
Linguistic Features in Post Handshake Speeches of President Uhuru Kenyatta and the Former Prime Minister Raila Odinga in Kenya

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Abstract. Political discourse is one of language domains that has attracted the interests of researchers for a long while. This is because political discourse is a complex human activity that deserves critical study particularly because of its central place in the organization and management of society. The political system in Kenya is prone to conflicts and show of power that is usually common during campaigns. This study investigates linguistics features of selected political speeches of President Uhuru and Honourable Raila Odinga in Kenya after the handshake on 9th March 2018 as pieces of discourse through the framework of critical discourse analysis as propounded by Fairclough (1989, 1993, and 1995). The research design for the study was descriptive research design. A sample size of 20 speeches was selected using the down sampling technique. The study was a desktop research and therefore the method of collecting data was through a checklist. The analysis of linguistic features of speech acts revealed that leaders in post handshake speeches use language uniquely to construct a certain ideology. The findings of the study demonstrate how lexical items, textual features, modality and use of rhetoric questions were used as a form persuasive process to represent the idea of handshake and building bridges initiatives.

Key words: political discourse, linguistic features, handshake, building bridges initiatives, critical discourse analysis

Introduction

Political discourse is a complex human activity that deserves critical study particularly because of its central place in the organization and management of society (van Dijk, 1997, Fairclough 2000; Fairclough, 2002). Political language deals with the use of power to organize people's mind and opinion (Beard, 2000). It is an instrument used to control the society in general. Political speech can be seen as a means of establishing and maintaining social relationships, expressing feelings, and selling ideas, policies, and political projects in any society (Chilton, 2004). Klebanov, Diermeier, and Beigman (2008) define a political speech as the primary means of influencing others, using rhetoric to persuade, excite, and claim leadership.

The language of political discourse is laced with structures that are seldom exclusive, but typical and effective discourse in political contexts, but certainly, they do have preferred structures and strategies that are functional in the adequate accomplishment of political actions in political contexts. Political discourse is not only about stating public propositions but about politics. Thus, political discourse is about doing things with words which are the speech acts. Words are used to affect the political body. Lexical items may not only be selected because of official criteria of decorum but also because they effectively emphasize political attitudes and opinions, manipulate public opinion, manufacture political consent, or legitimate political power.

According to Chilton (2004), political discourse is identified by its actors or authors, viz., politicians. The political process thus may include groups and individuals as well as organizations and institutions. van Dijk (1997) argues that to conduct a critical analysis of

political discourse such as political speeches, the analyst has to take into consideration three main components: (1) political actors or authors, (2) the assumed recipients of the political speech, and (3) political speech itself. This then implies that political discourse includes various recipients in political communicative events. Therefore, a framework that is important in the study of political discourse is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). According to Fairclough (1993), CDA mainly focuses on the way certain ideologies are used and attitudes are produced, disseminated, inculcated and naturalized through discourse.

Some studies in discourse analysis that reveal political discourse include Bullock's (2003) study on rhetorical strategies employed by President Bush as means of persuasion for the prosecution of the Iraqi's war and to justify America's interest in prosecuting the war. Skoniecki and College (2004) study of President Ronald Reagan's show the effectiveness of Reagan's persuasive use of language in facilitating the opening of the Berlin wall. Rudyk (2007) study on power relations in Bush's union speech reveals levels of manipulation in semantic, syntactic and pragmatics. Rudyk's study provides necessary information on the linguistic structure of political structure. The current study however goes beyond the level of the sentences and explores the discourse ideologies of political speeches. Maireder and Ausserhofer (2012) analyzed political discourse on twitter. They described this discourse using three perspectives; (1) networking topics, (2) networking media objects and (3) networking actors. They tried to connect those perspectives in order to understand how twitter can be used to coerce and influence voters to vote in a particular pattern. This study was beneficial in enabling us to see political dialogues taking place on social media.

In Kenya some studies on political discourse includes Achieng's (2007) study that focused on interpretations and implications of political discourse. The findings of this study indicates that politicians are fond of deliberately misleading, misinforming and lying to the public for their own selfish gains. Ogola (2008) and Bichanga's (2010) study on political discourse in Kenya have same findings. The studies show that political leaders' language was laden with linguistic devices such as metaphors and lexical choices and that newspaper discourses manifest the political influence, political impunity and ethnic interest of politicians. Barasa (2014) analyses discursive strategies in Kenya's 2008 post-election consultation discourse. The study reveals that language can play a powerful role in resolving politically related conflicts. Michira (2014) in his paper; language and politics, investigated the 2013 Presidential campaign discourse in Kenya using CDA. The study reveals the usage of the diverse range of rhetorical techniques such as riddles, metaphors and symbols among other devices employed in the Kenyan political discourse during the 2013 campaign periods. Michira's study informs the current study on linguistic features of political discourse.

This paper explores selected political speeches of President Uhuru Kenyatta and the former prime minister, Raila Odinga after the handshake on 9th march, 2018. Kenya as a country has been experiencing several episodes of political violence after every general election. In 2007/2008 there was countrywide violence over the contentious elections being claimed as rigged elections. This political violence has often been referred to as ethnic clashes and occurs after every general election, creates tension and hatred among ethnic communities in the country. This has been caused by political rhetoric which fans hatred and retards smooth running of the government, hence, slows down development in the country. The two political protagonists observed the political tension and decided ease it on 9th March, 2018. Their agreement is popularly known as "the Handshake" and it has resulted in the Building Bridges Initiative (BBI). It is against this background that the paper investigates linguistic features of post handshake speeches with an aim of unearthing how the BBI ideology was created and represented to the citizens. The study therefore has one main quest which is to:

- i. Establish the linguistic features in post handshake speeches of both President Uhuru Kenyatta and the former Prime Minister Raila Odinga.

The study adds knowledge to the theory and practice of the scope Discourse Analysis, and Language and society and that it provides useful insights on educational researchers who have increasingly turned to use Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to answer a set of questions about the relationship between language and society. A study on CDA provides an interface between language and context. Thus, such a study on language use provides learners with knowledge on forms and functions of language.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

This paper is anchored within the framework of CDA as propounded by Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1993, and 1995). CDA appeared in the 1980s as an approach toward the combination of language studies and social theory (Fairclough, 1992) and it stems from a critical theory of language which sees the use of language as a form of social practice. CDA is a branch for Discourse Analysis commonly used for analyzing political spoken and written texts and shows how language can be represented from different point of view. CDA is a kind of relationship between or among ideas, power, language and the ordering of relationship within society. Fairclough (1995) defines CDA as: the kind of discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, (c) relations and processes. CDA investigates how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power.

CDA analyzes the content and social relations in a text, and this way CDA reveals the underlining ideologies and power relations in a context. Content in a given text explains one's experience of the natural or social world (Fairclough, 1989). It is the view that Discourse Analysis (DA) should have a critical dimension (Fowler, 1991; Van Dijk, 1993; 2004). CDA is not a homogenous model, nor a school or a paradigm, but at most a shared perspective on doing linguistics, semiotic or DA. Van Dijk (1993) proposes that CDA's objective is to perceive language use as social practice. It explains how societal power relations are explained and reinforced through language. That is, CDA is the reflection of the writer's ideology and perception of the world, and social relations display the relations of people in a certain context which in the end is a clue to show the power relations between people.

Fairclough and Wodak (1997: 271-80) summarize the main tenets of CDA as follows: CDA addresses social problems, Power relations are discursive, Discourses constitutes society and culture, Discourse does ideological work, Discourse is historical and that the link between text and society is mediated. The first tenet emphasizes that CDA is specifically concerned with critically examining the relationship between language and social meanings. CDA focuses on the relationship between language and meanings, which influence thought and reflect ideological assumptions in discourses such as newspaper headlines, regulations, advertisement (Cf. Widdowson, 1995). In this sense then CDA is related to functional linguistics in two main ways: first by the fact that it rejects the treatment of language systems as autonomous and independent of "use", or the separation of "meaning" from "style". Secondly, it supports Halliday's view of the grammar of language as systems of "options" amongst which speakers make "selection" according to social circumstances (see Fairclough, 2000, 2002).

Another important tenet captured in CDA theory is ideology. According to Widdowson (1995) CDA uncovers implicit ideologies in texts and it is an approach reflecting a certain ideology and voicing an overt political commitment. Van Dijk (2000) notes "if there is one notion often related to ideology, it is that of power" (p.25). Thus, whenever ideology is mentioned the first thing which comes to the mind is power. Power is simply the possession of the ability to shape actions. Since the most outstanding feature of mass communication as printed media is to convey information and interaction between writer and reader, it is not free

from the struggle for influence over any other. That is to say, the exercise of power is highly accomplished through ideology.

CDA inspires critical studies on the role of discourse in the social construction of legitimacy and power relationships related to controversial organizational phenomena (Humphreys & Brown, 2007). The focus is on spoken and written language as crucial parts of the social processes through which different conceptions of corruption are (re)produced and transformed. More so, CDA is a theoretical framework for language in modernity and focuses on the ways in which language works in social life.

In the current paper CDA tenets are applied in the analysis of objective of the linguistic features that were used to represent the handshake and BBI in political speeches. Kress and Hodge (1993) observe that people can be both informed and manipulated by language, and can simply inform and control others. Thus, language is “an instrument of control as well as communication. According to Fairclough (1995) typically discourse analysts examine the discursive and linguistic features of given texts, rather than examining the processes of producing and consuming texts. Thus, to explicate ideological assumptions of discourse, CDA is in cooperated in the analyses of linguistic constructions of the handshake and BBI ideology in selected political speeches of President Uhuru Kenyatta and former Prime Minister Raila Amollo Odinga.

Materials and Method

The study applied descriptive research design (Cf. Mugenda & Mugenda, 2009; Cresswell, 2012). Descriptive analysis is composed of raw data transformed in a form that is easy to comprehend and explain rearranged, organized, and manipulated data that produce descriptive information (Kothari, 2004). Descriptive quantitative method was also used to analyse the frequency of lexical items in the speeches. The study used downsampling procedures to select 20 samples of political speeches made by President Uhuru Kenyatta and the former Prime Minister Raila Amollo Odinga. These texts were selected from You Tube after the famous handshake on 9th March 2018 to June 9th 2020. Only speeches based on the handshake were selected for the study. The study was a desktop research and therefore the method of collecting data was through a checklist. The data procedure included downloading of visual clips onto a laptop. The researcher then watched this downloaded data with a purpose of identifying and describing linguistic features in them and so as to understand their intent of communication. The data collected was analyzed through content analysis with the guide of CDA.

Data Presentation, Discussion and Interpretation

This section focuses on the linguistic features of post handshake speeches to determine how the idea was passed to the citizens. The language of political discourse is meant to be persuasive. Political discourse is embodied in propaganda and rhetoric. Politicians incorporate different linguistic devices in their speeches to persuade the masses. Drawing on Fairclough’s paradigm of CDA, this section examines how specifically chosen words express and reflect the concept of handshake and BBI. The linguistic features are discussed in terms of lexical items, textual features such as allusions, references, quotations and modality and rhetorical questions as used by both president Uhuru and the former Prime Minister Raila Amolo Odinga about the handshake and BBI.

Linguistic Features in Post Handshake Speeches

Lexical items

This section begins by identifying key terms in both the speeches of President Uhuru and former Prime Minister Raila Amollo Odinga. The lexical items were used to define the concept

of handshake and BBI. Table 1 below gives a summary on the key terms that were used in the post handshake speeches.

Table 1. Lexicalization and the concept of handshake and BBI

Lexical Item	Frequency/148
Handshake	7
BBI	5
Agreed	9
Work	3
Unity/United	9
Nation	6
Reconciliation	5
Peace	5
Kenya/Kenyans	42
Promise	2
Ethnicity	7
Violence	3
Shook	4
People	16
Corruption	6
Promise	1
Politics	5
Working	3
Pledge	1
Equity	3
County	6
Total	148

Table 1 above displays the key words employed in post handshake speeches. The frequency of the key words is indicative of the main issues of concern raised by the two leaders as they constructed the idea of BBI to the masses. The linguistic choice of lexical terms such as Kenya/Kenyans, nation, people, peace and unity clearly show the conceptualization of handshake and BBI. The lexical items in Table 1 above portray that the two leaders choose the handshake for the sake of creating peace in the country after the hotly contested elections. This can be demonstrated by the following sentence from President Uhuru Kenyatta's speech:

I pledge to continue working strongly with my brother Raila and indeed with all Kenyans to continue to build a safer, more united, prosperous Kenya with equity for all. In this context, the President Uhuru Kenyatta sees the need for the handshake which amounts to a peaceful county.

The handshake was therefore perceived a necessary step for creation of unity, peace and equity to all Kenyans by the two leaders as shown in the following excerpts from President's speech (1A) and (1B) from Former Prime Minister. Excerpt 1A was when the BBI task force presented report to him at State House:

Excerpt 1A

We are going to use this as an opportunity to heal the wounds and to create an environment that would make *Kenya peaceful* that would make *Kenya* prosper, that would make *all Kenyans feel included*.

Excerpt 1B

We agreed with my brother Uhuru that we can have something to bequeath the future generation with; **a country that is united**. The founding fathers of our nation coined **the Kenyan dream**;

The speakers in excerpt 1 and 2 above show that the main purpose of BBI was to bring Kenyans together as shown by the bolded phrases. The speakers present the handshake and BBI as the solution to the political violence created after every election.

Excerpt 2A

I honestly believe that we have set the path to long term prosperity and stability for our **nation**.

Excerpt 3A

I think we can all **agree**, we don't want to achieve our individual ambitions on the altar of **peace**, prosperity, and stability of the people we wish to lead

Excerpt 2B

We have brought the **handshake** home... We decided that **Kenya** is more important than all of us together... We want to see a **united Kenya**.

Excerpt 3B

We want to see **equal** developments in all parts of Kenya irrespective of tribal affiliation.

In summary, it can be observed that the speakers in the excerpts above used words that portrayed the handshake and BBI as the solution to ethnicity, divisive politics and tension. Fairclough and Wodak (1997) argue that the specific words speakers choose to use convey what such speakers feel about a given phenomenon which either bears a positive or negative connotation, depending on the feelings of the speaker. The lexical items such as agree, peace, reconciliation, Kenyan, Kenyans, equity are meant to persuade and appear appealing to the listeners who should support BBI and the handshake idea.

Textual structure

The text structure was discussed in terms of intertextuality, cohesion, modality and use of rhetorical questions. These are features that reveal text features of political speeches. The first feature that was revealed in the data collected was intertextuality. Intertextuality includes the role of elements like presupposition and implicature (Leeuwen, 1996). The analyzed data reveal the knowledge that both President Uhuru Kenyatta and former Prime Minister have on the country and the problems of the country. According to Genette (1983) intertextuality is defined as "the presence of a text in another text". The data collected revealed three strategies of intertextuality that were used by both president Uhuru Kenyatta and the former Prime Minister Raila Amollo Odinga; allusion, quotation and reference.

Raila Amollo Odinga's speeches were laced with biblical allusion. Allusion is defined as any implicit, indirect or hidden reference and quotation is the exact reproduction of the words said by another person. During the presentation of the speech his speech at Harambee house immediately after the handshake between President Kenyatta and the former Prime Minister Raila Amollo Odinga uses the allusion of the journey to *Canaan* and *Egypt*. In the same speech he considers BBI as a way of crossing *River Jordan*. Thus, the allusions are used in comparison to the ideology of BBI that would bring the long lasting peace to the country. Intertextuality is also reflected in the use of quotations and references. For instance, during the national prayer day Raila Amollo Odinga quoted Nelson Mandela experience after being in jail for 27 years. He also makes reference to South Africa apartheid and how the people of South Africa suffered the greatest injustices in the world. But in spite of that Nelson Mandela decided to shake hands with De-Klerk who defended the system that had put him in prison for 27 years. Raila Amollo Odinga compares himself to Nelson Mandela who shook hands with De-Klerk with an aim of

showing and persuading other leaders and masses about the handshake meant peace and unity which has borne more fruits for the country.

President Uhuru Kenyatta also made a quotation of Abraham Lincoln with an aim of convincing Kenyans on the handshake and BBI as shown below:

Abraham Lincoln said.... "If we could first know where we are, and whether we are tending, we could then better judge what to do, and how to do it."

The second reference that president Uhuru makes corresponds to historical circumstances in Kenya. He reminds the citizens of ethnic divisions by making reference to fight for multipartism in 1992, and the 1st multiparty election to 1997. He also reminds them of how Raila teamed up with Mwai Kibaki against him and President Moi in 2002 as a way of fighting for multipartism. He again reminds them of 2007 where Kenya witnessed the worst cycle of election violence that led to a coalition government was formed with Kibaki as President and honorable Raila as Prime Minister. This reference is made by the president as a way of convincing each and every person on the need for building a peaceful country through BBI. In summary, both the speeches of President Uhuru Kenyatta and former Prime minister reveal the use of intertextuality which was used as a mean of persuading the listeners to embrace the handshake and BBI.

The textual structure of the post handshake speeches were also achieved through cohesion. The speeches collected revealed that cohesion was created through the use of connectives, argumentation and Parallelism. The data collected revealed the use of various connectors such as those that show contrast and for emphasis as shown in excerpt below:

'Universities will continue to drive not only our national technological and industrial development agenda **but** also the advancement of knowledge in all other fields of national endeavour' **And** I take a special note that the graduands here today have great potential to contribute to the advancement of the big 4 agenda. **So** indeed, we are happy that amongst you here today are people that will help to contribute to make Kenya a safer, more secure **and** a prosperous nation, by focusing and helping us build on these four pillars.

Structural parallelism was another strategy that was used to achieve cohesion. Structural parallelism involves the contiguous juxtaposition of syntactically parallel elements such as individual lexical items, phrases, clauses, or sentences, for the purpose of suggesting analogical relationships or comparisons. Structural parallelism is also a rhetorical device used for the purpose of emphasis and foregrounding as shown in the excerpts below:

We have a great country, **Kenya** and we have no other country other than **Kenya**.

And I have said that if I were to die and God asks me where I would want to be born again, I would tell him to take me back to **Kenya**.

All what I am requesting from you every now and then is to embrace unity and togetherness.

The excerpts above are from Odinga's speeches and they all emphasize on the need of having a peaceful country. The speaker achieves cohesion and emphasis through the repetition of the noun **Kenya** and use of a coordinating conjunction **and**.

Modality

Modality is understood as the attitude towards reality in the representation of the speaker. In the data collected modality was created by both President Uhuru and former prime minister by an impressive use of the pronoun we which showed inclusivity as shown in the speech below after the President Kenyatta had met with Raila Odinga on Friday, March 9, 2018.

First and foremost, I have taken great pleasure this morning in welcoming **my** brother Raila to Harambee House. **We** have had an opportunity for an extensive discussion on matters of Kenya and **We** have come to a common understanding, an understanding that this country of Kenya is greater than any one individual... Democracy is not, as has often been said, an end in itself. It is just a process by which the will of the people is heard. But the national good, the national interest must always prevail over those elections. And this is why **me** and **my** brother (Raila) have agreed that starting from today, **we** will begin a process of bringing our people together... So to me, this marks a new beginning for our country, a beginning in which we hope that **we** shall march together as Kenyans and that **we** can differ in terms of political alignments but always remain steadfast and united in matters Kenya.

In the speech above President uses the pronouns *we/I/my* in his speech which adds coloring and makes the speech much richer, and to touch the citizens who were deeply heart by the loss of election. The excerpt below further how inclusivity was achieved through the use of pronouns:

We refuse to allow **our** diversity to kill **our** nation. **We** refuse to be the leaders under whose watch Kenya slid into a failed nation. **We** are all sailing in this one ship. **We** must come together to scoop out the water that has been sipping in or **we** shall capsize... **Our** only option is to come together and scoop out these waters of animosity that we have been pouring into the boat before we all sink.

The above excerpt includes the use of the pronoun *our* to show that the journey of handshake involves each and every Kenyan.

Rhetorical questions

According to Mutz (2006) rhetorical questions refer to the questions which a speaker poses only to gain an effect as opposed to expecting an answer. Mutz further notes that such questions indicate the speaker's line of thought and are used to provoke the hearers to see the speaker's stance and they are important in revealing a speaker's stance or viewpoint. Both President Uhuru and former prime minister used a number of rhetorical questions during the representation of speeches on handshake and BBI which served the role of indicating the speakers' perceptions as shown in the excerpts below:

Do you want politics of bringing people together or what type of politics do you want? Do you want us to continue with divisive politics where blood must be shed? Do you want us to shed blood? Do you want us to shed blood? Our aim therefore is to bring people together and bring development to the people.

The rhetorical questions in the above speech are indicative of the speakers' perception on divisive politics. The rhetorical questions have been used by the speaker to show that divisive politics are responsible for blood shed. Hence, the speaker presents his ideology of handshake and BBI as a solution to unity. Raila Amollo Odinga's rhetorical questions above are used to emphasize reflection or to provoke the listeners to think about the cause of disunity in the county "***Do you want politics of bringing people together or what type of politics do you want? Do you want us to continue with divisive politics where blood must be shed?*** These questions may make the audience to fall into a reverie and they are used by a speaker to introduce a topic later which is the handshake and BBI. It is clear also that the rhetoric questions have been used to make the audience to focus on the topic and thus Railla Amollo Odinga uses them to make an appeal about the handshake and BBI.

President Uhuru also uses rhetorical questions as a strategy to persuade the listeners about BBI as shown below:

Why am I saying these stories? I am just showing you what potential exists in this country if only we could just become visionary leaders and work together in partnership. Why can't we see that future? For every step you take, every leap you make, in technology and development you move from being one thing to another.

The rhetorical question in the above speeches is an indirect act of speech and is addressed directly to the audience. The speaker uses rhetorical question to make his points on handshake rather than to elicit an answer as an answer would be obvious and therefore redundant. President Uhuru uses rhetorical questions to show the need for unity and urges the listeners to think of the future.

Conclusion

The analysis of linguistic features of post handshake speeches revealed that political leaders use language uniquely to construct a certain ideology. The study therefore concludes that language in post handshake speeches was shaped by political factors surrounding the ideology that was to be represented to the citizens. Through the application of CDA the researcher was able to realize the relation between language and ideology. CDA enabled the researcher to reveal how language is used to express ideologies. The study concludes that language is used to express the ideological beliefs of political speakers. The study found that a combination of lexical items and textual features such as intertextuality, references, allusion, quotations and cohesion are key in persuasion process. Moreover, the use of modality and rhetoric questions reveal the political perceptions of the speakers. The study concludes that linguistic features reinforce the various strategies that are used in speeches to influence and persuade the audience. The study also concludes that all the speeches used language that was purposeful. The words served the purpose of persuading, informing and to express the ideology of handshake and BBI. The use of unique language also had an intention of achieving a particular effect on the listeners. The speakers used words that emphasize on the need for unity, peace and for nationhood.

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