

Ethnic Stereotyping On Facebook During The 2013 Political Elections In Kenya: An Analysis Of Linguistic Features Of Facebook Posts And Comments

Frank Mbaya Asirigwa¹, Furaha Chai (PhD)², Nabea Wendo (PhD)³

1. *Master of Arts Candidate (Journalism and Mass Communication), Egerton University, Kenya.*

2. *Senior Lecturer, Department of Literature, Languages & Linguistics, Egerton University, Kenya.*

3. *Department of Communication & Literary Studies, Laikipia University, Kenya*

ABSTRACT:- The social media is one of the fastest growing forms of digital media in the world today. It comes in various forms such as websites, emails, blogs and social networking sites like Facebook, WhatsApp, 2go, MySpace, twitter and others. It is developing fast and becoming complex due to its ability to incorporate all the other aspects of the main stream mass media. Despite the communicative importance of social media, like any other media, stereotyping on Facebook in Kenya has become improper for the social fabric, yet scholars and leaders seem to give it little attention. This research investigated negative ethnic stereotyping exchanged on Facebook in Kenya during the March 4th, 2013 political elections. The study employed a qualitative approach which delved into selected Facebook pages, their titles, status updates, comments and graphic representations especially pictures for negative tone and interpretation and then carried a content and thematic analysis of the same. The study's main objective was to assess how language was used to propagate ethnic stereotyping. The study was hinged on the taxonomy of stereotyping model as espoused by Glaveanu which analyzes how stereotypes and generalizations are attributed to a group of people by others who believe they have a certain defined set of characteristics and the pragma-dialectical theory which analyzes argumentation as an interactional discourse activity that is part of a critical discussion that aims at a reasonable resolution of a difference of opinion. The study demonstrated that Facebook stereotypes highlight conflicts emanating from power struggles and political exchanges in the society especially during the electioneering period.

Key Words: *Social Media, Ethnic stereotyping, Facebook*

I. INTRODUCTION

Mass media plays a key role in informing the public. It entails all the communication technologies that are intended to reach a large audience through space and time. The significance of mass media plays out when individuals and communities are bombarded constantly with messages from a multitude of sources and these messages promote not only products, but moods, attitudes, and a sense of what is important or not. It therefore impacts heavily on humankind by creating and re-creating culture. News reports transmitted via various forms of mass media are coined and therefore laden with ideological elements coded in linguistic choices which are aimed at influencing the thinking and behavior of an audience through agenda setting and news framing (McQuail, 2005).

During the March 2013 political elections in Kenya, it emerged that there was a lot of negative ethnic incitement that was being propagated through the social media. Unlike 2007 where Kenyans fought openly in the streets leading to the killing of close to 1,500 people and further displacing close to 250,000 others (Waki, 2008.) In 2013 the ethnic division that played out on the internet was mainly between supporters of the Jubilee Alliance and Coalition for Reforms and Democracy Alliance (Cord). These were the two major Political alliances that produced the top presidential candidates. The Jubilee Alliance was comprised of The National Alliance Party led by Uhuru Kenyatta who was the presidential flag bearer and the United Republican Party led by William Ruto. Cord on the other hand was largely comprised of the Orange Democratic Movement led by Raila Odinga who was its presidential flag bearer, Ford Kenya led by Moses Wetangula and Wiper Democratic Movement led by Kalonzo Musyoka. The ethnic profiling that was experienced was majorly between the Gikuyu who were the majority followers of Uhuru Kenyatta, and those backing Raila Odinga, from the Luo tribe (Lando & Mwangi, 2014). The 2013 political election spurred a heated debate among Kenyan Facebook users concerning who won the country's presidential elections. The argument seemed dissipate after the Supreme Court upheld the victory of Uhuru Kenyatta as the president thus Kenyans accepted the verdict and moved on. However, many Kenyans took to social media to vent their anger and displeasure with both the outcome of the elections and the Supreme Court's verdict; in the process spewing a lot of negative ethnicity.

There was ethnic stereotyping during the 2013 general elections whereby Kenyans on social media resorted to using coded language when referring to people of another ethnic group (Lando & Mwangi, 2014).

It is in this regard that this study sought to find out whether the language used on Facebook to propagate ethnic stereotyping was coded in figurative speech. It also evaluated the argumentative patterns used on Facebook and assessed the thematic concerns which propagated ethnic stereotyping. Mass media have the potential to influence the reader's perceptions and thinking and just like any other media, social media has the same communicative power. The selection, placement and structure of a text on social media can be shaped into a unique form of rhetorical organization to achieve a desired communicative intention. Users can post sensitive material and this is of great concern no wonder the media has been accused of playing a role in the 2007/2008 PEV (Nabea, 2009). While some government officers expressed concern over the ethnic stereotyping, little scholarly work has been done to unravel the nature and form of this stereotyping. This study therefore sought to investigate the nature of ethnic stereotyping that was propagated on Facebook amongst Kenyan Facebook users after the March 4th, 2013 General Elections until the time of swearing in of the President elect. It is hoped that the it will provide a good foundation upon which media scholars and students can build on to the rapidly changing media climate so that in future elections, the mass media can be kept in check in order to avert any crises that may arise from irresponsible reporting like the case of 2007/2008 PEV

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There was ethnic stereotyping on Facebook after the 2013 political elections in Kenya. Kenyan communities fragmented along ethnic lines using stereotypes on Facebook to bring out ethnic division. The stereotyping was done through linguistic devices, argumentative patterns and thematic concerns which remain unexplored by many scholars as well as advocates of peaceful co-existence. This engendered ethnic suspicion that could have led to ethnic strife like the case of 2007 where hate speech disseminated by the media had underlying ethnic stereotypes that escalated into ethnic hate sparking the violence that broke out thereafter. There being scanty empirical evidence that outlines the nexus between ethnic differentiation and negative stereotyping propagated on Facebook, it was fundamental to carry out this study on the foregoing theme.

III. STUDY OBJECTIVE

This study's main objective was to assess the forms of ethnic stereotyping through Facebook in propagating ethnic differentiation in Kenya.

IV. JUSTIFICATION AND SCOPE

The study embarked on one of the most topical issues in Kenya today following the General Elections held on 4th, March, 2013. This was at a time when the nation was still recovering from the shock and aftermath of the 2007/2008 P.E.V which was partly blamed on media involvement (Waki, 2008). The study focused on negative ethnic materials posted on Facebook in the period ranging from the day of the election-March, 4th – and the 9th of April when the president elect was sworn in. It is within this period that the supporters of Uhuru Kenyatta and Raila Odinga, the biggest political players, were engaged in a war of words on social media over who won the elections. The nation faced the risk of highly disintegrating along ethnic lines if the situation experienced on social media would find its way in the main stream media. It was necessary that online ethnic stereotyping be checked and Kenyans advised to tone down their online ethnic differentiation. If this could not be put in check, then the process of healing and reconciliation in the country would suffer setbacks.

ScopeThe study purposively extracted fourteen Facebook posts and thirty nine Facebook comments from four Facebook pages. CORD EFFECT, which was created to advance Raila Odinga's party politics, had attracted over 69,000 likes. Uhuruto 2013 on the other hand which attracted close to 18,000 likes was pro-Uhuru and his Jubilee Alliance. The pages were red flagged by the Ministry of Information for having exchanges that were ethnic and politically instigated amongst their users. The other two voices that the researcher deemed prominent and were used in this research were those of two bloggers, BX and BY. The two aggressive bloggers were politically aligned to Jubilee and Cord Alliances respectively. Blogger BX led the digital campaigns of the presidential campaigns of President Uhuru Kenyatta in the 2013 general elections while BY was on the forefront in running the online presidential campaigns of the Cord Coalition in the 2013 general elections. The study pointed out linguistic features which had negative ethnic connotations which appeared in form of ellipses, emotive catch phrases, rhetorical questions and sentence topicalization. Therefore the researcher purposively sampled fourteen texts from the foregoing pages. It is imperative to note that CORD EFFECT did not entirely carry a Luo, Luhya or Kamba following as the party was perceived to be as a result of the leaders hailing from the said ethnic communities. The same could be said of Uhuruto 2013, that the users on the page were not entirely Gikuyu or Kalenjin. It should also be understood that the term "like" as used on Facebook may not semantically denote that a Facebook user enjoyed or regarded a particular page, person, post, comment or photo with affection, but rather the "like" button was the quickest way for one to join a page, share content and

interact with others and it ensured that one was notified of any activity that took place within a particular page. It is worth to note that individuals could have had several Facebook accounts under different pseudonyms and therefore some of the content posted was made to achieve a certain function. The study sampled posts and comments on Facebook stereotypes from the day of the election (March, 4th) to the day of swearing in of the president elect (April, 9th). It is not given that all the content on these pages spelled the issues specified by the researcher. Therefore the researcher sampled out purposively the content that is specific to the issues being researched on. Some of the content sampled out was not presented in the English language per se, and therefore the researcher translated some content from either Swahili or other languages to English.

V. LITERATURE REVIEW

The media plays a key role in any political election. It oversees elections by informing people and providing them with a platform to listen, read, express their opinions and follow the proceedings on the political situation. In Kenya, the broadcast media with the widest reach is the radio with over 50 channels broadcasting in English, Kiswahili and mother tongue (BBC World Service Trust, 2008). It is followed by television then the cell phone which has become a key element in disseminating information. The internet is also having a remarkable presence amidst the array of media channels. The internet may appear an elitist tool but without proper structures of monitoring and control to oversee the content, it could easily find its way into the other media channels (Nabea, 2009). There is a lot of symbiotic relationship between reports such that news from one channel can be used by other channels and vice versa (Montgomery, 2007). Although argumentation employs the use of narratives, this study recognized that online content was compact in nature and could generate a variety of different meanings. Figurative language or imagery was employed in order to achieve rhetoric with an attempt to inform, persuade, or motivate particular audiences in specific situations. Language users who intended to achieve this, used emotional language that lacked rational thought, therefore, this research proved that such use of language was a threat to democracy and its ideals. The researcher pointed out how language could be used figuratively to stir ethnic emotions through features such as rhetorical questions and speech acts. Nabea (2009) carries out a discourse analysis of argumentation in the Kenyan media before and after the 2007 elections. He argues that a common motif in all ethnic narratives that appeared recurrent in the electronic mail, cell phone messages and mother tongue radio stations was argumentation. His study builds on the pragma-dialectical theory which holds that the goal of an argumentation is to identify and resolve differences of opinion in a kind of 'repair mechanism' (van Eemeren et al., 2006). It entails an argument or debate where two or more interactants holding divergent views try to come to a compromise. In studying of argumentation in the ethnic narratives, the author employs the use of linguistic techniques in analyzing how they are used for persuading purposes. Language can be used in a variety of ways to achieve an intended outcome in an audience. The artistic use of language (that has concealed meaning) be it in speech or writing can be defined in a number of terms such as metaphoric or figurative language or the use of literary tropes. This research acknowledged that language was a potent tool through which negative ethnicity was propagated on Facebook. The content that propagated negative ethnicity was found to be coded in figurative speech. Due to the nature of Facebook, users did not post detailed content because online literature was not considered as serious literature but users posted brief content that was meant to have a certain function. Nabea(2009) explored various linguistic features that had the potential of stirring emotions in an audience. He cited examples of features that displayed the Kalenjin's ambitions for political supremacy and the Presidency. He demonstrates that these features were well orchestrated and formulated in a persuasive strategy that was intended to persuade the Kalenjin into believing that they had been sidelined in politics and commerce. He appreciates the fact that language was tailored in 2007 to fit a certain mindset thus instigating civil war. It is important to note that such sentiments have the potential to spill over from one medium to another. Aristotle (1991) explores argumentation embedded in *Rhetorica* whereby strategies employed in rhetoric include *pathos* which is intended for the emotional appeal, *logos* whereby evidence is embedded in truth and *ethos*, for the credibility of the speaker, as forms of persuasion. All these strategies were figuratively employed during the feuding that took place in Kenya after the 2007 elections. The purpose of resorting to this was to ensure that the arguer was as persuasive as possible. The same pattern was experienced during the March 2013 General Elections.

This research focused its analysis on the various textual linguistic features employed by Facebook users and their intended purpose. The researcher's analysis focused on the persuasive and rhetorical nature of online discourse that underlies the language used. Grispurud (2002) argues that rhetoric implies the skillful use of language for effective communication. It alludes to the efficacious and functional application of the resources of language for dissemination of information and persuasion. The art of persuasion involves the manipulation of linguistic features to attain utilitarian and aesthetic functions. In media communication, rhetoric entails how language is engaged, ordered, and managed in presenting news bulletin. News reports are loaded with ideological elements and linguistic choices whose implications may be direct or indirect. The selection, placement of news and its structure in the text of a report reveal a unique form of rhetorical organization and

communicative power. In online media, especially Facebook, one can indiscriminately use language unlike news reports where language is moderately and indirectly used to achieve the intended communicative function.

Language, therefore, is no longer seen as merely reflecting people's reality but as a key component of creating reality. The rhetoric intent, the coherence and the world view that the author and the receptor bring to the text are equally important (Kaplan, 1990.) This implies that an understanding of grammar, morphology, semantics and phonology of a text does not necessarily constitute an absolute comprehension of a text. As observed earlier by the researcher, online content can find its way into other media like newspapers, radio, and television and vice versa and users can use the content for their agenda-setting role in initiating, advancing and sustaining discourse on political and pivotal national issues. As a result, undiscerning readers normally regard the process of selecting and constructing news items and their placement on social media to be objective and an obvious routine task. However, this process is a result of a deliberate discursive construction (by use of linguistic features and typological embellishments) which is determined by the person posting the story. Hence there is need to unveil the underlying political ideologies that form the basis of political rhetoric on social media.

Discourse and language can be used to make unbalanced power relations and portrayals of social groups appear common, normal, and natural. However, in reality there is prejudice, injustice, inequalities and subjective presentation of underlying issues unless we begin to deconstruct the words and language used, we can be misled into embracing the dominant views. This explains why it was imperative to study the language of online content in a bid to identify and describe the linguistic features used in presenting the 2013 general election campaign issues. This was also aimed at unveiling the argumentation that brought out the partisan or biased presentation of the prevailing socio-political conflicts. This study critically examined how the resources of language were used to construct posts and stories that were meant to influence the reader's interpretations. The linguistic features, argumentative patterns and thematic concerns were determined after the researcher did a pilot study that revealed the presence of the aforementioned. The researcher carried out a critical examination of the ideological moves and linguistic choices that constituted persuasive rhetoric. Yieke (2008) examines the factors that have contributed to violent postelection clashes in Kenya. The proximate causes of violence are intrinsically related to democratization and the electoral cycle; its roots are to be found in recent times and are politically instigated. The author argues that violence in Kenya appears to be an ethnic expression of political conflict (Yieke, 2008). Yieke's argument postulates that ethnic identity and chauvinism has been sharpened over time especially after the introduction of multi-partism in 1991 thereby increasing the likelihood of future conflict. The hypothesis of her research is that any assessment of conflict involving ethnicity or ethnic identity requires an investigation into the language used. This is because language plays a crucial role in ethnic conflicts. The author further examines the link there is in language, ethnicity and power and how this led to the voting patterns in the 2007 general elections and further led to the post election violence. Her study acknowledges that what partly fuels ethnic animosity is embedded in stereotypes, the belief that some ethnic groups are more adept in particular jobs or tasks and the differences in intelligence among certain ethnic groups. Yieke also analyzes texts that are classified as hate speech and how such relates to ethnicity and the political crisis that followed the General Elections in 2007. This study borrowed a leaf on how she handles the linguistic choices used in 2007 to propagate hate after the General Elections. It demonstrated that negative ethnic stereotyping is embedded in hate speech. Although Yieke's study expressively analyzes statements that were deemed to be hate speech, she ought to have recognized that the statements being analyzed are in essence stereotypes.

VI. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research adopted a descriptive research design. Descriptive research design is based on a fact finding approach which entails generalizing a cross-sectional study of the present situation. Descriptive research design coupled with thematic content analysis formed the basis of methodology of this research. Thematic content analysis is the study of textual content with reference to the meanings, contexts and intentions contained in messages. This kind of research design helped this study in presenting a qualitative analysis of texts and interpretations of the study findings to explain the nature of negative ethnic stereotyping.

Location of the Study

The research got secondary data from online sources. Facebook provided the bulk of the data as the researcher purposively extracted the relevant linguistic features that were to be analyzed for negative tone and interpretation. The researcher purposively selected four Facebook pages. Two of them; CORD EFFECT and Uhuruto 2013 were pointed out by the then Ministry of Information to have attracted a lot of negative ethnic stereotyping during the electioneering period. The two pages attracted a large following that the researcher found to have similar characteristics, the former having close to 59 000 likes and the latter close to 29 000 likes.

The researcher also sampled texts from pages of renowned bloggers whom the researcher labeled as BX and BY. The four sources were considered relevant enough because one page could generate large amounts of data.

Target Population

The researcher focused on fourteen posts and thirty nine comments from CORD EFFECT, Uhuruto 2013 and blogger BX and BY's Facebook pages. After careful scrutiny, it was found out that the foregoing pages had a homogeneous following that propagated the same negative stereotyping content and thus the four pages were deemed sufficiently appropriate for analysis of the fourteen selected Facebook posts. The fourteen posts were considered manageable and as such provided enough data for analysis. The researcher captured screenshots of the content that was analyzed and stored them in a folder on a hard drive of a computer. This ensured easy storage and retrieval of data whenever needed because it was not guaranteed that the pages were permanent on the internet in the event that they were shut down.

Sampling Procedure

Purposive or judgmental sampling was used in the selection of these pages. The primary consideration in purposive sampling is the judgment of the researcher as to who can provide the best information to achieve the objectives of the study, the researcher only goes to those people who in his or her opinion are likely to have the required information and be willing to share it.

Data collection

The study relied on both primary and secondary data which was collected from selected Facebook excerpts, books, journals and magazines. Primarily, data was collected from the four selected Facebook pages while the secondary data was collected from other online sources like journals, books, magazines and blogs. Online discourse that propagated negative ethnic stereotyping was captured by use of highlighting and snipping tool which was eventually analyzed to examine its roots and what form it took. The snips were stored in a folder in the researcher's computer for retrieval during data analysis. The snips contained the highlighted negative ethnic Facebook content propagated by users. Data was collected from, March 4th, the date of elections to the date of swearing in of the President, April 9th, 2013. The study employed thematic content analysis of textual data from purposively selected Facebook pages of CORD Effect, Uhuruto 2013, blogger BX and blogger BY.

Data Organization, Coding Data, Analysis and Interpretation

Before data analysis was done, the Facebook pages were randomly searched and coded for text that was deemed stereotypic and negatively ethnic. The researcher created folders that were labeled as containing Facebook posts demonstrating linguistic features, argumentative patterns and thematic concerns. With regard to linguistic features Facebook posts and comments were analyzed for emotive catch phrases, rhetorical questions and sentence topicalization. Under the same heading, posts were also analyzed for typographical layout and visual aids in form of photos. The analyzed data was taken from CORD EFFECT, Uhuruto 2013, blogger BX and BY's Facebook pages. Facebook posts were analyzed for linguistic features that demonstrated negative ethnic stereotyping. Data was analyzed for linguistic features, visual features and typographical layout. The posts and messages used as illustrations in this chapter were numbered as excerpt 1-14 while responses to posts were numbered as R1-R25 and replies to the responses as RR1-RR4 in the main sections. This was done to avoid constantly referring back to previous sections to read the posts and messages, because some of the posts were used more than once to illustrate different objectives. The comments, reactions and responses to the posts were denoted using "R" to show a reaction by a different author to an original post whilst "RR" stood for a response that was made in reply to "R", the direct respondent of the post. The texts were reproduced in the exact form and structure they appeared on the actual pages and a translation given to the texts that appeared in other languages like Kiswahili, Dholuo, Gikuyu, Kenyan slang and short forms. The researcher found it necessary to crop out the names and photos of the bloggers and Facebook users whose posts and comments were used in the study due to ethical considerations. After carrying out an in-depth examination of the linguistic features that were evident in propagating negative ethnicity, the study closely examined features that were also related to online posts as a whole. This was done by examining the surface features that were significant in creating a descriptive background for analyzing the texts. The surface features in this case referred to the visual layout that accompanied the texts which helped in adding to the meaning of the texts

FINDINGS: It was found out that Facebook users used both strong and concealed rhetorical political content, which was negatively coined to evoke ethnic feelings. This study identified the use of textual linguistic features such as emotive catch phrases, rhetorical questions, ellipses and sentence topicalization. The tenets of the taxonomy of stereotyping model were used to analyze post, comments and responses for ethnic stereotypes.

Emotive Catch Phrases:- The study found that emotive catch phrases were used extensively by social media users in their posts. This involved the use of powerful and thought provoking words or key phrases. The aim was to catch the reader's attention by use of emotive adjectives. In excerpt 1, a blogger's statement was found to be emotive, it read: "Walking the streets of Nairobi, you get a feeling that the whole country is mourning. The mood is not jovial. Silence is not PEACE."

Taking Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya to be representative of the whole country, the above excerpt whips emotion rather than reason when the author injects the feeling of sadness. The post is made after Uhuru Kenyatta is confirmed as president by the Supreme Court. By painting the country in a somber mood, the tone of the post seems to be disappointed by the outcome of the events thus the intention is to influence the emotional feeling of the Cord supporters. The sad feeling was evoked to divide political rivals and set rationale and prepare a stage for ethnic abuses. Although the message lacked any speech acts of offense and insult, it took the form of negative rhetoric. The phrase "Silence is not PEACE" subtly shows the conscious effort on the part of the speaker to shape the reader's perception accordingly. In this case the author's aim is to rally those who share his view behind the negative evaluation that there would be no "peace" because they feel the election was bungled. The message appears propagandist in nature as it appeals to fear by instilling anxiety in the general population. The blogger captures a somber mood that speaks of the disappointment of a lost election by the Cord coalition. This message is intended to build support for the agitation of a fresh presidential election. The political tension gains momentum when the blogger uses a declarative statement to end the post which reminds us that in the absence of peace there is war. The negation of peace calls for a strong emotional reaction for it reminds the audience that the silence has to be broken by some form of action that would destabilize peace. This brings into memory of the postelection violence of 2007-2008. The above post triggered reactions that were passionate as seen below;

U r the only one mourning. We are jubilated in these streets of Nairobi (R2)

N how comes the only people complaining are those whose names start with letter O, the wrong genes of hatred...(R3)

Haiya akina O and group proceed to uproot railway u forgot uko kibera, how come no one is crying/wailing rolling down for RAO unlike last time???I think his supporters are fed up (R4)

The post triggered some comments that were stereotypic. Comment R (1) states that, "*Raundi hii I hope there will be no jiggers in central province and for your information I can never marry a kikuyu woman coz its like sleeping with a dead log maliza nifunike na baridi kama barafu kuoga mashida phew*" (This time round I hope there will be no jiggers in Central Province and for your information I can never marry a Gikuyu woman because it is like sleeping with a dead log you finish and cover her cold like ice and bathing is a challenge). This invokes a hetero-stereotype whereby the author regards central Kenya, inhabited by the Gikuyu as infested with jiggers. This common stereotype that emerged after news reports of jiggers' outbreak in Central Kenya paints the Gikuyu as impoverished and leading unhealthy lives. The author sarcastically states that he hopes that the presidency will help the Gikuyu to alleviate these problems. He further invokes another ethnic stereotype that disparages the physical sexuality and cleanliness of the Gikuyu woman by stating that sleeping with a Gikuyu woman is like lying with a dead log. The comment implies that she is cold and lacks the responsive nature of a human being during sexual intercourse. The author also implies that the Gikuyu woman does not observe body cleanliness. The response in R2 is dismissive of the author by asserting to him that "he is the only one mourning" while R3 and R4 demonstrate a hetero-stereotype that considers the Luo as having names that start with letter 'O'. The author points to a histo-political rivalry that has generated "hate" by the Luo for the Gikuyu, for they feel that the Gikuyu have twice snatched the presidency from them unfairly in 2007 and in 2013. R4 alludes to the case of 2007 in which the Luo in Kibera directed their disappointment by uprooting the railway after Odinga lost the presidential elections to Mwai Kibaki amid rigging claims. From the foregoing texts, it can be deduced that ethnic stereotyping has created some deep sutures and mutual suspicion along ethnic lines which are akin to political affiliations which reveal hardened attitudes and deep seated ethnic rivalry (Luoch, 2016).

Rhetorical Questions

The findings of the research revealed that rhetorical questions were used to inject a strong political mindset and that politics in Kenya is shaped along ethnic lines. From excerpt 2 an author posts that:

Who doesn't know the reality Kenya is not one?

You cant push that under the carpet in the pretext of that "MOVING ON" and "NATIONAL UNITY"

A united country does not have all security chiefs from one community.

A united country does not have people who influence IEBC process and influence judiciary systems.

As outlined in excerpt 2 above, the typographical layout invites a reader to the page. The opening sentence relays a rhetorical question which sets the rationale of creating emphasis on certain political issues.

The blogger implies that there is disunity along tribal lines amongst Kenyans stemming from the skewed public appointments by the government. This passes a challenge to the process of national cohesion whereby national unity is portrayed as elusive and presents the country as fragmented along ethnic lines, a recipe for political chaos. There is an element of tribalism being raised by the author who seems to suggest that the Kibaki government appointed all security chiefs from the Gikuyu community and further insinuates that they had every intention of influencing the political outcome of the presidential election by compromising the IEBC and judicial systems. The rhetoric in this post pushes forward the narrative of ethnicity and animosity along tribal affiliations. The author stresses further that all security chiefs in the country hail from the same community, and that a united country should not compromise the independence of both the electoral commission and the judiciary. In other words, the author was discrediting the presidential results and was further questioning the verdict of the petition that had followed. The argument raised ethnic temperatures and hatred among the ethnic group of President Kenyatta who felt aggrieved by the narrative being formulated by the blogger. On the other hand, the Cord followers and sympathizers of the prime petitioner, Raila Odinga felt that the presidential victory was snatched from them. The foregoing was likely to beget ethnic animosity between the two political factions. The post attracted comments that degenerated into tribal accusations as seen in one of the responses below.

Blogger BY is an enemy of peace and stability in Kenya. He reasons like a Luo who has never left his village in Uyoma. Who does not know the pm office was only populated by Luos? Before you call others tribalist. Check yourself. (R5)

The response made in R5 addresses blogger BY and shows a hetero-stereotype that assumes the Luo as being backward. The author uses a simile to liken the blogger to a Luo who has never left the village. The rhetorical question is a counter accusation to the author's claim by stating that during the Kibaki and Raila's coalition government, Raila was also guilty of being tribal by appointing the Luo only in his former Prime minister's office. Ilie (1994:142) argues that rhetorical questions can be used as an effective persuasive strategy, especially in political speeches. The narrative being created here is that Raila is ever crying foul over bungled presidential elections yet he has always partly benefited from the same political system he lashes at. The persuasion employed in the comment is meant to fall on the Jubilee supports to rubbish any advancements and efforts by Raila Odinga to ascend to power.

Sentence Topicalization

Topicalization refers to foregrounding certain pieces of information as grammatical subjects of a sentence. In choosing what to put in the subject position or topic position, the writer of a post creates a biased political perspective that influences the reader's perception. The findings of the research revealed that sentence topicalization was mainly used by bloggers to create attention to certain elements. As outlined in Excerpt 3, a blogger posts that; *Our petition is the only one that has won...* This text illustrates the foregrounding of the pronoun, "our", as a subject of the sentence. The blogger either by design or by default injects the notion of dichotomy which forms the basis of division and inequality around the concept of "our" and "their." By quoting the "win" and further use of the ellipsis at the end of the sentence the blogger paints the opposing group which is CORD, as losers. This statement is in reference to the ruling of the Supreme Court that upheld the election victory of Uhuru Kenyatta as the country's president on 30th of March after Raila Odinga filed a petition alleging that the election had been rigged. The above statement opens up the stage that pits the Jubilee supporters against the Cord supporters. The author openly dichotomises the victory and injects a sense of political superiority. The jubilee camp which largely constituted of the Gikuyu and kalenjin voting blocs was declared as the winner in the elections thus elevating them above the other ethnicities. Owing to the fact that Uhuru Kenyatta was a Gikuyu, gave the Gikuyu a sense of pride because one of their "own" was president. This advanced an attributed stereotype which has it that the Gikuyu think that they are politically superior to other tribes. This is attributed to the fact that out of the four Presidents that Kenya has had, three of them have hailed from the Gikuyu tribe. Although the text may have had a divisive political undertone, the responses made were largely constructed in a resigned tone that was devoid of any serious political rhetoric because it was at a time when the Supreme Court had made a ruling that is final and binding and could not be contested further. *Lets now get back to work n build our nation we have no losers Kenya has won n amazed the world.* (R6)

It was found out that the above response was representative of how the majority of the Kenyans felt after the ruling. The high emotions, political and ethnic division that had played about on Facebook was becoming dilute. The author echoes that there was need to get back to work, unite and build the country for the rest of the world was closely watching that a repeat of the post election violence that took place after the 2007 presidential elections does not recur.

Analysis of Photos

A photo by CORD Effect presented in Excerpt 4, shows Raila Odinga smiling. The photo appears to be endearing to the audience. It is accompanied by the caption, "*Ready to change this country*". The technique

used to produce the image has been aesthetically engineered to have an affective impact on the audience who are moved by the ‘feel’ of the image. The photo is superimposed on a background that speaks of the party’s colors thus quietly presenting ‘CORD’ to the users making them unconsciously embrace the party as a whole. The post manages to subtly attract comments that are sympathetic of Odinga, the timing is deliberate as it is during that period that Kenyans are waiting for the supreme court to make a ruling on the petition that Odinga filed challenging the announcement of Uhuru Kenyatta as the president-elect. Following the photo is a sample of the comments and the researcher found out that most of the comments were pro-Odinga and therefore the post achieved its intention of promoting Odinga and stirring passion for him as envisaged in the comments.

I am ready too! (R7) To change this country RAO yes (R8)

Wen I see this picture, I feel betrayed in my own country, RAO U RE MA PRESIDENT (R9)

The comments appear to be an “echoing” reference to the post as a whole with the discourse being pro- Odinga. The authors in R7, R8 and R9 are in total support of Odinga as the wait for the outcome of the Supreme Court’s ruling take an anticipatory toll on the country. This is seen through their reference of Raila Odinga through the fond name “RAO.” Negative stereotyping was less experienced during this time owing to the fact that all the parties both friendly and foe were solely focused on the case that was on going.

In excerpt 5 a photo shows Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto the leaders of the Jubilee Alliance party. It captures them leaning towards each other conversing. The caption, “Best friends,” has been used by the author to capture the photo, a phrase that is formulated in a bid to portray their union as formidable. A well known political narrative has it that Uhuru and Ruto merged as a result of being indicted at the ICC for criminal charges leveled against them during the 2007 Kenyan postelection violence (Lynch 2013.) The photo was posted in March, 5th 2013, when Kenyans were still waiting for the Supremes’ court ruling two weeks later. The photo is therefore timely and intended to inculcate confidence and persuade Jubilee’s supporters that the union was going to withstand political storms. It attracted comments that were largely supportive of the coalition.

Love this (R10)

God bless you forever (R11)

Ur friendship is short lived (R12)

That is according to O names... (R13)

I admire ur friendship (R14)

With regard to responses, R10, R11, R13 and R14, it is a representation of the general feeling of that page during that time. The responses sampled indicated that most supporters of the Jubilee coalition were feeling confident that the coalition would win the petition. One of the dissent responses R12 referred to the friendship as “short lived” This was followed by a reply from another user R13 who commented that his views were “according to O names” a hetero-stereotype that popped up severally and which was used by the Gikuyu to refer to the Luo ethnicity with hate.

Blogger BY posts an image showing the map of Kenya mounted on a cross and massively bleeding as seen in excerpt 6. The image is posted on April 1st 2013 after the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Uhuru Kenyatta and upheld his victory as the president-elect on 30th March 2013. The author with a massive following seemingly launches a fierce attack on the Supreme Court with the image. This made the Cord fraternity who had anticipated a call for a re-run of the presidential elections in light of the evidence they presented, to feel that justice had not been served well by the Supreme Court. The image is accompanied by the caption, “The Supreme Court crucified Kenya.” This is a generalization that is thinly veiled and meant to whip up strong emotions for people to agitate for justice. In this case justice can only be served by demonstrations in the streets. The image serves as a strong element of allusion. Allusion is a linguistic device that an author uses to imply or make an indirect reference to a person, event or circumstance from an external context that is known to the audience. The image alludes to the crucifixion of Jesus. It is strongly emotive in the sense that CORD feels betrayed by the Supreme Court’s ruling. The image becomes sensational when it shows Kenya crying blood and thus implies that all Kenyans have been betrayed by the ruling. The image inundates the environment with a somber mood that can build up into tension in the mass audience that identifies with Odinga. The intention is to change the audience sympathy towards Odinga thus it can raise tension.

From the responses sampled by the researcher, it was found out that as much as part of the political players, especially the Cord coalition and its followers felt they were aggrieved; the will for physical and violent action was less experienced.

... it did bcoz the judges dint rule in cords favor wen will some pple grow up he country does not revolve arnd Raila I voted for Uhuru n am happy for him but I need my luu neighbour more than uhuru because if I happen to fall sick in the middle of the nite it is tha neighbor who will rush me to hosi n vice versa cmon people be real coz reality is mo darker we need u u need u (R15).

Wah! Post election violence just got digital. Thank God the people throwing insults and threats here are cowards. Vita ikianza wataingiachini ya kitanda. Thank God mafala wa machete hawako fb so they wont read this shit (R16).

The response in R15 captures a Jubilee sympathizer who seems to offer a gesture of conciliation and goodwill. This author is a representation of those voices that came out in a reconciliation tone and had wished to see peace prevail for the country to move on. She suggests that Kenyan politics should not revolve around Raila and seems to touch on the sore spot of ethnicity when she asserts that in times of need and sickness she would need her Luo neighbor to rush her to hospital and vice versa thereby encouraging national unity. The incitement that was laced with emotive rhetoric was picked up by R16 who observed that “post election violence had gone digital” as a flashback to the physical post election violence that took place in 2007/2008. This was in response to the negative ethnic stereotyping and insults that were being exchanged by ethno-political rivals on Facebook. The author stated in Kiswahili that the machete wielding people were not subscribed to Facebook which meant that the chances of physical violence were minimal due to the fact that the medium and content that was propagating ethnic negativity was only open to a few people. This demonstrates that Facebook was considered an elitist form of media that was not available to many.

A photo of a young Uhuru Kenyatta is posted in excerpt 7 showing him seated beside his father the first president of Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta. Looking on while standing, are Daniel Moi and Mwai Kibaki who subsequently became the second and third presidents of Kenya respectively. A popular blogger captions the photo with a mild message that confirms Uhuru Kenyatta as the designate president. His post reads “...*One of those rare Photos-Kenya’s four presidents in one room...*” the photo is indeed seen as a foreshadow that speaks volumes of the eventual confirmation of Uhuru Kenyatta as president. Though not much can be alluded to the photo, a certain specific message has already been conveyed given that the photo and the commentaries came to the fore during the elections despite the same being shot decades ago, Kenyans regardless of their ethnic and political affiliations, were expected to acknowledge, Uhuru Kenyatta as the fourth president of the Republic of Kenya. This research found out that most of the photos that appeared had different functions. They were either authored to whip support for the two major political party coalitions and their presidential candidates or stir up emotions to advocate for a certain political action. Most of the sampled photos appeared after the date of the election and most comments were found to be less stereotypic.

Use of Punctuation

This research found out that the major punctuation mark that was emphasized was the exclamation mark as outlined in excerpt 8 as follows. “*Ati Ruto has been reduced to ‘kuja usalimie wageni na uwaambie jina yako.’LMAO!!!*” This post was a form of satire supposedly leveled at Mr. Ruto. It was meant to have an emotional appeal to members of the same ideological bloc. The post demeans William Ruto, the deputy president and the co-leader of the jubilee coalition. Most probably the author has picked up a comment from Uhuru Kenyatta, the president, and uses it to diminish Ruto. The author implies that Ruto is being demeaned by the casual manner in which he is being called upon to greet guests. ‘*Kuja usalimie wageni na uwaambie jina yako*’ is a directive in Swahili meaning, “come and greet the guests and tell them your name”. As the deputy president, the expectation is that Ruto, should be introduced in a formal manner. The author implies and intends to implant in the mind of the ethnic group that identifies with William Ruto that “one of their own” is being undermined. He portrays somewhat a casual tone which sets an ethnic collision course. The statement is directed at the Jubilee coalition with the intention of antagonizing the Kalenjin and Gikuyu. This is against the backdrop of the 2007/2008 post election violence that saw the two communities fight each other. The post ends with three exclamation marks that visually create a strong impression that Ruto has actually been “reduced” thereby ultimately suggesting that the Kalenjin community is being looked down upon in the Jubilee coalition as the lesser community. The post was meant to incite the readers into ethnic stereotyping. One of the readers, R 17 cautions the author by posting, “*Blogger BY when will you ever stop inciting people?*” This shows that the author’s intention is to invoke ethnic hatred in the audience. The exclamation mark puts a lot of emphasis on the phrase in context. As shown in the above extract, the author sought to tarnish the political alliance between the two political wings of The National Alliance (TNA) and United Republican Party (URP) led by Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto. Both TNA and URP were the major political parties forming Jubilee Alliance during and after 2013 general elections. Though affiliated to neither of the aforesaid political parties, the blogger wades into the murky political waters pitting the two political leaders in Uhuru and Ruto. However, true or untrue the blogger’s political anecdotes would have been, there was the probability of igniting a political discourse riddled with stereotypes and political differentiation amongst the Jubilee followers.

Use of Capitalization

Capitalization may appear as a subtle rhetorical technique but the way a text is ordered may render the capitalization of certain words to achieve an emphatic function. Besides improving the readability of texts, capitalization provides important semantic clues for further text processing tasks by the reader. The main aim of using capitalization is to attract the attention of the reader to a particular text. Excerpt 9 is a post made by CORD EFFECT on March 14, ten days after the elections. “*Kenya: The Nation of “ACCEPT AND MOVE ON”*”

Was a narrative widely bandied by the Jubilee Alliance for having been declared as top in the presidential election. Cord seems to be satirical of the phrase thus, implying that they would not accept the victory pending the outcome from the Supreme Court. Putting the phrase in capital letters underlines the weight of the implied message. The satirical tone was likely to incite the CORD followers against accepting the presidential elections results. The phrase encourages the opposition to raise their voices against the hitherto status quo where Kenyans are depicted as a very forgetful nation with a population that is ever willing to accept whatever elections outcomes are announced by the electoral commission of the day. The above post injects a strong sense of emotional appeal to the readers by mocking the alleged view of the situation through the statement “accept and move on.” This helps the post to achieve its communicative intention an ability which would not be achieved in a more straight forward way. From the responses there is no direct attack on the opponents or the use of insults and negative ethnic stereotyping rather the aim is to rally the Cord supporters to stand firm by not accepting the results of the presidential vote.

I stand my ground am Corded (R18)

bullshit we will not accept (R19)

peace walks hand in hand with justice only then can we “accept and move on”(R 20)

From the sampled responses it was found out that the intended audience stood their ground firmly, rejected the results and were advocating for the filing of a petition for justice at the Supreme Court in the hope that it would translate into a re-run of the presidential election. The call for justice by R (20) was analogous to a call for violence when the author insinuated that “peace walks hand in hand with Justice.” R (19) is solidly behind the call by vowing to stand firm with Cord.

In excerpt 10 the author of UhuRuto 2013 posts figures representing the supposed number of seats won by Jubilee in the Parliamentary, gubernatorial and senatorial elections. The figures posted are 134 parliamentary seats, 26 gubernatorial and 23 senatorial seats which translate to 44%, 55% and 48% of the quoted seats respectively. This implies that the remaining percentage is to be shared out amongst CORD and the other parties. This information is politically disquieting because it is presented before any official announcement is made and without any credible source. This is meant to set the bar high and show the audience that to achieve the remaining 56%, 45% and 52% respectively would be impossible even for a single party. The message ends emphatically in capital letters stating: “SURELY THIS IS A JUBILEE GOVERNMENT”. This message is meant to be assertive. The preemptive nature of the phrase by Jubilee sympathizers was ultimately confirmed not to be entirely true. This is given the fact that CORD and allied parties won in 24 gubernatorial seats as opposed to 23 of Jubilee and its allied parties.

It is, therefore, imperative to note that certain phrases which carry ethno-political undertones may provoke ethnic emotions between competing political camps which may further instigate violence. In the above example, the figures posted represent an individual’s formulations which get planted in the minds of the voters. This sets a rationale for rejection of the results in the event the announced results contradict the expectations instilled in voters’ mindsets by either party. Nabea (2016) identified hate speech as one of the possible causes of the 2007/2008 PEV in Kenya. He demonstrated that ethnic stereotypes that appear on Facebook during political elections lack objectivity because they represent an individual’s sentiments. Such posts strive to defend and reinforce in-group identities while dismissing and disparaging out-group behavior as a result of flimsy and unfortunate reasons, simply to show that their communities’ politicians are better suited for the office than others.

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The conclusions drawn in respect of linguistic features, argumentation and thematic concerns as relayed through Facebook in tandem with propagation of ethnicity and ethnic differentiation in Kenya. Luoch (2016) argues that the verbal fuel that triggers ethnic hatred and subsequently political violence is hate speech which is inflammable language that exists both offline and online. Additionally he states that hate speech or ethnic stereotyping is a surface expression of deep seated differences created by the biased distribution of national resources in a way that favors some communities and not others. This has created deep sutures characterized by mutual suspicion, deep resentment and rivalry among the different ethnic communities in the national society which has boiled down into volatile ethnic enmity. This research demonstrated that ethnic stereotyping was akin to hate speech which was found to harbor the hardened attitudes and histo-political rivalries between ethnicities and thus the study concluded that ethnic stereotyping was way of reacting to the skewed distribution of national resources, educational and employment opportunities. There is need to address these issues through sustainable efforts that should be directed at reconciliation and restoration of peace. Unfortunately, attempts at redressing the situation have targeted hate speech and not these core causes of conflicts. Oyeniyi (2011) also reiterates that ethnicity is a major cause of violence in Africa. He sees other long

term causes like interstate borders, inter-state military aggression, annexation or intervention, ideological campaigns expansionism; power struggles hostile groups or overpopulation; persecution involving human rights violations or mass movements of refugees, poverty or instability and poor economic performance. Therefore ethnic competition has frequently been offered as the universal causal factor in African political conflicts. This may be because the influence of inflammatory language, dangerous language or hate speech as it has come to be known widely is an emerging phenomenon which has mutated into various forms with the online forms having not been well-established.

The posts and responses that were sourced from some Facebook pages and analyzed were found to be replete with messages that smacked of sheer recklessness and impunity on the part of the users. These messages thrived on the fact that some users might have been hiding under pseudonyms knowing very well that the registration and regulation of online content is still elusive. In view of this, it becomes difficult to track down authors of sinister messages on the internet in order to bring them to book. However, neither can Facebook nor any other media be viewed as reprehensible alone in the instigation of violence, putting into account that historical injustices and other political players contribute to the violence. If all the loopholes that were sighted by the Commissions that were mandated to investigate the root cause of the violence were mended and the irresponsible nature of online media cupped then future electoral processes in Kenya and other emergent and fragile democracies would definitely be more transparent (Nabea, 2016).

The study therefore recommended that: News portals, readers comment, groups and Facebook posts used to disseminate hate speech should be reported to the relevant authorities or removed. There is need to popularize and circulate reports related to hate speech on the internet. Citizens and government authorities alike must be equipped with knowledge to recognize hate speech and appreciate the impact it has on society. The NCIC in its role and mandate of promoting harmony, cohesion and peaceful coexistence and integration should facilitate forums and outreach programs for citizens to address the core issues that are manifested through inflammatory and hateful speech online. The relevant authorities must monitor social media which has become a breeding ground for hate speech whereby people are defamed, inflammatory remarks are made and propaganda is continuously spread during the campaign period. The police in Kenya should be taken through social media training and learn how to operate online tools so that monitoring of social media crime is easier. By doing so, the police can get to learn how they can use this platform as a source of their evidence; by for example the use of screen shots so that when an offender deletes a Facebook post the police can still have their evidence.

REFERENCES

- [1] Aristotle (1991). *On Rhetoric. A Theory of Civic Discourse*. G.A. Kennedy (ed.), New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [2] Grisprud, J. (2002). *Understanding Media Culture*. London: Oxford University press
- [3] Ilie, C. (1994). "What Else Can I Tell You? A Pragmatic Study of English Rhetorical Questions as Discursive and Argumentative Acts," Doctoral Dissertation at the University of Stockholm. Stockholm: ALMQVIST & WIKSELL INTERNATIONAL.
- [4] Kaplan, R. (1990). Concluding essays on applied linguistics and discourse analysis. In Kaplan, R. (Ed.). *Annual review of Applied Linguistics*, 11.
- [5] Lando, A. L. & Mwangi, S. WS. (2014). 'Social Media and Cell Phones are Bonding and Vilification tools: Exposing Kenya's 2013 Postelection Violence.' In Musa, B. A. & Willis, J. (Eds.) *From Twitter to Tahrir Square: Ethics in Social Media Communication*. Volume 1. California: ABC-CLIO, pp. 277-300
- [6] Luoch, O. T. (2016). The verbal fuel for Ethnic Hatred and Political Violence in Kenya. In Orwenjo, D. O., Omomondi, O. & Asiru, H. T. *Political Discourse in Emergent, Fragile, and Failed Democracies* (pp. 253-264). Hershey, U.S.A: Information Science Reference.
- [7] Lynch, G. (2013). Electing the 'Alliance of the Accused': The success of the jubilee alliance in Kenya's Rift Valley. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*. 8(1) 93-114
- [8] McQuail, D. (2005). *Mass communication theory* (5th ed.). London :Sage.
- [9] Montgomery, M. (2007). *The Discourse of Broadcast News*. London: Routledge
- [10] Nabea, W. (2009). *Language Policy in Kenya: Negotiation with Hegemony*. Retrieved January 17, 2014, from <http://www.Japanafrikan.com/docs/vol3no1/3.1%20Kenya%20Language%20Policy.pdf>
- [11] Nabea, W. (2016). Ethnic Stereotyping on Kenyan Blog Sites in the 2013 Political elections: A Spurious Harbinger of Ethnic Discord. In Orwenjo, D. O., Omomondi, O. & Asiru, H. T. *Political Discourse in Emergent, Fragile, and Failed Democracies* (pp. 253-264). Hershey, U.S.A: Information Science Reference.
- [12] Oyenyi, A. (2011, February). *Conflict and Violence in Africa: Causes, Sources and Types*. Africa, 28. Policy Brief, F. C. N. 2009. (2009). Kenya: Temporary Ceasefire or Lasting Peace? Retrieved from http://fcn.org/issues/ppdc/kenya_temporary_ceasefire_or_lasting_peace
- [13] Van Eemeren, F. Grootendorst, R. Jackson, S. and Jacobs, S. (2006), "Argumentation," in Van Dijk (ed.), *Discourse as Structure and Process*, London: Sage Publications, 208-229
- [14] Waki, P. (2008). *The Kenyan commission of inquiry into post-election violence*. International Center for Transitional Justice
- [15] Yieke, F.A. (2008). *The Discursive construction of ethnicity: The Case of the 2007 Kenyan General Election*. Egerton University.