## A Pragmatic Analysis of Political Discourse of Facebook Images in Kenya

By

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**Abstract**

Nowadays, everyone can witness the importance of the internet and the role it plays as a means of communication. One of the top social networking websites these days is Facebook. On this social site, users create an online profile by listing personal information and interests, link up with other users, and share updates of the information posted on a daily basis. Facebook and other platforms occupy an essential role in public discourses. However, simply the fact that there is public discussion on political issues says yet nothing about its specific quality. The purpose of the study was to address the gap in empirical research related to a pragmatic analysis of political discourse of face book images in Kenya. The objectives of the study were to explore the use of Facebook in Kenya; to find out functions of cartoons in social media, and to examine the effectiveness of maxims as a backbone of Grice theory. In order to achieve this, the study was anchored on Grice's CI theory. The study employed a mixed method research design in which the main methods used in data collection was specifically descriptive survey; Content analysis of social media networks was surveyed as a method of data collection from online. The study population comprised of 250 selected social media platforms such as tweeter, cartoons and Facebook images from the internet. A sample size comprised of 33 purposively sampled images that focused on five popular SNSs namely, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, and face book. The analytical procedure followed the content analysis of significant textual features and discourse patterns in the online political conversation that shed light on the persuasive use of technologies as discourse strategy. The study thus highlighted the sociality of politics and socio-communicative features of Face book images as campaign tools to mobilize support and woo listeners in an emerging democracy Data was analyzed qualitatively through narratives and descriptions of themes that emerged from political images in face book. Findings revealed that the independent variables of political discourse, language and social linguistic interactions significantly influenced choice of social media images among politicians. Demographic characteristics did not moderate social media choice, personality in political discourse but characteristics such as the messages being conveyed, of position of the politician and the criticisms that the cartoonists seem to be portraying moderated the use of a particular social media network. The study concluded that social network sites usage among Kenyan politicians needs to be harnessed for positive outcomes. Equally, the study made the following recommendations. Firstly, social network sites could be used positively in behavior change campaigns targeting politicians because they have a higher affinity to the public. Secondly, policy makers within government should take keen interest on social interactions among politicians in social network sites in order to forestall negative effects such as recruitment into terror cells or flouting the communicative principles or the four maxims according to Grice. The study suggested further research in rural contexts and on a wider political segment of communication on tweeter. The study is significant to scholars as it adds to knowledge on the pragmatic analysis of political discourse of face book in Kenya.

**Key Words**: Pragmatic, Social media, Images, Face book Users, Political Discourse, Kenya

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## Introduction

This article aims at analyzing Facebook images on political discourse. The continuous use of Facebook users in Kenya to gather information is the motivation for this study. The term 'social media' refers to a set of online tools that are purposely built and dedicated to social interactions and supports communications for web based technologies such as social networks (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, Google +), blogs, microblogs (e.g. Twitter), social sharing services (e.g. You Tube, Flickr, Instagram, Pinterest), text messaging, discussion forums, collaborative editing tools (e.g. Wikis) and virtual words (e.g. Second Life) (Fuduric and Mandell;, 2013). These tools are different in functionality and features for their purposes but they share a common goal allowing users to communicate, interact, edit and share content in social surrounding. However, social media relies on user generated content, which applies to any content that has been created by end users or the general public, unlike traditional media which has content generated by professionals.

Social media has emerged as a significant communication platform in recent times where people across the world share thoughts and ideas and interact with each other via social networking sites. Social media has also been designed for two-way communication mainly as a dialogue for many-to-many interaction unlike traditional media which is solely one-to-many as a broadcast platform. The many-to-many interaction enables larger groups of users on a wide geographical level to produce valuable information instantly while gaining a diverse insight into various categories of information and sharing their perspective through discussion i.e. comments, blogs etc. Founded in 2004, Facebook's mission is 'to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected' (Facebook, 2015).

Facebook was started by Mark Zuckerberg with his college roommates and fellow students at Harvard University. It was initially designed to allow university students to stay connected with college friends and to find dates. Facebook is the most visited social network site on the internet (Alexa, 2015). Cartoonists on Facebook use humor, satire, irony, exaggeration, labelling and analogy to express their public opinion. Streicher (1967) contends that literature is 'satire', while in pictorial art it is 'caricature/ cartoon'. Satire typically deals with demonstration and exposure of human vices or follies in order to scorn or ridicule humans; graphic caricature ridicule pictorially.

In political caricature/ cartoons, the purpose is to ridicule, debunk or expose persons, groups or organizations engaged in political scenario. In this study, political discourse is viewed as political communication. That is, the ways and intentions of message senders to influence the political environment (Denton and Woodward 1998). Political cartoons dates' way back from the ancient Egypt's culture 1360, B.C. where human and animal caricatures were painted on the walls, this genre then travelled to Europe and other parts of the globe (Johnson, 1937; Willet, 1993). The medium of cartoons signifies political discourse climate and future plans both in politicians' personal and in national interest (Edwards, 1995). In the contemporary world, political action is prepared, accompanied, influenced and played by language and cartoon. Political cartoons observed notable importance during civil war, when artist Thomas Nast created some significant images on U.S. politics i.e. Uncle Sam, the Republican elephant and the Democratic donkey (Burns, 2007).

The success of cartoon is in the accurate usage of both verbal and visual ideas. Specifically, cartoon is a weapon in the cartoonist's hands, who can hit whatever he feels like followed by freedom of speech (Morris, 1992). Published cartoons are not ordinary in their nature; they change minds, make beliefs, transform ideas, guide the public both directly and indirectly. Cartoon can also be described as an art but it also needs science to be accurately sketched to be understood (Steuter et al. 2008).

Political cartoons portray voters' perceptions about politicians and vice versa (Lamb, 2004). This article however analyzed how Kenyans use social media to analyze political images. It looked at pragmatics as a means of describing and explaining discourse facts from a linguistic point of view in a principled way. The focus of this study was to use the pragmatic approach particularly the Gricean theory of Conversational Implicature to analyze political discourse on social media. Pragmatics is primarily concerned with the study of utterance meaning or meaning in context and therefore relies on discourse (utterance). The political images which were analyzed in this study, were frequently accompanied by written words and were political satires blatantly aiming at critiquing government of Kenya. All images which were analyzed in this study were reactions to current issues affecting the Kenyan government.

## Statement of the Problem

Different research works have been done in this area of study but research on communication has not been exhausted because there are still misconceptions of ideas between the cartoonist and the reader. This is why some information on the images are understood better than the others. This article tended to find out how the cartoonist message would correspond with their intended meanings. According to Adegbite (2016), pragmatic analysis of language can be broadly understood to be the investigation into that aspect of meaning which is derived not from the formal properties of words and constructions, but from the way in which utterances are used and how they relate to the context in which they are uttered (61qtd in Babajide).

This article portrayed the fact that successful communication is very essential between the writer and the reader. Crystal also supports this idea when he said that 'pragmatic principle arises in the attempt to achieve successful communication in any setting and at any level" (120). Josh Greenberg in his research on Framing and Temporality in Political Cartoons: A Critical Analysis of Visual News Discourse, he states that cartoons are a form of visual news discourse. He mentions that it's through comedic conventions that cartoons seize upon and reinforce common sense enabling the public to classify and interpret in meaningful ways what they see or experience about the world at a given moment. This article draws to the fact that in typical linguistic exchanges, many things are meant without being explicitly said and attempt to explain how this is possible. This article thus sought to explore how intention to communicate subtle issues is embedded in editorial images and how access to the message is given briefly of presentation enhanced by the situational context of the image.

## Research Objectives
i.    To explore the use of Facebook in Kenya.
ii.   To find out functions of cartoons in social media.
iii.  To examine the effectiveness of maxims as a backbone of Grice theory.

**Theoretical Framework**

This article analyzes the use of social media images on political discourse. The article was guided by Grice's CI theory. The theory has been the most favored in recent linguistic studies on cartoons and humour –related discourses like comedies (Abiola, 2011; Khir, 2012; Olowolayemo, 2013). CI is generated as a result of non-observance of conversational maxims in CP (Thomas, 1995). CP asserts that one should make contributions as is required at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which one is engaged (Levinson, 2000). It is illustrated in four sub-principles called maxims. Maxims are defined as unstated assumptions people have during verbal interaction, and each interactant is expected to adhere to the four maxims. When one maxim has been exploited or not observed, an alternative meaning is generated.

The additional meaning is what Grice terms implicature. The four maxims are based on speakers and hearers using the following guidelines to interpret the inferences necessary to make sense of the conversation: Maxim of Quality- states that, contribute only what you know to be true. Do not say false things. Do not say things for which you lack evidence, Maxim of Quantity- states that; make your contribution as informative as is required. Do not say more than is required, Maxim of Relation (Relevance) –on the other hand states that, make your contribution relevant, and lastly Maxim of Manner- i). Avoid obscurity; ii) avoid ambiguity; iii) be brief; iv) be orderly. This has been summarized below.

**Table 1: Conversational Maxims (Grice, 1975:45-46)**

| Category | Super Maxim | Maxims |
|---|---|---|
| Quantity | Try to make your contribution as relevant as possible | Make your contribution as informative as required<br>Do not make your contribution more informative than required |
| Quality | Try to make your contribution one that is true | Do not say what you believe is false<br>Do not say that for which you lack adequate response |
| Relation | Be relevant | |
| Manner | Be perspicuous | Avoid obscurity expression<br>Avoid ambiguity<br>Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity<br>Be orderly |

(Source: Grice 1975:45-46)

**Violation of the Maxims of the Cooperative Principle**

When a maxim is violated, it leads to a breakdown in communication. According to Mey "When speakers do not follow one or more of these rules, then they are inviting hearers to figure out why". A flout occurs when a speaker blatantly fails to observe a maxim, not with any intention of deceiving or misleading, but because he wants the hearer to look for a meaning which is different from, or in addition to, the expressed meaning. This is a deliberate intention of generating an implicature.

## Review of Related Literature

### Analyzing Digital Media Political Texts

A Corpus-based Discourse Methodology both offline and online political discourse aspires to the central goal of using language by political actors or participants to engage in civic affairs and to use power for social goals. Digital media political discourse analysis (DMPDA) examines texts and talk constructed and communicated by political actors using web-based platforms. It suggests a context in which wireless technologies are deployed to initiate and/or reproduce political actions. The major advantage of online political discourse is the power of the new technologies to widen the scope of the participants and the political actions. Bimber (2001) argues that with the advent of the internet, online participation in political process is more open and there is more equality in political participation. Tolbert &McNeal (2003) equally observe that the internet is quick and up to date and it provides a lot of information necessary to participate in civic life and public discussion. West (2004) provides the civic engagement dimension by highlighting the functions of the internet in democracy as an interactive medium that is capable of strengthening the workings of direct democracy and improving relations between citizens, politicians, and their intermediaries through processes like e-government.

### Uses of Facebook in Kenya

Since the turn of this millennium, the Internet and social media networks have been opening up new opportunities to energize political participation and civic engagement in advanced and emerging democracies. This new mode of virtual political interaction is creating a new space for accelerated engagements between politicians and citizens in most democratic cultures across the globe. They are particularly effective in encouraging more direct channels of communication between politicians and citizens thereby reducing status and communication gaps. Cab (2017) observes that the increasing use of social media by political parties, advocacy groups and general citizens has provided a new environment for communication and interaction. Scholars (e.g., Zappavigna 2013; Opeibi 2015) now believe that these new media technologies have now made several people across temporal, spatial, cultural and political boundaries more interconnected. Facebook is a type of social media which is a web-based tool that allows users to create and share content and information online.

Facebook is 'social' in the sense that it is created in a way that enables users to share and communicate with one another (Bohler-Muller & Merwe, 2011). Facebook, which was one of the first social media tools of its kind, was launched in 2004 and today has over 600 million users worldwide (Bohler-Muller & Merwe, 2011). Facebook is a free social networking website that allows users to add friends, send messages; post updates, share photographs, links and videos, and participate in groups. The total number of Facebook users in the world is 1, 886 560, with the largest user age group being between the ages of 25 – 34. Kenya ranks number 64 globally in the ranking of Facebook use by country, and number seven in Africa.

### Functions of Cartoons

Historically, the term 'cartoon' is derived from the Italian word 'cartone' meaning paper. Cartoon was used by painters for preliminary drawings on paper which were then transferred either through tracing or punching on to a surface which could be a ceiling or a wall. Pictorial form of communication can be said to have existed as long as man himself. Cartoons are described as visual communication images that contain pragmatic meaning most often satire in nature while entertaining the reader. Readers are most often at the mercy of the frame

pictures, thus missing the main message/ story that the cartoon contains. Ages and Bolieve (1993) state that cartoons perform the following functions. First, cartoons inform readers about what is happening in the community, country or world as well as announce what possible events are likely to occur. Cartoons also entertain its readers as they are known to be satirical in nature. Cartoons are one of the most effective means of communication we have. Does this sound far-fetched? It isn't. Here we will look at just why cartoons are so effective at communicating with human beings, and why we are hard-wired to take their messages on board ahead of other forms of communication.

## Analysis of Maxims

Grice subdivided his Cooperative Principle into four maxims which were meant to explain how implicature get conveyed. i.e. maxim of quality, quantity, relation and manner. According to Bach (2006, p 5), they are used to explain the relation between utterances and what is understood from them. Bach (2006, p.6) claims that we, as listeners, assume that the speaker is being cooperative by speaking truthfully, informatively, relevantly and appropriately. If an utterance appears not to conform to any of these presumptions, we look for another way of taking it so that it makes sense. Under the Cooperative Principle, there are four maxims; the first one is the maxim of Quality, which states that make your contribution as informative as require, the second maxim is maxim of Quality, states that, do not say what you believe to be false or that which you lack evidence. The third maxim is the maxim of Relation, it states that make your contributions relevant. Lastly is the maxim of manner, which highlights that one should avoid ambiguity, be brief and be orderly. Grice supported the Cooperative Principle with four conversation maxims and he identified four ways in which a discourse may break or fail to fulfill maxims in a conversation: flouting, violating, clashing and opting out.

## Violating Maxims

Grice, according to Zor (2006, p.23), argues that if people fail to observe these maxims during the exchange of conversation, the participant may quietly violate a maxim. This means that the participant does not observe the maxim intentionally for some purpose. Grice (1975, p.320) states that, in the case when one quietly violates a maxim, 'one is liable to mislead' as follows: quiet violation of quality states that, saying something you believe to be fair; the hearer will believe you. While quiet violation of quantity, indicates failing to mention all the relevant information, the hearer would assume that there is nothing more to know. Lastly is the quiet violation of relevance which explains that saying something that is irrelevant, the hearer would assume that it is relevant. The investigation was therefore applied in the analysis of social media images in Kenya. These maxims do not prescribe how one should talk, but explain the listeners' assumptions on instructions for successful communication. Grice thinks that they are better understood as presumptions about utterances, presumptions that listeners count on and speakers use. Grice is concerned with the ways in which we connect our sentences meaningfully in a conversation and the reasons for saying what we do.

## Methodology

This article analyses the use of political images on social media and the research design which was used is qualitative research as this design focuses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experience and the world, they live in. Qualitative research is an umbrella term that covers a variety of styles of social research. The study used the descriptive survey

designs to gather data relating to pragmatic exploration of social media images on interpretation aiming at Facebook users in Kenya: political discourse. A descriptive survey aims at describing the distribution of a phenomenon in a population and thereby establishing the facts. According to Saunders et al., (2003) descriptive survey has a broad appeal for planning, monitoring and evaluating policies. Creswell, (2003) says that any researcher who adopts the descriptive research d design attempts to produce data that is holistic, contextual, descriptive in depth and rich in detail. The target population for this included all social media channels selected from online images in Kenya. In this article, the population was uploaded images from Facebook. The article focused on 10 images.

The article used probability sampling. Probability sampling methods are those in which every item in the entire population has a known chance of being included in the sample. The selected process is chiefly random and independent of the person doing the research. This method produces unbiased estimates with measurable precision that requires relatively little knowledge about the population. This research analyzed social media images on Facebook since Facebook has been identified to be used by many individuals. The chosen images are clearly political images downloaded from a social site which is Facebook. An image with a political caption or just a political image could show how maxims are used or violated. Descriptive content analysis was used in analysis of the data and this was presented in terms of captions and images form online interlocutions. All the cartoon data that were analyzed in this research are reactions to recurring issues affecting discourse and they are believed to have already been reported in other media outlets. The cartoons carry a variety of themes including donor reliant, economy, media protection rights, and general governance. These messages are meant to evoke emotions of anger, fear, desperation and hopelessness in the readers through visual and verbal discourse. The cartoonist tactically crafts his discourse to present same issues in their unique way. The researcher sought to find out what the cartoonist flouts, opts out, and suspends almost all the four maxims with flouting being dominant. However, the analysis sought to identify the affected maxims and the linguistic devices that have been employed and the possible reasons behind.

## Results and Discussion

This study established that face book is gradually becoming one of the social media tools that is influencing how online political communication practices now impact the ways political actors interact with citizens in Kenya. Within the framework of an emerging democracy, the study has provided a fresh understanding of the role of social media tools in enhancing participatory democracy and sociality of political activities. From the survey that was done using the face book images that mostly contained political figures, the results showed that more males than females on contextual information posted more political images. The females tended to post face book images of their own figures which kept being updated with time. The findings also showed that younger males and females were less likely to post political figures as compared to the older ones in all the pictures that were sampled and down loaded. On overall, the political face book images that were sampled included those dealing with corruption, nepotism, tribalism, inequalities and gender biases.

Another finding was that the success of cartoon is in the accurate usage of both verbal and visual ideas while observing the principles of conversation. Specifically, a cartoon is a weapon in the cartoonist's hands, who can hit whatever he feels like followed by freedom of speech. Published cartoons are not ordinary in their nature; they change minds, make beliefs, transform ideas, guide the public both directly and indirectly. Cartoon can also be described as an art but it also needs science to be accurately sketched to be understood. On the second

research question, the finding demonstrated that political leaders in power fail to listen to the voice of the weak and the majority vulerable citizens.

In other words, the portrayal of images implied that every political leader needs to be for the people with the people and by the people inorder to enhance harmony and development for all. On effectiveness of Maxims as a Backbone of Grice Theory, the researcher found that when politicians are faced with political scandals, they tend to use language to weaken the scandal. And make it look trivial to his audience. They try to safeguard their position as well as trying to salvage their public image. All these seemingly could be as a result of avoiding to provide admitance of the accusation. While responding to the isssue of corruption, it was found from the facebook images that the politicians who are acused are the same ones who go asking the government to arrest and persecute any kind of corruption.

The politicians in this case are found to plainly flout the maxim of quality as it is evidenced in the images that were found online. An interesting part is that some of the responses that were presented portrayed one who is the acused but tended to rubbish the acusation saying that, "Arrest all the corrupt government officials, Arrest and prosecute all government officials mention in mega corruption scandals."

The study found that politicians deliberately fail to adhere to the conversational maxims with their interests being beneath such conduct or utterances. It was established that politicians purposely chose not to observe the maxims. In this case, the maxim of relevance which states that the speaker should be as truthful as possible and avoid saying what they belive to false, was found the be flouted severally. This finding therefore clearly revealed that the maxim of relevance was dominantly violated by the politician. It can genrally be argued that responses from most politicians seemingly had a glimpse of uniqness as they are characterised by non-explicitness caused by the indirectness of responses they largely employ such as sayings, implicatures and politness.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

Based on the summary and conclusions made from the findings, the study therefore recommended that with increased interactive political activities and civic engagement via online platforms, web-based political activities hold a lot of promise for the development of a strong participatory democracy in Kenya. The study equally recommends the use of social media as a more creative platform for language innovations among Kenyan internet users. Focusing on the position of some scholars that new media technologies are increasingly influencing language use and discourse features due to "specific technological features now associated with the production of texts within social media". The study recommends that users become more aware of the interlocutors and the principals of conversation so that the maxims are not flouted by politicians in bid to perpetuate their own agendas and ideologies. Face book as a social media should be used by politicians moderately for the purpose of education the public rather than their own selfish ends.

Cartoonist are reminded to portray the political situations in the nation and include information that enlightens the nation on the vices and what politicians should do to find solutions to issues facing them politically. From the recommendations made, the study suggested future research to be conducted on the effects of face book use on student participation in educational programmes in secondary schools in Kenya. The study also felt that a study could be done on the Contribution of Information and Communication Technologies to Local Governance in among Kenyan politicians and finally a study could also look at language and Discourse in Social Media: New Challenges and Approaches.

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