



# Redundancy and Rhetoric: A Look at Zambian President Hakainde Hichilema's Presidential Inaugural Speech, August 24, 2021

**Kennedy Njenje Kangwa<sup>1\*</sup>, Pethias Siame<sup>2</sup>, Brenda Hanangama<sup>3</sup> & Chella K. Njenje<sup>4</sup>**

1,2,3,4Department of Literature and Languages, Kwame Nkrumah University, Zambia

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**ABSTRACT**

This article undertakes a critical discourse analysis of the strategic deployment of rhetorical redundancy within President Hakainde Hichilema's 2021 Zambian inaugural address. Advancing beyond a conception of repetition as purely a stylistic feature, the investigation posits that deliberate lexical, thematic, and structural redundancies operate as a fundamental strategy for establishing ideological dominance. Utilising Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional analytical framework, the examination reveals how the textual reiteration of core commitments—such as "unity," "economic restoration," and "servant leadership"—functions to demarcate a rupture from the preceding era, appropriate legitimising historical narratives, and distil complex policy agendas for public assimilation. Consequently, these redundancies demonstrate the execution of significant social practices, aiming to normalise the new administration's ideology and validate its authority. Thus, the speech emerges as a paradigmatic illustration of how calculated redundancy in political oratory serves as a potent instrument for ideological transformation and the solidification of a novel political consensus during periods of democratic transition.

**Original Research Article**

**Keywords:** Rhetorical Redundancy, Political Discourse, Inaugural Address, Hakainde Hichilema, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Hegemony, Zambia.

\*Corresponding author: Kennedy Njenje Kangwa

Department of Literature and Languages, Kwame Nkrumah University, Zambia

## 1.0 Introduction: The Rhetorical Architecture of Repetition in Political Oratory

Within the domain of political communication, the strategic deployment of language is of critical importance. This investigation centres on the intentional convergence of two fundamental concepts: **rhetoric** and **redundancy**. **Rhetoric**, classically articulated by Aristotle as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion," represents the art of impactful oratory crafted to inform, persuade, and mobilise. **Redundancy**, denoting the reiteration of information beyond strict necessity, is transmuted within political oratory into a powerful rhetorical

mechanism. In this context, strategic redundancy is a deliberate and calculated repetition designed to amplify, unify, and anchor a central message. This practice is foundational to ceremonial political discourse, especially within inaugural addresses, which function as cornerstone texts for a new administration.

Directing our attention specifically to Zambia, a nation at a definitive democratic juncture following the 2021 general elections, this practice assumes profound significance. The inaugural address delivered by President Hakainde Hichilema on August 24, 2021, stands as a masterful exemplar of this deliberate oratorical strategy. Following a historic electoral victory that signalled a decisive political alternation, the speech constituted a blueprint for national transformation.

Within its textual fabric, a meticulous pattern of calculated redundancy weaves a coherent tapestry of core commitments. This article will conduct a detailed analysis of these deliberate redundancies, guided by the following research questions:

1. How is rhetorical redundancy formally manifested in the textual structure of Hichilema's inaugural address?
2. What intertextual functions does this redundancy perform in constructing a narrative of legitimacy and discontinuity?
3. How does strategic repetition operate as a hegemonic instrument to naturalise a new political ideology and marginalise opposition within the social practice of Zambia's transition?

This article argues that the redundancies in Hichilema's address are not inadvertent but are essential pillars underpinning his administration's foundational narrative and hegemonic project. Through this analytical lens, the speech emerges as a prime exemplar of how political actors wield repetition as an instrument for ideological (re)education and consensus-building during pivotal democratic transitions. This study aims to make an original contribution to CDA scholarship by explicitly examining how redundancy is weaponised for hegemonic reconstruction in a context of decisive inter-party alternation, a gap in the existing literature which has focused more on intra-party continuity.

## 2.0 Literature Review

The deliberate strategic deployment of redundancy constitutes a well-documented phenomenon within political oratory, particularly in inaugural addresses. Academic scholarship has moved past dismissing repetition as stylistic superfluity, instead analysing its constitutive function in legitimising authority, constructing collective identity, and managing political transition.

### 2.1 Redundancy within Established Democratic Traditions

Investigations within stable democratic environments reveal that redundancy frequently fulfils ritualistic and unifying objectives. The foundational analysis by Washington and Hart (1985) of U.S. presidential inaugurations identified a constrained repertoire of recurrent themes such as "unity" and "renewal," positing that this cyclical repetition operates as an indispensable political ritual that fortifies foundational myths and provides continuity. Similarly, Cavalcanti and Santos's (2013) CDA of Brazilian presidential addresses shows how redundancy within a political bloc ensures ideological cohesion and brand identity. In a European context, Wodak's (2009, 2011) research illustrates how repetitive *topoi* construct a shared transnational identity and manage internal diversity, functioning as a mechanism for discursive integration.

### 2.2 Redundancy within Post-Conflict and Transitional African Contexts

Within African contexts characterised by fragile democratic consolidation, the strategic application of redundancy assumes urgent dimensions tied to nation-building. Adegoke's (2013) analysis of Nigerian inaugural addresses identifies "strategic repetition" as a performative discursive act that attempts to rhetorically summon a unified national identity into existence. Mkhize's (2012) study of South African inaugurations uncovers a powerful "rhetorical inheritance," where successors engage in redundant intertextuality with Nelson Mandela's legacy to claim legitimacy, creating a potent yet confining rhetorical tradition.

### 2.3 Theoretical Commonalities and the Identification of an Analytic Gap

A synthesis reveals fundamental commonalities: across diverse settings, inaugural redundancy is consistently framed as a strategic political tool characterised as ritualistic, unifying, legitimising, and stabilising. Notwithstanding these insights, a significant analytic gap persists concerning the application of a hegemonic lens to redundancy within a *democratic transition* marked by a decisive shift of power between directly opposing political camps. While existing studies focus on scenarios of intra-party continuity, the Zambian case of 2021 presents a paradigm of overt political alternation. This context necessitates a framework to examine how redundancy is weaponised not merely to ensure continuity, but to actively deconstruct a preceding consensus and establish a new hegemony. It is this identified gap that the present article addresses.

## 3.0 Theoretical Framework

This investigation employs Norman Fairclough's tripartite model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as its central theoretical scaffold, selected for its capability to reveal how language operates as a modality of social practice, engaged in constructing, legitimising, and naturalising relationships of power (Fairclough, 2001). It is well-suited for analysing oratory within a transitional context.

### 3.1 Core Theoretical Foundations

The approach is anchored at the confluence of two pivotal traditions integrated within Fairclough's CDA:

1. **Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model:** This conceptualises analysis across three levels: the **Text** (linguistic data, including patterns of repetition); **Discursive Practice** (processes of production, dissemination, and reception, focusing on intertextuality); and **Social Practice** (the broader socio-political context, examining consequences for power dynamics and hegemony).
2. **Gramscian Hegemony:** The framework is informed by Gramsci's concept of **hegemony**, whereby a dominant

group secures consent by establishing its worldview as accepted "common sense." Discourse is a primary arena for this contest.

3. **Socio-Cognitive Dimension:** Incorporating van Dijk's (1998) approach, the analysis considers how discursive structures like redundancy function to construct ideological polarities and shape the audience's mental models.

### 3.2 Application to Strategic Redundancy

Within this framework, rhetorical redundancy is theorised as a **deliberate hegemonic instrument**. Its functions are mapped across Fairclough's three dimensions:

- **Textually**, it manifests through lexical field repetition and syntactic parallelism.
- **Discursively**, it operates through strategic intertextuality, referencing both negative pasts and positive legacies, and is designed for persuasive public consumption.
- **Socially**, it executes hegemonic labour by naturalising new norms, legitimising authority, marginalising opposition, and performing agenda-setting.

## 4.0 Methodology

### 4.1 Research Design and Approach

This investigation adopts an **integrative qualitative research design**, fundamentally rooted in CDA. The design is **descriptive-explanatory**, intending to systematically describe manifestations of redundancy and explain its function as a hegemonic instrument. The study incorporates **quantitative content analysis** techniques within the overarching **qualitative discourse analysis** to provide empirical substantiation for linguistic patterns and enable deeper interpretive work.

### 4.2 Data Selection

The primary data is the verbatim transcript of President Hichilema's inaugural address on August 24, 2021, selected as a **purposively chosen critical case**. A **comparative corpus** was constructed for contextualisation, comprising previous Zambian inaugural addresses, addresses from analogous African transitions, and seminal addresses from established democratic traditions.

### 4.3 Analytical Framework

The analysis was systematically guided by Fairclough's three-dimensional framework:

1. **Text Analysis (Description):** A multi-cycle coding process (Saldana, 2021) was applied. Cycle 1 involved open coding of repetitions. Cycle 2 grouped these into lexical, thematic, and structural units. Cycle 3 applied a hybrid codebook with deductive categories from theory and inductive categories emerging from the data.
2. **Discourse Practice Analysis (Interpretation):** This involved intertextuality analysis (identifying positive

and negative intertexts) and consumption analysis (interpreting how repetition simplifies agendas and constructs narratives).

3. **Sociocultural Practice Analysis (Explanation):** This involved hegemonic analysis (examining naturalisation and marginalisation) and agenda-setting analysis (investigating how reiteration constructs perceived priorities).

### 4.4 Data Analysis Procedures & Rigour

Procedures included software-assisted textual interrogation, critical close reading, comparative analysis against the corpus, and triangulation of findings across analytical levels. Trustworthiness was ensured through transparency, systematicity, contextualisation, and methodological triangulation.

## 5.0 Findings and Analysis: Rhetorical Redundancy as a Hegemonic Strategy

This segment delivers a stratified examination of intentional redundancies, illustrating that they operate as purposeful hegemonic instruments across textual, discursive, and social dimensions.

### 5.1 Lexical Repetition: Semantic Anchoring

Lexical repetition implants core ideological signifiers.

- **Addressive Formulae ("Fellow Zambians"):** This phatic reiteration acts as an *interpellation* (Althusser, 1971), summoning listeners into a consolidated national collective and framing discourse as a direct pact.
- **Promissory Utterances ("We Will"):** This modal repetition enacts *illocutionary acts* of commitment (Austin, 1962), transmuting promises into a unified, agentive program and cultivating an expectation of definitive action.
- **Foundational Mantras ("Power Belongs to the People," "New Dawn"):** These operate as *discursive shorthands*. Their repetition serves as a *legitimation strategy* (van Leeuwen, 2007), roots authority in populist tenets, and signifies a rupture and renewal.

### 5.2 Structural Parallelism: Rhythm and Persuasion

Structural redundancies impose rhythmic and logical coherence.

- **Anaphoric Vision-Building ("A Zambia where..."):** This assembles a parallel, cumulative vision, presenting the national project as comprehensive and integrated through *syntactic iconicity*.
- **Manichean Contrasts ("inclusion and not exclusion..."):** This contrastive parallelism simplifies the political choice into a moral dichotomy, reinforcing *ideological polarisation* (van Dijk, 1998) and constructing the old order as the antithesis of the new.

- **Epistrophic Closure ("The days of... are over"):** This confers rhetorical finality, executing *temporal proximisation* (Cap, 2013) to consign malpractices to a terminated past.

### 5.3 Thematic Reiteration: Agenda-Setting

Thematic redundancy constructs the public's perception of paramount issues.

- **Economic Restoration as Master Narrative:** The relentless return to the economy frames it as the *central crisis* and *primary benchmark*, performing macro-level *agenda-setting* (McCombs & Valenzuela, 2020).
- **Governance and the Rule of Law:** The constant reiteration of "zero tolerance to corruption" serves a dual intertextual function, constructing a negative past while promising a new normative framework to *naturalise* hegemonic norms.
- **National Unity as Performative Incantation:** The thematic insistence on unity operates as a *performative speech act* (Austin, 1962), endeavouring to bring into being the unified nation it describes.
- **Servant Leadership as a New Social Contract:** This reiterated dichotomy seeks to *invert the existing power schema* and institute a new ethical framework for political authority (Charland, 1987).

### 5.4 Synthesis: The Constitutive Logic of Redundancy

The analysis discloses that redundancy operates through a *constitutive logic*:

- **Textually**, it generates a dense, resonant verbal tapestry.
- **Discursively**, it functions as an instrument of *intertextual management*.
- **Socially**, it executes the hegemonic labour of *naturalisation*, *legitimation*, and *marginalisation*. Consequently, the address stands as a paradigm of how deliberate redundancy is strategically deployed not merely to communicate but to *construct* a new political reality during a foundational moment of democratic transition. However, an alternative interpretation could suggest that such redundancy, while constructing a new consensus, also risks simplifying complex socio-political challenges into slogans, potentially obscuring the substantive policy pathways needed to realise them.

## 6.0 Conclusion

This study has substantiated that the extensive rhetorical redundancy in President Hichilema's inaugural address is a premeditated hegemonic technique. Employing Fairclough's framework, the investigation delineated its operation across three dimensions. **Textually**, persistent reiteration established a cohesive ideological matrix. **Discursively**, repetition served as an instrument of intertextual engagement, forging a narrative of discontinuity and appropriating legitimacy. **Socially**, strategic redundancy accomplished

paramount hegemonic objectives: it endeavoured to **naturalise** the incoming ideology, **legitimise** the new authority, **marginalise** opposition, and actively **socially construct** the national agenda.

Within the specific milieu of Zambia's 2021 democratic transition—a definitive rupture—Hichilema's address exemplifies how redundancy is transformed into a tool for ideological reconstitution. It transcends unifying functions to actively deconstruct an erstwhile consensus and erect a novel one. This oration elucidates that during epochs of democratic transition, deliberate rhetorical redundancy functions as a potent discursive mechanism for cementing hegemony and striving to solidify a nascent political reality through the methodical reiteration of its core doctrines.

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