

**A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE REPORTING OF
SOME NIGER-DELTA ISSUES IN SELECTED NIGERIAN
NEWSPAPERS, 1999 – 2007**

BY

**KEHINDE ADEWALE AYOOLA
B.A. (Honours) English Ife
M.A. (English as a Second Language) Ife**

**A Thesis in the Department of English, Submitted to the Faculty of Arts
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of the Degree
of Doctor of Philosophy of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife,
Nigeria.**

June 2008

ABSTRACT

This study examined the setting, topics and participants that were projected in the content and context of reports on the Niger-Delta in selected Nigerian newspapers. It examined the salient linguistic features employed by the writers in their presentations and critically analysed the pragmatic and discourse strategies employed by the participants in the news reports. These were done with the aim of proposing an analytical framework for describing and interpreting Nigerian print media-political discourse.

The data comprised reports that centred on Niger-Delta issues in three national newspapers, namely *The Punch*, *The Guardian* and *The Vanguard*; and three community newspapers, namely *The Tide*, *Niger-Delta Standard* and *The Telegraph* between 1999 and 2007. Five to ten reports per year were randomly selected for analysis from each of the publications resulting in a total of 273 samples. Field trips were undertaken to selected towns and villages in the Niger-Delta region for the purpose of familiarisation with the setting and a better understanding of the issues at stake. Photographs of significant places that support the topics of the discourse were taken. Both individual and institutional perspectives in the data were identified, classified and analysed using a three-layered pragma-linguistic theoretical framework.

The results revealed that discourse participants from different sides of the Niger-Delta conflict often slanted their public pronouncements in a manner that promoted their positive sides, on the one hand, and the unflattering sides of their opponents, on the other hand. Discourse participants engaged one another on the pages of newspapers using adversarial lexical items and collocations to gain political advantage over one another. The findings also showed that the context of domination and its resistance could be seen in the morphological and grammatical choices of the discourse participants. Evidence of bias and partisanship in the news reports showed that journalists and the media houses they represented played active roles as participants in the conflict. In their quest to gain political

advantage over their opponents, Niger-Delta discourse participants also resorted to several pragmatic and discourse strategies, such as the force of logic, the use of figures and percentages, the persuasion of science, interdiscursivity and intertextuality, rumour mongering, name calling, dysphemism, obfuscation and flattery.

The study concluded that the pragma-linguistic analytical framework enhanced accurate description and interpretation of media political discourse and therefore could equip the reading public and discourse interpreters with the appropriate tools of identifying nuances of meaning that would otherwise have eluded them.