

Exploring a Linguistic Intergroup Bias on Communication of Compound-word Names and Acronyms Among Political Parties

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ABSTRACT According to the linguistic intergroup bias (LIB), positive actions of ingroup members are described with more abstract predicates than those of outgroup members, whereas negative actions of ingroup members are described with more concrete predicates than those of outgroup members. The researchers extrapolated the LIB to compound-word names (for example African National Congress) and their acronymic equivalents (for example A.N.C). They theorized that compound-word names are positive abstract terms, thus, suiting description of the ingroup's positive identity. Besides, their concrete equivalents acronyms can be easily ascribed a negative meaning and, thus, would be suitable for outgroups. Using content and discourse analysis on a sample of nine African political parties, they investigated the hypothesis that people mention a compound-word name of an ingroup more frequently than of outgroups. Results indicated that people use compound-word names more frequently than outgroups. They explained the effect as a form of a linguistic intergroup bias.

INTRODUCTION

The researchers explored a peculiar form of a linguistic bias that appears to partly determine whether compound-word names of the ingroup vs outgroup political parties' names are written either in full (for example British National Party) or in acronymic form (for example BNP). Specifically, they postulated a motivated tendency by political party members to fully spell out the ingroup compound-word name at least some of the times but almost invariably use acronyms in reference to outgroups.

In advancing this hypothesis, they emphasize group names' capacity to represent social identities, thus, implying that their communication is prone to intergroup bias (cf. Day 2007). According to social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979), individuals derive part of their self concept from groups to which belong (that is, ingroups), which forms their social identity, as distinct to their own personal identities. It follows therefore that individual group members strive to achieve a positive social identity through favourable comparisons with other groups (that is, outgroups), an effect that is generally known as ingroup bias (see Brewer 1999; Brewer et al. 1998; Brown 2000; Brown et al. 1988;

Jetten et al. 1996; Tajfel et al. 1971). A favourable comparison, among other effects, is considered to result in a boost of self esteem for individual group members (for example Abrams and Hogg 1988). People also derogate outgroups, though less frequently than they favour ingroups, to feel better (Fein and Spencer 1997), amongst other psychological benefits (see Branscombe and Wann 1994; Crocker et al. 1987; Scaillet and Leyens 2000).

Thus, what the researchers proposed was that political party members are more likely to spell out ingroup compound-word names than outgroup compound-word names, a tendency that would mirror a more positive view of the ingroup, in line with social identity theory. By the same token, the tendency of avoiding referring to rival political outgroups with their full compound-word names (using the acronyms instead) would be viewed as mirroring a less favourable view of outgroup members. It could also signal a dislike and derogation of an outgroups' social identity, considering that intergroup relations between ruling and opposition parties are usually characterized by hostility, sometimes flaring up into open conflict. The bias would be more specifically understood in terms of the linguistic intergroup bias [LIB] (Maass et al. 1989, 1992).

The Linguistic Intergroup Bias (LIB)

According to the LIB (Maass et al. 1989, 1992), positive behaviours are more likely to be

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described in abstract language when performed by an ingroup member (for example *Wayne is helpful*) than when performed by an outgroup member (for example *Wayne held the door open for somebody*). The opposite applies for negative behaviours, which may be described in more concrete terms when performed by an ingroup member (for example *Arnold insulted someone*) than when performed by an outgroup member (for example *Arnold is aggressive*).

Relatively abstract descriptions of positive ingroup behaviours carry the psychological advantage of imputing desirable characteristics to the ingroup (for example *helpful, intelligent, charismatic*, etc.). Besides, using relatively abstract descriptions in reference to negative outgroup behaviours imputes undesirable characteristics to outgroup members (for example, *aggressive, cruel, heartless*, etc.). In this way, language contributes to protective beliefs about the ingroup and/or to prejudicial beliefs about outgroups (Maass et al. 1989).

In its first decade of its inception, the LIB was reported in a variety of conflictual intergroup settings, including horse-racing competitions (Bencivenni 1990), competing schools, sports teams, nations (Arcuri et al. 1993), between genders (Fiedler et al. 1993), political and interest groups (Bencivenni 1990; see Maass and Arcuri 1999, for an overview). The bias was also reported in content analyses of political and athletic events (Maass et al. 1994).

In the past decade, the LIB was replicated many more times (for example Douglas and Sutton 2006; Fieldler et al. 2003; Geerater et al. 2004; Roberson and Stevens 2006; Rubini et al. 2007). In particular, Roberson and Stevens (2006) extended LIB research into the workplace, and demonstrated a link between biases in organizational justice and employees' relative use of abstract language in an ethnically and gender diverse environment. Consistent with LIB hypotheses, positive experiences of the ethnic and gender ingroups were more likely to be described in abstract terms than their negative experiences and the opposite applied roughly to outgroups. Further, Rubini et al. (2007) found that the LIB also applies to the minimal group paradigm, in which individuals are more-or-less randomly assigned to different groups. In sum, thus, the LIB has received support in a wide range of intergroup contexts, using various methods, sug-

gesting that it is a rather robust and pervasive effect.

In general, language abstraction (vs. concretization) is driven by both cognitive and motivational goals, including the need for closure (that is, subjective uncertainty: Webster et al. 1997); defending one's point of view and attacking the opposite camp (Schmid 1996); the motive to compete or cooperate (Gil de Montes et al. 2003), self-presentational goals (Douglas and McGarty 2001; Rubini and Sigall 2002, and the desire to portray a behaviour in a favourable or unfavourable light (Douglas and Sutton 2003). However, regardless of its apparent pervasiveness, language abstraction vs concretization as represented by the LIB does not occur with intentional control, nor do people appear to be aware of the implications of using particular predicates (Franco and Maass 1996; Maass 1999). It is, therefore, not surprising that the LIB correlates with implicit but not explicit measures of prejudice (von Hippel et al. 1997). The LIB has its roots in the linguistic category model (LCM), to which attention will now be now turned (Semin and Fiedler 1988, 1991, 1992).

The Linguistic Category Model (LCM)

The original version of the LCM distinguishes four linguistic categories, increasing in abstractness from descriptive action verbs (DAVs), through interpretive action verbs (IAVs), state verbs (SAVs) to adjectives (Adjs).

Descriptive action verbs (DAVs) are exemplified by a statement "A is talking to B", which provides an objective description of a specific, observable event, which has a distinct beginning and end, and marked by at least one physically invariant physical feature (for example *kiss* always involves the mouth, *phone* always a telecommunication handset). The description is concrete, and enables visualization of the event. The description is also neutral, and offers little to no interpretation of an action (Semin and Greenslade 1985).

Interpretive action verbs (IAVs) provide more than just a description of an action (Brown and Fish 1983). They involve some interpretation (for example, *encourage, mislead, cheat, and flatter*). Their truth value is verifiable to a large extent. In contrast to DAVs, there is no physically invariant feature in the case of IAVs, which refer

to a multitude of different actions that may have virtually nothing in common.

State verbs (SVs), exemplified by “A likes B”, provide a description of a person in a certain cognitive or emotional state (other examples are *love*, *respect*, *abhor*, *trust*). They refer to the psychological states of person A in relation to person B, or an object, which may, however, not actually exist. Besides, they give rise to abstract statements whose truth value usually cannot be easily verified. There is no clear beginning or end to such psychological states (Brown and Fish 1983; Miller and Johnson-Laird 1976).

Located at the most abstract end are adjectives (Adjs), which express what a person is like (for example, John is *aggressive*). In the original version of the LCM, adjectives are conceptualized mainly as serving to discriminate between persons in terms of their intrinsic qualities and propensities such as *aggressive*, *intelligent*, *charismatic*, *naughty* etc. (Semin and Fiedler 1988). However, in later versions, this category also includes adjectives not directly referring to persons, but to actions, that is, adverbs-terms which serve to qualify verbs-as exemplified by the following statement: He sat *quietly* in the reception. *Quietly* qualifies the verb *sitting* is, therefore, an adverb and is (depending on the research goal) coded as an adjective in later versions of the LCM. Because nouns can also, like adjectives, express what a person is like (for example he is a cheater/dictator/ shame/ star), they can also be coded as adjectives (Coenen et al. 2006).

Applying the LCM and LIB to Compound-Word Names

In extrapolating the LIB to the communication of compound-word names, the researchers apply the LCM, composed of four different categories of linguistic terms (DAVs, IAVs, SVs, and Adjs), to a rather different set of linguistic terms, compound-word names vs their acronymic forms. In this regard, the major questions are what properties do compound word names vs their acronymic forms possess that could make them fit in a linguistic model akin to the LCM, and how the variations between the two categories provide capacity for a linguistic (intergroup) bias.

First, there is a need to recognize that, as nouns, compound-word names do qualify as the

most abstract terms in the LCM. Further, the fact that they are constituted of multiple words, chosen judiciously by ingroup members, appears to provide an even greater capacity to represent, even boast, the positive identity of the ingroup. For instance, each word that makes up the name of the Zimbabwean opposition party, Movement for Democratic Change, suggests that the organization is a force of good, fighting to supplant a non-democratic political dispensation with a democratic one. Viewed in this light, compound-word names represent positive abstract terms likely to be used exclusively in reference to the ingroup, just like positive adjectives and nouns (for example *intelligent*, *charismatic*, *hero*, *star*). Thus, members of the Movement for Democratic Change may be more likely than usual to fully spell out the “Movement for Democratic Change” thereby emphasizing and legitimating the identity of their organization as a “movement” that will bring “democratic change”. This outcome would form one facet of the linguistic bias, one that would have an effect of maintaining the positive abstractness of the ingroup name, thus, boasting its positive meaning and essence, in this way legitimizing the ingroup identity.

Besides, through insinuating that there is no democracy in Zimbabwe, the name Movement for Democratic Change may in and by itself be an insult and a threat to the ruling party, the Zimbabwe African National Union (Zanu [PF]). Therefore, Zanu (PF) members may avoid, perhaps, subconsciously, fully spelling out *Movement for Democratic Change*, that is, they shorten it to the less meaningful string of letters defined as an acronym, *MDC*. This outcome would form the other facet of the linguistic bias, one that would have an effect of shedding the abstractness and positive meaning from the outgroup name, leaving it as a rather unimpressive string of letters, in this way potentially delegitimizing the outgroup identity (cf. Bar Tal 1989).

Strictly speaking, acronyms constitute a string of letters which can be arbitrarily ascribed psychological meaning and valence, in contrast to the compound-word names. Viewed this way, it is very likely that the acronyms of major rival political parties are ascribed a negative meaning, precisely because their mere existence, goals, and identity constitute a substantive threat to the ingroup. Viewed in an extremely negative light, acronyms of major rival political parties would be just like negative abstract terms like

adjectives and nouns (for example *unintelligent, uncharismatic, villain, loser*). The researchers refer to the bias in whole as an *abbreviating linguistic intergroup bias (ALIB)*.

The researchers suppose that, in addition to legitimizing the ingroup vs delegitimizing the outgroup, the ALIB would share all the important characteristics with the mainstream LIB, including that it would occur without intentional control, nor would people be aware of the implications of using particular predicates (cf. Franco and Maass 1996; Maass 1999).

As the researchers introduce the ALIB in the present study, it is noteworthy that the leader of the British National Party gave a decree in 2010 that his party stops using the acronym BNP in all official logos and literature, as part of the rebranding of the party. The cited reason, resonating with our ALIB hypothesis, is “presumably... based on the advice that using the party’s full name is a good way of getting around the negative perceptions that come with the acronym” (Liverpool Antifacists 2010: 3). The central question is why the acronym BNP would be associated with negative perceptions, whereas, presumably, the full name, British National Party, would be associated with positive perceptions. The researchers believe the answer is that it is cognitively easier to attribute a negative meaning to an acronym, as literally a concrete string of letters, than to a compound of words carrying a meaning deliberately intended to be positive, which is the main tenet of the ALIB.

The ALIB or Linguistic Simplification?

It is clear, though, that the ALIB would not possibly account for all instances in which compound-word names, whether of the ingroup or outgroups, are either spelt out in full or are abbreviated. Obviously, the most intuitive explanation for the abbreviation of compound-word name is the cognitive need to simplify rather cumbersome syntax. This more obvious explanation formed a baseline against which to test our ALIB hypotheses. The cognitive simplification argument gives rise to at least two hypotheses. First, it predicts a general preference of acronyms to the full compound-word names, regardless of whether it is the ingroup or outgroup being referred to. Second, it predicts no difference in use of full compound-word names of the ingroup and outgroups.

On the other hand, the ALIB predicts significantly greater use of compound-word names for the ingroup than the outgroup. This hypothesis obviously goes directly against the second cognitive simplification hypothesis. However, predicting more use of compound-word names for ingroups than outgroups is not the same thing as predicting that ingroups will be referred more in terms of their compound-word names than their acronyms. In other words, the researchers think that the ALIB effect will not be strong enough to overturn the much more intuitive, therefore, more likely, tendency to prefer acronyms across both ingroups and outgroups simply because they are linguistically simpler.

Validating the ALIB

To demonstrate more conclusively that the ALIB constitutes a type of a linguistic intergroup bias, we considered it necessary to demonstrate empirically its relationship with the mainstream LIB (Maass et al. 1989). In this vein, on the one hand, the researchers expected use of compound word names of ingroups to be associated with the LIB terms that legitimate ingroup identity (that is, positive abstract terms like adjectives and nouns for example *democratic, charismatic, hero, star*), and in addition, expected use of acronyms of outgroups to be associated with the LIB terms that delegitimize outgroup identities (for example negative abstract terms like adjectives and nouns).

Summary of Research Hypotheses

In the chronology in which the researchers developed, and tested our hypotheses, they are as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Ingroup members would refer to the ingroup compound-word name more frequently than to the outgroup compound-word name.

Hypothesis 2: The ingroup compound-word name would be referred to in positive abstract language more frequently than the outgroup acronym.

Hypothesis 3: The ingroup compound-word name would be referred to in positive abstract language more frequently than the ingroup acronym.

Hypothesis 4: The outgroup compound-word name would be referred to in negative abstract

language more frequently than the ingroup compound-word name.

METHODOLOGY

The Sample and Procedure

The researchers focused the research on African political parties partly because of the convenience deriving from their knowledge of and familiarity with African politics. The goal was to include as many political parties as possible from the 52 African nations to have as large a sample as possible. African political parties were ideal to the goals also because the majority, if not all of them, have compound-word names. The starting point was a website headed "African Political Parties and Organizations", accessed through a basic Google search of "African Political Parties", which provided a convenient list of the websites of the major political parties in Africa by country. The site provided essential details such as whether a certain party was a ruling or an opposition one, and its its popularity as indicated by representation in parliament percentage of popular votes garnered in the latest national elections.

The researchers used a number of parameters to determine which parties to include in the sample. First, only the major parties were included in the sample, as indicated by whether they were the ruling party, the official opposition party or at least having substantial representation in parliament according to the latest national elections. Besides, the research involved an intergroup context in which either the ruling or some major opposition party could be the ingroup/outgroup. This meant a ruling party could be an outgroup across a number of major opposition parties, whereas any major opposition party could only have a single outgroup, the ruling party. This as well as many other parameters turned out to be major handicaps to the research. For instance, most major opposition parties did not have websites. Another parameter which turned out to be a major handicap was that between the only political parties with an English name could be included, picked from websites in English, because the researchers lacked proficiency in the other official languages used in Africa such as French, Portuguese, Swahili and Arabic. This led to automatic exclusion of a lot of political parties from countries such as

Mozambique, Angola, Senegal, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Libya, Egypt, Tunisia, etc. Perhaps the biggest handicap was that only websites with a search tab enabled searches for the data required in the study; many of the parties' websites turned out not to have search tabs. This problem contributed to exclusion of political parties from many countries, including Namibia, Kenya, Lesotho, Swaziland, Liberia, etc. Yet, another unforeseen limitation of the searches was that sometimes two and three-letter acronyms were not searchable on many of the websites. This caused a lot of major exclusions, including the ruling party of South Africa, the African National Congress (ANC) and the main Zambian opposition party, the Patriotic Front (PF).

Only nine parties met all the inclusion criteria, limited to only five countries: South Africa (Democratic Alliance, Independent Democrats, Azanian Peoples Organization, and African Christian Democratic Party), Zimbabwe (the Zimbabwe African National Union and the Movement for Democratic Change), Zambia (Movement for Multiparty Democracy), Uganda (People's Resistance Movement), and Nigeria (People's Democratic Party). For ruling parties, the outgroup was represented by the main opposition party, or if its details were not available, by the next most popular opposition party as indicated by parliamentary representation. In addition, the ruling party served as the outgroup for the major opposition parties. Nine parties was a small number, considering the total that had been targeted was from the 52 African countries. However, they were enough for the researchers' purposes because parametric forms of analyses had been planned, with the unit of measurement being the document, not the party.

On each of the nine parties' websites, documents were searched in which the ingroup and outgroup party names were mentioned either in full as compound word-names or as acronyms. The search showed that the outgroup compound-word name was hardly mentioned. This meant that the group names could not be represented in all the four categories but in only three (the full ingroup name, the acronymic ingroup name, and acronymic outgroup name). A single search could yield, two, three, a hundred, even a thousand or more documents. In order to have a workable sample to start off with, a maximum of 10 randomly selected documents were saved

from each search. However, the documents used for each political party were matched across the three categories for total number and word count. This involved taking note of the number of documents in the smallest category from the search and then randomly selecting matching documents from the other three categories in terms of their number and also, as much as possible, document size in number of words. Following this process, the researchers ended up with 32 documents from each category across all the parties, thus, 96 in total.

The task of counting the predicates was completed by two assistants who were blind to the aims of the research, in line with Coenen et al.'s (2006) recommendations. To prepare them for the task, they were first given a mini-lecture on the definitions and general classification criteria of the predicate categories (DAVs, IAVs, SVs, Adjs, and nouns). They were also provided with section 2 of the LCM Manual (Coenen et al. 2006), which concisely details the classification criteria of the predicate categories, as well as an additional list of the LCM predicates classified in LCM categories obtained from Semin and Fiedler (1988).

The assistants first counted and listed positive LCM predicates (DAVs, IAVs, SAVs, Adjs, adverbs and nouns) used in reference to the group name separately in documents in which (1) the ingroup name was referred to in its full form (2) the ingroup name was referred to exclu-

sively in its acronymic form (3) the outgroup name was referred to in its full form (4) the outgroup name was referred to exclusively in its acronymic form. Secondly, they counted the negative predicates used in reference to the ingroup vs outgroup name in the same respective documents.

RESULTS

Counts of References to the Ingroup and Outgroup Using Compound-Word Names Vs Acronyms

As indicated in Table 1, acronyms accounted for the larger chunk of the frequencies of mention of the ingroup and outgroup names. In percentage form, acronyms accounted for an incredible 99.15 percent of references to the ingroup name, and 80 percent to the outgroup name. This confirms the cognitive simplification hypothesis: that people generally prefer acronyms to the more linguistically cumbersome compound-word names, whether in reference to ingroups or outgroups. However, providing support for the ALIB hypothesis, Table 1 also shows that the use of compound-word names was much higher in reference to the ingroup (20.05 %) than to the outgroup (only 0.85 %). In our view, this difference is too big to be attributable to chance alone, but rather is understandable in terms of the ALIB.

Table 1: Frequencies for use of compound word names and acronyms of the ingroup and outgroups

Party	Ingroup name search		Outgroup name search	
	Full compound name	Acronym	Full compound name	Acronym
<i>South Africa:</i>				
• Democratic Alliance		7 (7.53)	86 (92.47)	0 (0)
• Independent Democrats	1421 (36.20)		1874 (63.80)	87 (5.48)
• Azania People's Organization	14 (14.89)		80 (85.11)	2 (2.22)
• African Christian Democratic Party	610 (49.59)		620 (50.41)	0 (0)
				700 (100)
<i>Zimbabwe:</i>				
• Zimbabwe African National Union	2 (0.51)		387 (99.49)	0 (0)
• Movement for Democratic Change	7 (4.29)		156 (95.71)	0 (0)
				228 (100)
<i>Zambia:</i>				
• Movement for Multiparty Democracy	5 (14.29)		30 (85.71)	1 (3.85)
				25 (96.15)
<i>Uganda:</i>				
• People's Resistance Movement	8 (28.57)		20 (71.43)	0 (0)
				30 (100)
<i>Nigeria:</i>				
• People's Democratic Party	51 (24.64)		156 (75.36)	2 (1.61)
				124 (98.39)
Total	2125 (20.05)		3409 (79.95)	92 (0.85)
				2997 (99.15)

Note: Numbers in parentheses are percentage frequencies.

Counts of the LCM Predicates and Reliability Testing

The counts and classifications of the predicates into their respective categories (DAVs, IAVs, SVs, and Adjs) contained in the documents are presented respectively in Tables 1-4 in which (1) the ingroup name was referred to in its full form (2) the ingroup name was referred to exclusively in its acronymic form (3); the outgroup name was referred to in its full form in its acronymic form (4).

Cohen's Kappa Coefficient (Cohen 1960, as cited by Coenen et al. 2006) was used to test for reliability between the two coders in their classification of the predicates into the LCM categories. This was done separately for the coding of the predicates in documents containing (1) the ingroup compound-word, (2) the ingroup acronym, and (3) the outgroup acronym. The process consisted of three steps:

Step 1: "...a matrix to compare the classifications of both coders. The columns represent the classifications of the first coder and the rows represent the classifications of the second coder. The classifications on the diagonal are the terms classified into the same categories by both coders" (Coenen et al. 2006: 16).

Step 2: involves computing expected frequencies on the diagonal due to chance:

$$q = \sum[(n_{\text{row } i} * n_{\text{column } i})/N]$$

n_{row} = total of category i-row
 n_{column} = total of category i-column
 N = total number of observations.

Step 3: involves calculating the Cohen's Kappa based on the following formula:

$$K = (d - q) / (N - q)$$

d = sum of the cells on the diagonal
 q = number of observations can be expected on the diagonal based on chance.
 N = total number of observations

According to Coenen et al. (2006), a Kappa's coefficient 0.41—0.60 is acceptable; between 0.61—0.80 is high, and between 0.81 and 1 is a range from almost perfect up to perfect (cf. Landis and Koch 1977).

Table 2 displays the matrix representing step 1 of the process in relation to the documents containing the ingroup compound-word name.

Below is *step 2*, involving computation of the expected frequencies of the predicates used in the documents containing the ingroup compound-word name on the diagonal due to chance:

$$q = \sum[(n_{\text{row } i} * n_{\text{column } i})/N]$$

n_{row} = total of category i-row
 n_{column} = total of category i-column
 N = total number of observations.

Table 2: A matrix to compare the classifications of predicates used in relation to the ingroup-compound-word name

	DAV	IAV	SV	ADJ	Total
DAV	30	3	0	0	33
IAV	6	182	21	0	209
SV	0	1	28	3	32
ADJ	0	2	9	126	137
Total	36	188	58	129	411

$$\text{Thus, } q_{\text{DAV}} = 36 \times 33/411 = 2.89$$

$$q_{\text{IAV}} = 188 \times 209/411 = 95.6$$

$$q_{\text{SV}} = 58 \times 32/411 = 4.51$$

$$q_{\text{ADJ}} = 129 \times 137/411 = 43$$

$$q_{\text{TOTAL}} = 146$$

Cohen's Kappa was then calculated as per the given formula:

$$K = (d - q) / (N - q)$$

d = sum of the cells on the diagonal

q = number of observations can be expected on the diagonal based on chance.

N = total number of observations

$$\text{Thus, } d = 30 + 182 + 28 + 126 = 366$$

$$K = (366 - 146) / (411 - 146) = 0.83$$

Thus, Cohen's Kappa pertaining to the coding of the predicates used in documents containing the ingroup compound-word name was very high, at 0.83.

For the documents containing the outgroup acronym, step 1 is represented by the matrix in Table 3.

Table 3: A matrix to compare the classifications of predicates used in relation to the outgroup acronym

	DAV	IAV	SV	ADJ	Total
DAV	34	8	0	0	42
IAV	4	23	4	0	31
SV	1	2	8	0	11
ADJ	0	6	3	22	31
Total	39	39	15	22	115

Steps 2 and 3 were repeated, and showed that the Cohen's Kappa of coding of the documents containing the outgroup acronym was 0.67, a high figure. The three steps were again repeated pertaining to documents containing the ingroup acronym (Step 1 is represented by the matrix in Table 4).

The Cohen's Kappa was 0.64, again a high figure. Thus, all in all, the inter-rater reliability between our coders was high.

Table 4: A matrix to compare the classifications of predicates used in relation to the ingroup acronym

	DAV	IAV	SV	ADJ	Total
DAV	22	0	0	0	22
IAV	7	65	3	0	75
SAV	0	4	11	4	19
ADJ	0	1	1	8	10
Total	29	70	15	12	126

Abstraction of Predicates in Reference to Ingroup and Outgroup Names

A Wilcoxon Ranks Test showed greater use of positive abstract predicates in documents containing the name form preferred for the ingroup, that is, the full ingroup compound name ($Mdn = 3.20$), than those containing the acronym of the outgroup ($Mdn = 0.75$), $Z(32) = 4.94$, $p < .001$, $r = .88$. Figure 1 shows the mean frequencies of the four classes of positive predicates as they were used in documents containing the ingroup compound-word name vs. the acronymic outgroup name.

Furthermore, the test showed that the ingroup compound-word name was referred to more frequently in positive abstract language ($Mdn = 3.20$) than the ingroup acronym ($Mdn = 2.00$), $Z(32) = 4.59$, $p < .001$, $r = .81$. Figure 2 displays the mean frequencies of the four classes of positive predicates as they were used in documents containing the ingroup compound-word name vs. its acronymic form. Figures 1 and 2 suggest that interpretive action verbs and adjectives largely accounted for the greater use of positive abstract predicates in documents containing the full ingroup compound name than those containing the outgroup and ingroup acronyms respectively. Barring state verbs, the figures show a linear increase in positive predicates in reference to the ingroup compound-word name as they become more abstract. All in all, and most importantly, they suggested that positive abstract predicates—especially the most abstract, adjectives—were preferred much more in reference to the ingroup compound-word name than to either the outgroup or ingroup acronym.

Use of negative predicates was limited to references to outgroup acronyms, and was significantly higher ($Mdn = 2.20$) than use of positive predicates used in reference to outgroup

acronyms ($Mdn = 0.75$), $Z(32) = 2.42$, $p = .015$, $r = .43$. Figure 3 shows an increase in the use of negative predicates as they become abstract in documents containing the outgroup acronym, a linear increase if we exclude state verbs (as in Figures 1 and 2). More importantly, it shows that virtually all state verbs and adjectives used in reference to the outgroup acronym were negative. The use of positive predicates in reference to the outgroup acronym was minimal, and limited to the more concrete categories.

DISCUSSION

Results reported in this study support our hypothesis that people are more likely to refer to the compound-word name of the ingroup than that of the outgroup. The compound-word name of the ingroup was mentioned more frequently than the compound-word name of the outgroup across all the documents studied in this research, authored by many different authors belonging to nine parties. The percentage difference between the use of the full ingroup and the outgroup names suggested a motivated tendency to refer to the ingroup compound-word name at least some of the times and to avoid the outgroup compound-word name. The researchers cannot attribute this difference to chance but to the motive to refer to the ingroup compound-word name at least some of the times and to avoid the outgroup compound-word name.

These results are explained as reflecting a form of a linguistic intergroup bias [LIB] (cf. Maass et al. 1989, 1992, 1999), which specifically targets communication of ingroup vs. outgroup compound-word names. In the mould of this bias, compound-word names are viewed as abstract linguistic terms, just like adjectives and the usual one-word nouns, and on the other hand acronyms as concrete linguistic terms, like descriptive action verbs (Coenen et al. 2006; Semin and Fiedler 1988). Furthermore, the compound-word names of dynamic groups such as political parties are viewed as positive terms, reflecting the fact they are chosen by group members, most probably the highly identifying group members such as the founders and leaders.

The researchers posited that if people are given the rare chance to provide a compound-word name for their group (a group's name being perhaps the most stable and perennially salient aspect of its identity), people will carefully

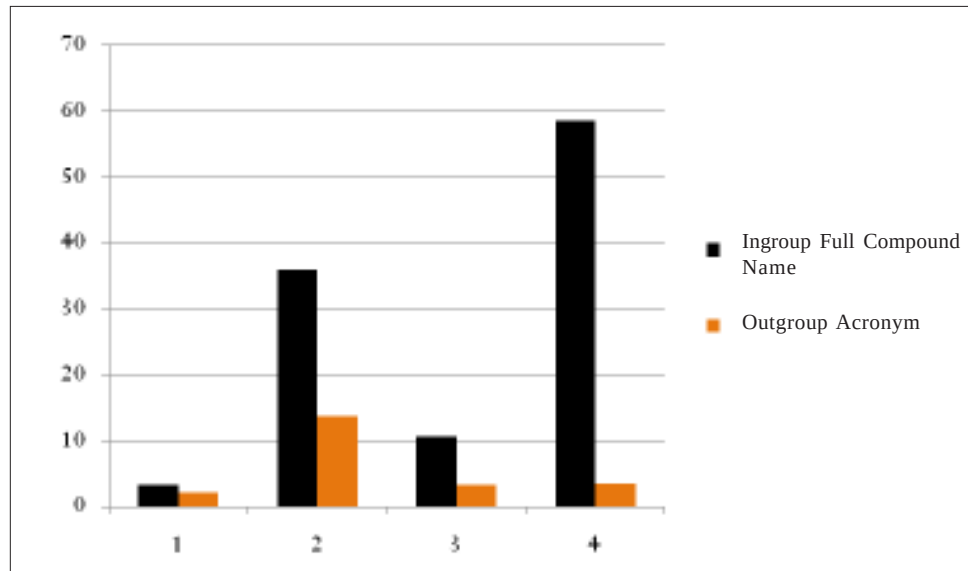


Fig. 1. Average frequencies of the four classes of positive predicates as they were used in documents containing the INgroup compound-word name vs. its acronymic outgroup name. 1 = DAVs, 2 = IAVs, 3 = SVs, and 4 = Adjs.

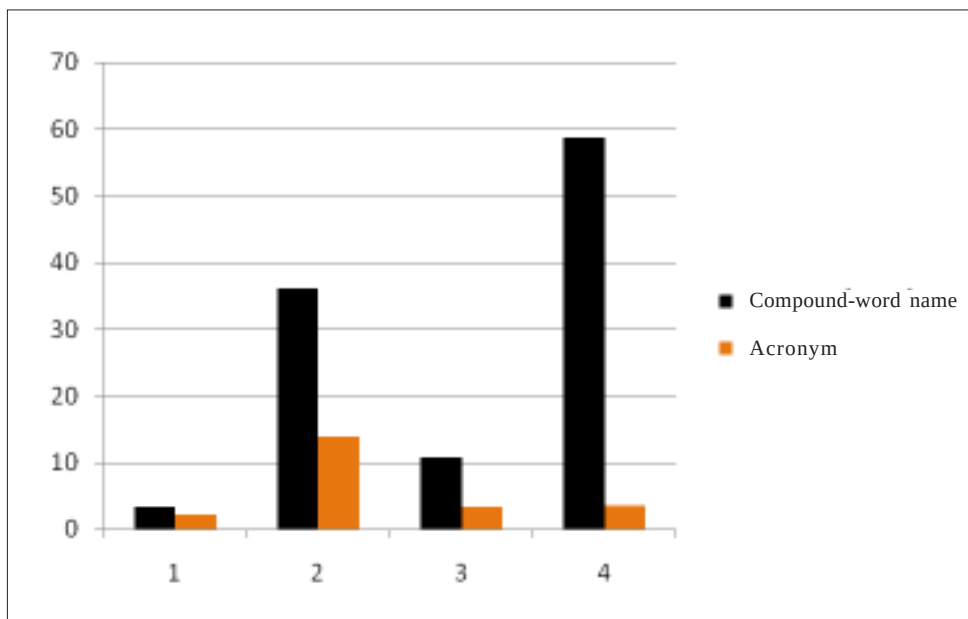


Fig. 2. Average frequencies of the four classes of positive predicates as they were used in documents containing the ingroup compound-word name vs. its acronymic form. 1 = DAVs, 2 = IAVs, 3 = SVs, and 4 = Adjs.

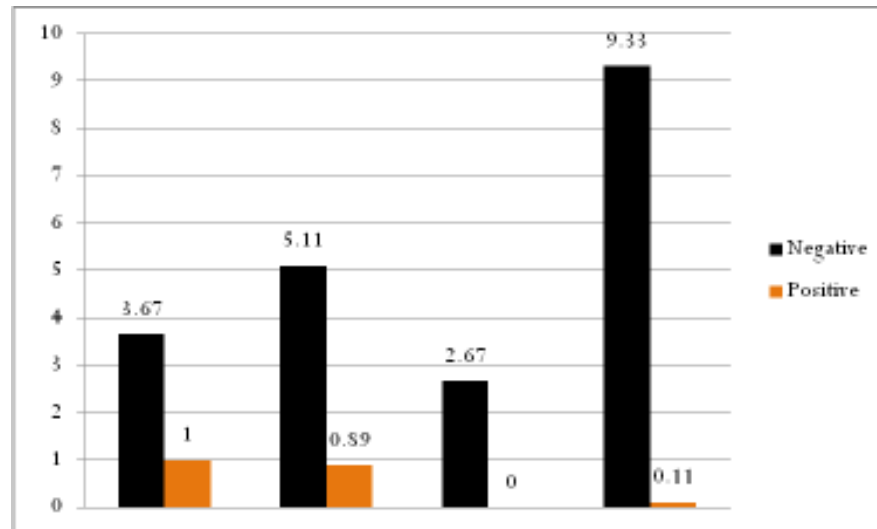


Fig. 3. Average frequencies of the four classes of positive vs negative predicates as they were used in documents containing the acronymic outgroup names. 1 = DAVs, 2 = IAVs, 3 = SVs, and 4 = Adjs.

select words that, from their perspective, best represent its (positive) identity. In light of the LIB, compound-word names are viewed as being both abstract and positive as desirable descriptors of the ingroup, like any other types of positive abstract terms like adjectives (for example *intelligent*, *virtuous*) and one-word nouns (for example *star*, *hero*, *genius*). However, when used in reference to outgroups, especially rival outgroups, they should be incongruent, even threatening, as they may uncomfortably draw attention to outgroups' "positive" identities. Thus, to try to escape and de-emphasize outgroup compound-word names' positivity, individuals may resort to use their linguistically watered down alternatives, acronyms. Notably intriguing is that people sometimes mention the outgroup acronym in the same sentence as the ingroup compound-word name, thus, rendering the bias much more clear, for example "The violent attack yesterday on two *Democratic Alliance (DA)* activists by a gang of men known to be *ANC* members and supporters is a brutal reminder of the ruling party's intolerance of opposition" (italics added for emphasis) (Democratic Alliance 2008: 2), and "For the record, assertions by *Zanu PF* administration secretary Didymus Mutasa that *Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)* President Morgan Tsvangirai will never rule Zimbabwe, are totally false and

misguided (Movement for Democratic Change 2009: 3). To reiterate, we refer to this tendency as the abbreviating linguistic intergroup bias (ALIB).

However, average use of acronyms across the ingroup or outgroup was much higher than the average use of compound word names across the ingroup and outgroup, indicating a general, cognitive preference for acronyms to the rather cumbersome compound-word names. The results suggested that this more prevalent cognitive tendency operates simultaneously with the ALIB, overshadowing it even. It would, thus, be tempting to view the ALIB as an insignificant artefact of the general cognitive preference of acronyms over compound-word names. Therefore, we sought to investigate the validity of the ALIB by assessing its relationship with the LIB. In this vein, on the one hand we expected references to the ingroup compound-word name to be associated with the positive abstract predicates like adjectives and one-word nouns. On the other hand, we expected acronyms of outgroups to be associated with negative, relatively abstract predicates. The results were largely in line with these expectations, showing particularly high use of positive interpretive action verbs, adjectives and nouns in documents containing the ingroup compound-word name and similarly high use of negative interpretive ac-

tion verbs, adjectives and nouns in documents containing the outgroup acronym.

Essentially all that matters as support for the ALIB-LIB relationship is that positive abstract predicates were preferred in general as descriptors of the ingroup compound-word name, whereas negative abstract predicates were preferred in general as descriptors of the outgroup acronym. Even more interesting is that positive abstract predicates were preferred more as descriptors of the ingroup compound-word name than its acronym. This goes a step further to show that it is specifically reference to the ingroup compound-word name, not its acronym, that is used in conjunction with positive abstract predicates.

It is also important to note the fact that preference for abstract predicates (whether positive and, therefore, reserved for the ingroup or negative and, therefore, reserved for the outgroup) was mostly in the form of interpretive action verbs and adjectives. The researchers believe this reflects the fact that political parties are fundamentally not only about what they are like (as reflected by adjectives, adverbs and nouns for example *strong, successfully, democratic, thugs, innocent*), but also about their actions, either of help or detriment to the electorate (as reflected by interpretive action verbs for example *imploring, enhancing, fighting, deploring, condemning, helping*). Viewed this way, it is understandable that the ingroup compound-word name was described positively and more in terms of interpretive action verbs than their more concrete counterparts, descriptive action verbs. On the other hand, the outgroup acronym was described negatively and more in terms of interpretive action verbs than their more concrete counterparts, descriptive action verbs. For, positive and negative adjectives were the most preferred descriptors of the ingroup compound-word name and outgroup acronym respectively, effects which fall well in line with ALIB-LIB explanation.

It is the hope of the current researchers that future research will employ experimental or quasi-experimental methods to investigate the ALIB, in which the variables involved, whether critical or extraneous, will fall at least under some experimental control of the researchers.

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