

Editorial Cartoon Communication in Political Election Campaign Period: A Case Study of 2013 Kenyan General Elections

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Abstract: Editorial cartoons are a media genre discourse used to express opinions, bring up valuable arguments and function as a running commentary on contemporary social issues. The goal of the genre is to provide information and bring to the readers' notice current crucial issues. Editorial cartoons function as a form of political journalism that presents messages from specific points of view. The subject matter of editorial cartoons is expressed through visual semiotic forms and linguistic forms. This paper aims at unveiling how visual semiotics and linguistic forms are used in newspapers editorials reporting in Kenya to communicate political view points in the run-up to the 2013 Kenyan general elections. The study focuses on two Kenyan mainstream newspapers viz., *The Standard* and *Daily Nation*. Content analysis was used to determine the content of the editorial cartoons produced between 1st January and 3rd March, 2013. A total of 30 out of 91 editorial cartoons that were running commentaries on politics and politicians were analysed. Six out of the 30 editorial cartoon texts analysed are given in this paper for illustration. The thirty formed approximately a third of the total editorial cartoon texts on political issues produced during this period. The findings indicate that mainstream Kenyan newspapers editorial cartoons use mainly narrative representational syntactic patterns to express negative viewpoints about Kenyan politicians and political activities. Editorial cartoonists also use interactive forms of meaning making, mainly distance while compositional meaning is used mainly in form of information value: given and new, salience and framing. This study gives a guide to the readers on possible interpretations of cartoon texts. It therefore creates political awareness thus provides a form of civic education to political cartoon readers.

Keywords: Editorial cartoons, media discourse, visual semiotics, linguistic forms, Kenya.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to illustrate how lexical items and visual semiotics co-occur in editorial cartoons to express political view points. Editorial cartoons constitute a specific genre of political reporting. They are pictorial representations that express political and social issues as well as the parties involved in immediate and condensed manner. Editorial cartoons project specific view points and enlighten readers on issues by exposing wrong practices [1, 2]. They are also used to set social agenda, disseminate information and reorient the public on current issues reflecting social realities of the society at a particular time [3]. The focus of this study is on editorial cartoons produced in 2013 Kenyan general election campaign season.

Studies have been carried out on political cartoons focusing on communicative functions of cartoons, construction of social and political ideologies and the influence of political cartoons on public opinions. Streicher cited by Benoit. W.L., Klyukovski,

A., McHale, J., Airne, D. [4] indicates that visual messages are much more succinct and provide clear summary of events or issues. He posits that visual messages are given preference over conventional media news. According to Streicher, cartoons help audiences to read news and to scan through the meaning of an issue or event especially those audiences who give much preference to visual news and those who have little time. He adds that political cartoons are capable of commenting on social and political issues thus making a distinct medium that contributes abundantly and facilitates effective communication.

Meyer [5] identifies salient communicative functions of humour in cartoons as identification, clarification, differentiation and enforcement. The research in this paper is related to Sani *et al.* [6] which demonstrates that humour is used in cartoons to persuade audiences towards making opinion on contemporary issues in society and unite audiences on particular point of view in terms of important issues of

national interest in order to bring positive change in society.

In his study Duus [7] examined the historical development of Japanese cartoons. His findings indicated that political cartoons were used in Japanese media as a form of political critique, adding that political cartoons were used in Japan as a vehicle for expressing political opinion.

Hogan [23] examined political cynicism in political cartoons and contends that there is a lack of balance in visual comment on politics in political cartoons. Hogan avoided cartoons that merely described politicians and political institutions due to the fact that they are not humorous and satirical. He discovered that although satire is essential, the level at which politicians and politics are negatively depicted will have serious repercussions to democratic societies like political cynicism which will result in high level of abstention from voting and distrust on democratic system and lead audiences to resort to violence, hatred or civil war.

A study by Benoit *et al.* [4] analyzed political cartoons concerning Clinton-Lewinsky affair. The cartoons concentrated on the investigations and trial of President Clinton. The analytical framework used for the analysis was a fantasy theme analysis of political cartoons. They used symbolic convergence theory as it is a tool for assessing rhetorical discourse with emphasis on the visual message that provides basis for the analysis of imaginative language and imagery usually embedded in the cartoons. The analysis demonstrated that political cartoons are complex visual or symbolic discourses which employ rhetorical devices that require rhetorical analysis in order to make sense of the messages and their impact on the public.

Diamond [8] studied cartoons depictions of post September 11 attack in the US. He examined themes of the cartoon representations and found that cartoons are used to reveal a number of frequent themes such as description of events related to 11 September terrorist attack in the US and issues in the aftermath of the attack.

According to Walker [24] political cartoons are used as a powerful weapon for communication of political issues since cartoon messages can easily be absorbed by audience and transmitted in mass circulation. Walker [24] indicates that political cartoons are of social importance because they are used in setting social agenda and providing satirical commentary aimed at transforming social and political societal norms.

Minix [9] explores the nature of conventions of political cartoons. He says that political cartoon depictions exploit a wide range of visual rhetoric such

as humour, blending and exaggeration to communicate social issues in the society. According to his findings, visual rhetoric serves as a persuasive device that political cartoonists employ to convey messages.

A study by El Refaie [10] that incorporated semiotics to investigate the concept of visual metaphor in newspaper cartoons using Australian newspaper cartoons shows that visual metaphors cannot be expressed precisely in formal terms only. Rather, they must be seen as visual representations of metaphorical thoughts or concepts. Taking into consideration the method of analysis, the author clearly demonstrates that visual metaphors are described in terms of the visual mode particularly in newspaper cartoons. He also suggests that visual metaphors are best described in terms of their underlying metaphorical concepts. Thus, cartoons as pictorial representations portray the real-life events and this is the cognitive process through which metaphors convey meanings.

Bergen [11] focused on cognition and culture in the analysis of September 11 political cartoons. He identified cognitive mechanisms as: conceptual blending, conceptual metaphor and cultural models. His findings indicated that cognitive mechanisms play visual roles in reflecting social events by revealing significant similarities in the cartoons through which audiences can easily understand at the moment of such events. Furthermore, they appear to interact in political cartoons much easier than they do in language. Therefore, cognitive mechanisms make cartoon messages more accessible to audiences through clarification of relatively abstract concepts in visible and easily recognizable concrete domain.

Connors [12] examined political cartoons and the popular culture in the 2004 American presidential campaigns. He contends that political cartoons are used as tools for manipulating voters' opinions on the candidates captured in a single cartoon message during the campaign period. This illustrates that political cartoons are unique forms of media messages that have strong impact on the audience in terms of public opinion making. The study demonstrates that political cartoons can be harnessed and monopolized through its specific messages to form powerful and elaborate campaign machinery in a period of elections.

Najjar [13] contends that cartoons are essential sites for the construction of people's identity which he refers to as the identity of the self and other. The study demonstrates the influence of the cartoon as a medium of political expression in the Arab world. This study posits that cartoons offer a unique form of social and political commentary specifically to the cartoonist and his society in general. The study vividly portrays self identity by easily depicting identifiable features of Palestinian refugees such as clothing style, related

artifacts, physique as well as mode of behaviour and body images which are quite explicit in representing Palestinian people and their culture.

Townsend, McDonald & Esders [14] found that political cartoons function as a medium representing the response of a particular group over sensitive issues. They explored the nature of political cartoons at a time of major political and social reforms specifically on how political, satirical cartoons illustrated Australia's 'work choices' debate using cartoon images published in mainstream Australian newspapers. Cartoons' content depicted many issues on the newly introduced industrial relation laws in Australia at the time. The outcome of the research indicated that political cartoons formed significant medium through which important debate on industrial reform was presented to Australian workers and the general public.

El Refaie [2] carried out a research on how readers interpret political cartoons. He indicates that in the case of political cartoons, interpretation lie solely on many different kinds of literacy including familiarity with cartoon conventions and the ability to draw conclusions or analogies. The findings of the study suggest that even the highly educated audiences who are to some extent more informed need to put into play a whole range of interpretation strategies such as good analogies of idioms and metaphors as well as other linguistic skills in order to grasp fully the meanings conveyed in the cartoons.

Another study by Tsakona [15] using multimodal theory of humour as an analytical framework to study language and image interaction in cartoons, the researcher indicates that cartoon humour is a complex process that involves different mechanisms of language interplay between verbal and nonverbal devices such as exaggeration, contradiction and metaphor. Unlike what others consider, cartoons are not so easy to grasp. Therefore people need to pay close attention to both verbal and non-verbal details contained in each cartoon.

In El Refaie [16] study where he explored young people's responses to political cartoons published in newspapers, he found that newspaper cartoons are part of multimodal texts because they combine verbal and visual semiotic modes in creating and conveying meaning. The researcher piloted the use of newspaper cartoons as a means for soliciting young people's views concerning the meaning of the cartoons. The findings indicated that the young people's opinions can be influenced through the cartoon's messages and interpreting multimodal texts is often more complex than comprehending verbal texts.

Sani, Ali & Abdullah, [6] in a research aimed at unfolding the nature and function of humour in Nigerian political cartoons used theoretical perspectives of humour as a method of analysis. Their findings were that cartoonists use humour in Nigerian political cartoons to relieve audiences of stressful situations and persuade them towards making opinion on contemporary issues in society. They found that cartoonists manipulate aggressive and affiliative humour styles to construct criticisms pointed to political leaders and comment on current socio-political issues in order to initiate social and political reforms.

Kondowe, Ngwira & Madula [17] analysed Malawi newspaper political cartoons using Grice's Conversational Implicature Theory. Their research was based on how Malawi newspaper political cartoons employ verbal and non verbal features in their portrayal of political leaders. Their focus was on the portrayal of the then president Joyce Banda. Their findings were that Malawi cartoonists often do not adhere to the conversational maxims. They mainly flout the maxim of manner through hedging. They concluded that the cartoonists deliberately provide vague information to indicate precision in order to avoid being judgmental but prompt the readers to generate their own understanding of the president's actions.

The foregoing discussions on studies done on political cartoon genre, gives a basis for this study. From the discussions above, no researcher has carried out a study on Kenyan political cartoons in election campaign season. Furthermore, the present study uses Multimodal Discourse Analysis theory- A linguistic theory to analyse political cartoons. The study lays more emphasis on visual forms in political cartoon representations and takes a linguistic approach to the analysis of political cartoons produced in the mainstream press in Kenya in the run-up to the 2013 general elections in Kenya. The findings of this study may provide civic education to the electorate in any country in the world.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study embraces Multimodal Discourse Analysis [18] in analyzing its data. The term multimodal aims to offer a way of talking about how language and image work together or how image, language and sound are coordinated [19]. Language has a representational function. Speakers of a language use it to encode their experiences of the world thus language conveys a piece of reality-things, events and circumstances. Language encodes what the discourse is about, that is, the topic of communication [20]. According to Kress & Van Leeuwen [18] visual images do have three meanings simultaneously communicated in a visual text. These are representational, interactive and compositional meanings.

Representational meaning (Experiencial)

Representational meaning is conveyed by the abstract or concrete participants (people, places or things) depicted. Kress & Van Leeuwen [18] when discussing representational meaning have identified two kinds of visual syntactic patterns described in terms of their function of relating visual participants to each other in meaningful ways. They identify two ways of expressing representational meaning, that is, narrative representations and conceptual representations.

Narrative structures

Narrative pictures or scenes with pictures are recognized by the presence of a vector which is formed by depicting elements that form an oblique line. Vectors may be formed by bodies, limbs, or tools in action [18]. The vector can be bi-directional, however, the primary goal, the participant to whom or which the action is done, is formed by a more weakly articulated vector. The vectors express doings or happenings kind of relation. The actors or doers of action are the participants from whom or which the action emanates or which the action is directed. When a picture or a scene within a picture has both an actor and a vector it is said to be **transactive**, representing an action taking place between two parties. It is also possible to have pictures or a scene containing only an actor and a vector; in this case the direction of the gaze is a special kind of vector. The eye line, the direction of gaze of represented participants (is so far as it is not directed at the viewer) is a special kind of vector. It creates a reaction rather than an action. Such reactions can again be **transactive** or **non transactive**. It could be that we see both the person/ animal who is looking and the object of his or her gaze (transactive) or only the person looking and not what he/she is looking at (non-transactive) Facial expressions and gestures can then colour in the nature of the reaction as pleased or displeased, differential or defiant and so on.

The concept of narrative visual analysis (action, reaction, transactive, non-transactive) can help interrogate a visual text, help to frame questions such as who are playing the active roles doing or looking and who the passive role of being acted upon and or being looked at in visual texts with certain kinds of participants (e.g. minorities). Who are shown as people who act, who are shown as people who react in visual texts about certain issues?

Conceptual structures

Conceptual patterns represent participants in terms of their more generalized, stable or timeless 'essences'. They do not represent them as doing something but as being something, or meaning something or belonging to some category or having some characteristics or components [21]. These images do not contain vectors, they usually define/analyse/classify people, places or things.

Conceptual structures are of three types. These are classification, symbolic and analytical.

Classification Conceptual structure

Classification conceptual structures bring different people, places or things together in one picture, distributing them symmetrically across the picture space to show that they have something in common, that they belong to the same class [18, 21].

Symbolic Conceptual structures

Symbolic conceptual structures define the meaning or identify a participant. In the symbolic attributive structure the identity or meaning of one participant ("the carrier") is established by another (the symbolic attribute). Symbolic attributes are recognized through salience in the representation-size, position, colour, use of lighting; they are pointed out by means of gestures; they look out of place in the whole; they are conventionally associated with symbolic values [18, 21] A range of props confer symbolic meaning or attributes on the represented participants e.g. owning a car, motorbike as potent cultural symbols of male virility [18, 21].

Analytical Conceptual structure

Analytical conceptual structures relate participants to each other in terms of a part-whole structure. An entity is defined by showing how it is made up out of which parts. Analytical structures normally have two key participants; 'the carrier' (the whole) and any number of 'possessive attributes' (the parts).

Interactive meaning (interpersonal)

Interactive meaning shows images that create particular relations between viewers and the world inside the picture frame. In this way they interact with the viewers and suggest the attitude viewers should take towards what is being represented. Three factors play a key role in the realization of these meanings: distance, contact and point of view. Together they can create complex and subtle relations between the represented and the viewers [18, 21]. Interactive/interpersonal meaning has three components: contact, distance and point of view.

Contact

Contact is a component of interactive meaning that shows people who from inside the picture frame, look directly at the viewer. They make contact with the viewer; establish an imaginary relation with them. They are 'demand' pictures-the people in the picture symbolically demand something from the viewer. Facial expression and the gesture then fill exactly what they demand. They can demand deference by unblinkingly looking down on the viewers, or by pleadingly looking up at them, they can address viewers with an ingratiating smile or unsettle them with a

penetrating stare. Without the imaginary contact we look quite differently at the people inside the picture frame. We observe them in a detached way and impersonally as though they are specimens in a display case. Such pictures are ‘offers’. They ‘offer’ information. They are to be observed [18, 21].

Distance

Distance is another subtype of interactive meaning and shows how images can bring people, places and things close to the viewer or keep them at arm’s length. In every day interaction the norms of social relations determine the distance we keep from each other. To see people close up is to see them in the way we would normally only see people who we are more or less intimately acquainted. Every detail of their face and their expression is visible. They reveal their individuality and their personality. To see people from a distance is to see them in the way we would normally only see strangers, people whose lives do not touch on ours. We see them in outline, impersonally, as types rather than individuals [18, 21].

People we see represented in close ups are represented as though they belong or should belong to ‘our group’ and that the viewer is addressed as a certain kind of person. A close up (head and shoulders or less) suggests an intimate/personal relationship. A medium shot (cutting off the human figures somewhere between the waist and the knees) suggest a social relationship and a ‘long shot’ (showing the full figure, whether just fitting in the frame or even more distant) suggests an impersonal relationship between the viewer and the represented [18, 21].

Point of view

Point of view, an interactive meaning resource depicts people, places and things from above or below or at eye level and from the front, the side or the back. Point of view creates a meaning potential such that vertical angles express relations of symbolic power; if one looks down on something, they look at it from a position of symbolic power; if one looks up at something, that something has some kind of symbolic power over them. At eye –level there is a relation of symbolic equality. Horizontal angle expresses involvement or detachment from what is represented. Frontality on the other hand allows the creation of maximum involvement. This means that the viewer is directly confronted with what is in the picture. If something is depicted from the sides, the viewer literally and figuratively remains on the sidelines.

Compositional meaning (Textual)

This component of multimodal discourse analysis has four components, namely: information value, Framing, Salience and Modality.

Information value

According to Kress & Van Leeuwen [18], Left-right placement creates a ‘given- new’ structure. The elements placed on the left are presented as ‘given’ the elements placed on the right as ‘new’. For something to be ‘given’ means that it is presented as something the viewer or reader already knows as a familiar and agreed departure point for the message. For something to be new means that it is presented as something not yet known and not yet already agreed upon by the viewer or reader, hence as something to which the viewer or reader must play special attention. The ‘new’ is therefore presented as problematic, contestable; the information at issue while given is presented as commonsensical and self-evident [18, 21]. If some of the constituent elements in a visual text are placed on top and others at the bottom, then what is placed at the top is presented as ‘ideal’ and what is placed at the bottom as the idealized or generalized essence of the meaning hence its ideologically most salient part. The ‘real’ is the down to earth information, more specific information or details. Centrality means what holds the marginal elements together. The marginal elements are the elements that are held together by the centre-belonging to it, subservient to it.

Framing

Framing indicates that elements of a composition can either be given separate identities, or represented as belonging together. In other words family ‘connects’ or disconnects’ elements. There are degrees of framing that show disconnection, empty space between elements, contrast of colour or form or any visual feature that can be visually significant. Connection can be achieved through similarities and rhymes of colour and form, vectors that connect elements, through absence of frame line or empty space between elements [18, 21].

Salience

Salience indicates that some elements can be made more eye-catching than others. This can be done through size, colour contrasts (e.g.red) tonal contrast – through anything that can make a given element stand out from its given surroundings.

Modality

Modality is the congruency or otherwise of a visual representation of an object to the real object as it is in the real world. Visual reality therefore is the congruency between what you see of an object in an image and what you can see of it in reality with the naked eye in specific situation and from a specific angle; the greater the congruency the higher the modality of the image. If an image displays more sharpness, more colour saturation, a deep perspective than the average colour photo, its modality decreases and it starts to look more than ‘real’ or surreal ‘fantastic’ or ‘ghostly’ depending on the way the

particular meaning potential sensory modality is actualized in the specific thing or person represented [18, 21].

The cartoon images in this study are not subjected to modality (component of Compositional meaning) meaning analysis because cartoons are caricatures of what they represent. They therefore obviously have low modality because of low congruency between the images and the real persons or things represented in the cartoon text.

METHODOLOGY

Data for this qualitative study was obtained from the Kenyan main stream press- the *Standard* and *Daily Nation* newspapers. Editorial cartoon texts from these newspapers were used as the unit of analysis to establish how Kenyan mainstream newspaper cartoonists express viewpoints in editorial cartoons in an election campaign period. Content analysis was used to analyse data. The study focused on visual and lexical aspects of cartoon texts. Data analysis entailed a qualitative description of the cartoon texts by focusing on their multimodal properties. The examination of cartoon representations was done following Multimodal Discourse Analysis's components of representational, interactive and compositional meanings. A total of 30 editorial cartoons were analysed. This formed about a third of the total editorial cartoons on politics and politicians produced in January, February and March 1st -3rd, 2013. This follows Kothari [22] view that one should always sample a third of the total population for

analysis in a research. For the purpose of illustration, six editorial cartoons were randomly selected and analysed in this paper; three are from *Daily Nation* and three from *The Standard*. The following research question guided the conduct of this research:

1. How do Kenyan mainstream newspaper cartoonists express viewpoints in political editorial cartoons in election campaign season?

THE DATA AND THE DISCUSSION

The data analysed in this section was obtained from randomly chosen editorial cartoons from a batch of 91 purposively sampled editorial cartoons that were commentaries on political activities and politicians in the run up to 2013 general elections in Kenya (January, February and March 1st -3rd, 2013). Six such political editorial cartoons constitute the data for this study; three are from *The Standard* and another three from the *Daily Nation*. *The Standard* produced 49 political editorial cartoons while *Daily Nation* produced 42 editorial cartoons that were running commentaries on politicians and political activities at the time mentioned. One third of each of the figures (42 and 49) gave rise to 14 and 16 political editorials respectively. These gave a total number of 30 cartoon texts that were closely analysed. Out of the 30; six have been randomly picked for illustration in this paper. They are numbered as Fig. 1 - 6.

The cartoon illustration in Fig.1 alludes to the Kenyan politicians' habit of calling each other names in election campaign forums, a trend rampant in Kenyan politics.



Fig.1 (From *the Standard* of 30th January, 2013)

The editorial cartoon, in Fig 1, has a lady on the left and on the right are three 2013 presidential aspirants and their running mates. In the cartoon representation there is the use of **narrative representational** meaning. The cartoon representation relates the participants in terms of happenings of the

unfolding actions. There is a lady in the illustration who is the **actor** from whom a vector emanates. The vector is formed by the lady's hand pointing in the direction of the politicians. The vector, her stretched arm, connects her with the other participants –the presidential aspirants on the right. The presidential aspirants are

Uhuru Kenyatta, Raila Odinga, Musalia Mudavadi and their running mates. They form the **goal** at whom the vector is directed. The words of the actor (the lady) are also directed at them. From where the lady is to the right is Raila Odinga riding on the back of Kalonzo Musyoka, his running mate then, in the middle is Uhuru Kenyatta riding on the back of William Ruto who was his running mate then and on the extreme right is Musalia Mudavadi riding on the back of Jeremia Kioni, his running mate then. The lady could be said to be representing the common Kenyan citizen, commonly referred to as 'Wanjiku' in the Kenyan media context (always a simple lady character in a headscarf, carrying a simple basket or bag). The facial expression of the lady shows that she is irritated and fed up of the political aspirants' campaign gimmicks that comprise insults. The presidential aspirants and their running mates carry containers of stinking insults that they hurl at each other. The insults seem to be meant for the ears of the electorate, common citizen, represented by the lady whom they look at but show lack of interest in their game. The stench from the insults is denoted by the presence of insects, most likely flies, around the containers the running mates are holding for their masters to pick insults from. The politicians are standing on a filthy black ground full of flies. The common citizen/ a potential voter, in her words in the caption advise the politicians to change their campaign strategies and come up with ideas that can benefit the common citizen. She retorts that the insults will not provide her with *ugali* (a kind of food) on the table; meaning, she has nothing to benefit from the insults. The lady is portrayed as the only voice of reason in the text and her priorities are different from those of the politicians. Thus, she pays no attention to them. It cautions the reader not to pay attention to the politicians' political gimmicks made up of insults. The cartoon representation also portrays the Kenyan political aspirants as lacking essential agenda that can be beneficial to the common citizen. They are simply abusive towards one another in their bid to win votes. The presidential aspirants and their running mates come out as those who look upon the potential voters for approval of their deeds as they try to outdo each other in insults. The politicians engage in a transactive reaction by looking at the common citizen for approval of their deeds. By such illustrations the cartoonist seems to be giving a piece of advice to the voters to be the voice of reason during the campaign season and choose their leaders wisely in the then forthcoming elections.

Indeed, the cartoon visual illustration uses **interactive/interpersonal** meaning making technique

that comes out through distance component of interactive meaning whereby long shot, full figures of politicians and the common citizen are presented to the reader. The long shot suggests an impersonal relationship between the reader/viewer and the represented personalities in the text. The cartoonist, as result, brings out lack of unity of purpose among Kenyans regardless of stature, whether politician or common citizen. None seems to care about the other. All those in the cartoon representation frame are depicted as impersonal and distant people whose lives do not touch on the readers'.

Furthermore, the cartoonist brings out compositional meaning through use of **information value** component of compositional meaning. This, according to Jewitt and Oyama [21]; Kress and Van Leeuwen [18] creates a given-new kind of relationship. The common citizen, represented by a simple lady on the left is presented as given (something the reader/viewer is already familiar with). The politicians on the right are presented as new (something problematic or the information at issue). Still in the same cartoon text, **framing**, a component of compositional meaning, that shows connection or disconnection between elements in a text, normally shown by empty space or absence of empty space a vector connecting elements, contrast of colour, is used in the cartoon text to create a void between the common citizen and the politicians. There is a gap between the two categories of people and this brings about the idea that they belong to different schools of thought as far as political matters are concerned. In addition to the information value and framing aspects of compositional meaning, the cartoonist also uses **salience**, another aspect of compositional meaning to foreground the politicians and their behaviours by making their representations big in size. This could be said to be a way of attracting attention to the readers to see them as what the reader should be aware of and watch keenly at that moment. Compositional meaning seems to have been used by the cartoonist to caution the reader to watch keenly the mannerism of political aspirants for their traits are problematic and questionable thus belong to a different school of thought from the common citizen.

Fig. 2 is a cartoon illustration of one of the then presidential aspirants, Musalia Mudavadi, who was running on *Amani* party ticket in the 2013 general elections.

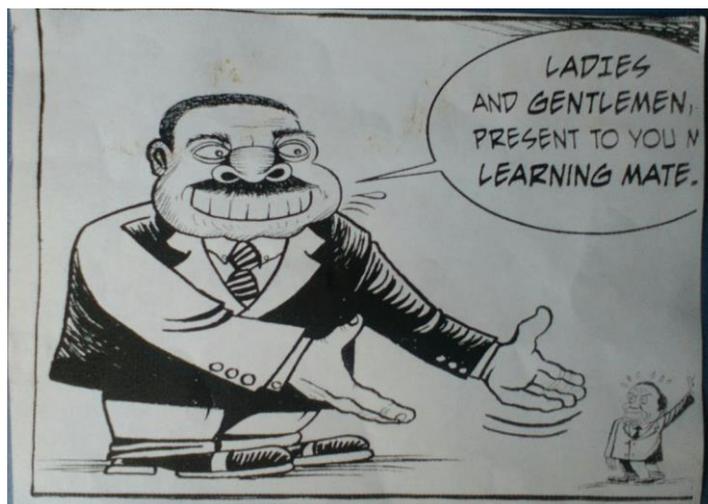


Fig. 2 (From *The Standard* of 23rd January, 2013)

The editorial cartoon in Fig. 2 above shows one presidential aspirant, Musalia Mudavadi of *Amani* party introducing his running mate, Jeremiah Kioni. The cartoon is a kind of **narrative** representational image in which the **actor** is Musalia Mudavadi on the left, pointing at his chosen running mate Jeremiah Kioni, who is the **goal**. His extended hands pointing in the direction of his running mate form the vector that connects them—the actor and the goal. He, Mudavadi, looks at the reader and utters the words: “Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you my learning mate”. The lexical item *learning mate* portrays the two politicians as amateurs connoting their incompetence in politics especially the running mate who was not known by many in Kenyan politics. The running mate is shown carrying up his hand to acknowledge the introduction and let the reader see him as he is being introduced.

The cartoon image of Musalia Mudavadi creates a kind of interpersonal/ interactive relationship with the reader. He looks directly at the reader as he introduces his running mate. It is therefore a **demand** picture in which the presidential aspirant Musalia Mudavadi pleadingly looks at the reader to demand for approval of his running mate and support in form of support votes for both of them. In the cartoon representation **interactive meaning** is further expressed in form of **distance**. Distance has been used to show how aloof the politicians are with the reader. This is expressed by the **long shot** visual illustrations in the editorial cartoon text that shows full figure of the politicians. They are portrayed as detached and only have impersonal relationship between them and the readers who are potential voters. The cartoonist portrays them as those whose lives do not touch on the readers’. **Point of view** kind of interactive meaning is evidently used as well, where the actor, Musalia Mudavadi, looks at the reader at eye level, trying to bring equality between him and the reader to attract them to him consequently creating a relationship of symbolic equality.

Compositional meaning is also portrayed through the use of **information value** component that takes the form of left-right placement which creates a given-new structure in the text. Musalia Mudavadi placed on the left is **given** information. This shows that he is a known character to the reader. The reader is not meeting him for the first time in the text. His running mate, Jeremiah Kioni, placed on the right is **new** to the reader and is being introduced to the reader for the first time. The readers’ attention is being attracted to Jeremiah Kioni to pay special attention to him. He is presented as contestable; whether he qualifies to be a politician and a vice –president for that matter is presented as questionable and a matter not yet agreed on. The fact that Musalia Mudavadi is a known politician is presented as self –evident to the reader by the placement of his image on the left of the cartoon text.

In addition to information value, **framing**, a form of compositional meaning is used to show connection and a sense of belonging by bringing the two characters together, close to one another. Furthermore, salience, another sub-component of compositional meaning gives more prominence to Musalia Mudavadi by making him more eye-catching than the running mate. This is through size; his image size is big while that of his running mate is small. This shows that he is comparatively more prominent in the political field than his running mate.

The point of view that the editorial cartoonist puts across is that the politicians are incompetent. It is a subtle way of cautioning the readers’ to watch keenly such a combination of characters and choose their leaders wisely.

Fig.3 is an illustration of the kind of political aspirants that Kenya normally has. It is a portrayal of political aspirants in general.



Fig. 3 (From *The Standard* of 6th February, 2013)

In Fig. 3, a narrative **representational** illustration is used. There are goats in a wooden pen and it is dark at night as heightened by the crescent moon in the dark sky. In the cartoon illustration still, there is a big hyena salivating with its tongue extended towards the goats. The hyena bears the labeled ‘candidates’ -referring to political candidates for the then forthcoming general elections. The tongue of the hyena and legs extend towards the goats form a vector connecting the hyena, **actor**, to the goats, **goal**. The words ‘please let me in, I promise to bring you reforms!’ express a plea for acceptance by politicians to the voters -represented by goats in a wooden pen. This connotes the distance or void that exists between the voters and the political candidates who are presented as greedy – salivating with the intent of wreaking havoc on the voters. A nondescript creature at the bottom of the frame makes a comment that expresses its disbelief in anything good from the hyena when it says ‘grass and sukuma wiki suppose!?’ This illustrates that the Kenyan political candidates cannot have anything good in store to offer the electorate, they can only exploit them and pursue the posts through persuasion for their own personal ends.

Interactive meaning is presented in form of distance, close up interactions. The goats in the pen are presented as closer to the reader than the hyena. This shows that the goats (representing potential voters) are more intimate to the reader than the hyena that is represented in **a long shot**, full figure illustration, suggestive of an impersonal relationship between the reader and the political candidates.

Compositional meaning in the cartoon text takes the form of information **value, framing and salience**. Information value is seen when the goats are on the left as **given** elements in the visual illustration. They are represented as familiar to the reader. The ‘candidates’ on the other hand are presented as **new**, something unfamiliar, problematic and contestable. This implies that they cannot be trusted since the reader does not know them well in terms of character. The small creature’s comment stresses the point that the candidates have nothing good or new to the electorate but just ‘sukuma wiki (kales) and grasses’ which are ordinary and detestable goat feeds. **Framing**, on the other hand is used to show that the candidates and the voters are separated by a void marked by the spacing between the hyena and the goat pen. The goats (voters) are also enclosed in the wooden pen to express the disconnection between them and the political candidates. The colours of the goats are made similar to express connection. They are together, similar and different from the dotted hyena outside the pen. Moreover, **Salience** plays a role in the cartoon text expression when the political candidates, signified by the hyena is made more eye-catching through its big size and presentation on the side opposite the goats in the pen. This makes the hyena stand out lonely in an open field outside the pen. The political candidates are consequently presented as peculiar from the common citizens and are only out to exploit them.

Fig. 4 presents Uhuru Kenyatta and Raila Odinga, both presidential candidates in the 2013 general elections.



Fig. 4 (From *Daily Nation* of 16th January, 2013)

Fig. 4 uses a **narrative representational** structure kind of representation. In the upper panel of the text, two presidential aspirants, Raïla Odinga on the left and Uhuru Kenyatta on the right are fighting, throttling one another and calling each other unprintable names. Their hands form vectors connecting them. In this case, Raïla is an actor and a goal at the same time. Uhuru is also an actor and goal. This means that they are people of equal standing and character in the Kenyan political scene. In the lower panel there is a lady on the left who advises them to stop the fight and instead declare their wealth to settle their dispute reasonably. To the right of the lower panel are still the two locked in a fight but on hearing the voice of the lady, they look in her direction. This seems to be the only voice of reason. Tagged to Uhuru's left ankle are the International Criminal Court (ICC) charges over 2007/2008 post election violence. In the lower panel, the lady is the actor. She is the participant from whom a vector emanates. Her right hand forms a vector connecting her to the goal, the two presidential candidates, Uhuru Kenyatta and Raïla Odinga.

Interactive meaning in the cartoon text is brought out by the use of **distance**, an aspect of interactive meaning that is presented in the form of **medium shot**, in the top panel; it is suggestive of a social relationship. This implies that they are trying to create a social relationship with the reader to win votes by hauling insults at each other, an unacceptable habit. In the second panel, the lady is presented in a long shot, which means she is not out to create any sort of relationship with the reader in form of trying to win votes. Her utterances that are meant for the presidential aspirants are reasonable and socially acceptable.

In the cartoon text, the cartoonist uses two aspects of compositional meaning: information value and framing. **Information value** is used whereby the lady on the left is presented as **given** and the presidential candidates on the right as **new**. She is presented as what the reader already knows and is familiar with (that the only way to know whether someone has ill gotten wealth is through wealth declarations). The lady therefore is presented as saying what the reader is familiar with. The candidates on the other hand are presented as new; their behaviours are contestable, problematic and not agreed upon by the reader and must therefore be paid attention to or watched carefully. **Framing** component of compositional meaning is used on the other hand to show connection and disconnection of elements. There is connection between the presidential candidates, they are close together. This connotes that there is no difference in their character. Their hands even form the vectors that connect them together. The lady on the left is isolated or disconnected from them by a wide space showing that she does not identify with that group of characters who believe in sorting out their differences through physical fight and insults. A small nondescript creature is in the middle bottom section of the frame, speechlessly watching the unfolding events, probably dumbfounded by the behaviour of the presidential candidates.

Fig. 5 is a cartoon illustration produced as a commentary on party nominations that were done in the run up to the 2013 general elections.

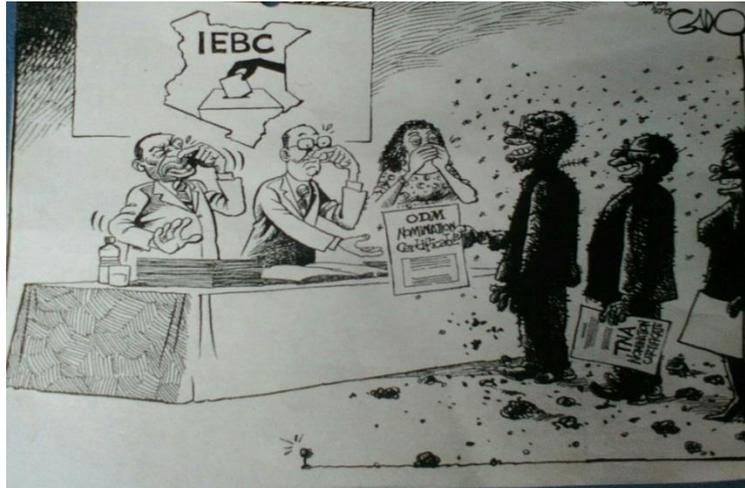


Fig.5 (From *Daily Nation* of 24th January, 2013)

Fig. 5 is a **narrative representational** illustration where the Independent, Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) official extend a hand to pick nomination certificates from nominated candidates from different parties. The IEBC officials hold their noses and the lady nearer to the candidates holds her nose with both hands in reaction to the perceived stench from the three political party nominees on the right. The nominees are presented as filthy. This is demonstrated by the dirt on the floor on which they are standing and the flies around them. The first on the queue is an Orange Democratic Party (ODM) nominee followed by a The National Alliance (TNA) nominee and the third one, a lady, equally filthy but not identified as belonging to which party (ODM and TNA were the major political parties under the main coalition parties: CORD and JUBILEE respectively in the 2013 general elections) . This filth implies that all the parties nominated questionable personalities. The words on the papers held by the nominees help the reader in identification of the political players and the writing IEBC, identifies the officials of the electoral commission. The officials hold their noses in discomfort, chocked by the perceived filth from and around the nominees.

The political party nominees' gaze at the IEBC officials forms a vector creating a **transactive** reaction. Their facial expressions show that they are complaining, demanding for services or reacting to the reception they are getting from the IEBC officials who are holding their noses on arrival of the nominees. The IEBC officials are unable to maintain eye contact with in them due to the perceived stench they have come with to the room. The IEBC officials are the goal; they are being looked at and talked at by the nominees. This connotes the lack of choice the IEBC has when it comes to nominations, they have to take the people they are given regardless of their character.

The cartoonist also uses **interactive meaning** to communicate with the reader. This takes the form of **distance** and **point of view**. **Distance** is used when the IEBC officials are represented in **medium shot**. This suggests a social relationship with the reader, a way to demonstrate that the IEBC are even closer to the readers –potential voters than the political nominees themselves are. The **long shot** representation of the nominees gives the reader an idea about how impersonal the politicians' relationship with the voters is. Additionally, **Point of view** comes out where the IEBC officials look at the readers at eye-level angle, which denotes equality. They have at least some rapport with the reader/ voter more than the nominees who are vying for leadership positions.

Besides representational and interactive meaning, Fig. 5 uses compositional meanings as well. This takes the form of **information value, framing and salience**. **Information value compositional** meaning is used when IEBC officials are presented on the left as **given** while the political nominees on the right are presented as **new**. This shows that the IEBC are presented as what the reader is familiar with while the nominees are presented as what is not agreed upon by the reader, what is problematic and contestable that the reader must therefore pay attention to. This implies that these nominees perhaps were simply handpicked by the party officials and not nominated by the electorate. **Framing compositional** meaning has also been used to depict the difference in the two categories of people, that is, the IEBC officials and the political nominees. There is a desk separating the IEBC officials from the presidential nominees. The nominees are shown to belong together through similarity and rhyme of the same black colour for the three of them, meaning they belong together and have similar characteristics different from those of the IEBC officials on the opposite side. There is also the use of **salience, a compositional meaning** making aspect whereby the nominees are made more eye-catching than the IEBC

officials. This has been done through colour contrast and the many flies around them that differentiate them from the IEBC officials on the left hand side.

Fig. 6 The cartoon illustration presents Uhuru Kenyatta of TNA party, Jubilee Alliance and Raila Odinga, ODM, CORD Alliance who were both presidential candidates, and their associates in the 2013 general elections.



Fig. 6 (From Daily Nation of 11th February, 2013)

Narrative representational meaning is used in the visual illustration in Fig. 6. The editorial cartoon presents two presidential aspirants Uhuru Kenyatta on the left and his associates and supporters behind him and Raila Odinga and his associates on the other side. Each one of them has a long trailing cloth fastened at the neck and these clothes are held by their associates. Each of them is stark naked and carries a trophy kind of item which symbolize their selection as the top contestants in their parties. They use their other hands to point at their opponents. The items they carry and their pointing hands form vectors. This makes each one of them both an **actor** and a **goal** at the same time. They are talking at each other and pointing at each other. The writings on the balloon captions show that they are using crude and obscene language (unprintable words) to describe one another. On the extreme right, there is a lady, the common citizen leading a child away by the head so that he does not watch and hear the political actors. Her words to the child 'c'mon kid....this absurd show comes up every 5 years' shows her lack of concern for and disinterest in the ongoing activities since they have been the same in every election period. She is the **actor**. The directions in which her eyes gaze form a kind of vector joining her to the other people, the politicians who are the **goal**.

Interactive meaning in the form of **Distance** is brought about through **long shot** representation of the politicians which creates an impersonal relationship with the reader. This proves how aloof they are with the reader/ electorate in general.

Other than other meanings brought out in Fig.6, **compositional meaning** is equally used through

information value and **framing**. From **information value** perspective, the JUBILEE team is presented as given on the left while CORD team and the common citizen are presented as new. This could mean that the Jubilee team leaders' ICC (International Criminal Court) case is known to the reader. JUBILEE leaders, Uhuru and Ruto then had charges on crimes against humanity at ICC as seen by the loads tied to their legs. CORD's position and the common citizens' feelings towards the political contestants are presented as still unknown, problematic and contestable. Further still, framing is used to explain the connection between each party torch bearer and his associates through colour rhyme. The CORD team hold to an orange fruit patterned long trailing cloth fastened at the neck of their leader Raila Odinga while Uhuru Kenyatta's team lacks this pattern; he has a plain cloth fastened to his neck. The pattern contrast distinguishes the two parties as belonging to different political alliances. The framing in form of the cloth patterns are used in this cartoon text to bring out both connection and disconnection expressing similarities among members of each political alliance and differentiating the political groupings from each other.

Conclusion

The findings of this study show how political cartoons communicate in the two Kenyan mainstream newspapers (*The Standard* and *Daily Nation*) to project viewpoints in election campaign season. The study established how Kenyan mainstream newspaper cartoonists express viewpoints in editorial cartoons in election campaign period. Through political cartoons the newspapers comment on political issues in Kenya in order to inform people about the inadequacies of

politicians and their political ideas. This paper reveals that narrative representational syntactic patterns are utilized in the *Standard* and *Daily Nation* newspapers political cartoons to express view points about Kenyan politicians and political issues. Other mostly used meaning making elements are the aspects of interactive meaning such as distance: long and medium shot (used to relate the political participants to the reader) and compositional meaning, mainly in form of information value.

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