period after the Ceasefire Agreement (CFA) which was signed between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Tamil militants from February 2002 and its unilateral abrogation by the the Government of Sri Lanka on 16 February 2008. It finds more evidence that the media has been a part of the problem but not a part of the solution. Media Monitor (2004:28) observes:

> What would have been the reasons for different truths to be reported to the Sinhala and Tamil people? Such reporting confirms the statement that the Sri Lankan media are not partners in the resolution of the conflict but participants in the disharmony among the communities.

The Significance of Analyzing the Editorials

Since newspaper and editorial discourses are the constructions of journalists and editors of the elites, ideologies are

"hidden or subtle in expressions and often revealed in mild forms" (Van Dijk, 1995c, 1995d, 1995e). An editorial is defined as "an article in a publication expressing the opinion of its editors or publishers" ("Editorial," n.d). "An editorial is a statement or article by a news organization (generally a newspaper) that expresses the opinion of the news organization or one of its members; editorials are (usually short) opinion pieces, written by members of the editorial board of the paper" ("Editorial," 2007). The interpretative and discourse analysis approach to the editorials may offer a closer understanding and useful insights. Although the content and linguistic analyses of news reports, articles, and editorials, have been amply done earlier in the West, it received less attention in South Asia, especially in Sri Lanka. This necessitates the study of how the editorial writers construct social reality and shape public opinion. So far the editorials have not been studied at the academic level by linguists.

The grammatical structure of the editorial is "meaning potential" (Halliday, 1994). It brings out 'what can be said' with a set of rules. But the Discourse Analysis is interested in the sociopolitical and critical relevance of editorial discourse (ED). Editorials use complex strategies in expressing the conflicts, thereby promoting ideologies. Editorials play an important part in the national and international socio-political and economic systems of a country, and through which social reality is produced, negotiated and changed.

Van Dijk (1998, pp.21-63) gives a detailed account of the status of editorials and op-ed articles in the Press and their "workings" in terms of opinion making, from a socio-cognitive perspective. He defines the concept of "ideology", in terms of its main social function (co-ordination of the social practices of group members for the effective realization of the goals of a social group and the protection of its interests), and its main cognitive function (to organize specific group attitudes) which is eventually reflected in discourse filtered through models. He talks about mental models as being the interface between the social and the personal, the general and the specific. He goes on to argue that people continually "model" their everyday lives, through the communicative events they are engaged in, or the news reports they read in the Press. "Thus, remembering, storytelling and editorializing involve the activation of past models...."(ibid, p.27) He concludes that a text is merely the tip of the iceberg of what is represented in models and people usually understand much more of a text than it actually expresses.

Journalists who write editorials and opinion columns, do not form our ideologies, but shape and group them in texts which we are able to process due to our pre-existing mental models (or schemata) and social cognition which is 'the study of people's knowledge of the social' (Contor and Antaki, 1997, p.343).

Objective

The basic assumption of the research problem is that the editorial discourse constructions of journalists and editors of the Sri Lankan elite media "hide or express their ideological and attitudinal positions in subtle and mild forms" (Van Dijk, 1995a). The general objective is:

> To investigate the themes, structures and strategies of an editorial of the Sri Lankan English newspaper on the ethnic conflict and peace to arrive at the Ideological and Attitudinal Positions and its consequent contribution to the sustainable peace in the country.

The research questions are formed to trace the appropriate answers. The general question is "how does the editorial discourse discursively construct social reality?" and the sub-questions are "what discursive practices help to construct the meaning in the editorial discourse?"and "how is social distinction constructed interactively in an editorial discourse?"

Theoretical Background

Discourse analysis reveals "the relations between notions such as ideology, discourse, and text have been more complexly reconceptualized" (Canagarajah, 1999:30). In the context of the Sri Lankan press, "discourse is the linguistic realization of the social construct, ideology; the abstract paradigms of discourse are linguistically manifested in text" (ibid.). Lyotard (1984) attacked the grand theories, meta-narratives, and totalities which have shackled the heterogeneity of discourses to impose unitary meaning" (Canagarajah,1999:32).This study makes use of the frameworks of the Ideological Discourse Analysis (IDA) of Van Dijk (1995b;1995d;1995e) and the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of Norman Fairclough (1989;1995) for analyzing the media texts. The texts have been often politically analyzed by the political scientists,

but not by the linguistic (or discourse) analysts of media discourse in both national and international levels in Sri Lanka.

Therefore, it necessitates the study of how the editorial writers construct social reality and shape public opinion. The existing presuppositions (EP) and propositional attitudes (PA) reveal covert and overt positions of the editorial discourse. This research studies shows the use of the discourse conventions related to "knowledge production, distribution and consumption" (Fairclough, 1995:16) construct the structures of the state and the concept of sovereignty and nationalism.

'Discourse' is a concept often used by the social theorists (Foucault, 1972; Fraser, 1989) and linguists (e.g. Stubbs, 1983; Van Dijk, 1985). It refers to the use of language as a social practice and "to genres of thinking, communicating, interacting that are influenced by concomitant forms of sociolinguistic conventions, ideological complexes, and knowledge paradigms" (Canagarajah, 2002:7). Van Dijk, (1988:11) observes "...the media are not a neutral, common-sensed or rational mediator of social events, but essentially reproduce pre-formulated ideologies". Rumelhart (1980:35-58) and Fowler (1991:43) have also studied the significance of mental schemata and ideology in textual representation. Social constructionism (SC) as an approach focuses on the shared meanings and on how they are produced. There are four assumptions about the meanings: 1) they are dynamic and socially constructed; 2) inter-textually linked with meanings of other socio-political and cultural objects in a historically constituted system; 3) a multiplicity of meaning or schematic systems available for a single social actor for constructing and negotiating it in a particular situation; 4) the chains of meanings as multiple and overlapping resources, from which social actors can select, combine and juxtapose (Askegaard, Jensen, & Holt, 1999:33-39).

Research Methodology

Discourse Analysis is useful in analyzing the ways of social construction in editorial discourse using the methods of Social Constructionist Approach (SCA) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Canagarajah (1999:30) notes that "critical linguists interpret how speech genres and texts may serve the ideological interests of the powerful". This study focuses on the text and the discourse themes in it, and not on the individuals. It also focuses on the

discursive practices behind ideological and attitudinal positions and the discourse constructions. A case study is done on the editorial appeared in the newspaper concerned on 24 July 2003 "Twenty years after". Figure 1 illustrates the components and methodological path of the study.

Figure 1. The Components of the Research Methodology
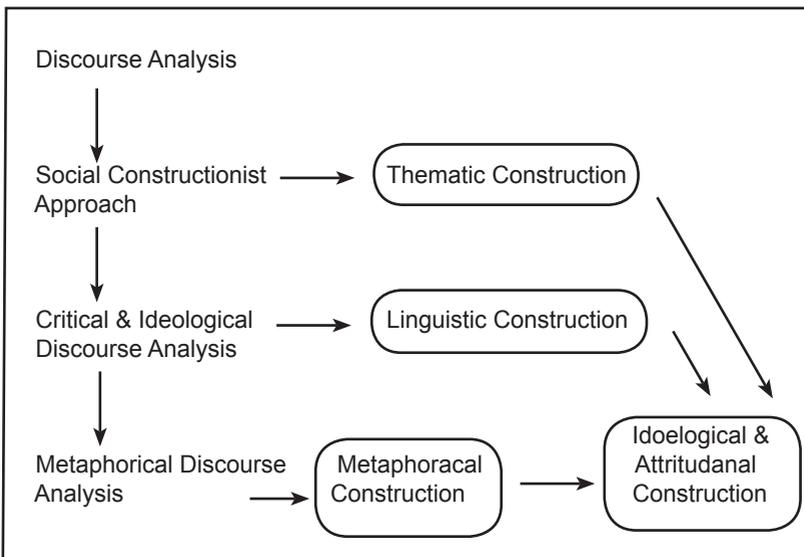
Source: Compiled by the Author

The study takes into consideration of the Context of situation: the activities and goals around which the community is organized, the behaviour of the community: the field (what is happening, to the nature of the social action that is taking place), the tenor (who is taking part, to the nature of the participants, their statuses and roles), the mode (what part the language is playing, what is that the participants are expecting the language to do for them in that situation). In addition, it focuses on the Context of Culture: the immediate events and the whole cultural history behind the text. Knowing where, when the text is set will help to understand the text more. All discursive practices are necessarily context-dependent (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000:202). The communicativeness of language is established through three aspects: Textual, Interpersonal and Ideational (Halliday, 1994).

Analysis of Discourse Construction

In Sri Lankan context, the discourse themes help the construction of binary positions/discourse of dichotomy, through the use of US and THEM. Van Dijk's (1991:13) describes that the term 'THEM' refers to deviance and threats, viz., threats to OUR country, space, population composition, and ethnic representation in political power, employment, education etc. It recognizes the concerns of dominant group, their prejudices, group norms and goals, as well as dominant ideologies. The themes (semantic macro-structures) of editorial texts are identified according to Van Dijk's (1991:13) view that ethnic minorities are linked to the prominence and availability of the overall social cognitions such as (a) Socio-cultural difference and lack of adjustment and tolerance; (b) Deviance of established (dominant) norms (including terrorism, violence and crime); (c) Competition for scarce resources (educational, economic and natural recourses). After the victory over the Tamil militants in May 2009, the editorials almost backgrounded the significance of resolving the conflict politically and started commenting on the positive dimensions of the victory over terrorism, especially economic development and the outcomes of the provincial, parliamentary and presidential elections and resettlement and rehabilitation. All the editorials constructed a situation that economic development of the country is the real solution to the ethnic conflict.

The editorials use universal discourse of higher order of abstraction and impression management in the form of nominalization in commenting about the conflict; The newspaper, in its editorial, "'The Tamil Problem' and the Problem of the Tamils", appeared on 07 December 2004, comments, "'the Tamil problem' which can be resolved through discussions and negotiations in a civilised manner with any government." Pointing out the failure, it says: "some Tamils complain that these problems have remained for decades and nothing been done about them and certainly there are many problems to be resolved which have dragged on over decades" but "in other quarters Tamils enjoy even greater rights than the Sinhalese such as the freedom to live freely in any part of the country enjoying their rights although no Sinhalese or Muslim could do so in the Northern Province" (Apparent contrast Move). However, Hariharan (2008) distinguishes the effects from the causes:

President Rajapaksa's government has repeatedly given an impression that once the LTTE is vanquished it would be all smooth sailing with the Tamil population automatically joining the democratic mainstream. It appears to identify the LTTE as the problem, rather than as the manifestation of the problem.

The media's failure in distinguishing "Sinhala people" from "Sri Lankan people" at the ideological level has manifested in their discourse construction. Both the Sinhala and Tamil Press have played a negative role in resolving the ethnic conflict. The discourse generally lacks the well-known (obligatory) Resolution category (Gamson, 1992). The minority groups and the International Community are assumed to create all kinds of problems for the majority. The ideological value structure of such editorials emphasizes order, authority, and control: the minority community should be obedient, patriotic, and loyal, and if they do not obey the law, then they will have to suffer the 'inevitable actions' of the radical nationalists of the majority community. The editorials reveal the 'intent and content', 'insular and secular' approaches, and 'commands and demands' of the dominant community.

Analysis of Linguistic Construction

The full text of the editorial titled, "Twenty years after", is analyzed here in detail. It retrospectively comments on the causes and consequences of the 83 riots in the South.

> 1. Twenty years ago (Inter-textual), the Sri Lankan nation (Nominalization1) went through (Ergative & Passivization) the most agonising shameful days of its contemporary history (Nominalization 2) when innocent Tamils were killed (Passivization) on the streets and in their (Inter-personal & Pronominalization) homes while their properties were looted (Passivization) and business establishments set on fire (Passivization).

The title denoting "Twenty years after" connotes a change quite opposite to what happened in July 1983, blaming 'some Sinhalese' as the aggressors. Now it tries to project the Sinhalese as victims and the Tamils, by foregrounding 'the Tamil militants and Tamil nationalists as aggressors. The concern is about 'the Sri Lankan

nation', not the Tamil people (Binary: The Sri Lankan nation versus the Sri Lankan Tamils). The editorial foregrounds the situation of the country, not the suffering of the Tamils. It was "the days" which were "agonising and shameful", not the agonized Tamils and the shameful acts of the aggressors (Binary: Aggressors versus Victims). The positioning of the attributes distancing the victims and the aggressors and the description of the destruction (Passivization & Verb of Material Process) plays down the suffering of the Tamils and foregrounds the consequent impacts on the nation as a sovereign country. The interpersonal anaphoric reference, "their" implicitly foregrounds the unilateral position. Whenever they address the losses of the Sinhala people, they used to call, "our people" and "our properties" (Binary: US versus Them).

> 2. Whatever the causes (Topicalization & Forgrounding, Inter-textual) that led to these shameful incidents, the bestial acts (Nominalization1) that (Who) were committed (Passivization & Ergative) on innocent citizens of this country (who) cannot be excused (by whom) (Passivization & Ergative). These riots took place (Passivization) at a time (Inter-textual) when the political climate was extremely volatile (Attributive Complement) — a fact (Assertive) that may escape the attention of recent political commentators of the Sri Lankan scene. It was a time when (Inter-textual) India for the first time appeared in the form of a monster attempting to gobble up (Metaphorical) this little island (Nominalization2) (B i n a r y : Aggressors versus Victims). Tamil separatist terrorists were being nurtured, trained, financed and backed internationally by the New Delhi government to serve their political agenda. When the terrorists ambushed (Active) a truckload of 13 soldiers and killed (Active) them all —the biggest number (Quantitative Enumeration) of servicemen killed till that incident — extremists and fanatics (Nominalization3) provoked and inspired goondas to run riot (Binary: The provoker versus the provoked).

After revealing "the most agonising and shameful days" of Sri Lankan history in the first 'small paragraph', immediately in the second paragraph, it urgently lists out the causes and justification of the happening of it (Binary: Causes versus Consequences). Though it downplays the causes in the sentence adverb,("whatever…incidents), ironically the whole paragraph describes the Indian interference and

the militants' ambush. "The bestial acts" of the 'goondas' are compared equally with 'the monsterization of India' and 'the terrorization of the Tamil militants,' so that the intensive effect of the former is lessened. Now it is the Sri Lanka which was the victim. The justification is given in intensity ("extremely volatile") and in negativity (extremists and fanatics), and in quantity (the biggest number). It excludes the real elected representatives of the then government (extremists and fanatics) who planned and encouraged this riot. The demonization frame is evoked in the nature of beast positioned against monster which is far worse. In these two paragraphs, passivization and ergative are used to construct the victim frame of the Tamils to background the aggressors. On the other hand, the active voice is used to foreground the aggressor frame to the Tamil militants when the security forces are the victims.

> 3. But (Conjunction of contrast) by far (Inter-personal) the majority of the Sinhalese (Topicalizaion) were (Verb of Relational Process) against this carnage.

> 4. There were large numbers (Quantitative Enumeration) of them who risked (Active1) their lives and property to save (Active 2) Tamils from being attacked (Passivization1) by mobs (Nominalization1) (Binary: Humanization versus demonization). Yet (Apparent Admission Move), it was poor consolation to those Tamils (Nominalization 2) who had been subjected (Passivization 2) to humiliation, torture, their loved ones killed (Passivization 3) and their homes destroyed (Passivization 4) (Apparent Compassion move & Apparent Altruism move).

To project the innocence of the majority community, the editorial has devised this statement as a single paragraph (3). The fixed character of the community is represented ('were'). This paragraph is the continuation of the earlier one. It illustrates their humane nature against the suffering of the Tamils de-emphasizing it as "a poor consolation". But, the positioning of the saving acts of the Sinhalese in active voice as the topic sentence prioritizes its significance against the suffering acts of the Tamils. The destructive acts causing the sufferings, written in the passive voice, backgrounds the aggressors. The semantic moves support the editorial position.

5. What is striking (Topicalization & Assertive 1) about these despicable acts (Nominalization) is (Verb of Relational Process) that they ceased to be in a few days time and have not been repeated ever since (Assertive 2) (Binary: The sudden act versus sustained act). This underlies the fact (Assertive 3) (Binary: fact versus fiction) that there has been no animosity between the Sinhalese and Tamils who had been living together amicably for centuries (Cliché) and could and will continue to do so. Unlike in communities that are opposed to each other such as the Muslims and Hindus of India who go for each others jugulars quite often, the Sinhalese and Tamil have co-existed in peace except for (Cliché) the two major aberrations — the 1958 and 1983 riots.

The rhetorical expression foregrounds the immediate cessation of the acts positioned against "these despicable acts". The propositional attitude is that these acts are the sudden outcomes, a temporary departure or lapse which will be back to normalcy soon ('days', 'incidents', 'aberrations' 'except'). The media always had the tendency of attributing the causes of the prolonged ethnic conflict to these sudden outbursts of violence of the extremists and fanatics of the majority community. They often exclude or de-emphasize the planned acts of political discrimination perpetrated against the minority community over the half century over. The emphasis on non-repetition of such riots excludes the facts that the violence and discrimination against the minority community has been 'institutionalized' at present. The discourse of violence from then onwards is discursively attributed to 'the acts of the non-state actors and organizations' and the discourse of security is exclusively linked to 'the acts of the security forces' (Binary: Violence versus Security).

The editorial asserts the taken for granted nature of the statements in   Paragraph 5: Sentence 2, Paragraph 2: Sentence 2 and Paragraph 6: Sentence 1. The history of the conflict has revealed quite the opposite (Little, 1994; Manor, 1994; Obeyesekere, 1970; Ponambalam, 1983; Smith, 1978; Tambiah, 1986; Uyangoda, 1996; Wilson, 2000 etc,). The use of the clichéd expressions (Paragraph 5: Sentence 2, Paragraph 10: Sentence 2 and Paragraph 5: Sentence 4) have been a discourse strategy for a long time to exclude the political discrimination and the violence unleashed against the minority community. Another is to quote a comparative larger and

worse example from the international or Indian scenes to lessen and de-emphasize the impact of the similar incident in Sri Lanka.

> 6. Another point often overlooked (Assertion) by foreign commentators who want to interpret events in journalistic shorthand — Sinhala Buddhist majority determined to suppress the rights of the Tamil minority (Unit1) — is that despite the severe provocations during the past two decades (Repetition) there has been no adverse reaction on the part of the Sinhalese against the Tamils (Unit 2 & Impression Management). The provocations (Repetition) by Tamil terrorist groups (Negative Lexicalization) have been calculated to get a backlash of Sinhala reaction against the Tamils living in Sinhala predominant areas. But (Conjunction of contrast) that has failed in toto (Unit 3 & Impression Management).

The editorial asserts and repeats its propositional attitude that "it did not occur again". The explanation given within the two dashes makes the idea a biased one (Unit 1). What prevents the repetition of such violence could be the fear of the reprisals by the organized violence by the militants and the military. This might have prevented the civilians from both communities engaging in riots (Binary: disorganized ad hoc violence versus organized and institutionalized violence). But on and off, pockets of violence, reported in the media, question this statement (Unit 2-3).

> 7. The ethnic cleansing of the Northern Province of all Sinhalese (Nominalization1) by the LTTE within 72 hours, slaughter of people in remote hamlets bordering the Eastern and Northern Provinces men, women and children being brutally massacred, Buddhist devotees meditating under the sacred Bo Tree, venerated Buddhist places of worship being machine gunned, two busloads of Buddhist monks being gunned down in cold blood, bombing of the Sacred Temple of the Tooth, assassination of national leaders, including President Premadasa, attempted assassination of President Chandrika Kumaratunga and attacks on civilian targets such as the Oil Storage tanks, the Central Bank and the Colombo Airport are some such acts intended to provoke the Sinhalese community (Nominalization 2 & Repetition) (Binary: The

provoker versus the provoked) so that international opinion would turn in favour of the terrorists, the LTTE (Unit 1).

The rhetorical argument continues to counter the riot (Binary: Humanization versus demonization). A list of violent acts committed by the militants is given but the list of the violent acts against the minor community is excluded. Thus the rival's demonized acts are repeated to humanize the acts of the Sinhala community.

> 8. By bearing these crimes of grave provocation (Nominalization & Topicalization, Repetition) with fortitude and monumental patience (Positive Lexicalization), the Sinhalese have been able to prevent the entire community (Unit 1) being painted with the brush of raving communalists (Metaphorical).

The provoker is pitted against the provoked with positive lexicalization (Binary: The provoker versus the provoked). The picture given by the minority community is manipulated to exclude the editorial's canonization of the majority community against the cannibalization of the minority community.

> 9. On the other hand, the great paradox (Nominalization1) is that after 1983, the Tamils have fled the North and East, where large areas are under control of their (Pronominalization) 'liberators' (Within Quotes) (Unit1), so much so that there are more Tamils now living outside the Northern and the Eastern Provinces in Sinhala areas (Unit 2). In fact (Assertion), in Colombo, Sinhalese are (Verb of Relational Process) in the minority outnumbered by the Tamils (Quantitative Enumeration) who have taken residence and the Muslims who continue to live in the traditional Muslim pockets. New Tamil residences are particularly evident in Colombo's Kotahena area where plush residences (Nominalization 2) have come up in the last twenty years.

The Units 1-2 are reproduced discursively (Binary: Living in the Northeast versus living in the South & Fleeing from the militants versus fleeing from the war zone). On the other hand, Tamils living in the Northeast and fleeing from the war zone due to the military and militant operations are resisted. The South is praised for racial tolerance and harmony amidst the often provocative acts of racial

hatred in the Northeast (Binary: racial hatred versus racial harmony). The false themes (the great paradox) are foregrounded with the exaggerated expression of jealousy (plush residences). The editorial completely excludes the majority of the Tamils living in the south with real political insecurity and fear, paying exorbitant prices and forced ransoms for their survival during the war times. Another reason was 'the establishment of the High Security Zones' of their lands and houses.

> 10. The BBC's Asia Today programme yesterday went back to the sad days 1983 and attempted to revive their (Pronominalization) horrors and tragedies (Nominalization) (Unit1). Had Asia Today, also (Logicalreasoning and proof or logos) shown the Tamils of today living amicably with the Sinhalese in areas such as Kotahena and Wellawattte (Cliché), it would have been a more accurate picture (Positive Lexicalization) of what Colombo and Sri Lanka are (Verb of Relational Process) today (Unit 2).

The editorial defends the unilateral ethno-nationalist foreign policies (Binary: international media versus national media reporting). Its propositional attitude is that the International media is ignorant and gives false reports on the ethnic conflict; it thus maintains double standards when reporting the similar events in the West or the Middle East. It presupposes that the national media is the sole enhancer of the conflict reporting. Another attitude is that the national media reporting is for national harmony, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the nation whereas the foreign media is against them and for devolution and division of the nation. The quote from Perera (2007), a Sinhala political analyst reveals this position:

> The present ground reality for Tamil people in the north, east and also the south, is one of immense suffering. This is because both the government and LTTE are giving priority to the military course of action. Each side claims that it is ready for peace and that it is only reacting to the other's military strategies. The intensity (Unit 1) is lessened and implicitly resisted by the present picture (U2).

> 11. The Sinhalese, we believe (Verb of Mental Process) are (Verb of Relational Process) not anti-Tamil. There is (Verb of Relational Process) a great difference being anti-Tamil

and anti-LTTE (Nominalization). To be anti-LTTE is (Verb of Relational Process) not being anti-Tamil (Binary: anti-LTTE versus anti-Tamil).

The editorial backgrounds uncertainty of the idea expressed. It presupposes that the Sinhalese are only anti-LTTE but they treat the minority without any cultural or linguistic nationalism. It excludes the causes of the political struggle: the claims of their equal national status and political power sharing. Though many 'moderate Tamils' are for a non-violent approach to the resolution, the editorial excludes the Sinhala community's intransigent attitude. Therefore, the editorial's attribution of the position of the Sinhalese towards the Tamils is vague and ambiguous.

Findings

The Critical Discourse Analysis helps us to reveal the linguistic constructions of the positions and power relations, and the 'ingroup-outgroup' polarization. Van Dijk (1995e:19) says, "socially controversial opinions reveal the writing strategies, cognitive strategies and interactional strategies".

It apparently transfers the causes of the violence of the 'goondas' to the Indian interference and the militants' killings of the soldiers; it apparently denies that it was not the Sinhalese as a whole but only some 'goondas' who committed this violence against the Tamil community; its apparent compassion and altruism is seen in its sympathy for the Tamils in their sufferings. It praises the Sinhalese and the Sinhalese owned national media and blames the Tamils, the militants, India and the international media while at the same time critiquing the 'goondas' who committed the 1983 violence. While there is a detailed description of the violence by the Tamil militants, there is only a vague description of the role of the Sinhalese radical nationalists in the 1983 riot. The editorial makes an impression management of the non-violent and accommodative nature of the Sinhalese.

The semantic moves of apparent admission, compassion and altruism are created over the grievances of the minority community. The lexical, metaphorical and inter-textual choices (Thetela, 2001) were traced behind the binaries and the socio-cognitive ideological significance. The English press marginalizes

the minority communities. Comparisons and metaphors emphasize the negative evaluation of 'them'. 'Silencing' and backgrounding of the injustices and discrimination of the minorities are traceable. The media exploit the inter-textual and interpersonal functions of discourse to make persuasive statements about the ethnic conflict and peace contextualized and co-textualized in the grand narratives, scripts and frames in the forms of war against terrorism, democracy, national security and sovereignty. 'The 'double standard' of the international media is constructed through these grand narratives.

The sympathy of India and International Media towards the Tamil community was seen as internationalization of and interference in the national conflict. These relations were hinted as creating 'many problems'. The Tamils' political struggle can be easily solved once 'the terrorism' is suppressed – the major obstacle for reaching a solution –whereas the problem of party rivalry and absence of southern consensus are neglected.

Impression management and self-glorification in the guise of self-criticism help commenting on the attitudes and approaches of the collective ideologized psyche. The semantic move of apparent admission of 'the grievances' is made, not 'the aspirations' of the Tamil community. Apparent Altruism and Compassion moves are made to show that the Tamil community is 'the victim of the conflict and the terrorism'. The omission of the agent, and the varied use of all these strategies cognitively contribute to construct 'preferred models' (Van Dijk, 1998) of a situation, and, socio-politically, to hide 'institutional or elite group responsibility' (Marín Arrese (Ed.), 2002).

The use of the verbs of relational process and verbs of material process intensifies the positions of the majority community on terrorism, national security and sovereignty. But the verbs of mental process and verbs of verbal processes are used in complicating the positions on conflict resolution. The editorials de-legitimize the power of India over Sri Lanka within aggressor versus victim frame. They always legitimize the positions of the majority community and de-legitimize those of the minority community. The ethno-nationalist extremism and its intransigence in denial of devolving power are backgrounded. They gloat on the illusive scripts and frames of national security and exploit the universal terms of abstraction. Thus the media passivize the violations of human rights of the minorities at the national level.

'The present-oriented epideictic (ceremonial) rhetoric' is developed to support 'suppressing terrorism and violence'. The 'past-oriented judicial (forensic) rhetoric' is used in balancing the dominant community-induced political causes of the conflict: the assistance and support of India in the 80s.

The "inclusiveness and exclusiveness of the pronouns" (Fairclough, 1995) in pronominalization and lexicalization is to include the positive side of the majority community and exclude the positive characteristics of the minority community whenever it suits the ideological agenda of the press and to claim or disclaim the authority of the statement.

Though the rhetoric is often subtle and seemingly innocent, it has been carefully mobilized to emphasize evaluations that positively portray the ideology of integration by minimum or no power devolution within the unitary constitution of Sri Lanka. When Nye (1966:79) observed that the media were instrumental in integrating East Africa, he was setting a research agenda. This notion was supported by Ngugi (2005); but this study has found out that the media in Sri Lanka were instrumental in disintegrating the Sri Lankan identity. Apparent compassion is developed to maintain the 'outward image of being humanitarian' in commenting the conflict issues. Yet, it subtly confirms the dominance of the ethnic group through the processes of inferiorization, marginalization and exclusion of minority groups. (Van Dijk, 1995)

The functional syntax shows that the Tamils and militants are primarily in the first position when they are agents of negative actions, whereas the security forces and other majority institutions appear as victims rather in neutral or passive roles and have a less prominent position, or are often absent when they are agents of negative actions.

The process of social distinction exercised in the writing of the media can negatively influence the reader. At the interpersonal level, the media identifies itself with the Sinhala community readers. They construct them as critical readers and regard the Tamil community and International media as shallow readers who either do not know the contextual implication of the issues or they are not interested in the sovereignty and security of Sri Lanka. At the societal level, they insist that the readers be a part of 'the Sri Lankan society' with the base of cultural nationalism, not of the constitutional nationalism.

The media include and reproduce the discourses of separatism, terrorism, international interference, and discourses of constitutional nationalism, party rivalry, power politics and the Sinhala Buddhist resistance, and Muslim resistance at the national level. They exclude and resist the discourse of power sharing and the voices of minority communities. They are silent over proposing and discussing the viability and the practical aspects of a fair solution and constantly resisted the proposals as conspiracy and "Missions Impossible".

Table given below lists out the presuppositions, propositional attitudes and binaries of ideological themes implicated through the linguistic strategies in this analysis. They are used unfairly to mystify the issues to serve ideological and political purposes.

The media show that Tamils are the victims only of the militants, the ethnic conflict, the Indian interference, not of the security forces, the discriminatory treatments in the past, the cultural nationalist interests of the state and the Sinhalese. The unequal distribution of power relations in state politics as well as media questions the status of Sri Lanka as a "pluralist and multi-cultural state." On the other hand, there have been pressures on the media to conform to that expectation. Canagarajah (1999:33) observes:

> Power works by absorbing alternate forms of power to further its hegemony. This dialectical-or conflict-oriented-perspective accounts for the possibility of resistance. If power is sustained by controlling the irrepressible interplay of heterogeneous discourses, this provides scope for the creative and critical reinterpretation of those discourses for purposes of resistance.

This work has challenged long-held beliefs about the media's engagement in constructing a positive atmosphere, especially amidst the intensive emotional and ideological historical conflict. The media seem to be inadequate in revealing the forces underlying ethnic violence in the context of political and economic dynamics of globalization.

Table 1 : The Discourse of Dichotomy and Linguistic Strategies Identified in the Editorial

Discourse of Dichotomy	Linguistic Strategies
Ethnic Conflict Versus Terrorism or Freedom Struggle Versus Terrorism	Nominalization
Aggressors Versus Victims	Ergative & Passivization, Active Voice
Causes Versus Consequences	Inter-Personality, Pronominalization, Anaphoric Reference
The Sri Lankan Nation Versus the Sri Lankan Tamils	Implicit and Explicit Expressions and Meanings
US Versus Them	Foregrounding and Backgrounding, the Positioning of the Attributes
The Provoker Versus the Provoked	Verb of Material Process, Verb of Relational Process, Verb of Mental Process
Humanization Versus Demonization	Topicalization, Attributive Complement, Assertion
The Sudden Act Versus Sustained Act	Metaphor and Framing
Violence Versus Security	Exemplification and Explanation
Fact Versus Fiction	The Sentence Adverb Manipulation, Conjunction of Contrast
Disorganized ad hoc Violence Versus Organized and Institutionalized Violence	Emphasis Versus De-Emphasis, Rhetorical Exclamation, Cliché
Canonization Versus Cannibalization	Exclusion and Inclusion, Repetition
Living in the Northeast Versus Living in the South	Negative Lexicalization and Positive Lexicalization
Fleeing from the Militants Versus Fleeing from the War Zone	the Rhetorical Argument and Quotes
Racial Hatred Versus Racial Harmony	Single Paragraphing
International Media Versus Majoritarian National Media Reporting	Inter-Textuality
the Majoritarian Media Reporting Versus the Minority Media Reporting	Title Language and Connotation
Anti-LTTE Versus Anti-Tamil	Quantitative Enumeration, Attribution of Intensity, Negativity and Quantity

Source: Compiled by the Author

Contributions, Limitations and Suggestions

This case study exemplifies the failure of the newspaper to challenge the stereotypes and to provide the 'other picture'. It contributes to the interdisciplinary media language researches of the impacts of the political ideologies inherent among the Sri Lankan media professionals and the politicians done by a discourse analyst belonging to the discipline of applied linguistics, for, it was only the political scientists and commentators who did witness the existence of cultural and linguistic nationalism. But the significance of this study lies in its focus on the Sri Lankan English newspaper editorials through the Discourse Analysis models to uncover the linguistically embedded ideologies found in the media.

The study endorses the notion that the media in 'democratic and constitutional states' are likely to be harmfully ideological as well. Thus, it contributes to the body of literature that investigates media political discourse in the third world countries and, in particular, to the limited body of works within Sri Lanka. This study is a case study of one sample text only from the English Press and there is a need for a specialized research focusing on the media of other languages such as Tamil and Sinhala and a need for a proper discourse analysis of the press owned by the Tamils. There has been a perception that the mainstream Tamil media ignoring the Muslims' concerns and they have even failed to project the positive accommodating characteristics of the moderate Sinhalese and ordinary innocent Sinhala people. They had been less critical on the violence committed on the innocent Sinhalese during the intensive conflict times in the past in fear of the Tamil militants. There is a need for holistic study of the media coverage and the multi-ethnic nature of the media. The study should be extended to the changes and growth of the media, their reporting system, the diachronic evolution (Halliday, 1988) and media and their influences using the Discourse Analysis methodology. After conducting a journalistic study of the Tamil and Sinhala media, Media Monitor (2004:11) questions that:

Is it not reasonable to conclude that the Sinhala and Tamil newspapers were intoxicated with nationalistic sentiments and as a result, they failed to impress the realities of the Sri Lanka's ethnic war to the country?

It has chosen only the newspaper editorial and avoided the op-ed and guest columns (Greenberg, 2000). There is a need for an analysis of the different texts in 'journals' and 'magazines', the news stories and feature and opinion columns, the interviewed or surveyed texts from all the communities. There is a need for in-depth interviews with writers; analyzing schematic macro-structures of texts is an invaluable way of looking at texts.

Conclusion

The editorial discourse constructions hide or express their ideological and attitudinal positions in subtle and mild forms. The findings are the result of an analysis of a particular genre in its past time and space. Therefore, this study claims that since the genre of the editorial is dynamic and always in flux due to the change in the contexts, especially the editorial committees, the Sri Lankan English newspaper editorial discourse may have different positions at present and in future. Hence, these findings need not be construed as fixed positions. The changing current political circumstances in this post-war, development-focused scenario may positively or negatively influence the ideological and attitudinal positions of the media elites in Sri Lanka. The researcher through an alternative reading has located a different voice in the media discourse. It has challenged the media voice in the literature.

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