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the British Novel “Blonde Roots A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Representation of Identity in”

A B S T R U C T

This paper critically examines the clash of identity in the British novel “Blonde Roots” by Bernardine Evaristo. The study includes a qualitative analysis by adopting van Dijk’s (2006) Ideological Discourse Analysis model. The data is based on analysing critically the strategies used to present the identity in the British culture. The study is useful in showing how language is manipulated to serve certain ideological discursive strategies. It also aims to differentiate between the presentation of the self and other to see which group is more powerful and more dominant. The findings of this study emphasise that there is a language manipulation in the novel represented in the European’s positive presentation of the self and the negative presentation of the other (African).

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تحليل الخطاب النقدي لتمثيل الهوية في الرواية البريطانية "جذور شقراء"

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المستخلص:

تعنى هذه الدراسة بتحليل نقدي لصراع الهوية في الرواية البريطانية "جذور شقراء" لبرناردين ايفارستو. تتضمن الدراسة تحليل نوعي وحسب نموذج فان دايك (2006) لتحليل الخطاب الأيديولوجي المتبع في هذه الدراسة. تعتمد البيانات على تحليل نقدي للاستراتيجيات المستخدمة لتقديم الهوية في الثقافة البريطانية وتعتبر هذه الدراسة مهمة في إظهار كيفية التلاعب باللغة باستخدام بعض الاستراتيجيات الأيديولوجية الخطابية. وتهدف هذه الدراسة أيضاً لمعرفة كيفية عرض الذات والآخر لمعرفة المجموعة الأكثر قوة وأكثر هيمنة. وتؤكد نتائج هذه الدراسة أن هناك تلاعباً بلغة الرواية متمثلة في عرض الأوربيين الإيجابي للذات والسلبي للآخر (الأفريقي).

الكلمات المفتاحية: صراع الهوية, جذور شقراء, تحليل الخطاب الأيديولوجي, التلاعب باللغة, تقديم الذات مقابل الآخر.

1. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Historically, the evolution of Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA) is linked to Critical Linguistics (henceforth CL). In the late 1970s, a group of linguists and literary theorists such as Fowler, Hodge, and Kress, in East Anglia University, developed an approach to discourse analysis called CL (Blammaret & Bulcaen, 2000). Critical Discourse Analysis and CL have a shared history since the earlier steps of CDA are traced back to CL. That is why CDA and CL are often used interchangeably (Wodak, 2001). Both CL and CDA claim that discourse hold ideologies and they are always motivated by the producer's interest. Also, both of them are developed out of Halliday's (1978) functional view of language and used his approach of Systemic Functional Linguistics (henceforth SFL) as toolkit for analysis, but, as one of the points of departure, other theorists such as Foucault,

Gramsci, Pecheux and Habermas have influenced CDA, but not CL (de Filologia, 2006).

The real emergence of CDA started in the early 1990s in the University of Amsterdam and through the support of Teun Van Dijk, Norman Fairclough, Gunther Kress, Theo van Leeuwen, and Ruth Wodak. These linguists spent two days together doing a small symposium to discuss theories and methods of Discourse Analysis (henceforth DA), specifically CDA. The meeting determined an institutional start to CDA, so it has become an established discipline (Wodak & Meyer, 2008).

Van Dijk (2015) considers CDA to be a type of discourse analysis research which mainly focuses on how social power, abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in sociopolitical contexts. Therefore, its aim is to discover and, ultimately, resist social inequality. It is believed that CDA relies on the idea that language use is social and the social world is reflected and constructed by discourses (Rogers, 2004). However, CDA aims at showing the relationship between language, ideology, and identity on the one hand and between language, society, and culture on the other hand. It also aims to uncover the hidden agenda behind a particular discourse and their effect on society.

Wodak presents a simple definition of CDA stating that it is a “problem-oriented interdisciplinary research programme, subsuming a variety of approaches, each drawing on different epistemological assumptions, with different theoretical models, research methods and agenda” (2013, p. xix). All “CDA group” agree that CDA investigates how power, injustice, domination, abuse, inequality and ideological representations are produced in a specific context.

2. Identity and its Types

Norton (1995) states that both identity and language use are dynamic, not fixed, notions depending on time and place. Human identity is determined by language. When somebody speaks, others immediately make guesses about that person's gender, age, education, origin and profession. Therefore, language is a complicated mixture of internal and external interpretations of a person's identity. Deng defines identity as "the way individuals and groups define themselves and are defined by others on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, language, and culture" (1995, p. 1). Mishler states that identities are generated in spoken communication and written interactions by stating that "we speak our identities" (1999, p. 19). That is, identities are not constructed by themselves, but it is people that perform their identities, express and display who they are and how they want to be through the use of language and interaction with others in different situations (Kroskrity, 2000). In addition, Joseph (2004) indicates that identities never stay the same, they change depending on the context, e.g., a person may be a teacher, student, parent and so on. Paltridge (2012) emphasises the same idea that identities are not stable or fixed but they are constantly constructed and re-constructed as people interact with each other. Identity is defined by Djité as "the everyday word for people's sense of who they are. It is both about sameness with others and uniqueness of the self" (2006, p. 6).

Critical Discourse Analysis is among the analytical methods that are used in the study of identity. The way identity is constructed in discourse is an interesting area to CDA studies. Identity is built day by day through interactions and it never stays the same in the whole life but rather shifts. Studies that investigate identity usually concentrate on specific variables like gender, sexuality or national identity in order to show how identity is theorised. Different fields like anthropology, linguistics, psychology, gender studies, literature, sociology, history,

and social theory have now a basic role in the creation and establishment of identities (De Fina, et al., 2006).

Identity could be of different types and the three types of identity represented by individual or personal, multiple and social are the most important ones that will be explained below.

2.1 Personal Identity

Joseph (2004) points out that personal identity is a person's own name or it is an individual's nature and uniqueness. It is, according to De Fina (2011), a matter of negotiating a person's own identity as individuals, for example, a conversation with a friend or talk to a psychologist in a therapy session or when the individual presents him/herself as a depressed or care-free person. In addition, Kroskrity (2000) illustrates that it is through language that people construct and communicate their identities and who they are as individuals and members of a social group. So, it is people who are responsible for the kind of image they project to themselves. Djité (2006) and Benwell and Stokoe (2006) point out that this type of identity is concerned with the individual's conception of self. That is, the way a person characterises him/herself. They also mention that personal identities include not only sets of membership categories; but also moral and physical characteristics that differentiate one person from another.

2.2 Multiple Identities

This type is more complex, a person may have different social roles such as a woman, wife, mother, daughter, employee or a son, husband, father, employer and student. This means that they have multiple identities to practice in life (Djité, 2006; Paltridge , 2012). Duszak (2002) declares that identity forms a sequence of

“ingroupness” and “outgroupness” in which every individual takes on a different position allowing every person to have the ability of integrating multiple identities.

2.3 Social Identity

Social identity helps people find their place in the world. Tajfel and Turner (1983) illustrate that the social group consists of group of people having the same identification and are considered members of the similar social category. So, people who are similar to the self-concept are characterised with the label “in-group”, and people who differ in the self-concept are labeled within “out-group”. However, to understand identity, it is necessary to depend on the notion of the “the other”. Social identity is associated with two processes. One is concerned with identifying and differentiating between the two values “us” and “them”, while the second is the meaning attached to these values, “us” with positive and “them” with negative (cited in Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Joseph (2004) and Benwell and Stokoe (2006) state that in social identity, people identify themselves in a particular social group according to categories such as age, sex, career, ethnicity, political orientation and nationality. They decide to be nice, nasty or indifferent to others, depending on how much they think that others (interlocutors) will be relevant in their future interactions.

3. The Model of Analysis

Van Dijk’s (2006) “Ideological Discourse Analysis” model which is regarded a common method in humanities and social science is adopted in this study. It aims to connect the structure of discourse to the structure of society by the social interaction. According to Van Dijk (2006), a variety of discursive structures may be utilised to express ideological beliefs. The general strategy that defines ideology revolves around “positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. Van Dijk names this “Ideological Square” and it consists of four principles: (2006, p.

734)

1. “Emphasize our good thing”.
2. “Emphasize their bad things”.
3. “De-emphasize our good things”.
4. “De-emphasize their bad things”.

Since ideologies are implicit and not overtly stated, van Dijk identifies some strategies for the sake of relevance and clarity. They are summarised as follows:

- Self-identity description: it is usually positive and relevant for those groups who are self-or other-defined because of their gender, race, ethnicity, age, religion, language, origin.
- Negative lexicalization: the selection of strongly negative words to describe the actions of the Others.
- Hyperbole: a description of an event or action in strongly exaggerated terms.
- Negative comparison: it emphasises the bad qualities of the Other by comparing the target person or outgroup with a generally recognised Bad person or outgroup.
- Generalisation: generalising one person or a small group to a larger group or category.
- Concretization: to emphasise Their negative acts, another well-known move is to describe the acts in detail, and in concrete, visualisable terms.
- Warning: it is used to emphasise possible threats and terror.
- Norm and value violation: the most fundamental way of establishing a distinction between THEM and US is not only to describe ourselves in benevolent terms and them in negative terms, but to emphasise that the Others violate the very norms and values that are hold dear.

- Presupposition: the semantic device to indirectly emphasise our good properties and their bad ones is presupposition. That is, these properties are simply assumed to be known, as if they were common sense, and hence need not be specifically asserted.
- Vagueness: the use of language that creates uncertainty and ambiguity, that is, speakers use expressions that do not have well-defined referents.
- Irony/sarcasm: the contrast between what is said and what the speaker intends to convey through language use, often humorously.

In other words, the macro-analysis will deal with van Dijk's "Ideological Square" to examine how positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation are presented in the novel, and the micro-analysis will deal with some selected strategies that are most relevant.

4. Methodology

Methodology is a plan or a procedure of using some techniques to analyse the chosen data related to the research in general (Crotty, 1998). The methodology of this paper is about giving a critical analysis to the representation of identity in the British novel "Blonde Roots" by Bernadine Evaristo. The novel is a modern feminist one; it is chosen to examine how the clash of identity is presented through the language of a feminist British author. The nature of the study is qualitative in nature because it presents an explanation to certain examples used.

5. Strategies of the Elicited Data

In this paper, the data is composed of one novel, the British novel "*Blonde Roots*" by Bernadine Evaristo (2009). The theory of CDA can be applied to novels since novels can be treated as discourses. The data will be analysed on the basis of van Dijk's (2006) model of analysis. The analysis is limited to the macro-level which deals with positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation and the

micro-level which is limited Generalisation and Norm and value violation. The theoretical framework which is adopted to analyse the selected data is illustrated in Figure (1) below:

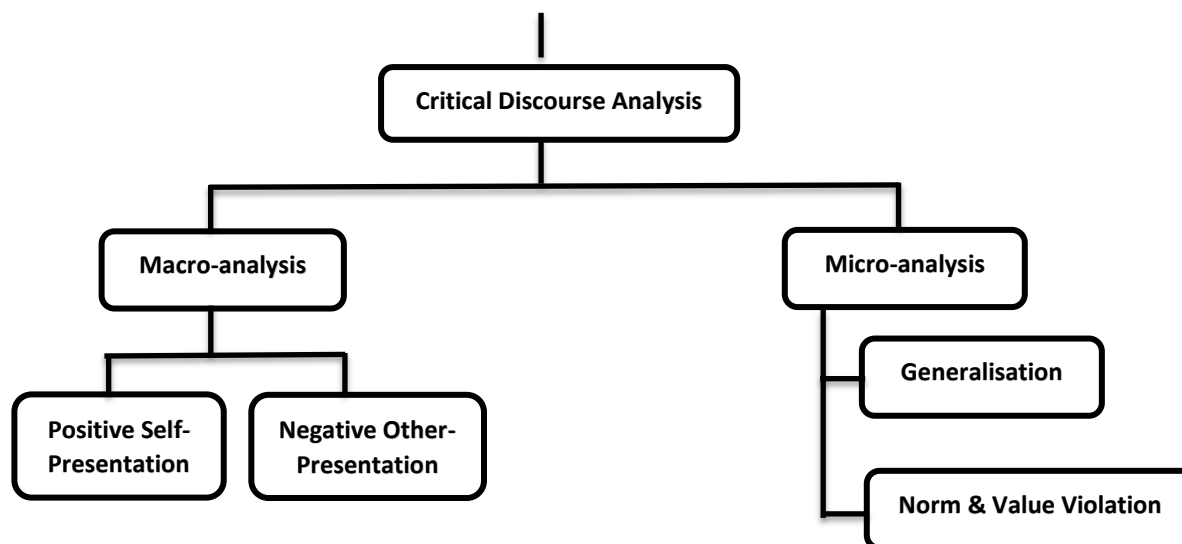


Figure 1: The Theoretical Framework of the Model of Analysis [Adapted from Van Dijk, 2006]

6. Data Analysis

This section presents the analysis of the novel on the basis of the abovementioned theoretical framework. The adopted data will be analysed through examining the representation of identity in the macro and micro-levels of analysis using van Dijk's (2006) model.

6.1 Macro-Analysis

This section is related to how identity is represented in the novel taking the notions of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation into consideration. The way a group of individuals identify themselves and how others

identify them is a major concept in understanding identity. In the selected novel, a comparison between two values: “us” which has a positive value and “them” which is associated with a negative value is presented. The novel presents a racial stance between two cultures. So, European (white) people are represented by “us” and African (black) people are represented by “them”. Two parties are created, white vs. black or Europe vs. Africa. Doris (i.e., one of the main characters in the novel) is part of a social group that is different from Bwana’s (i.e., another main character in the novel) social group. This, in turn, creates different ideas, values, feelings and so on.

Through narration, positive self-representation is given to Europeans and negative other-representation is given to Africans. Doris presents the Europeans as simple hard workers, dreamers, fighters who never give up, “*The Ambossans called us tribes, but we were many nations, each with our own language and funny old customs*”. They work day and night for living and care for nothing here and there but their daily life. The African people are presented as slavers, powerful violent oppressors, kidnappers who hold grudge and hatred towards Europeans. They come across European place(s) kidnapping women and children, and transporting them to Africa to be sold and sent to slavery. Doris and her family are simple, positive people who think that these stories are far away from them.

To be honest, it felt so distant from us that we didn’t give it much thought. Our world was made up of our immediate neighbors and foreign meant the people of the midlands or fenlands. We were just simple country folk, who tried our best to live with ourselves and understand one another. ... To us peasants, the New World was a distant land far across the seas about which we knew nothing, except that no one wanted to go there, because those that did never came back. (p. 50)

The Africans, however, treat Europeans in a very bad way using different kinds of punishments, leaving them starving and even rape (some of) them during

the long voyage while being transported. The first time Doris sees an African was when she is kidnapped. She is treated very badly by her kidnapper as if she is not a human.

I lay there crumpled in a heap, not knowing my arse from my elbow, quite literally, while he untied the sack and dragged it off my head. [...] He appeared like a giant to me. Surely he wasn't a man at all but one of those evil ogres in the legends Pa loved telling us around the hearth on winter nights. [...] the man cocked his head, turned and lumbered toward me, grabbing my legs so that I fell onto my back and my skirts once more rode indecently up my legs. He bound my mouth with a rag, fastened my hands with rope, and placed an iron collar around my neck to which he attached a chain with workaday expertise. (p. 55)

Transported to Africa, the people who are kidnapped are treated badly along the way.

Slaps, punches, pulls and kicks turned into a free-for-all among the women. [...] THE CREW TOOK ASIDE those observed to be not eating. The punishment was to place hot coals so near the offender's lips that they blistered. It didn't always do the trick. The males of my species were kept shackled for their gourmet experience. Food was fed to them from a ladle. If they were too weak to lift their heads, they had to eat prone and sometimes choked, a couple of times to death. (p. 74)

Being sold at the market of slaves, Doris is treated badly, too.

They grabbed at the slaves they wanted, tied us up with rope or simply dragged us out of the pen by whatever limbs or body parts they could lay their hands on. I collapsed in the middle of the scrum and was stamped on. The man who pulled me up wanted me, but so did another, which resulted in a tug-of-war as they each tried to dislodge a shoulder from its socket. The victor bound my wrists with rope so tightly that they bled, then dragged me out of the pen like I was a goat (not for the first time). (p. 84)

Whether women or men, African are seen the superiors who control over everything even people's lives. When Doris becomes a slave to Little Miracle, she

faces a very hard time with this African family. As a slave, she is not allowed to do anything or speak to anyone without her master's permission first. She also lives with the threat that if she ever breaks the rules, she will be punished and sent to the fields or to the brothel at the port.

I wasn't allowed to touch any of her possessions without her permission. If I did, she pinched my arm, hard. In fact, I couldn't do anything without her say-so. I couldn't talk to any of the other house slaves, especially those our age, or go for a walk outside alone. When I broke the unspoken rules in those first few weeks, she'd throw a wobbly and threaten to have me sent to the fields. (p. 87)

Being a slave to Bwana, Doris notices the hard treatment of Madama Blessing to all the other slaves who are referred to as enemies, "She wore her favorite outfit made out of Adinkra cloth. It was stamped with the design known as Atamfo Atwameho, which means 'Enemies Surround Me'" (p. 26).

When you have an army of slaves at your beck and call, you expect to get what you want when you want it. Even when it seemed that every job was completed, Madama Blessing, Bwana's imperious Number One wife, kept everyone busy. [...] On this most festive of days, she had woken up in one of her charming early-morning moods and ordered every available slave to get down on their hands and knees and scrub the immeasurable lengths of her cherished beige flagstone floors—with soap and a nailbrush. [...] Madama Blessing herself had large startled eyes that dominated her face, and when they swooped and swerved, you prayed they would not rest on you, because if they did it would be with shocked outrage at a crime for which you had to be punished, even though you had not committed it yet. (p. 26)

At the plantation when Doris becomes Massa Rotimi's slave, she testifies the bad way of living and the hard treatment.

When the wooden door to the mill was flung open with such violence it nearly smashed into pieces, I knew it had to be the man in charge—Massa Rotimi. [...] When Massa Rotimi looked me up and down with

disdain, I had no doubt that he knew exactly who I was. My job interview took place as he swept past, muttering out of the corner of his mouth that I'd been assigned to work in the mill and boiling house—immediately. “Now get that damned hair cut or those rollers will scalp her!” (p. 158)

Beauty, on the other hand, is a matter of distinction between African and European. It is seen accompanied with European people who have colourful eyes, blonde hair, white skin and slim body. These are signs of beauty especially to the females who are seen like Barbees. Yet, Ambossans regard them ugly because their signs of beauty are symbolised in having a dark skin, wooly hair, big (fat) body and big lips as well. Doris is never seen beautiful in the eyes of Ambossans. Doris positively thinks of herself and accepts the way she is, unattached with whatever they tell her, so no matter what they say; she is beautiful and will always be.

“I may be fair and flaxen. I may have slim nostrils and slender lips. I may have oil-rich hair and a nonrotund bottom. I may blush easily, go rubicund in the sun and have covert yet mentally alert blue eyes. Yes, I may be whyte. But I am whyte and I am beautiful!” Our guys would call women who looked like me Barbee, named after the popular rag dolls of the Motherland, those floppy little female figures with one-inch waists, blue-button eyes and four-inch blonde tresses that every little girl loved over there. Not here, though. Find a little slave girl on this continent and you'll discover she's hankering after one of the Aphrikan Queens, a rag doll with a big butt, big lips, lots of bangles and woolly hair. It was so bad for our self-esteem (p. 35)

African high class masters show their power in dehumanising and degrading the Europeans and stripping their identities. Doris states that Africans convince themselves that Europeans do not have feelings as they (African) do. The relation between the positive “us” value and the negative “them” value is illustrated below:

“I could see how the Ambossans had hardened their hearts to our humanity. They convinced themselves that we do not feel as they do, so

that they do not have to feel anything for us. It's very convenient and lucrative for them.” (p. 31)

6.2 Micro-Analysis

This section is related to the strategies and the way they are used to present the self in a positive way and the other in a negative way. The most relevant strategies in this study are: Generalisation and Norm and Value Violation.

6.2.1 Generalisation

In this strategy, a small group is used as a point of generalisation to a whole group. In the English novel, it is illustrated with the group of black people who are regarded as out-group. In other words, they correspond to the Us value which is concerned with a negative representation. The African people or the “blaks” are seen superior, violent and powerful. So, all blacks or Africans are generalised with the negative other-presentation. They are presented as slave traders who want to increase their exports. They come across different cities and towns and kidnap people and transport them to the New World to be slaves.

The slave raiders, it seemed, were in cahoots with aristocrats like Percy and the middlemen who supplied them with slaves for shipment overseas. Criminals and prisoners of war were hot favorites, but when they weren't available it was any one who could be captured, so long as they weren't too old or, in Percy's case, his own serfs. Children were taken too. (p. 50)

Doris, the narrator, and most of the characters who are kidnapped, tortured and treated as slaves are Europeans and the kidnappers, slavers and masters are Africans. So, all the negative acts and misery that have happened to the Europeans are caused by the Africans. This puts the out-group (Africans) in the bad circle, whatever they do is bad. The narrator and her friends are kidnapped and treated badly by the Africans: “*They grabbed at the slaves they wanted, tied us up with rope or simply dragged us out of the pen by whatever limbs or body parts they*

*could lay their hands on”, “I was **forced** to my knees and **branded** on my shoulder with the initials for Panyin Ige Ghika—my new mistress” (p. 84), “[Yomisi] was **gang-raped** by her three kidnappers shortly after **capture**” (p. 24), “**Slaps, punches, pulls and kicks** turned into a free-for-all among the women (p. 74)”, “she was **forced to wear an iron muzzle in the kitchen to prevent her eating on the job**” (p. 25), “The blak men **inspected our bodies, our mouths, our limbs, and we were soon loaded facedown into the yawls**” (p. 59).*

The ones who do not respond to the kidnappers’ orders, shout or cry will be punished, “They **ripped Rosie-May from her back and dropped her. Just like that**” (p. 72), “People who couldn’t go on were **beaten** with a truncheon until they did” (p. 58), “If a screamer didn’t shut up, they were **whipped** until they did” (p. 76). On the other hand, those who tried to free themselves while being tied and kidnapped receive a very hard punishment.

They **strung** him up. The cat-o’-nine-tails whizzed through the air, **ripping open** the skin on his back, buttocks and legs and **slashing it to pieces**. The sailors charged with **whipping him** took it in turns. Four shifts. They just wouldn’t stop

THE OTHER MEN WERE let off with **thirty lashes** apiece. They had to heal by the time the ship

docked, to be healthy bucks capable of fetching a good price. (p. 81-82)

6.2.2 Norm and Value Violation

This strategy is concerned with breaking the rules, such as right of education, freedom of expression and opinion, right of life and liberty and security, etc. In the novel, the out-group (Africans) breaks such rights. First, they deprive the Europeans from their humanity, kidnapping them, changing their names and decide what to do and not. When Doris is kidnapped, she says “I belonged to him now” (p. 56), her kidnapper. Being sold and transported, Europeans become slaves and they no longer have the right of education. Doris learns to read and write

secretly from her young mistress “Little Miracle”, “it was illegal for slaves to be literate on the island” (p. 87). Doris has also taught her lover “Frank” to write his whole name secretly.

I secretly taught him to write his name on a slate: Frank Adam Merryweather, son of Frank William Merryweather, of Hull, England. The look on his face when it was first accomplished without any spelling mistakes. How he beamed like an elated child. (p. 28)

The Europeans are also not allowed to talk and express their feelings or opinions. That is why most of the conversations between the Africans and the Europeans are of one turn, one participant talks, usually the Africans’. This indicates that what the Africans do to the Europeans is unfair and against the rights any human should have.

7. Conclusion

From the analysis of the novel “*Blonde Roots*”, it is found that the novel is organised in such a way that the in-group and out-group are polarised. That is, the novel uses the strategy of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. The Africans are presented as out-group because of their power and superiority and the Europeans are presented as in-group because of their weakness and inferiority. In other words, the Africans are described as “the other” and have negative presentation and the Europeans are described as “the self” and have positive presentation. Language is manipulated by using some strategies that serve to negatively present the other (Africans) and positively present the self (Europeans). The negative actions of the others are emphasised by using strategies like generalisation and norm and value violation. The former involves many negative lexicalisation to present the Europeans as “others” and presenting them with bad and negative description, and the latter (norm and value violation) further emphasises the negative actions of the other by showing how they break the norms

that any human deserves, e.g., right of humanity, right of education and freedom of expression. It is clarified that it is the African black people who are responsible of the clash and differentiation between the Africans and Europeans. The Africans are shown as slavers, more powerful and more dominant than the Europeans who are seen as slaves, weak and inferiors.

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a. Halliday (1978) are not mentioned in the list of references. Write them.