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"Nelson Mandela: From 'I'm prepared to die' to 'Free at last'. A linguistic analysis"

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Abstract: The name Nelson Mandela is associated to concepts such as peace, harmony, and the fight against apartheid. However, there are more unknown things and aspects about this figure; for example, his membership to the terrorist organisation *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (Spear of the Nation).and his violent acts. This paper analysis some linguistic changes in his discourse, related to his shifting ideology in the context of his life evolution. I focus on two of his speeches: "I'm prepared to die", a judicial declaration delivered in the Rivonia Trial where Nelson Mandela and others were convicted of terrorism. The second corresponds to Nelson Mandela's inaugural address in 1994 when he was proclaimed President of South Africa. There are great differences between the two and this will be shown in the use of different linguistic strategies.

Keywords: Nelson Mandela, speeches, linguistic analysis.

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Nelson Mandela: From 'I'm prepared to die' to 'Free at last'. A linguistic analysis.

0. Introduction

Nelson Mandela was a controversial figure during his life, but also a role model even after his death. He did not have a good beginning, justifying and committing acts of terrorism. However, after his prison sentence he became a new person and a symbol of the struggle against apartheid, representing the lack of freedom of all black South Africans.

Described in the Mandela Foundation web page as a person whose life is "an inspiration to all who are oppressed and deprived; and to all who are opposed to oppression and deprivation", he was born in Transkei, on July 1918. His father was a counsellor of the Thembu people. Mandela was given the Christian name of Nelson at school, and he grew up hearing the stories of his ancestors. He completed his Junior Certificate at Clarkebury Boarding Institute and went on to Healdtown Comprehensive School, where he obtained his Bachelor of Arts in 1943. Nelson Mandela joined the African National Congress (ANC) in 1944

In 1952, he joined the Defiance Campaign which involved civil disobedience against some unjust laws passed by the Government. Mandela and some other people were arrested. In 1960 he was involved in the Sharpeville protest where police killed 69 unarmed people. This incident led to the country's first state of emergency and the banning of the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress. Nelson Mandela and his colleagues were again arrested during the state of emergency. In 1961 he joined the terrorist organisation *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (Spear of the Nation). In 1963 Nelson Mandela was charged for committing acts of sabotage at the Rivonia Trial and sentenced to life imprisonment. After his release from prison, Nelson Mandela started to work in order to end white minority rule, and in 1991 was elected president of the African National Congress. In 1993, he received the Nobel Prize for Peace, along with President Frederik Willem de Klerk. The following year, Mandela was proclaimed South Africa's first democratically elected President. he stepped down from presidency in 1999, and continued working with the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, and other Foundations until his death in Johannesburg on 5 December 2013.

1. Preview of Research Questions.

This paper examines the similarities and differences between the following two speeches by Mandela: 1) "I am prepared to die", pronounced when Nelson Mandela was declaring at the Rivonia Trial in 1964, and it can be considered a judicial declaration; 2) "Free at last" corresponds to his Inaugural Address of Nelson Mandela after the victory of the African National Congress in 1994.

The research questions in this paper focus mainly on two important aspects: (a) The features which are genre-related, and which may result from the fact that the two speeches were delivered in different situations, (b) it can observed that there is an obvious different situation of power in both speeches. In the first one, Mandela is being convicted for committing acts of terrorism. In the second, he is the first President democratically elected in South Africa, a role which gives him the possibility to govern a country. Thus, there are clear differences in the context of the speeches and in the ideology that they contain.

The object of study are the following discursive strategies: 1) Us vs. them: positive self- and negative other- representation. The positive and negative references to black and white people used by Nelson Mandela in his speeches. 2) The use of stance taking strategies concerning three big subgroups:

- a) The use of epistemic stance shows the degree of certainty that a speaker has about events.
- b) The effective stance that denotes the position of the speaker, his intentions and his influence regarding the realization of events.
- c) The enuntiative position and the self-reference expressions that indicate how Mandela positions himself towards the audience in each situation.

2. Critical review of Literature.

There are many research papers that deal with the analysis of Nelson Mandela discourses. More specifically, and taking into account the speeches chosen to analyse, I can mention María Martínez Lirola (2012) who focuses on the relation of meaning to wording, basing thus her analysis on a Systemic Functional Analysis on rhetorical devices, marked syntax and appraisal. Moreover, we can refer to Rania L. Williams (2008), where the purpose is to analyse the use of English language and the rhetorical techniques in four speeches by Mandela, including the ones selected for this research paper.

Nevertheless, this is the first time that these speeches are going to be compared in terms of similarities and differences in the representation of the social participants, that is, in terms of the use of effective stance strategies, epistemic stance strategies and expressions of self-reference. First of all, it is important to mention that language and ideology have a close relationship, where language is the principal vehicle responsible of transmitting the ideology of the person. Norman Fairclough claims that "Ideologies are closely linked to language, because using language is the commonest form of social behavior, and the form of social behavior where we rely most on 'common-sense' assumptions." (1989: 12)

The representation of social participants in discourse consists of attributing positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. That is to say, we tend to describe ingroups in a good and positive way and outgroups in a bad and negative way. Teun Van Dijk (1995) has explained that Positive information about the ingroup and negative information about the outgroup will be included or highlighted, whereas negative information about the ingroup and positive information about the outgroup will tend to be suppressed or downgraded. In "Politics, ideology and discourse" he also states that, "Whenever a meaning is associated with good things it will tend to be associated with the ingroup of the speaker, and all structural properties of the discourse may be brought to bear to emphasize such meanings." (2005: n.p) In other words, in social and political discourses the speaker tends to position himself and the ingroup positively, and the outgroup negatively. This is reflected on some discursive aspects such as the intonation, the vocabulary used for each group, the syntax, how the speaker organizes his discourse, nonverbal communication, etc.

The term stance is defined by Douglas Biber & Edward Finegan as "the lexical and grammatical expression of attitudes, feelings, judgements, or commitment concerning the propositional content of a message." (1989: 93) John W. DuBois also states that stance is "a public act by a social actor [...], positioning subjects (self and others), [...] with respect to any salient dimension of the sociocultural field" (2007: 163). Stance is a big group of markers that can be divided into sub-groups: evaluation, concerning attitude and its subtypes; positioning, including evaluative, epistemic and effective stance; and finally, alignment.

The use of epistemic stance strategies indicate the degree of veracity that the speaker has about the events. According to Juana Marín Arrese epistemic stance refers to knowledge concerning of the realization of the event and/or judging the validity of a proposition designating the event (2011: 193-223). Among the epistemic stance strategies there are epistemic modals (e.g. verbs, adverbs), evidentiality markers, factive predicates, involving cognitive and affective, and non-factive mental predicates. The use of effective stance markers denote the position of the speaker and his intentions of the realization of events. Marín Arrese adds that effective stance pertains to the realization of events, to the way in which the speaker/writer carries out a stance act with the purpose of causing some

change in events in reality. Inside effective stance group of markers, there are deontic modals, modals expressing possibility and necessity, personal or impersonal predicates embodying requirement, attitudinal expressions concerning modal volition and personal predicates indicating intention or determination and directive expressions like imperatives and hortatives, with a directive illocutionary force.

Marlou Van Rijn argues that alignment is the morphosyntactic expression of the arguments of a clause on the basis of their mutual pragmatic, semantic or syntactic behavior (2011: 1-30). Scott Fabius Kiesling (2011) also explains that alignment is how a speaker aligns or disaligns to an interlocutor both epistemically and interactionally. The use of pronouns in discourse corresponds to a strategy of impersonalisation so that the avoidance of individual specification of the agent in impersonal situations include the use of indefinite pronouns (one, some,...) and of personal pronouns with generic or uncertain reference (they, you, we,...) (Marín Arrese 2008).

3. Hypotheses and Research Objectives.

The hypothesis I am working on is that Nelson Mandela used different linguistic tools and resources in both speeches due to their different context and also to the different ideology of Nelson Mandela at that times. If my hypothesis is true, we will see great differences between the two discourses based on the reasons previously mentioned. The research objectives are described below. This paper analyze both discourses based on

- Representation of us vs. them: how Nelson Mandela presents himself and South Africa's society in his speeches.
- Use of epistemic stance: use of epistemic modal verbs, cognitive attitude verbs and expressions of factivity.
- Use of effective stance: use of deontic verbs, imperative forms, attitude predicate and expressions of commitment and/or promise.
- Use of enunciational position and self-reference: expressions of alignment and/or acknowledgement, self-reference and the use of pronouns such as *you* and *we*.

4. Methodology.

The samples used for the analysis consist of the transcripts of two discourses of Nelson Mandela taken from the webpage of Nelson Mandela Foundation. These speeches are chosen because of their relevance, delivered in two different time periods with a high importance in the life of Nelson Mandela.

After deciding the aspects of analysis, I assigned a code for each linguistic feature. To analyse references to blacks and whites (us vs. them), I first highlighted every reference. After that I made two tables, one for each speech. These tables show both positive and negative references to black and white South Africans. I also added an extra column due to show some expressions referred to "all South Africans". In addition, I made another table taking references only from the first speech which shows privileges of white people and hardships of black people.

Stance included an enormous group of references to analyse as one group only. Thus, I decided to divide it in three big subgroups (epistemic stance, effective stance and self-reference) and I assigned one code for each of them. After that, I classified every reference in the group it belonged to. Once I had done this, I classified again those references more concretely inside their subgroup.

5. Results and Discussion.

Us vs. Them.

As mentioned, when the representation of social participants comes in, the speaker tends to belong to the ingroup. Besides, he will try to describe the ingroup positively and the outgroup negatively. In Appendix I, there are three tables which show the results of analysing the relation between Us vs. Them in both discourses. In this case, we have to

know that Mandela and black people belong to the ingroup, and white people and the present govern (at that time) are the outgroup.

Table 1 belongs to the first discourse and it shows a great variety of terms referring both to white and black people. For instance, Nelson Mandela uses terms such as "my people", "African freedom" and "Africans" to refer to black people. Although there is not many, it also attributes negative reference to the ingroup, such as "black domination". Terms like "the whites" (repeated several times), "outsider" and "white domination" allude and emphasize bad things of the outgroup (white people). Apart from all the references to white and black people, it has been found some references to another group: South Africans. It has been found utterances near the end of the discourse like "How could black and white ever live together again in peace and harmony", where the speaker advocates for unity between races. Thus, it can be concluded that Mandela uses this kind of representation in order to appear as a victim along with the ingroup, and to blame the outgroup despite the use of "neutral forms" which calls for unity and to join both races.

Table 3 shows the references of representation of social participants found in the Inaugural Address. If this table is compared with table 1, it will be seen that there are great differences. In table 1 there are many negative references to white people and many positive references to black people. However, in table 3 it is shown that there are no negative references to white nor black people. The Inaugural Address is full of positive references to "All South Africans". Mandela uses "all the people of South Africa", "we are all South Africans" to make people feel that they are part of an only society, being the question of race of no relevance.

Finally, table 2 shows another form of representation of social participants. In this case, Nelson Mandela, in his declaration at the Rivonia Process, presents black and white people in terms of standards of living. White people are accused of having "high standards of living" while black people live in "poverty and misery". Mandela states that there are great differences between blacks and whites with respect to rights and he summarizes with: "Laws are made by the whites and they are designed to preserve this situation".

Epistemic Stance

Epistemic modals are used to express the opinion about a statement or an event. Using this kind of stance, the speaker accepts that there is a possibility to be truth, but it is not certain. In his declaration, Nelson Mandela uses this type of markers in order to give his opinion. Most of the times, the opinion he is giving is about things done by the whites, as in (4). Mandela also uses epistemic modals to downgrade actions of black people, like in (2), and (3) and to talk about himself, as in (1).

- (1) "I have already admitted that these documents are in my writing, and I acknowledge that I made these studies to equip myself for the role which I **might** have to play if the struggle drifted into guerrilla warfare"
- (2) "Eric Mtshali may have been amongst these young men..."
- (3) "I did tell them that the activities of Umkhonto **might go through** two phases, namely: acts of sabotage and possible guerrilla warfare, if that became necessary."
- (4) "The whites enjoy what **may well be** the highest standard of living in the world, whilst Africans live in poverty and misery."

In Mandela's Inaugural Address there is no much opinion. Only two examples of epistemic modals have been found in the speech, where Nelson Mandela gives his opinion about political issues, like in (5) and (6), concerning different voting intentions in different parts of South Africa. Example (5) has a concessive meaning.

- (5) "We might have our differences, but we are one people with a common destiny in our rich variety of culture and traditions."
- (6) "Lastly, I just want to say that in some areas we **may not have done** as well as we hoped."

Cognitive attitude markers have to do with the emotions of the speaker. That is to say, it is related with verbs of cognition or mental attitude, such as know, believe, feel, etc. Results show that Mandela uses cognitive verbs in the first discourse with the intention of justifying himself in relation of the acts committed by himself or by the terrorist organization, as in (7). He also appeals to this type of attitude to tell the judge his beliefs, like the extracts (8), and (9).

- (7) "Secondly, we felt that without sabotage there would be no way open to the African people to succeed in their struggle against the principle of white supremacy."
- (8) "We believed in the words of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that "the will of the people shall be the basis of authority of the Government", and for us to accept the banning was equivalent to accepting the silencing of the African people for all time."
- (9) "We felt that the country was drifting towards a civil war in which blacks and whites would fight each other."

Factivity is used in this discourse in order to give veracity to what Mandela is telling the audience. According to Sauri (2008), "truth values are assigned to propositions by checking whether the situation it describes corresponds to a situation in the world". In this case, Mandela uses terms such as "fact" and "true" to reinforce the issues he is explaining to the judge, as in (10), (11), and (12).

- (10) "It may not be easy for this Court to understand, but **it is a fact that** for a long time the people had been talking of violence of the day when they would fight the white man and win back their country, and we, the leaders of the ANC, had nevertheless always prevailed upon them to avoid violence and to pursue peaceful methods."
- (11) "It is true that there has often been close co-operation between the ANC and the Communist Party."
- (12) "It is not true that the enfranchisement of all will result in racial domination.

Effective Stance

Deonticity.

According to Marín Arrese (2009, 2011a), the domain of deonticity includes deontic modals, modals of possibility and modals of necessity. The results of the first discourse shown below, reveal that Mandela uses must and can in terms of necessity, that is to say, obligation, as in (13), (14), (15), and (16) for example.

- (13) "As all strikes by Africans are illegal, the person organizing such a strike **must** avoid arrest."
- (14) "It **must not be forgotten**, My Lord, that by this time violence had, in fact, become a feature of the South African political scene."
- (15) "Although there are no figures available to me, it **can be stated**, without doubt, that the white children on whom R144.57 per head was being spent all came from wealthier homes than African children on whom R12.46 per head was being spent."
- (16) "But this fear **cannot be allowed** to stand in the way of the only solution which will guarantee racial harmony and freedom for all."

However, in the second speech, Mandela rarely tends to use deonticity, which it was found only three times. In this case, he uses it with a sense of promise. That is to say, Mandela and his administration want to make South Africa a completely different country with all people together and without racial problems, as in (17).

(17) "For **we must**, together and without delay, begin to build a better life for all South Africans."

(18) "But I must add, we are not going to make the Government of National Unity an empty shell."

Imperatives.

All the imperative forms found in the analysis come from the Inaugural Address of Nelson Mandela. Every form found follows the same construction, that is, the let form. Nelson Mandela used that in order to make a summary of what he wanted to do as the new President of South Africa., asserting people that "this is the time" to change and to make South Africa a better place.

- (19) "Let's get South Africa working."
- (20) "Let our celebrations be in keeping with the mood set in the elections, peaceful, respectful and disciplined, showing we are a people ready to assume the responsibilities of government."
- (21) "Let us build the future together, and toast a better life for all South Africans."
- (22) "Let us stretch out our hands to those who have beaten us, and to say to them: we are all South Africans, we have had a good fight."

Attitude predicate.

Attitude predicate are verbs that express human abilities. Nelson Mandela uses this kind of marker to tell the judge all the desires African people had, as in (23).

(23) "Africans want to be paid a living wage. Africans want to perform work which they are capable of doing, and not work which the Government declares them to be capable of. We want to be allowed to live where we obtain work, and not be endorsed out of an area because we were not born there. We want to be allowed and not to be obliged to live in rented houses which we can never call our own. We want to be part of the general population, and not confined to living in our ghettoes. African men want to have their wives and children to live with them where they work, and not to be forced into an unnatural existence in men's hostels. Our women want to be with their men folk and not to be left permanently widowed in the reserves. We want to be allowed out after eleven o'clock at night and not to be confined to our rooms like little children. We want to be allowed to travel in our own country and to seek work where we want to, where we want to and not where the Labor Bureau tells us to. We want a just share in the whole of South Africa; we want security and a stake in society. Above all, My Lord, we want equal political rights, because without them our disabilities will be permanent."

Commitment or promise.

All the expressions of commitment or promise were found in the second discourse. He uses verbs such as would and will in order to express his good intentions being the new President of South Africa.

- (24)"I pledge to use all my strength and ability to live up to your expectations of me as well as the ANC."
- (25) "Tomorrow, the entire ANC leadership and I will be back at our desks."
- (26) "Now is the time for celebration, for South Africans to join together to celebrate the birth of democracy."

Assessments.

Some impersonal expressions were found indicating that the action is socially desirable or required.

- (27) "I promise that I will do my best to be worthy of the faith and confidence you have placed in me and my organization, the African National Congress."
- (28) "But now this is the time to heal the old wounds and to build a new South Africa."

Stance: Enunciational position and self-reference.

Alignment and acknowledgement.

Alignment markers "can and often do stand alone to demonstrate speakers' attitudes towards the topic at hand" (Wang et al., 2010). There are only examples of alignment and acknowledgement in Nelson Mandela's declaration. The intention of Mandela through this markers is to justify himself towards the issue of Umkhonto we Sizwe, as in (31); also, towards his acts and ideology, like in (29), (30), (32), and (33).

- (29) "I admit immediately that I was one of the persons who helped to form Umkhonto we Sizwe, and that I played a prominent role in its affairs until I was arrested in August 1962."
- (30) "I do not however, deny that I planned sabotage."
- (31) "I deny that Umkhonto was responsible for a number of acts which clearly fell outside the policy of the organization, but which have been charged in the indictment against us."
- (32) "I have already admitted that these documents are in my writing, and I acknowledge that I made these studies to equip myself for the role which I might have to play if the struggle drifted into guerrilla warfare."
- (33) "I have denied that I am a communist, and I think in the circumstances I am obliged to state exactly what my political beliefs are in order to explain what my position in Umkhonto was, and what my attitude towards the use of force is."

Self-reference.

Self-reference expressions made by the author "give the impression of being very knowledgeable of the field" (Cecchetto and Stroinska, 1996). Examples of self-reference found in the first discourse show that Nelson Mandela gives himself validity through what he says, as if the only truth is what he says in the trial to the judge.

- (34) "I have already mentioned that I was one of the persons who helped to form Umkhonto. I, and the others who started the organization, did so for two reasons."
- (35) "As I have just explained, administrators would be necessary who would be willing and able to administer a non-racial state and so men, and so would men be necessary to control the army and police force of such a state."
- (36) "It is true, as I have already stated that I have been influenced by Marxist thought."

Use of pronouns.

After analyzing both discourses, it is shown that there are two pronouns which appear with a high frequency: we and you. In the case of the first speech, the pronoun most used is we, which, the vast majority of the times is inclusive due to Mandela uses it to refer to black South Africa and/ or his colleagues in Umkhonto we Sizwe.

- (37) "We who formed Umkhonto were all members of the African National Congress, and had behind us the ANC tradition of non-violence and negotiation as a means of solving political disputes."
- (38) "My colleagues and I, after careful consideration, decided that **we** would not obey this decree."

In contrast, in the second speech it is found the pronoun you becomes important. Mandela uses it in order to address the audience, and to give society the prominent place it deserved at that moment like in (39) and (40). He also uses pronoun we as in (41) and (42), where he takes into account his administration and the audience.

- (39) "You helped end apartheid, you stood with us through the transition."
- (40) "But it is you, the people, who are our true heroes."
- (41) "We are a great team."
- (42) "For **we** must, together and without delay, begin to build a better life for all South Africans."

The following summary of the results shows the main differences between the two speeches:

The first speech is characterized by the representation of social participants, positioning black people as the victims of the white people; by the use of epistemic modals, cognitive attitudinal verbs and expressions of factivity, which gives certainty about what Nelson Mandela explains. Other characteristic to mention is the use of deontic modals and attitudinal predicate verbs, denoting the position of Mandela towards the events and acts described. He also uses expressions of alignment, self-reference and pronouns to addressee the audience. Finally, it has to be taken into account that it is a judicial declaration, that is to say, by using of these linguistic features Mandela tries to appear as a victim, along with black people in general.

The second speech is characterized by a different representation of social participants involved in the speech, in which Mandela considers everyone as South Africans. Another characteristic is the little use of epistemic and deontic modals, which is made up for the use of imperatives and expressions of promise urging for a change. In addition, the use of pronouns is very powerful in this speech, since Mandela uses them to addressee the audience.

6. Conclusions.

After the analysis of the two speeches, we can say that Nelson Mandela used combined linguistic resources and tools in his Inaugural Address with respect to his declaration at the Rivonia Process. The context of both discourses and the situation of Mandela in each of them was completely different and, as a consequence, he used particular linguistic resources in each situation.

The linguistic phenomena analyzed have revealed that all the changes correspond to a bigger change inside Mandela's mind: his ideology. These changes can be seen in the representation of social participants on both discourses. Whereas in the first speech there was a complete division between the two unreconcilable races (black and white people), in the second there were no differences in this regard.

In addition, the use of the epistemic stance, very common in the first speech through expressions of factivity and epistemicity, are scarce in the second. Effective stance markers are present in the Inaugural Address, with imperative forms such as "let's"; in the declaration, they appear through deontic modals and attitudinal verbs.

Expressions of promise were found only in the second speech, due to be a very common element of political discourses. Mandela uses personal pronouns such as *you* and *we* in order to address himself to the audience.

Thus, as argued the differences within the two speeches involve ideological issues, reflected through the linguistic tools and resources analyzed. We can say that Nelson Mandela had to change his mind radically in order to change all South African's mind. In the future it would be interesting to study Nelson Mandela's autobiography, *Long walk to freedom* (1994) and to see if he uses the same linguistic tools or resources of the first discourse, of the second, or if he combines both styles, due to the change of ideology shown through the results mentioned in this research paper.

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Appendix.

Table 1: Us vs. Them. First Discourse.

	Positive References	Negative References	
	My people The pride and glory of the entire African Nation The African people	Black army	
Black people	Africans The leaders of our people African leaders	Communists	
	African patriot African freedom	All strikes by Africans are illegal	
	Unarmed Africans Our people (The blood of) innocent Africans Our cause	Black domination	
		Outsider	
White people		The whites	
		White supremacy	
		White government	
		The whites	
		The Government	
		White republic	
		The unwanted republic	

		The whites' response
		All whites
		White domination
		White political organisation
		Repressive legislation
		The white man
		A government which uses force to maintain its rule
		Nationalist policy
		The white population
		The white newspapers
		The police and white civilians
		White South Africa
All South Africans	The ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons will live together in harmony and with equal opportunities.	South African political scene
	How could black and white ever live together again in peace and harmony	Inter-racial civil war
	Non-racial state	South African Government
		Racial friction
		Racial policies of the South African government.

Table 2: Differences between white and black lifestyles

Privileges of white people	Hardships of black people		
Highest standard of living.	Africans live in poverty and misery.		
Whites are rich.	Poverty goes hand in hand with malnutrition and disease.		
Compulsory education for white children (both rich and poor).	Infant mortality.		
The government uses more per capita spending for whites (R144.57).	Africans are poor.		
The quality of education is different.	African children have to pay more for schooling than whites.		
Industrial Colour Bar: all the better paid, and better jobs of industry are preserved	The per capita spending is R12.46 per head.		
for whites.	Strikes of African people (workers) are illegal.		
The right collective bargaining is permitted for the better paid workers.	Poverty and breakdown of family produce violence.		
Laws are made by the whites and they are designed to preserve this situation.	Africans are not entitled to vote.		
	40% of children between 7 and 14 do not attend school.		
	Africans are not allow to for Trade Unions.		

Table 3: Us vs. Them. Second Discourse

	Positive References	Negative References
Black people	South Africa's greatest leaders.	
White people	Worthy South Africans	
All South Africans	Fellow South Africans.	
	The people of South Africa.	
	People of South Africa.	
	South Africa's heroes.	
	All South Africans.	
	Our people.	
	All the people of South Africa.	
	South Africans.	
	We are all South Africans.	
	New South Africa.	