MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND COMMUNICATION

JANE TADIWA MUTSINZE
R122089X

SUPERVISOR: DR MANGEYA

(Re)Construction of Valentine's Day on social media platforms: A study of messages circulating on Whatsapp around Valentine's Day.

Topic submitted in the partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts Honours Degree in English and Communication.

DECLARATION

I, Jane Tadiwa Mutsinze, Registration number R122089X, hereby declare that this dissertation is my own original work that has not been previously submitted for any degree or examination at any other University. Proper citation and acknowledgements in line with copyright law and ethical requirements have been strictly adhered to, in writing this thesis. This dissertation is submitted to the Department of English and Communication, Midlands State University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts English and Communication Honours Degree.

Student: Signature................................Date.............................

Jane Tadiwa Mutsinze

Supervisor: Signature…………………..Date………………………

Dr H Mangeya

DEDICATION

With genuine gratefulness and warmest regard I dedicate this dissertation to my family. A special feeling of gratitude to my loving and supportive parents: Gilbert and Abigail Mutsinze who have been sources of strength and encouragement in carrying out this research project. My brothers Tatenda, Tendekai and Quinton, thank you for your unwavering support, you guys are just the best day ones anyone could ever ask for.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All glory and honour goes to the Almighty for without His grace and mercy I would have not accomplished any of this. I would like to thank my parents for their prayers, their moral and financial support throughout my studies. To my brothers thank you very much for your prayers and best wishes.

I want to pass my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Mangeya; for the sage instruction and supervision through the compilation of this research. I greatly appreciate the patience and outstanding supervision I received from him. He recognized the capability in me and maximized it to full potential. I want to thank all lecturers in the English and communication department for their tutorship which has been the light to achieving this academic dissertation.

I would like to thank Elaine Taka, Limpho Heywood, Natasha Khosa and Samantha Banda, who as good friends were always there in the good and bad times during campus life. Thank you for the crazy moments; it would have been a lonely place without you guys.

ABSTRACT

Holidays seem natural and yet every now and then their courses seem to change; how they are celebrated has proved not to be a stable state but fluid with the passing of time. My dissertation addresses the question of how holidays are not state but fluid; what is it that influences their instability to a particular celebration course. Firstly it is to be noted that holidays are not natural in any way, instead they are a result of a societal construct, which goes to support Gergen (1994), who is of the view that social constructionism theory is a reminder of how values, ideologies and social institutions are human-made and not natural. My argument is that the society manipulates language in the construction of any holiday, and so language is at the core of the construction to any holiday. Burr (1995) contends that the basis for all our thoughts is provided for by language, thus language becomes a means to expressing how one feels; in the construction of worldviews and realities language is the vehicle used. The relationship between the society and language in constructing realities is better understood by applying the Social Construction theory; which was developed so as to demonstrate how reality is as a result of social construction and not naturally given; Social constructionists adopt a relativistic view of reality (Denzin and Lincoln 2000 p.10). My dissertation's focus is on the role language plays in the (re) Construction or construction of any holiday, by looking at how Valentines' celebration for 2015 has been (re) constructed, main focus being the analysis of the messages that circulated on Whatsapp on Valentines' celebration. Holidays are (re) constructed because of current needs that ought to be met; be it economic, social, religious or political factors.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of study

Holidays are colourful markers of time during which people celebrate as families, friends, couples, nations and/or as individuals. Valentine's Day, as a holiday, has received an overwhelming response from various individuals across all walks of life. A grater majority of the population have taken to various social media sites in an attempt to give their own perceptions of Valentine's Day. The research makes use of the data available on the social media platforms to have a fuller understanding of the levels and trends in the (re)construction of Valentine's celebration, considering how social media has become a platform to discuss everyday matters that concern the home, family as well as work and so connecting users to a larger public on discourse about issues on both social and political matters. Valentine's, as a social phenomenon, was extensively discussed on the social media, Whatsapp. Valentine's is known to be a day to celebrate love, which is the most appropriate moment to express the feeling of love and affection towards the dearest or loved ones. It is believed that this day is named after a Roman martyr named Valentine, though argument is on that in the history of Roman martyrs, there are two who were named Valentine. The first is a Christian Priest who was thrown in prison for his teachings as well as his refusal to worship Roman gods. Whilst in jail he cured the jailer's daughter of her blindness. On February 14 he was beheaded, the night before his execution he had written the daughter a farewell letter signed "from your Valentine."

The other, was of the Italian Bishop he was sent to prison, as he was charged guilty of secretly marrying couples, of which this contradicted the Roman Emperor's laws. Young men could only marry if they had served as soldiers. He was beheaded thus becoming a martyr for the cause of

love. Valentine's celebration is conventionally marked with the exchange of fancy gifts, taking the loved one to expensive dining places such as hotels, restaurants or places to hang out as well as the purchase of Valentine's cards. In fact, it has been argued by Randerson (2014) that except for Christmas, Valentine's Day has more cards exchanged in its commemoration than any other holiday or time of the year.

There, so far, have been various researches carried out on Valentine's Day commemoration celebration, though the study to be used as a guide is the study on the effects of globalization and Westernization on Spring Festival. That is, how the Spring Festival has changed in the context of globalization and the spread of Western festivals like Christmas. This raises several specific and related questions such as: has the former traditional Spring Festival value been weakened by the current western festival perspective, when we compare how it used to be with how it is now Has the rise of Christmas celebration threatened the value of Spring Festival? Will Spring Festival ever retain its vitality though in another way? What are the actual changes in how Spring Festival and Christmas are celebrated? How and why do young Chinese people celebrate Spring Festival and Christmas nowadays?

The above mentioned study will be a guide in the current study being undertaken, considering that they are both studies on how holidays are not natural in any sense and so they rely on people's input in making them a "reality".

1.1 Statement of the problem

Yang 2008's study on the Chinese Spring Festivals holidays has managed to shed light on how holidays are not in any way natural happenings; instead they are formed by the people that celebrate them. People give them the reality sense to being and the intended reason to celebrating them. This research is thus a continuation from what has been studied before in the light that people construct holidays and the course they are to take, though this study will then further into what has not been looked at: it takes into looking at the process that is undertaken in this (re) construction to the Valentines' Day holiday; how images, texts and videos are indeed languages in their own forms, as used for the changing of courses to holidays.

1.2 Study Assumptions

The following assumptions are expected to be experienced in carrying out the study:

- In carrying out this research both the good and bad experiences are to expected though at the end of it all, even in the bad or rather difficult times the researcher is to soldier on to the end.

- Participants will cooperate fully whenever required to so as to collect relevant data.

- Reality being a subjective issue and having social environments as a result of construct created by people's interpretations that are not generalizable, the beliefs are more of constructionism rather than positivism.

- The world is shifting, changing and dynamic and so this study is to bring this point out with the aid of the social constructionism theory.

- Social media sites, such as Whatsapp, are arenas where participants are actively involved in the social construction of reality.

- Reality, such as public holidays, can be constructed in different ways depending on the social milieu.

1.3 Delimitations of study

- The only social media to be used is Whatsapp
- The only messages to be used are those that circulated inFebruary2015

1.4 Limitations of study

- Both limited funding as well as limited time restricts the study to Gweru only.
- Participants could give responses which seem favourable only in my view and not what they think which can hinder the purposes of this study.

Regardless of such probable weaknesses, this research ought to stand as one well researched as well as a critically analysed research at least at Undergraduate level. This study is to make an important contribution to the wide body of the scientific knowledge in Linguistics.

1.5 Significance of study

- To the body of linguistics this research helps in elaborating on how language is used by society to shape discourse and this is how it is used in changing perceptions on any subject.
- At individual level, this research will widen the researcher's base of knowledge because of the thorough researches to be done in coming up with a concrete study.

1.6 Definition of terms

- *Social media platforms* –   Are online groups of internet-based applications used by the members and users for the creation as well as exchange of information concerning a wide

range of issues in their lives and the world around them. Their dependence is on mobiles and web-based technologies for interactive platforms whereby individuals and communities share information. In this instance sites such as Whatsapp, Facebook and You tube.

- *Valentine's Day* – Festival of romance celebrated around the world in many countries on the 14th of February every year.

- *(Re) Construction*– Act of (re)creating yet another meaning to the way things are done using either language or images so as to change the patterns of a certain discourse.

- *Social construct*– To construct is to build; social construct thus becomes the concept built by people, which they organize what actions and thoughts are to be associated with it.

- *Reality*– True state of events as they actually exist, this opposes the idealistic idea of them.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The second chapter will focus on the literature review as well as the theoretical framework. From the aims and goals of this study, it is crucial that the student makes an effort to make clear what the study is about, so as to do away with the uncertainties regarding the topic making it easier for the reader to understand in the simplest manner. There is a twist in conception that was brought forth regarding Valentines Celebration –which was evident from the messages that circulated on Whatsapp. Looking at the root of such a conception, it can be conceived that the twist is as a result of social and economic spheres of the world today. This is as a result of economic spheres in that there are economic hardships currently and socially in that people have decided on re-shaping this day considering that there is absolutely nothing natural about holidays instead people sit down to form and shape them, and so social constructionism has to do with the society coming up with ideas as to any object or event,

> "The thing could not have existed had we not built it; and we need not have built
> it at all, at least not in its present form. Had we been a different kind of society,
> had we had different needs, values, or interests, we might well have built a
> different kind of thing, or built this one differently. The inevitable contrast is
> with a naturally existing object, something that exists independently of us and
> which we did not have a hand in shaping. (Boghossian 2001, p.6)"

This further goes to explain the point the study intends to bring out that indeed holidays are not natural as they are built by the society to meet particular needs, and so if and when the society feels the need to change them to meet other needs they will (re) built them. This then means that

social constructionism has always been an existing entity that has been used in evolving the unnatural things with time, with the exploitation of available technological advancements, in order to meet present needs.

Looking further into Valentine's celebration evolvement, assumption will be that it only came into existence with the coming in of technological advancements and the diverse inventions in the field of communication which is not entirely accurate, society has always been participating in the (re) construction of it so as to meet current needs. Randerson (2014) gives an account of the changes that this day's celebration undertook, a move from the wife bashing during the reign of the Roman Empire, the festive was named the feast of Lupercalia, the celebration stretched from Feb. 13-15, women would queue up to be beaten by drunk, naked men. A goat and a dog would be slaughtered by these men, who would then partake of alcohol then beat the women till they were fertile. The fertility game was also for matchmaking whereby, if the drunk, aggressive man liked his beaten woman enough, he would marry her. It was not until the 5th century that the festival was then related to St. Valentines. Pope Gelasius I combined the pagan rituals with a celebration of St. Valentine. Although this festival was considered a holiday, no roses or chocolates were given. It is this account that supports the notion that no holiday is natural; instead society comes up with holidays and how to celebrate them such that the course of holidays can be changed so as to meet the current situation.

A holiday as a topic of interest has been studied before though the student has found the research gap, which has not yet been exhausted in the study of holidays being (re)constructed especially on the social media platforms in a developing country like Zimbabwean. This research gap encompasses analysis of various messages that were circulating of Valentine's celebration which include videos, word and images created and sent amongst people on the Whatsapp platform.

The target audiences is within Zimbabwe as well as the language used in these various means and so the student is looking at whether this reaction is as a result of economic instability or because of the lack of knowledge as to what Valentines is really about. The student shall further take a look at the impact of these messages that circulated in Zimbabwe as a whole – this means looking at what message was being given and whether or not it received the impact it intended.

2.1 Literature Review

Scholars and critics have had interests in researching on holidays, this is how they come into being, and the impact society has on them. Holidays are created by people and are shaped by the people depending on what they need at any given time, and this goes to then bring out that holidays are not in any way natural. For years holidays have evolved just so to meet the current standards or needs a particular society is under.

One study carried out on holidays has shown that indeed holiday celebrations change or rather evolve so as to either move with the development at hand or to meet the current situational needs. The study being referred to is that by Yang (2008). A study on how young and middle-aged people in Shanghai have differently conceived holidays such as Christmas and the spring festival in China. This was termed by Yang (2008) to be the Chinese Cultural crisis because of the differences in spring celebration between the young and the middle-aged people. The decrease in the traditional flavor by the young Chinese in carrying out their Spring Festival celebrations as they welcome Christmas, of which the most influential festival in China was and or rather is the Spring Festival. The change of positions for the two festivals has shown a change in the young generations' conceptions. The reasons according to the study carried out on this were social development, generation gap and the social responsibility. From the above it can be

noted that what the study was mainly focusing on is the why and who impacts the holiday change. Yang (2008)'s thesis worked on looking into what reasons led to the society's acceptance of the Western ways to celebrating Spring Festival over its own traditional ways to celebrating Spring Festival. How this process was implemented is not looked into, which the current thesis is looking into; this is the use of language as a vehicle in the process of (re) constructing holidays.

The social development that came as a result of Modernization a process whereby China transformed from the traditional agricultural society to a modern industrial society and this in turn had an impact on the Chinese people's behavior towards their own tradition. Shanghai natives' *contact* with the Western culture meant their tolerance of the Western culture at the expense of theirs. They began embracing modern customs as these contemporary Western customs best suit their modern society than the Chinese traditional customs; hence they were accepted in the transitional period (Cai, 2001, p. 35). Spring Festivals meant 'family-re-union' which is not as important because people have spread all over the world (Li Songjie 44). Yet still, in the parts that traditions are to be conserved such as the country or rural areas, the Spring Festival behaviours are now getting different with each year, the younger age group, the majority who have been raised in the urban cities are less familiar with the traditional behaviours and it is now more of a ritual form rather than an exciting and meaningful activity. Festivals now most popular to the young Chinese people are Christmas, Easter, Halloween and many other Western Festivals, as these are 'fresh and fashionable" compared to their own (Wu Zhaosheng 108). The thesis notes that there was contact with the West that led to Shanghai people's adoption of the Western cultural ways. The thesis does not state what exactly is meant by contact, could it have been language or could it have been the goods from the West? The study only talks about

behaviour change amongst the Chinese natives, how it displayed agreement on conceptions of modern life and the pursuit of the modern lifestyle. The gap that is going to be filled by the current thesis is that of the role that language plays in the (re) construction of holidays.

These changes give an implication that although celebration of Spring Festivals has declined, new ones are being added and so the cycle will go on. These changes made by the society in adapting to a changing world will be the customs in years to come which will also be replaced by others. Although, no matter the difference from the original behaviours, the traditional social and cultural meanings represented by these activities will always exist. This is to say that the Spring Festival will not disappear; instead it will be developed dynamically as a permanent and continuing part of the Chinese culture. With the above said expressions Yang (2008) 's thesis successfully brought out how it is society that decides the course of a holiday and this is what has to be changed and why as well as what stays the same. The Chinese though they introduced Western holidays, they still maintained the Spring Festival period. This change in holiday celebration was because the society felt the need to meet up with the modern lifestyle so as to fit properly in the global village.

Language is the vehicle used in the construction of the worldview and its realities. This is the gap that has been noted, that the current thesis is to address. This thesis will be looking at how Zimbabweans (re) constructed Valentines' Day through various texts on the Whatsapp platform. In getting a full appreciation of why and how the sudden trafficking of such content on Whatsapp, an examination is to be carried out in detail by the selected methodologies to investigate this topic.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework to be used for this research is the Social Constructionism theory. This theory is important as it provides a good explanation in exploring issues to do with society's influence towards its surroundings. This theory also helps in explaining the uses of images as a language in the (re) construction process, as well as the reliance of unnatural events on society's opinions in the build-up.

2.2.1 Social constructionism theory

When we speak of social construction we are referring to the reliance on society on any event, the dependence on contingent aspects of social selves. This theory examines the development of jointly constructed understandings of the world. The assumption being acceptance of anything as well as impact and sense are developed in coordination fellow human beings. Construction of reality is as a result of using language; the most essential system that human use. Every time people speak they are creating or reaffirming a particular reality. How people think and the means they use such as the categories and concepts in the understanding the world are all provided by language. Burr (1995) contends that the basis for all our thoughts is provided for by language, thus language becomes a means to expressing how one feels; in the construction of worldviews and realities language is the vehicle used. With this the theory becomes suitable for this topic as it gives room in bringing out how people use language in the construction of a desired reality. Individuals and groups take part in the construction of their perceived reality.

Social constructionists adopt a relativistic view of reality (Denzin and Lincoln 2000 p.10). It is with time that people construct their realities through social interaction, what Franklin (1995) argues that there are socially constructed realities, instead individual's reality; it is from people's

interaction with one another that construction, modification and maintenance of what the society holds as true, real and meaningful. This tenet becomes relevant to this study because the study looks on the interaction on Whatsapp a social media site, whereby a society of people shared the Valentines' Day messages. Reality is socially constructed and this process is an on-going, dynamic process which people base on their interpretations and knowledge on things. Because events won't be "given" by nature they will likely be changed with time,

> "World views are specific to particular cultures and periods of history, they are seen
> as products of that culture and history and are dependent upon the particular social
> and economic arrangements prevailing in that culture at the time' (Burr, 1995.p4)"

Hackings (2000) further notes that social construction is often in reference not only to worldly items, like things and facts- but also to beliefs about them. Thus this theory goes to explain how the (Re) construction of Valentines' Day was a possibility. Firstly there is nothing natural about this holiday as it is a manmade event and so it means man can alter certain aspects of it to meet their desired needs. Valentines' Day is a reality that was socially constructed and so this means there is room for the process of change. Another aspect to this theory is that of the coordination of human beings in the construction of anything, McLeod (1997) argues that social constructionists believe that our understanding of the world is a product of a past developments that were influenced by the interaction and cooperation amongst people and so Valentines' Day was (Re) Constructed by people on the Whatsapp platform, this (Re) Construction was carried out using the various modes namely: images, videos and written texts.

2.3 Conclusion

Overall, chapter 2 successfully made an analysis on the previous studies on Holidays and the impact that society has on them and the student has made the effort to identify the gap between the existing studies and found an area of interest. The researcher in doing so has brought out the research gap. The research gap being that of the importance that language plays in the (re) construction of anything that is unnatural, in this instance Valentines' Day Celebration on Whatsapp. In the (re) construction there has been the use of language alongside images and videos, for it to be a success. Very little attention has been paid to the power language has in the rebuilding of any unnatural event and this is the impact that it has in the whole process of change. The researcher in analysing the impact language has in the Construction of a holiday used the messages that circulated on Whatsapp about Valentines' Day

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This dissertation makes an analysis of what the messages that circulated on Whatsapp pertaining Valentines' Day meant and what it is that influenced such traffic from amongst the Whatsapp subscribers. It further makes an assessment on how language is used as a means to creating 'reality'. Both; primary data and secondary data are going to be used in carrying out the research. Chapter 3 will focus on giving a full account on how the study was executed, bringing out all the activities and procedures undertaken during the course of the research. Focus is placed on the research design, sampling techniques, data collection techniques, data collection tools used and also the population the researcher used for the research.

3.1 Research Design

Pride and Ferrell (2002) put forward that a research design is the overall plan used in obtaining information that is needed in addressing a research problem. A research design is thus an overall operational framework of the project, that states what information is to be gathered from what sources and by what procedures. The researcher therefore used the qualitative research design. The research qualifies as qualitative in nature because the researcher mainly focuses on measuring and determining people's feelings and attitudes towards Valentine's celebration, as well as also looking into the reasons why it is so because at the end of the day it is what led to the huge amount of traffic on this topic on social media sites, which were used as the (re)constructing agents. Interviews and a focus group discussion were used as the research instruments.

3.2 Sampling

The researcher used convenience sampling, the population members are selected according to who is available to give information required by the researcher. The researcher chose 6 from the 8 prominent messages that circulated on Whatsapp regarding Valentines celebration and people from the society whom had their own understanding of the subject matter. Because convenience sampling is on selecting whoever is easiest, closest the researcher picked various messages which raised various concerns such as: economic instability affecting the celebration, people not understanding what Valentines' is all about and or not knowing how it came to being.

3.2.1 Sampling Techniques

Probability sampling was used; Martins (1995) is of the view that every member of the population has a known and equal chance of selection. Each element in this research, both the messages and individuals who took part in the interviews and focus group discussion, each had an equal chance of being selected in the sample. Simple random sampling technique is the one in use for this research. Greater need arose on the researcher's part to giving the market an equal chance to participating in the study so as to produce unbiased as well as realistic results.

3.2.2 Sample Size

Thirteen individuals consisted of the sample size and these were the respondents to the questions asked in the interviews and the focus group discussion. Both sexes were considered, with six females and seven males. Their age group ranged from nineteen to thirty years of age. These respondents are Midlands State University students. They are the representation of the society. These were divided between the interviews and the focus group discussion. The interviews were carried out to a total of six participants; three for both sexes, whilst the focus group discussion

had seven participants; four males and three females. The messages from Whatsapp included a video and six images. The respondents sample size was determined by the available number of individuals that who free to undergo either the interview process or the focus group discussion.

3.2.3 Sample Procedure

The Random sampling procedure was applied. The researcher would randomly select individuals who were walking around campus or were sitting in groups behind the main campus library. This was a cost effective procedure for the researcher.

3.3 Research Instruments

These are tools used for gathering data both primary and secondary Green and Tull (1989). Qualitative data for the present research was collected from the field. The instruments used include interviews and a focus group discussion.

3.3.1 Interviews

Because the topic at hand investigates a social phenomenon that impacts society's day to day activities, interviews had to be carried out to both males and females so as to get what they think of the impact language has when used by the society in creating a reality, this was attained by using the messages that circulated on Whatsapp about Valentines' Day celebration. Interviews were carried out to six people; three males and three females. The interviews were conducted face to face with the researcher writing down the responses that the participants gave. These participants were both from rural and urban set-ups.

3.3.2 Focus Group Discussion

The focus group discussion to the researcher seemed very vital in that it is through debates that various points come out, so it is what motivated the researcher to add this on top of the interviews. It was only one focus group discussion that was held, and it consisted of seven individuals comprising of four males and three females. These individuals were picked randomly though they participated as a group. The questions were both open ended and closed ended. The closed-ended question was on what it is they understood from the selected messages that circulated and the open-ended in that after responding to the closed-ended question they were free to add on whatever they had in relation to the topic. This allowed for creativity as well as self-expression from the respondents.

3.4 Limitations of the Methodology

- Both limited funding as well as limited time restricted the study only to the Zimbabwean context.
- Participants who took place in the focus group discussions could have not been as honest as possible because of the fear to be laughed at by other participants.
- The messages selected from those that circulated might have not met all the thematical concerns that had to be brought out.

3.5 Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 brought out the adopted research design; which is the qualitative research design. The research subjects as well as the sampling procedures have been stated. The two data collection techniques adopted by the researcher are the focus discussion group and interviews, which ensured smooth flow for the collection of qualitative data. The research instruments were administered randomly, with no appointment being made. Chapter 4 will then focus on the collected data presentation, the discussion as well as the data interpretation on the research findings.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 Introduction

Data exists in various formats and media. In this chapter data collected is explained and interpreted. Primary data, which is the immediate production from any fieldwork will also be analysed and interpreted. In the presentation and analysis of data the researcher employed an approach in which the data gathered is presented and analysed with the aid of both tables and diagrams. The research relied mostly on primary data due to the fact that this is a social phenomenon and so getting raw data suited best.

Language is not innocent at all instead it is used in the manipulation of any course and so the current chapter presents to what extent language as a tool is used in the formation of realities by the society; how realities that a community of people follow are not as a result of one person's making, instead a society's making; that is deciding on what is to be and how it is to be through the use of language be it in the form of images, videos or spoken word.

Although the dissertation focuses on how society uses languages in the (re)construction of Valentines' Day and its celebration it is important that this study's research findings be looked beyond this day, thus be looked on also even with other holidays or events and even actions that society has managed to create and term 'reality'. This chapter highlights the role played by the messages in the reconstruction of Valentines' Day and its related celebration. The 2015 February messages suggest a change in how this day is perceived, emanating from different reasons; namely economic instability, considering that it has lost the love meaning and has now become commercialised, not understanding what this day is all about and how this day is mainly about

women and yet there is no day that is focused on men being appreciated also. It is such factors that society was addressing so as to have equality for both men and women on this day. As the years progressed since this day was conceived, one will note that society has always evolved according to current needs when looking on Valentines' celebration. This chapter 4 is thus be a presentation on the findings produced by the research.

4.1 Research Findings

The research used a total of 13 participants. These participants were randomly selected from Midlands State University main campus; it was based on who was available at that time. Of the 13; 7 participated in the focus group discussion, whilst 6 were interviewed. The interviews were done as per individual and face to face. The research sought to find out the role that language plays in the construction of reality.

4.1.1 Response Rate

The interviews and focus group discussion produced valuable data; this data was in the form of qualitative data. The interview was carried to 6 people, whilst there was one focus group discussion of 7 individuals.

4.1.1.2 Interviews

For this research, the interviews were carried out to six people; three males and three females. The researcher formulated 3 open-ended questions that were used in carrying the interviews to collect data. Of the three questions three individuals found it hard to respond to the first question. The question reads: Can you think of how you would possibly either change the course of any holiday celebration or make public a certain holiday so that people can follow it. The problem in

answering this question was in that holidays are not a decision from an individual, but a society's decision. It important to note that interviews for this study proved useful a tool.

Interviewed respondents by sex		Percentages of respondents %
Females	3	50
Males	3	50
Total	6	100

Table 1: Interviewed Respondents

4.1.1.3 Focus Group Discussion

In carrying out the focus group discussion, like the interviews, three open-ended questions were used, which was very fruitful because it was in the moment of expressing oneself that the others would then familiarise with them thus bringing out the notion that ideas are built by a society not an individual, the focus group as small as it was, it was a society in its own sense. It was just one focus group discussion that was used for this study, in collecting data. 7 members consisted of the participants for this tool.

4.2 Analysis of Data

The researcher made a thematic analysis of the messages that circulated on Whatsapp pertaining Valentines' Day and its celebrations. The questions that were asked during the interviews as well as the focus group discussion complemented the data that is present in other studies carried out; that holidays are not natural, instead they are manmade. The research revealed that indeed it

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takes a society in coming up with a uniform idea and also that language as an entity is not innocent but rather it can be manipulated in the social construction of reality and so it has been shown that indeed language is a vehicle in the construction of any unnatural event.

Gunther Kress (2010, p. 79) defines a mode, "as a socially and culturally shaped resource for making meaning. Image, writing, layout, speech, moving images are examples of different modes". People then apply these modes so as to suit various contexts. Individual sentiments as well as social sentiments are as a result of the socially shaped resources from the meaning making process. It is these organized semiotic resources for meaning-making which are best referred to as modes that realize communicative works in distinct ways. Meaning is arranged through the selection and configuration of modes, communication is thus shaped by the norms and rules of sign making and also influenced by people's interests in a particular social context. The images and videos combined with language have been of paramount importance in expressing how people feel about Valentines' Day.

A holiday is not a natural phenomenon; society is what comes up with one, at the same time society can decide to change the course of that particular holiday so as to meet the current needs. There are various ways that can be employed in taking a message across to a lot of people, this range from media, and word of mouth to social media platforms. Images and videos that circulated on social media platforms serve as a distinct discourse, a language that seeks to redress people's conceptions of public holidays. It is thus as a result of interaction between people and not an individual that reality and meaning is given to any holiday. Meaning-making relies on the interactions with others, whereby an individual then integrates what would have been interacted on as a group into the individual's mental structure. Social constructionist's interest on how communication as well as relations between people affects the process of meaning making in

social interactions. People in the same circumstances can produce different constructions of the same reality, which is why we have the various thematic concerns. The multimodality skill has been useful in putting across the various thematic concerns surrounding Valentines' celebration. The major themes emerging from the texts under analysis are as follows; The thought that counts, Valentines as a woman-centred event, Economic Hardships over Expensive gifts, Messages as means to Valentines' celebration mockery and last but not least Redefining Valentines' Day.

4.2.1 The thought that counts

While Valentines generally is a holiday of romance, there has been a marked shift to being a highly commercialized holiday, whereby gifts are now more materialistic than being based on love. Gifts for Valentines being looked on from the point that it is the thought that counts; whether it is the giver when selecting a gift or the receiver when they get their gift. Valentines' Celebration has been reconstructed to one whereby no one is under pressure to either getting gifts or taking one on dates that are beyond their capacity to strictly being about gifts and dates that one can afford; the point of all of this being that it should be about the thought that counts. The following images fall under this theme: the spinach bundle in fig 1 below

Fig 1

The spinach bundle instead of a bouquet of roses also supports this notion; if one can't afford to buy the roses then they might as well improvise so that they show their partner that they appreciate them. Roses given on Valentines will be red to signify love; this gesture is to show affection, roses are seen as a highly romantic gesture to take. But now we find a turn from red roses to green spinach leaves that are tied with a red ribbon; this very significant in that firstly the colour has changed from red to green an ordinary colour which goes to then emphasise on the point that any gift colour is ok for this day, the red ribbon is what will show that it is a Valentines gift. Secondly a shift from roses to spinach, this goes to stand for the point that romance is not to be limited to what gift type one gets, instead on the fact that one has thought of getting their partner a gift.

The second image Fig 2, below, is that of the cheap junk food hamper,

Fig 2

The hamper consists of a packet of chips commonly known as Jiggies, a packet of vanilla cream biscuits, two lollipop sweets and two packets of powdered drink named jolly juice. The contents cost $1 to be precise, and this would had been an extremely low budget for a Valentines gift, because even the giver admits it is of a low budget from the message that is on the image "*murombo munhu, ndinzwisisewo paVale*" (please understand my gift for Valentines which is on account of my poverty). It indeed is out of the ordinary for one to get such a hamper, considering that all the food items can be found at any local vendor and not a fancy shop which had been the previous order of Valentines.

Another dimension to the different conceptualisation is apparent in The Stone Age wife bashing as a gift, as shown in Fig 3 below.

Fig 3
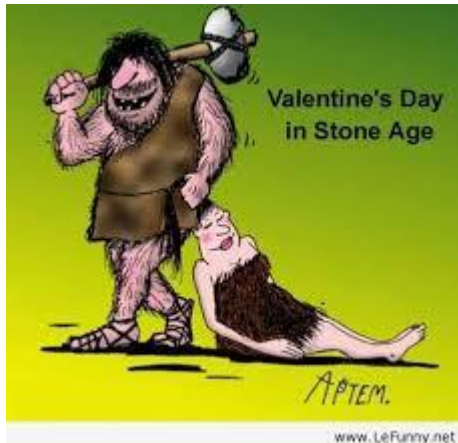
The Stone Age wife bashing is peculiar in that the woman is to be bashed and then be made love to by their partner and this dates to the reign of the Roman Emperor where they had the festival of Lupercalia; drunk men would beat women up and then have sexual intercourse with them, women would settle for a beating as a gift that would lead to sexual intercourse. This beating then will be looked on as sexual arousing gift, and so if surely one could settle for beating and see it as a romantic gift; it is possible to give anything on this day so long it is the thought that counts.

In further explaining this theme is the *Zvemukati* (insides) *video*. A compact disc of the video will be provided for under the appendix. This video stresses on the point that gifts are to be based on what one affords and the recipient is to appreciate that which they are given no matter how strange it will seem. In this video two men are conversing on the Valentine's gift that the other would have gotten their wife, he type of language that is used is in such a way that the other man assumes that his friend got his wife lingerie which is what most would think a 'romantic gift'; Bhutisi says '*mukadzi wese anotoda Zvemukati paVale ipapa, ukangotoshotesa Zvemukati hapana zvaunenge waita* (Every woman loves the idea of receiving lingerie on Valentines' Day ,

if a man does not buy this he would have not done anything in pleasing the woman) In describing what he got, he even mentions that even other men got the very same gift type '*Zviri kuita vamwe varume kumagrosa, vari kungotengera vakadzi vako Zvemukati... munhu ane shop iri kutengesa Zvemukati anoita mari yake*' (all men are getting their wives the very same insides ... such that the owner of the shop will be rich from this).

From the messages that have been discussed it becomes inevitable for one to deduce that it takes a society in coming up with a norm; people have gotten to realise that gifts are not about the price tag, rather they are about getting your partner something that shows they are appreciated. Getting offal, spinach or a packet of jiggies will not be anything taboo after having successfully created a reality that such gifts are viable as they are from the heart. The modes have been used in carrying the type language that has (re) constructed people's perception when it comes to receiving or buying gifts.

4.2.2 Valentines as a woman-centered event

Valentines' day celebration had now taken a form that it was all about pleasing women which is different from when it started off; whereby it focused on the appreciation by both parties of the love that was between the two. The turn now had the women as the only recipients on this day, the only party that had to be spoiled, one will then argue pertaining the validity of this statement basing on the leap years Valentines tradition, the only time women are obliged to spoil men, leap years are only after four years and so it still comes to that it is woman centred. The images that were sent thus were a cry by the society that it was high time Valentines celebration struck a balance; moving from the woman-centred perspective, see fig 4 below of the Indian-Pakistani match

Fig 4

This valentine 14 feb 2015 (Saturday)
make sure u treat ur wife well, take her to
a movie, then to a 5 star ⭐ dinner and
generally keep her happy

So that on 15 Feb 2015 (Sunday)
she gives u the control of the TV remote,
so u can watch India Pakistan match
peacefully 😜😜😜

Men were under pressure to please the women so that they can enjoy whatsoever benefits be it sexual favours or as even as much as being allowed to watch a match of any sport of their choice without any disturbances from their women. From the interviews and focus group discussion, most participants were of the view that 'Valentines is mostly about men sweating out to please women, whilst women are there to sort of give the men pressure to get them gifts such that the day becomes a judgement day whereby the type of gift one gets is a sign of how well appreciated or not they are', and so with this it was noted that indeed it is only the males who part away with money so as to please the women. Valentines' day gifts had been socially constructed for women to be from men only and not the women getting men anything. Fig 4 is a mockery of how women are the ones to be spoiled just so that the man can enjoy their home benefits. From this, society has de-constructed the notion that Valentine's Day is a women centred holiday, to having it as a holiday whereby both men and women get each other gifts in appreciating each other romantically.

The *Zvemukati* video also supports this theme; there is no mention on how women are getting their husbands anything for Valentines' and yet men are said to have been getting the offal gifts for their wives even days before the day, they are said to have been packed by the butchery.

Because a holiday is not natural, society was able to use language in the construction of images and videos that mocked this perception so as to bring change to Valentines' celebration. That is ought to be gifts from both sides and not just one side.

4.2.3 Economic Hardships over Expensive gifts

In an attempt to understand the implications and ideas of the chosen images and video for this theme, it is very clear that there is a pattern of the same idea as well as implication that is running through them all. The uniformity that runs through these messages is the apparent socioeconomic privation in Zimbabwe, for example in as much as it is the norm that the prevalent colour during any valentine`s day celebration is red but in this instance the red in an instance that plays out on a packet of chips commonly known as Jiggies, a packet of vanilla cream biscuits, two lollipop sweets and two packets of powdered drink named jolly jus. These items are not as innocent as they may look these are communicative items that attempt to speak into several socioeconomic issues that seem to redefine what it means to celebrate a holiday for lavishness during such economically grievous times. With the economic hardship that Zimbabwe is under it has come very difficult for some if not most to go out of their way on Valentines' day; and this is buying expensive gifts as well as taking one on expensive dinner dates. One would rather buy edible stuff as a gift that the whole family can enjoy, the video clearly brings this notion out when Bhutisi invites Kedha over for the offal, and this will also extend to the bundle of vegetables from Fig 1 above mentioned, in the end it is to better to buy such rather than buying roses for example that will wither away with time.

In order to bring logic to this line of thought one needs to understand the economic dimensions of the items given, for example the price of each item given is 10cents each save for the vanilla cream biscuits that cost 50 cents and the items total usd$1, and these food items are from Fig 2

above. Given this brief narration it seems that over and above the fact that the items appear to be intended for a valentine`s gift it actual fact is some subtle ridicule and dissent of the current economic challenges in Zimbabwe. Fig 5 below; the frog image

Fig 5

This image brings out the economic hardship, whereby one actually contemplates on being single so as to save up money; this thus implies that the current economic state does not allow for luxurious endeavours such as valentines' day celebration. The economy is stiff such that men are even contemplating on at least bashing their women as gifts shown by Fig 3 above; this goes to show that though one wants to give something, they have no means to buying that which they want to get, and so just so that the day does not go unnoticed they would rather they bash their wife just the same way it was done way back and then make love to their woman. Society with the realization that the economy is tough has thus used such messages to show that with such an economy it is only reasonable that one gets what they can afford and not try out do themselves. In other words valentine`s day may in some way be viewed as some premises that largely takes an economic dimension as the key defining characteristic.

4.2.4 Messages as means to Valentines' celebration mockery

Some of the messages that were circulating on Whatsapp about Valentines' celebration served as mockery to the whole purpose of 'Valentines'. This emanated from the fact that this holiday to society was viewed as a costly venture that would only last a day; it being termed venture because a relationship or marriage these days is like gambling, today it is on its peak and very best and the next it is over and so people would rather not waste their money on it. The frog image from Fig 5 above mentioned and the *Zvemukati* video elaborate on this theme. The wallet image; Fig 6 below supports this

Fig 6

The message behind this is that of mockery; that it is a money wasting venture. The messages were a mockery as they also portrayed the dependency syndrome that women possess when it comes to this day; they only want t receive and not give, whereas Valentines' is to be a mutual celebration of the love that exists between two people. The messages show that the primary intention which was based on love had shifted to materialistic things, such that women were now being teased on how they are materialistic. The messages portray women as '*vanoda zvinhu*' (they are very materialistic) such that if you cannot buy them the lavish good then it better you

get even offal as shown in the video or even a bundle of spinach as shown in Fig 1 above just so that they know that they received something on Valentines' Day.

Society views Valentines as costly; the wallet image from fig 6 above; whereby all the cash was whipped out from getting a gift and the frog that would rather be single and save up money, are serving as agents to devaluate the whole valentines' celebrations concept that was being followed.

The selected messages show an image of Valentines that has been greatly capitalized and so society in turn has taken the stunt of de-constructing this perception through mockery of how it was being celebrated. Reality that valentines was an expensive holiday had it not been for the images that circulated had not been known to the society; but because messages surrounding this 'fact' were formulated, it then became a reality and so drawing back to the point that language is very vital in coming up with a reality in as much as it takes a society in coming up with an accepted lifestyle and not just an individual.

4.2.5 Redefining Valentines' Day

This need to come up with an understanding of what Valentines stands for goes unnoticed from all the selected messages that circulated pertaining this holiday celebration. These images somehow have an element that people are lost as to what really Valentines is all about, and so the need to come up with their own definition which is guided from what they decide the day to be about and how it ought to be celebrated. This (re) construction of the holiday includes taking Valentines as a romantic day that is based on love and not material things; a day whereby one shows their appreciation for their partner either in the form of gifts, words or actions. In giving and receiving gifts the one thing to guide is that it is the thought that counts. An example is that

of the frog image from Fig 5 mentioned above, the message is that one would rather be single and save up money rather than waste it on a gift; this on its own shows that people have lost touch of the very first intention of Valentines' celebration, the image defeats the whole purpose of appreciating love. The other which is the cheap gift hamper Fig 2 cited above, which states that '*murombo munhu'* (a poor person is also or still a human being too); gives the impression that if does not get anything for their lover it is a sign that they do not care for them, of which the whole point in celebrating Valentines' day is not to be measured by how much one spends, but that one has been appreciated and thought of on this day. Appreciating one does not end with buying something, as there is more that shows that one cares without even spending money.

Valentines since the very beginning was based on showing love for the better half; though it was not based on material gifts. The images show that people had lost sight of what the day meant and so society had to awaken to re-defining this day so that the sentimental meaning will be preserved. The (re) construction had to take in the use of images that showed what was on the ground versus what it used to be so as to change it to what it ought to be.

4.3 Conclusion

Language from this research has been shown not to be innocent in any sense, it has been manipulated in the (re) construction of the holiday. The research has disqualified the notion that holidays are natural; it has shown that it is society that decides on what is to be a holiday such that after it has been agreed on a holiday becomes a reality that will seem natural. In proving that reality is created, the researcher in carrying out interviews drew from the responses that some of the participants' perception of Valentine's Day celebration had changed since contact with the messages that were circulating. This reality had been created from using language as a tool. The

idea is thus obvious that when we refer to anything being socially constructed we will be emphasizing on how it depended on aspects of our social selves; this goes to say that nothing exists from nowhere instead as a society we build it, such that when there is need for a different kind of it we will rebuild it differently just so as to meet the current needs. Holidays are not naturally existing objects, because we have a hand in shaping and building them based on many ideas such as money, romance, citizenship, sports amongst many. A holiday would have not existed without society having done so.

Chapter 5: CONCLUSION

5.0. Introduction

As the concluding chapter of the dissertation, this chapter gives an overall analysis of how language as used by the society is a vehicle in the construction or reconstruction of any unnatural event; this including holidays which are a man-made reality. It emphasizes on the importance of looking on language as being at the centrality of reality making. When referring to the Social construction theory it is vital not only to look on language as a key factor, rather to also consider that to say something is socially constructed is to mean that the reality of an event is a result not of an individual's making but a particular group of people. The tenets have seen the reconstruction of Valentines' Day celebration, with the use of a social media platform; Whatsapp.

5.1. Conclusions

The noted gap between what had been researched pertaining the way holidays are constructed and what the current research is on lays in the role that language plays in the (re) construction of holidays. Holidays seem natural and yet they are as a result of the manipulation of language so as to come with an expected 'norm' that will become a reality for a particular society. Reality is not something fixed, instead it is fluid. It is there to be contested, thus we have holidays being changed whenever there is need. Language, in this sense, is the medium which is used to construct meaning and or realities as well used to change the order of the world. Language can be presented in different modes in presenting as well as putting across a message; in this instance the modes used were pictures and a video. These modes were a representation of various thematic concerns namely. To be noted is that these images do not represent any reality; instead

they are merely used in the construction of a reality. The very reason that there are various thematic concerns drawn from one image or from one video is evidence that these modes are not a reality as they are open to contestation and (re)construction at any level.

5.2. Recommendations

After making an assessment of how language is the vehicle used in reality making, it is important for there to be studies that take up from this angle to other gaps left out so as to have efficient and effective explanations surrounding the being of holidays, this is fully exhausting all facets that lead to having an existence of a particular holiday.

5.2.1 Recommendations for Research

The following recommendations are offered for related research in the field of applied linguistics when specifically looking at holidays:

- Given the nature of holidays, a series of studies focusing on them is to give accounts of trends that are taken by holidays

- While the current research considers the impact of language on reconstruction of holidays, it would be advantageous to have a research that focuses on how holidays are distributed across a village of people.

- Researches related to holidays that provide with the information on the different modes used in the construction of holidays will be vital.

5.2.2 Recommendations for improving this study

- Carrying out interviews and a focus group discussion to Midlands State University students may not have been pervasive enough, had it been that the research was carried out at other University institutions. It is recommended that funds be provided for so that a research will be well carried out, especially such which is based on societal opinions.

5.3. Chapter conclusion

This study's major scope was on examining how there is nothing natural about any holiday; how holidays are as a resulted on constructed realities which are always open to contestation when there arises a need for such. This study has thus paved way for the in-depth understanding of the notions that firstly holidays are constructed and not natural, secondly they are constructed by the society and not just an individual and lastly the construction of holidays is as a result of the manipulation of language in undertaking 'reality making'. The recommendations stated will go a long way in helping with studies based on holidays to follow.

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