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CHAPTER 3.3

Semiotic signature of transformation in a diachronic corpus of a South African political party

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Corpus analysis has become established as an approach to the study of language description or for applied pursuits in language teaching, terminology, and so on. However, because of the social indexicalities of language use, corpora can also inform studies of social phenomena. This chapter draws on social semiotics to argue that, in the analysis of social phenomena, meanings that are socially significant can be read not only from what is said in corpora, but also from a range of other resources, such as names of persons and places as well as language choices made in texts. This chapter thus uses two heuristics, onomastics and discursive mono-/multilingualism, to query a diachronic corpus associated with a South African political party for evidence of whether or not the party has over time become more inclusive, contrary to its discursive positioning by a rival party as an untransformed organisation. The analysis shows evidence of the party opening up to diversity in terms of race, gender, geography, and language choice, but the finding raises the question of the relationship between semiotic evidence and reality.

1. Introduction

Preceding chapters in this volume have illustrated how corpora have been created and/or used to study Englishes in Africa. A few disclaimers are, however, in order. Corpora in Africa are, obviously, not only about variational studies of English. They have supported the development, enhancement, or evaluation of a broad range of natural language processing tools in Africa: a speech synthesizer in Ibibio (Ekpenyong et al. 2014), part of speech tagging in Bantu languages (de Pauw et al. 2012), a statistical English-Luo machine translation system (de Pauw et al. 2010), spell checkers, as well as extended applications such as language identification in Gikuyu, isiZulu, Tiv, Swahili, Hausa and Igbo (Akosu & Selmat 2013; Chege et al.

2010; Bosch & Eiselen 2005). The use of corpora for the development of predictive texting and translation memory solutions in other environments has also been described (Antia 2009).

Corpora do not have to be only about spoken or written language use. They can involve other meaning-making resources, including images, which present a different set of challenges for established understandings of corpus and the corpus analysis process (Baker 2006). Similarly, corpora and the corpus analysis process are not limited to the study of language as an end in itself or for such established applied pursuits as language teaching (Aijmer 2009; Sinclair 2004) or lexicography and terminology (Benson, Benson & Ilson 1986; Antia 2000); because of the social indexicalities of language use, corpora can also inform studies of social phenomena. They have been used to study sentiments on financial markets (Ahmad 2011), public health messaging (Antia & Razum 2012), knowledge evolution (Ahmad 1996), and so on.

In this chapter, the focus is on the affordances of corpora for studying the identity politics of a political organisation in South Africa. Much work on political discourse analysis (van Dijk 1997; Fairclough & Fairclough 2012; Chilton 2004) has focused on the (contents of the) *sayings* of political actors within institutionalised contexts. Surely, political actors have other modalities for appending their signatures onto the semiotics of the political landscape, beyond the contents of what they say. In this chapter we attend to the *beings* or identities of these actors as may be gleaned from alternative datasets. As a way of underscoring even further the analytical and interpretive possibilities of corpora which we have seen in previous chapters, we analyse the semiotic potential (van Leeuwen 2005) of onomastics and discursive mono-/multilingualism in a diachronic corpus of texts that is associated with a South African political party and its predecessor organisations. We use two heuristics, onomastics and discursive mono/multilingualism, to query the corpus for an answer to the question: what semiotic evidence is there of the Democratic Alliance (and its predecessor organisations) having transformed beyond the way the party is interactively positioned by the rival African National Congress and others as an untransformed White party, one that merely rents Black faces and hires Black leaders? (Mottiar 2015; City Press 2014).¹

Subsequent sections of the chapter address the following in turn: a political history of South Africa, political discourse analysis and the negotiation of identities

1. In this chapter, the following labels common in contemporary South African discourses on population groups are used: Black, Coloured, Indian/Asian and White. These discourses do however sometimes use Black in a much broader sense that includes all non-White groups. This chapter uses each of these labels with an initial capital letter, irrespective of whether the label is used as a noun or an adjective.

of political actors, onomastics and discursive mono/multilingualism as heuristics for a corpus-based political discourse analysis, methods, results and findings, discussion, and conclusion.

2. South Africa: A historical précis of a political landscape

South Africa is a multicultural and multilingual country, with eleven, soon twelve, official languages. After some 80 odd years of minority British, then Afrikaner rule, the country came under Black majority rule in 1994 when Nelson Mandela was elected President in the country's first ever democratic elections. In 1948, the Afrikaners, who are descendants of Dutch settlers, acceded to power and introduced apartheid or the strict separation of races. The territory of the country was carved up into zones for the different races and ethnicities. The particular focus was on zoning Black Africans according to the languages they were believed to speak. Thus, Black Africans were placed in ten Bantustans or so-called homelands – isiXhosa-speaking Blacks were placed in two homelands, Ciskei and Transkei; isiZulu-speaking Blacks were enclaved in KwaZulu; Lebowa was created for the northern Sotho people and so on.² These homelands were created by the apartheid government as 'tribal' areas in which the Black population would have so-called rights (such as voting) which they were denied in White South Africa. White South Africa at the time consisted of the Cape Province and Orange Free State (Berry 1996). Even in many environments where a given population group was said to be dominant, this apartheid spatial architecture was very much visible and its legacies continue to be felt to date.

Under apartheid, Blacks had very little say in the national politics of the country, and Black political parties were banned and had to operate underground or in exile. As the major liberation struggle movement, the African National Congress (ANC), founded in 1912, quite naturally drew the majority of its support from Blacks (in the broader sense of all non-White groups), but also enjoyed support from liberal Whites. In 1959, the political formation which will be studied in this chapter was formed. Called Progressive Party at inception,³ it was a liberal party and, perhaps unsurprisingly given the times, also a party of predominantly White, English-speaking males who were ideologically ill at ease with the policy of the party (the National Party) that had implemented apartheid (Swart 2003). In 1975, it became the Progressive Reform party. Other stops in its metamorphosis were the Progressive Federal Party (1977–1989), the Democratic Party (1989–2000), which

2. <<http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/homelands>> (4 October 2017).

3. <<http://www.sahistory.org.za/organisations/democratic-alliance-da>>

then metamorphosed from 2000 into the current Democratic Alliance following a merger (short lived) with the National Party.⁴ The National Party had now been rebranded as the New National Party. The New National Party would later be dissolved and then merged with the African National Congress.

An important point to note from this account is that while the Democratic Alliance and its predecessors may have been White dominated, the political organisation saw itself, like a number of other parties, as having been in ideological opposition to the apartheid government. There has been some contention over the manner in which this political formation has demonstrated its solidarity with the Black majority, and some of these contentions date back to the organisation's formation in 1959. There was, for instance, the Progressive Party's proposal of replacing political franchise (i.e. the right to vote) that had been premised on race, with a new form of qualified franchise based on 'civilisation' as determined by educational qualification. This new qualified franchise was perceived as race in disguise at the time and as a ploy to have upper-class non-Whites become allies of the White ruling class.⁵ In sum, the foregoing account sets the stage for the contestation of identities described in the next section.

3. Negotiating organisational identities in political discourses

Political discourse analysis (PDA) may be used as a synonym of critical discourse analysis and understood as an approach to the analysis of discourses (of whatever kind and not necessarily in the party political or governmental arena) that seeks to uncover power asymmetries (van Dijk 1997). This acceptance is roughly equivalent to what may be referred to as the politics of language (Dunmire 2012; Chilton 2004). However, PDA is also increasingly understood as the language of politics, as the text and talk of politicians in contexts where achieving legitimacy, power, influence, credibility, authority, or making other political actors lose such capital is a goal (Chilton 2004; van Dijk 1997).

Specifically, van Dijk (1997) describes political discourse in part as the text and talk of professional politicians and political parties in the public sphere, and in relevant contexts describable as political; however, he cautions against too narrow a view of what constitutes political discourse, who its relevant actors are, and what the relevant settings are. Text and talk associated with "cabinet meetings,

4. <<http://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/democratic-party-now-democratic-alliance-formed>> (30 September 2017).

5. <<http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/the-progressive-party>>

parliamentary sessions, election campaigns, rallies, interviews with the media,” among others, exemplify political discourse (van Dijk 1997: 14). When politicians and political parties are doing politics, or acting politically, they are attempting to achieve political goals, “such as making or influencing political decisions that pertain to joint action, the distribution of social resources, the establishment or change of official norms, regulations and laws, and so on” (van Dijk 1997: 14).

Central to Political Discourse Analysis (PDA) as an approach is the establishment of relations between the semiotic (or meaning-making) resources in discourses and the political contexts of the deployment of such discourses. Such resources must be “functional in the adequate accomplishment of political actions in political contexts” (van Dijk 1997: 25). Such actions may include: lobbying, criticizing the opponent, election campaign, party propaganda, seeking to broaden the membership base, governing, legislating, and so on.

Much writing on political discourse analysis has focused on the sayings of political actors. This emphasis on sayings is predicated on the widespread consensus that rhetoric is a “powerful weapon for shaping political belief and action” (Dunmire 2012: 735), without language there is no politics (Chilton 2004), etc. It is through these sayings that the doings and beings of these actors are constructed. Van Dijk’s approach, for instance, requires attention to topic (what politicians say about their policies, their opponents, themselves); textual schemata (argumentation structure, warrants for argument, opening and closing); local semantics (polarization, e.g. positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation, disclaimers: “I have nothing against them...but”); lexicon (words which are used to describe us vs. them); syntax (using deictic pronouns in a biased way, especially the first person plural subject or possessive pronouns (*we/our*)).

It is granted that meaning-making is central to the ‘construction of beliefs about events, policies, leaders, problems, and crises that rationalize or challenge existing inequalities’ (Edelman 1988: 104 cited in Dunmire 2012: 737). However, the challenge which social semiotics (Halliday 1978; van Leeuwen 2005) poses is whether verbalisations or sayings exhaust the meaning-making resources available for constructing beliefs about political actors in specific local contexts. Social semiotics alerts us to the fact that social communication often takes place through non-verbal modes (such as images, dressing), sometimes in combination with unique but socially motivated meanings that can be read from verbal language. Social semiotics sees semiotic potential (that is, possible meanings) that can be made with given resources in specific contexts, and these resources include language, gesture, names, music, artefacts, food, architecture, dance, photographs/images, colours, public spaces, and so on.

In the related field of political communication, which is at the intersection of communication studies and political science, there is keen awareness of this broader social semiotic view of political discourse. McNair (2001: 3) notes that in

the field, the notion of political language has been understood to comprise “not only rhetoric but paralinguistic signs such as body language, and political acts such as boycotts and protests”. He then goes on to define political communication as involving “not only verbal or written statements, but also visual means of signification such as dress, make-up, hairstyle, and logo design, i.e. all those elements of communication which might be said to constitute a political ‘image’ or identity” (McNair 2001: 4).

To view a political party through such prisms is, as McNair also makes obvious, to argue that there may be socially significant semiotic potential in the names of persons with whom the party is or is not associated (e.g. as its leaders or members); in places the party goes to or does not go to for electoral campaigns; in the manner the party approaches themes; in the languages it chooses to use or not to use; in the colours it identifies with; or in what entities are depicted in its publicity materials and how these entities are positioned. With these semiotic resources, political parties can express who they are, what they are doing, how they want to be related to, and so on. These alternative semiotic resources with which political parties may be associated (alternative to their sayings) mean that political parties can be seen as entities that are embodiments of semiotic signatures which can be ‘read’. The notion of semiotic potential suggests that these resources by themselves may not be meaningful (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006). These potentials are realised within a social framework of representation and interpretation; in other words, they must be “functional in the adequate accomplishment of political actions in political contexts” (van Dijk 1997: 25).

Within South Africa, one framework of interpretation and for accomplishing political goals is transformation. The very meaning of the term is contested by politicians, and the term has been likened to “motherhood and apple pie ... assumed to be an unqualified human good” (De Vos 2010: no pagination). Beyond perhaps consensus around a minimalist acceptance as righting the wrongs of the country’s colonial and apartheid past in order to evolve a cohesive nation with a secure future, there is hardly any agreement on the shape of this political cash cow that is milked by politicians and their respective organisations. Political organisations jostle to appropriate to themselves exclusively the credentials of commitment to this cow, and to actively deny competitors any or much stake in the fortunes of this cow.

The ANC defines its mission as

the fundamental transformation of the South African economy in order to empower black people, especially Africans, (collectively as well as communities and as individuals); eliminate poverty and the extreme inequalities generated by the apartheid system; generate productive employment opportunities for our people at a living wage and ensure balanced South African economic development.

(African National Congress 1997: no pagination)

Through then party leader Helen Zille, the Democratic Alliance issued a press statement in 2010 whose title read in part “The time is ripe for real transformation” and in which it sought to distinguish its understanding of transformation from that of the ANC. In part, the statement reads as follows:

If apartheid was characterised by racial division, one party dominance, power abuse and crony enrichment, it follows that transformation strategies should be centred on transcending race and gender, opening up the democratic space, putting limits on power and broadening opportunities for all. This is what we in the Democratic Alliance mean when we talk of “transformation”.

(Zille 2010: no pagination)

Both parties interestingly premise their respective notions of transformation on apartheid era injustices. The ANC views transformation as redress for Blacks for injustices of the past in the economic, political, and social realms, and considers the DA as a White party committed to the preservation of White privilege. The DA advances a notion of transformation which, in its view, is based on constitutional democracy and the rule of the law, and considers the ANC’s transformation agenda as being about racial representativity (“numbers game”) and ideological alignment with party rather than with the ideals of a democracy. To the DA’s self-positioning as an organisation that has come through a lineage of predecessors, and transformed from a White male party to “become the most diverse party in the history of South Africa” (Selfe 2015: no pagination), a party hopeful (early in 2014) of fielding a Black female presidential candidate, the ANC interactively positions it (the DA) as renting Black faces and renting Black leaders (City Press 2014; Mottiar 2015). Even Dr Ramphela, who the DA had hoped to field as presidential candidate early in 2014 but who later changed her mind, is claimed by the ANC to have once said as follows, presumably in respect of the same DA: “a white party remains white”.⁶

Obviously, in light of the foregoing, questions arise regarding how a perspective on social semiotics might elucidate the appropriateness of the identity conferred on the DA, or of the party’s contestation of that identity and its claim to a different one. In their seminal work on identities in multilingual contexts, Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004: 19) define identities as a range of options, discursive and otherwise, “offered by a particular society in a specific time and place to which individuals and groups of individuals appeal in an attempt to self-name, to self-characterize, and to claim social spaces and social prerogatives.” As one of several types of identity which Pavlenko and Blackledge identify, negotiable identities “refer to identity options that are/can be contested and resisted” (Pavlenko & Blackledge 2004: 21).

6. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2014-02-03-ramphela-da-agang-merger-a-joint-mistake>> (16 August 2017).

This is obviously the case with the Democratic Alliance which has sought to articulate its anti-apartheid credentials and commitment to a transformed society in South Africa, all of these in the face of criticisms by its rivals. Interestingly, for our envisaged diachronic reading of the DA in the context of the current contestation with the ANC, Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004: 21) note that “negotiation does not necessarily involve two or more physical parties – it may also take place within individuals, resulting in changes in selfrepresentation”. In the case of the DA, negotiation of identity is both synchronic (involving two entities, the DA and the ANC notably) and diachronic (concerning historical metamorphoses of the organisation today referred to as the DA). Pavlenko and Blackledge’s (2004: 14) view that “languages, or rather particular discourses within them, supply the terms and other linguistic means with which identities are constructed and negotiated” is strikingly relevant to our discussion.

The question for this chapter, then, is how a semiotic perspective that transcends the sayings in a corpus of texts associated with the DA and its predecessors can elucidate aspects of the identity of the party that are perhaps lost to other forms of political discourse analysis. We are interested in the party’s claim to a transformed identity, and we operationalise transformation in the single sense of opening up to diversity, that is, transcending racial and gender lines. Admittedly, transformation is the contested term that it is because of its multifaceted nature, and which no single treatment of the topic could hope to exhaust. Given our chosen angle to political discourse analysis in which we emphasise the use of alternative datasets to the study of political organisations, the heuristics we employ for the analysis of our corpus are names and languages. As will be seen subsequently, this choice is significant in light of apartheid-era marginalisation of Blacks and females in mainstream/national politics; the consignment of African languages to enclaves called homelands; and other aspects of apartheid-era spatial architecture.

4. What’s in a name and a language?: Theorising heuristics for a corpus-based political discourse analysis

According to Hough (2013), onomastics is the study of names of all kinds such as those of people, places, landscape features, buildings, organisations, and institutions. She notes that the names people bear are not only instructive in terms of what they say about the name bearers, but also what they communicate about those in the world of the name bearers. Thus, proper names of persons or anthroponyms “can reveal, among other things, a person’s cultural heritage, nationality, and economic standing” (Block & Onwuli 2010: 464). As the managers of presidential candidate Obama realised in 2008 with their principal’s middle name ‘Hussein’,

a “name can be a blessing or a burden if one’s life chances are partly determined by the background clues conveyed by it” (Block & Onwuli 2010: 464). Diverting attention away from Hussein became a campaign strategy to sell the candidate to an electorate constructed as ill at ease with the Arab and Muslim world.

Indeed, it has been observed that in public or political discourses, “onomastic material is widely used as a means of aligning oneself with preferred ideologies or sets of preferred representations of reality” (Galasiński & Skowronek 2001: 52). In the context of a political party, the names of members (synchronically) may have as much semiotic potential for identity analysis within a transformation framework as any observed changes in the diachronic patterns of membership names. Similarly, within the same transformation framework, there is semiotic potential in the toponyms with which a party is associated (e.g. places where the party goes to for its campaign rallies). The foregoing suggests, then, that potentially socially significant meanings reside in changes observed in the anthroponyms and toponyms in a diachronic corpus of texts of a political party.

Context is one of the determinants of language choice identified by Fishman in his seminal 1965 article ‘Who speaks What language to Whom and When?’ Fishman chose to understand context in terms of such binary pairs as intimacy vs. distance, formality vs. informality, and solidarity vs. non-solidarity; in other words, how in the assessment of interlocutors the choice of a particular language would be indexical of one or the other term in each binary pair (Antia 2017). Work on spoken and written code-switching has taken further the motivations for language choice, and has equally attended to the identity constitutive or relevant dimensions of code choice.⁷ Myers-Scotton’s (1993) markedness model of code-switching invites a conceptualisation of the choice of codes in interaction in terms of assumptions of what is normative within a community. A choice is unmarked when it conforms to what would be expected, and referential meaning is central to such choice. In contrast, a choice is marked when it is unexpected and serves a strategic objective beyond the mere referential meaning. Of course, defining what is expected in particular interactional spaces may not be unproblematic. At any rate, disarticulating from any specifics of definition, the model invites us to consider what the semiotic potential (e.g. in terms of identity construction) could be of a political party’s choice of codes (expected/unexpected of it). It also invites us to consider what the semiotic potential is of changes over time in the code choices.

One widely reported function of code-switching is that of communicating friendship, desire to identify and affiliate with. The use of the listener’s stronger language in parts of the conversation may indicate deference, a desire to belong

7. We do not distinguish between code-switching and code-mixing in this discussion.

or to be accepted. Tang's (2008) study of code-switching in political campaigning discourse in Taiwan shows how "in campaign situations, by converging to people's code(s), politicians attempt to draw potential supporters' attention and momentarily to create social solidarity, particularly the integration of a society or a particular ethnic group" (Tang 2008: 99). It obviously makes sense to take a scalar view of this identification function because switching, especially in the context of speeches at political rallies, could reflect no more than tokenism (greeting, solidarity call), or be substantive in a variety of ways (e.g. duplicating multilingualism, in other words, translating the same substantive information in different codes; through fragmentary multilingualism in which only a small part of the overall message is in a different language; via complementary multilingualism in which substantive and different parts of the overall message are communicated in different languages (Kallen & Dhnnacha 2010).

From an identity perspective, which as observed by Pavlenko and Blackledge is brought into sharp relief when there are contestations, there is semiotic potential in code-switching for solidarity purposes. From the perspective of transformation of identities over time, there is equally socially significant semiotic potential in any observed changes in overall (singular) language choices as well as in the use of code-switching. With respect to the latter, Bhatt (2008) argues that

code-switching, as linguistic hybridity, is a third space where speakers (readers/writers) (re-)position themselves with regard to new community practices of speaking and writing. It is in this space that (speakers/) writers, as well as (hearers/) readers, are presumed to have the capacity to synthesize, to transform: code-switching serves as a visible marker of this transformation. (Bhatt 2008: 199)

In sum, in a diachronic corpus of texts of a political organisation, changes observed in the code choices (singular, mixed) as well as the content the choices are used to communicate can be operationalised as semiotic signatures of identity construction, which can then be read from a transformation lens (in South African acceptations).

5. Method

Following van Dijk's (1997) description of examples of political discourse, the textual data collected consisted of DA's campaign speeches, parliamentary speeches, debates and parliamentary membership lists. The latter illustrate what Hoey (2001) refers to as colony texts (exemplified further by dictionaries and telephone books), in contrast to the former which qualify as mainstream texts. Colony texts are characterised, among others, by the absence of continuous prose and by components whose meanings are autonomous rather than deriving from a sequence. Although

a majority of the person names were contained in the colony texts, they did also occur in mainstream texts.

The diachronic corpus of data for this study covers a period of 26 years, divided as follows into two subcorpora:

1. Time frame 1: 1989–2007 (Democratic Party, DP)
2. Time frame 2: 2008–2015 (Democratic Alliance, DA)

This is a relatively short time span for a political formation dating back to 1959, but data for earlier periods were unavailable. It is nonetheless worth noting that it is within the 26 year period (1989–2015) that some of the most important changes in this political formation are claimed to have taken place (Selfe 2015).

For the broader data set on which this chapter is based, an overview of the different types of material obtained and the total number of word tokens in the respective time frames is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Overview of document types in the corpus

Types of documents	Time Frame 1 number of documents (and number of word tokens)	Time Frame 2 number of documents (and number of word tokens)
Speeches	35 (32,500 tokens)	35 (52,211 tokens)
Parliamentary membership lists	1 (339 tokens)	1 (407 tokens)
Manifestos/reports	2 (19,909 tokens)	4 (38,453 tokens)
Photographs of billboards	0 (0 tokens)	6 (63 tokens)
Photographs of campaign posters	8 (71 tokens)	5 (40 tokens)
Logos	3 (3 tokens)	1 (5 tokens)
Total number of documents and tokens in time frame	49 (52,822 tokens)	52 (91,179 tokens)

Even though this chapter excludes photographs for reasons of space, its analysis of names of people and of places as well as of language choice in texts justifies the social semiotic framing. A corpus analysis tool, AntConc (version 3.2.4w), was used for the quantitative processing of the data. The concordance functionality of AntConc was used to obtain frequency information for search items (symbols, as will be seen below). Texts that were not obtained electronically were first typed up or scanned using Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software. There was post-editing of texts obtained via OCR. Before texts were imported in plain text format into AntConc (into two folders representing each time frame), they were manually annotated with symbols. Symbols were chosen that would not be in conflict with those for wildcard searches and that would reduce the spectre of noise in hits.

- { was placed before every toponym (place name) linked to the DA or its predecessor organisations. Toponyms referred to in speeches that related to the activities of other political organisations were not taken into account.
- > was placed before names of individuals associated with the DA. First and second names were rewritten as one word. Thus, 'Helen Zille' became >*HelenZille*. Here as well, only names associated with the DA and its predecessor organisations (as contextually determined) were taken into account, not references to names linked to other organisations.
- On a duplicate copy of the corpus, an < was placed before names that could be identified as female. Thus, 'Annelie Lotriet' became <*AnnelieLotriet*. Other names were considered either male or non-classifiable.
- Since language identification in multilingual corpora is a challenge for many natural language processing applications and AntConc does not identify languages in texts, the following procedure was adopted. As English was the dominant language in the corpora, it was decided that each non-English word token in both corpora (apart from proper nouns that were processed as described above) be manually assigned to its language using the following symbols: = (Afrikaans), \$ (isiXhosa), & (Northern Sotho), and ^ (isiZulu).

In the analysis of toponyms, the following procedure was adopted. After frequency information had been obtained, the geographical dispersion of toponyms in the corpora of the two time frames was compared. Toponyms identified were looked up on political/administrative maps of South Africa to allow for a determination of any changes that may have taken place in the party's geographical reach over time. Data such as these would be read as meaning that, from one time frame to the other, the party's geographical penetration had changed. Any observed changes would be read from the standpoint of transformation (in the sense of opening up to, or closing out on, non-traditional communities).

With respect to the analysis of anthroponyms, it is worth noting that although a majority of the names came from colony texts, names occurring in mainstream texts were also part of the analysis. An obvious problem with using names as heuristic is that the names people bear do not necessarily give away their ethnic or racial belonging and gender for a host of idiosyncratic naming practices, name changes or choices as a result of marriage, religion, socio-political expediency, etc. Nonetheless, personal/cultural knowledge and internet searches (especially for names of party functionaries on parliamentary membership lists) informed the allocation of identified names to ethnic/racial groups, specifically, Black, Coloured, White, Indian, and Other. The frequency of occurrence of anthroponyms per ethnic/racial category was determined, and the frequencies in the two time frames compared. The same process was conducted for names related to gender. The

results are then discussed in terms of any shifts that may have taken place with respect to demographic and gender groups with which the party is associated. A shift in the direction of greater inclusion would be regarded as evidence or signature of semiotic transformation.

Finally, with respect to language choice, the frequency of each of the non-English codes was determined, then compared across both time frames. In quantitative analytical terms, the semiotic potential of increased diversity in the languages of texts in the corpora, from one time frame to the other, would be that effort was being made to identify (more) with non-traditional audiences. In terms of a qualitative analysis, semiotic transformation towards greater inclusiveness would be said to have taken place under certain conditions. An example could be that in time frame one a majority of the texts were in one language, but in time frame two there were texts that made use of more than one language, or there were texts in languages that had not previously been used. For texts with code-switching, the interpretation would be that, semiotically, transformation towards greater inclusiveness had taken place if:

- in the texts of time frame one, there were few code-switching instances compared to time frame two;
- in the texts of time frame one, the languages involved in the code-switching were only limited to English and Afrikaans, but in time frame two indigenous African languages were included; and
- in the texts of time frame one, the most common function of code-switching were the symbolic one (greeting, etc.), but in time frame two there were various substantive types of information in different languages along with their translations.

6. Results

In this section, the results of the corpus queries are presented and analysed under several sub-sections. Data on onomastics are presented and analysed in a manner that seeks to unlock the semiotic potential of the following: ethnicity-indexical names, gender-indexical names, and toponyms. Data on language choice are presented and analysed quantitatively and qualitatively.

6.1 The representation of ethnicity-indexical names

Let us consider anthroponyms from the standpoint of ethnicity/race. Figure 1 allows us to see what changes the corpus suggests have taken place in the ‘ethnicity/race of person names’ associated with this political formation over the two time frames.

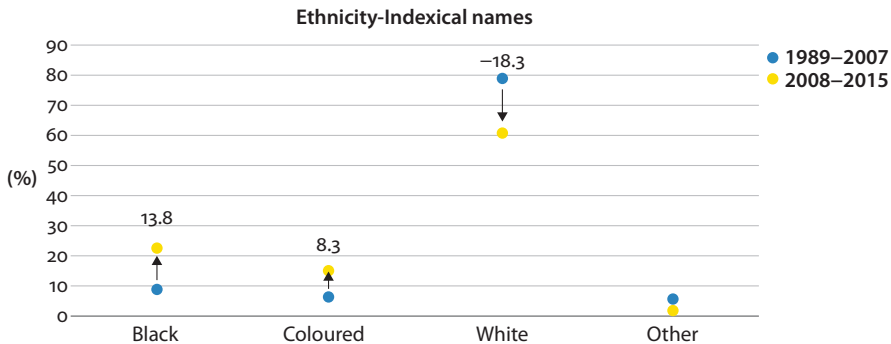


Figure 1. Ethnic distribution of anthroponyms associated with the DA and its predecessors over time

Figure 1 shows that, in time frame one, the majority (79.1%) of the party’s leadership/membership had White-indexical names. The number of Black African-indexical names stood at 8.8% and Coloured-indexical names came up to 6.6%. It may be recalled that in time frame one (1989–1994), non-Whites were only beginning to gain a measure of legitimate and de-criminalised presence in open national political spaces. The ANC, for instance, was unbanned in 1990. In some contrast, in the second time frame, the number of White-indexical names has dropped by 18.3%, from 79.1% to 60.9%. In other words, White sounding names have a negative growth percentage of –18.3%. The number of Black African-indexical names has increased by 13.8%, from 8.8% in time frame one to 22.6% in time frame two. The number of Coloured-indexical names has increased by 8.3%, from 6.6% in time frame one to 14.9% in time frame two. What these figures suggest is that, although still White dominated, the party is opening up to other ethnicities. We see this clearly in such names as *Lindiwe Mazibuko*, *Mmusi Maimane*, *Shahid Esau*, *Tsepo Mhlongo*, *Yusuf Cassim*, *Solomon Malatsi*, etc. It would be interesting to determine whether other datasets corroborate the change observed here. Let us consider the dataset on gender.

6.2 The representation of gender-indexical names

The semiotic potential of anthroponyms from a transformation perspective cannot only be seen from the standpoint of race/ethnicity. Gender is also important, considering that before the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994, women membership of the National Parliament for instance amounted only to 2.7% (Pitamber 2016). Let us consider Figure 2.

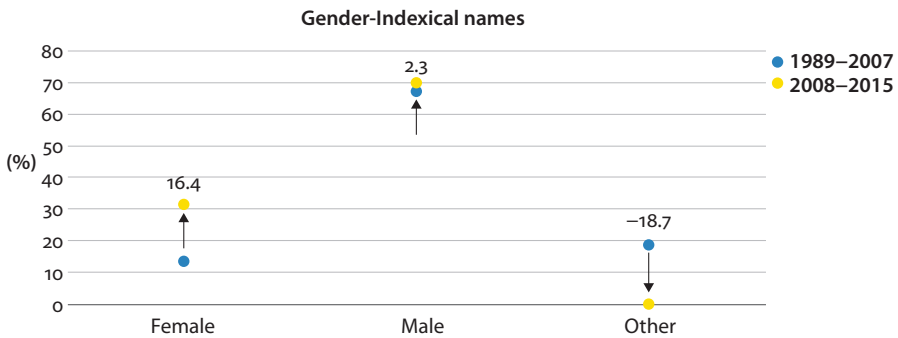


Figure 2. Gender in the DA and its predecessors in the respective time frames

Figure 2 shows that, even though the party is still male dominated, from time frame one to time frame two, the growth rate of (leading) women members in the party is more than that of men – increasing by 16.4%. We see names such as *Lindiwe Mazibuko*, *Helen Zille*, *Patricia de Lille*, *Annelie Lotriet*, *Phumzile van Damme*, *Natasha Mazzone*, etc. At one point, the four most important offices of the party were (going to be) held by women: presidential candidate (Mamphela Ramphele), party leader and premier of the Western Cape (Helen Zille), parliamentary leader (Lindiwe Mazibuko) and mayor of Cape Town (Patricia de Lille). It can, therefore, be argued that these female names communicate an organisation that seeks to transform from a past of male-dominated leadership and membership to one which encourages and supports female leadership and membership. Such an interpretation is consistent with semiotic signatures of transformation read into ethnicity. Let us turn to toponyms in order to determine if there is corroboration of these other signatures.

6.3 The semiotic potential of toponyms

As intimated in an earlier section, under apartheid, some parts of the country were considered ‘White’ areas, whereas others were seen as ‘Black’ homelands. Figure 3 presents a political/administrative map of South Africa between 1910 and 1994 (left map) the country’s administrative map post 1994 (right map).

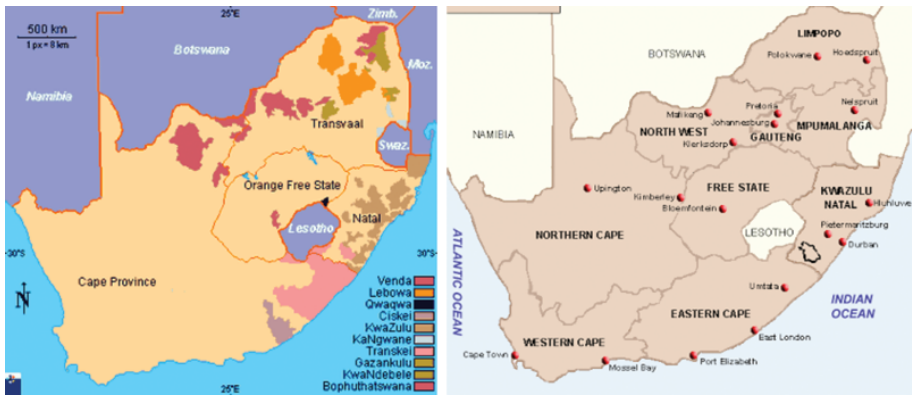


Figure 3. Left Map – Divisions in South Africa (1910–1994).⁸ Right Map – Divisions of South Africa (1994-present)⁹

As the left map shows, South Africa consisted of four provinces between the years 1910 and 1994. These provinces were known as the Cape Province, Natal, Orange Free State, and the Transvaal. Within the provinces of ‘old’ South Africa, there were ten ethnically based homelands, as mentioned earlier. The homelands (Venda, Lebowa, etc.) are depicted in the key in Figure 3 (left map). In the right map, the new, post-apartheid South Africa is divided into nine provinces. The census of 2011 indicated that the majority of the Black population resides in the following provinces: Eastern Cape, Kwa-Zulu Natal, Mpumalanga, Limpopo, Gauteng, and the North West (Statistics South Africa 2012). In the old South Africa represented on the left map, these provinces fell under the Cape Province, Transvaal, Natal, and minor areas of the Orange Free State. The census further indicates that other demographics (e.g. Whites, Coloureds) reside in the Western Cape, Northern Cape and the Free State – which were previously identified as the Cape Province and the Orange Free State on the left map in Figure 3 (Statistics South Africa 2012). It is against this backdrop that any remarkable changes in the distribution of toponyms in documents of this political organisation become of analytical interest.

In time frame one, of the 169 toponyms mentioned, 86 (50.8%) were in White areas, especially the Cape Province but also the Orange Free State (see Figure 4), and include *Cape Town* (21), *Parliament* (44), *Stellenbosch* (3), *Vredenburg* (3), *Kimberley* (4), *Bloemfontein* (3), *Uppington* (2), etc. There is also mention of *Eastern Metropolitan* (2), *Port Elizabeth* (6), and *Mafikeng* (3), which were classified as Black areas.

8. Source: <<http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/homelands>>

9. Source: <http://www.places.co.za/maps/south_africa>

In time frame two, of the 192 toponyms, 105 (54%) were Black areas such as (or which fall under) *Limpopo*, *Port Elizabeth*, *KwaZulu Natal*, *Madibeng*, *Johannesburg*, *Soweto* and *Gauteng* – all located in provinces which had Black homelands (Transvaal and Natal on the right map in Figure 3). White areas, especially in the Cape Province of the right map, accounted for 87 (45.3%) of the toponyms.

In Figure 4, the toponyms are assigned to the post-1994 (or contemporary) provincial structure of South Africa seen earlier on the right map of Figure 3. This allows for a province by province account of shifts in toponyms across both corpora.

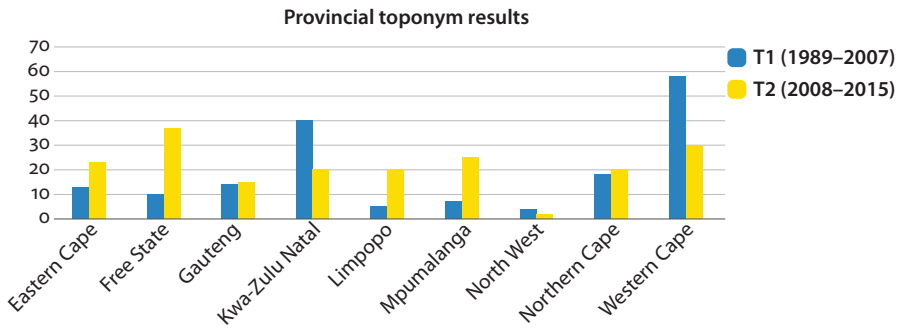


Figure 4. Depiction of frequency of toponyms in provinces (post-apartheid) for the respective time frames

Figure 4 shows that in time frame two, places in the Eastern Cape, Free State, Limpopo and Mpumalanga (all of which have majority Black African populations) seem to feature more in documents of the party than was the case in time frame one. The increase is 10% in the Eastern Cape, 15% in Limpopo, and 18% in Mpumalanga. Interestingly, in time frame two, toponyms associated with the Western Cape, the birthplace of the party, have dropped by 28% in time frame two compared to time frame one, and are even lower than the percentage in the Free State.

From the lens of transformation as greater inclusiveness, a semiotic potential of the shifts seen in the data on toponyms is that the party is reaching out to (or becoming present in) Black areas. Simultaneously, the shift may also be read as communicating some metamorphosis from a regional party to one with an increasingly national spread. So far, on the basis of race/ethnicity, gender and toponyms, the evidence has pointed to changes that are consistent with our operational definition of transformation as opening up towards diversity. The data show the party inscribing itself into the semiotics of the political landscape as a transformed/transforming organisation. In the next sub-section, we turn to another heuristic (language choice) to determine in what direction the evidence will be pointing.

6.4 The semiotic potential of language use and code-switching

As intimated earlier, English is the dominant language in the corpora of both time frames. What is of interest, therefore, is the incorporation of other languages in texts of the political organisation as well as possible shifts in the number of words per language. A first insight into the languages (besides English) occurring in both and the number of words in each is provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Language use according to counts of word tokens across corpora of both time frames. Counts for non-English words normalised per 10,000 words

Time frame one		Time frame two	
Total number of tokens 32,500		Total number of tokens 52,211	
Afrikaans	923	Afrikaans	129
isiXhosa	4.3	isiXhosa	50
		isiZulu	69
		Southern Sotho	27

Table 2 shows that from time frame one to two, there was a seven-fold drop in the relative frequency of Afrikaans word tokens (normalised per 10,000); besides an almost twelve-fold increase for isiXhosa in time frame two, in this time frame languages unattested in time frame one become visible. The semiotic potential of these changes is that the party is fashioning an identity in the construction of which Afrikaans is increasingly less important and indigenous African languages are considered of some importance. Given the limitations of many corpus analysis programs in processing multilingual texts, a manual analysis of the corpora is a lot more revealing.

Of the 35 texts in each time frame, there were texts produced: in English only; in Afrikaans only; that were English dominant but had 'bits' (such as greetings, and phrases) in Afrikaans and Bantu languages (such as isiXhosa, isiZulu, and Southern Sotho); that were English dominant but had 'passages' (paragraphs or other substantive content) in Afrikaans; and that were English dominant, but had 'passages' of Bantu languages. Figure 5 summarises this distribution. The x-axis refers to the number of texts that are described by the language choice options on the y-axis.

In Figure 5, it is remarkable that in time frame two there are no Afrikaans only texts. Also, we see a drop in English-Afrikaans texts. Besides the emergence of a category on English with 'passages' of Bantu languages in time frame two, there is also in this time frame a two-fold increase in the number of English texts with 'bits' of Afrikaans and Bantu languages. From the standpoint of transformation as inclusiveness, the semiotic potential of these differences is that the DA is attempting to reach new audiences (or to identify with new audiences), and is doing so

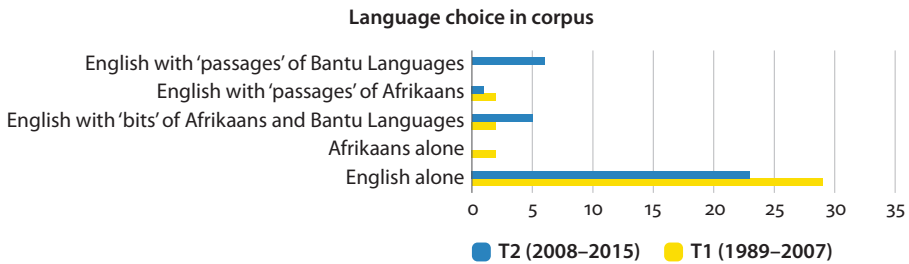


Figure 5. Categorisation of texts in corpus according to language choice

with increasingly more substantive messaging in a variety of languages. It is thus transcending some of the symbolic multilingualism in time frame one which we see in sloganeering, e.g. “Amandla” (solidarity call or rallying cry of Black South Africans, from isiXhosa and isiZulu and means ‘power’), or “beka abantu phambili” (isiXhosa for ‘Put the people first’). Compare the speech excerpts in Figures 6 and 7.

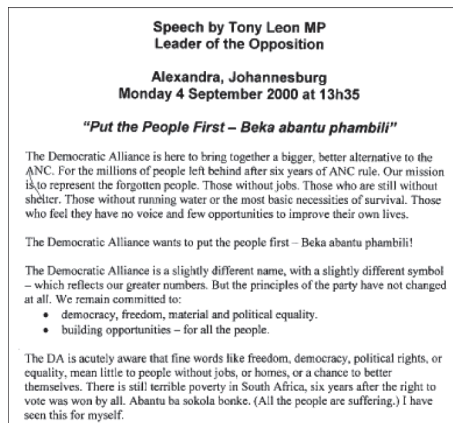


Figure 6. Bits of Bantu languages or fragmentary/token multilingualism in excerpt of English speech by Tony Leon in Alexandra (Johannesburg) in 2000 (time frame 1)

In Figure 6, party leader Tony Leon (White male) is giving a speech in an area where the majority speak two related Nguni (Bantu) languages, isiXhosa and isiZulu. Assuming Leon was hoping to address them either directly because they formed the majority of the audience at the venue, or indirectly through a differently constituted audience, it would seem their numbers (and politics is a game of numbers) justified using an unmarked code choice; in other words, using either or both mutually intelligible Nguni languages. Leon does this, but in a fragmentary way. The text of his speech translates the title “Put the people first” into isiXhosa “beka

Let me tell the ANC chairperson a truth here today, one that I am sure every culture in South Africa will agree with: running away when you should answer for what you have done wrong makes you a coward – not a leader. *ANC ekile ho thibela setjhaba ho tseba nnete. Nnete va hore mopresidente o tsotella tsohle tse tswelang vena molemo e seng setjhaba sa Afrika-Borwa.* [The ANC wanted to stop South Africa from learning the truth. The truth that our president is a man that acts for his own benefit and not in the benefit of the people of South Africa.] *Ena ha se ANC e lwanetseng tokoloho. Ena ha se ANC e lwanetseng boipuso. Ena ke ANC e bolavang le ho fedisa tokoloho e lwanetseng ka thata ka lebaka le meharo va bona.* [This is not the ANC that fought for liberation. This is not the ANC that fought for democracy. This is an ANC that is eroding the very freedoms that we fought for because of their own greed.] That is the great truth of the ANC under Jacob Zuma. It is no longer a party of the brave. It is a party of those who hide when they should stand up. Democrats; Right here in the Free State, the corruption of Zuma's ANC robs South Africans of opportunities. It keeps people in oppression - unable to enjoy the freedoms of our constitutional democracy. It deprives South Africans of their fundamental rights. Rights such as access to water, education and housing. *Daar is 'n water krisis oor die hele Suid-Afrika en die Vrystaat is een van die provinsies wat die ergste geraak is. Van Bloemfontein tot Brandfort. Van Warden to hier in Kroonstad.* [There is a water crisis across South Africa and the Free State is one of the worst affected areas. From Bloemfontein to Brandfort. From Warden to here in Kroonstad.] Towns all across the Free State are withering because the ANC government cannot provide water. Last week, I

Figure 7. Duplicating and complementary multilingualism involving Afrikaans, English, Southern Sotho in excerpt of speech by Lindiwe Mazibuko in Kroonstad (Free State) in 2014 (time frame 2)

abantu phambili”, and does so elsewhere where the title is repeated. Elsewhere, he plugs in an occasional “Abantu sokola bonke” (All the people are suffering).

In some contrast to this is Figure 7, where Lindiwe Mazibuko (Black female) is giving a speech in a predominantly Afrikaans-speaking Kroonstad, but then decides to go for a marked choice of English, Afrikaans and Southern Sotho, constructing both her audience and her organisation as multilingual and multicultural. Unlike the fragmentary multilingualism of Leon’s speech, her text exemplifies duplicating and complementary multilingualism, as there are passages in which substantive content is repeated in different languages or different substantive content is expressed in different languages. For the record, neither Afrikaans nor Southern Sotho is a language with which she was born. She clearly puts her reported interest in languages and qualification in political communication to good use.¹⁰

Of course, the increased multilingualism in time frame two which is communicated by the above datasets is clearly a reflection of new demographics becoming involved in leadership roles in the party. In the party’s changing language choices may be read a signature of transformation. The semiotic potential of more multilingual communications is diversity, an identity that in turn suggests the party is reaching out to new constituencies and simultaneously inviting these and other constituencies to redefine their own identities along the lines of multiculturalism and multilingualism.

10. <<http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/lindiwe-mazibuko>>

7. Discussion

This chapter was prompted by the assumption that a social semiotic approach to the analysis of political organisations could offer a novel lens for clarifying their contested (transformation) identities. Following Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004: 19), we viewed identity as semiotic resources leveraged by individuals or organisations “to self-name, to self-characterize, and to claim social spaces and social prerogatives.” We argued for the relevance of a social semiotic view in order to pave the way for analysing political identities on the basis of meaning-making resources other than their sayings around which much of the work on political discourse analysis has revolved.

Corpus evidence generated from several heuristics, *viz.* ethnicity-indexical names, gender-indexical names, toponyms and language choice/code-switching, suggested changes that were consistent with our definition of transformation as opening up to diversity, that is, transcending racial and gender lines. Such opening up to diversity was seen against the backdrop of the apartheid-era marginalisation of Blacks and females in mainstream politics; the consignment of African languages to enclaves called homelands; and other aspects of apartheid-era spatial architecture.

Context is critical to determining whether semiotic potential is indeed socially significant and corresponds to facts on the ground. There would seem to be a requirement that political discourse analysis justify its relevance by offering political scientists insights they would not have attained by other methods (van Dijk 1997). This rather tall order is made even taller when, writing on identity, Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004: 14) argue that a description of identities as “discursive constructions does not imply that they are not ‘real’ in the material world.”

What real world evidence, then, is there for the semiotic potential of the corpus analysed? Given well known dangers of causal relations, it seems safer to take a ‘coherentist’ view that claims that real world evidence is somewhat coherent with, rather than caused by, the semiotic signature of transformation in the corpus, in the sense in which we have operationalised transformation.

In the August 2016 local government (municipality) elections in South Africa, the DA had its strongest showing as yet, winning 26.90% of the popular vote. This represented an increase of over almost 3% on the preceding 2011 election results. Table 3 presents the performance of the ANC and the DA, the two leading parties, with respect to major or so-called metropolitan municipalities.

Table 3. Performance of two major parties in metropolitan municipalities in 2016 local government elections¹¹

Party	Type of control	Municipalities	Change
African National Congress	ANC Majority	3	▼ 4
	ANC Coalition	1	▲ 1
	<i>Total</i>	4	▼ 3
Democratic Alliance	DA Majority	1	— 0
	DA Coalition	1	▲ 1
	DA Minority	2	▲ 2
	<i>Total</i>	4	▲ 3

We see from Table 3 that the total number of metropolitan municipalities in whose running the DA is involved as a consequence of its performance in the 2016 municipal elections stands at the same 4 as the ANC's. On its website, the DA brags about this victory in the following way:

On 3 August 2016, the DA contested the 2016 Local Government Elections. As a result of our performance, we now run 37 municipalities, including South Africa's legislative capital, Cape Town; the administrative capital, Tshwane, our economic centre, Johannesburg; and the city named after our democracy's founding father, Nelson Mandela Bay.¹²

This electoral victory builds on the party's electoral fortunes in the 2014 general elections at which it displaced "the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) as official opposition in KwaZulu-Natal and became the official opposition in the Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape and Free State," while strengthening its position as the governing party in the Western Cape (Mottiar 2015: 106).

Such performance can either be seen as the outcome of a strategy, aspects of which this chapter has captured as semiotic signature/potential of transformation. Of course, the link between electoral fortunes and claimed semiotic signature of transformation can also be dismissed outright because, for some, the issue of a transformed party does not even arise. We can only hope to be able to give some insight into both perspectives rather come down on the side of one or the other.

The argument for a successful strategy or one in the making would, for some analysts, hinge on the observation that, in addition to whatever else explains the

11. Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_African_municipal_elections,_2016>; upward pointing arrow indicates gain, while a downward pointing one indicates loss. A dash indicates absence of change.

12. <<https://www.da.org.za/campaign/local-government-elections-2016/>> (12 September 2017).

traction which the party is having on the electorate, its self-portrayal as a diverse institution also counts for something. In this chapter, we premised this argument around strategy on the point that names in public discourses constitute capital for “preferred representations of reality” (Galasiński & Skowronek 2001: 52) as well as on the suggestion that code choices (both marked and unmarked) in mixed-language writing/speech have the potential of repositioning speakers in relation to new audiences, allowing them to reinvent themselves (Bhatt 2008). In this regard, it is worthwhile noting that, from about 2006, part of the DA’s strategy to enhance its electoral fortunes was “to revamp its image to appeal to all South Africans, regardless of race and ethnicity. The revamp included using various patriotic symbols such as the South African flag, images of crossracial groups of people and employing all 11 national languages” (Mottiar 2015: 108). This strategy acknowledges very clearly the political capital which semiotics other than language narrowly defined constitutes for a political party.

Of course, as far as constituencies in the Black electorate are concerned, the DA might have travelled further along this road by having speeches and texts written completely in Bantu languages. Besides signalling semiotic transformation at a theoretical level, a potential consequence at a practical level might have been the enlargement of the party’s (Black) support base beyond urban areas in which it has traditionally had its strongest following (Mottiar 2015).

In dismissing as tenuous at best any links between semiotic signatures of transformation in the corpus and the electoral fortunes of the DA, some other analysts may argue that the issue of transformation does not even arise, given alleged racism within the party directed against Blacks;¹³ it may be claimed that the party was merely a beneficiary of a protest vote intended as a wake-up call to the ANC (Mottiar 2015); the semiotic potential of DA’s success being mainly in urban centres may be pointed out; it could be stressed that Bantu languages, in spite of inroads, remain marginal to the party’s communications; it could also be claimed that no evidence has been adduced that such semiotic signatures of transformation cannot be found in corpora associated with other political parties.

What this study has offered is a set of hypotheses on semiotic resources the DA is leveraging to build an identity of a transformed (that is, diverse) party. Only time will tell if these semiotic resources (anthroponyms, toponyms, and multilingualism) constitute baseless identity performances or if, in the imagination of the electorate, they are outward manifestations of an identity that is responsive to a new social order.

13. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2016-01-28-das-black-leaders-live-with-racism>> (10 September 2017); <http://www.huffingtonpost.co.za/sipho-hlongwane/it-s-about-time-the-democratic-alliance-black-caucus-spoke-out_a_21897537/> (10 September 2017).

8. Conclusion

This chapter was intended to complement perspectives in other chapters of this volume, by drawing attention to applications of corpora and the corpus analysis process outside of variational studies of English. The perspective taken was that of negotiated identities in a South African political organisation. We were particularly interested not so much in the sayings of the political organisation but in other bases on which its being is fashioned. Such an approach required a broadly social semiotic approach to a corpus-based political discourse analysis. The notion of semiotic potential was elaborated upon. Following a theorisation of identity and of the heuristic value of onomastics (specifically, ethnicity of person names, gender-indexical names, place names) and of discursive mono/multilingualism, a small diachronic corpus of the Democratic Alliance and its predecessors was built and queried using the pre-identified heuristics.

Even if to differing extents, the corpus evidence pointed consistently to a political organisation that was semiotically responsive to diversity. The corpus showed some shifts in the racial and gender constitution of the party, from one time frame to the other. Similarly, greater diversity was observed in the languages used in the party's campaign materials, and in the sorts of information various languages were being used to convey. From at best fragmentary multilingualism in the subcorpus of time frame one, we see duplicating and complementary multilingualism in the subcorpus of time frame two.

While the very nature of our subject matter (politics) means that there can be no consensus on the findings, we would hope that, beyond drawing attention to other applications of corpus and the corpus analysis process, this effort has provided hypotheses for further research and has hopefully met van Dijk's (1997: 37) criterion for successful political discourse analysis (PDA): "PDA will only be accepted by political scientists if it has something to offer, preferably something political scientists would not otherwise (get to) know – at least not as well – through other methods, such as polls, participant observation or content analysis."

For now, though, we of course recognise the possible limitations of a rather small corpus as well as of descriptive, rather than inferential, statistics with respect to making claims of semiotic potentials that are socially significant.

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