

Media Narrations of *Saba Saba* Political Rally of July 7, 2014 in Kenyan Newspapers

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Abstract: In Mass Media they report in order to inform, enable the public to contemplate and attest. Generally, speech presentations can be interpreted differently depending on the situation or context. While speech acts can be well meant, they can as well result to misunderstandings or even violence. In Kenya, *Saba Saba* has been associated with protests and demonstrations that occur on the same day to seek political reforms in the country. On July 7th 2014, hundreds of Kenyans affiliated to the Coalition for Reforms and Democracy (CORD) coalition assembled at Uhuru Park in Nairobi in order to demand for dialogue with the Jubilee government over the issues regarding insecurity and high costs of living in the country. The purpose of this study was to identify the expressions that amount to speech acts of reporting, contemplating and attesting in Kenyan newspapers in regards to *Saba Saba* political rally. Two leading daily newspapers were analyzed to explore the use of speech acts. Purposive sampling of 10 articles, five from each newspaper was considered. The study employed Fairclough's critical discourse analysis to analyze and interpret data. The findings indicated that the two leading Kenyan newspapers utilized speech acts to mobilize Kenyans to attend the rally through speech acts of informing, contemplating and attesting, but which also propagated war journalism instead of peace journalism.

Keywords: Speech acts, War Journalism, Peace Journalism, *Saba Saba*.

Introduction

The choice and use of July 7th as well as the use of the Swahili term *Saba Saba* is borrowed from Tanzania's revolution day holiday held on the same date [1]. The history of *Saba Saba* in Kenya dates back to 12th June, 1990 when Reverend Timothy Njoya of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, the former cabinet ministers Kenneth Matiba and Charles Rubia applied for a license in order to hold a public rally at Kamukunji Grounds in Nairobi. This was scheduled for July 7th with the aim of discussing the merits of multiparty system. This was after Njoya delivered a fiery sermon at St. Andrew's Church in Nairobi on New Year's Day 1990. He openly challenged Kenyan leadership under one party KANU led by former president Daniel Moi and called for multiparty democracy in line with the changed global situation. However, President Moi's regime declined to grant them their request to hold public rally at Kamukunji Grounds citing that the advocates of multiparty politics had the intent to come up with killer gangs to terrorize the public and later blame the government. This was followed by police storming the press conferences and confiscating pens and note books from journalists[2].

In 1992, political activists under the auspices of activists such as Kenneth Matiba organized for protests

in order to champion for political change in a period which was coupled by dictatorship by KANU regime under President Moi. Since then, *Saba Saba* has been associated with protests and demonstrations that occur on the same day to seek political reforms in the country [3]. On 7th July, 2014, CORD members led by Raila Odinga embarked on a major political rally at Uhuru Park in Nairobi after their quest for national dialogue with the Jubilee government had failed. The opposition leaders called for a national dialogue with the ruling administration, Jubilee coalition and issued a list of key demands at a rally that was scheduled for July 7th, 2014 at Uhuru Park.

Thousands of Cord supporters gathered at Uhuru Park for the rally. Speaking to the crowd, Odinga called for the Jubilee administration to hold talks, which he called the national dialogue in order to address key issues affecting the country; among them immediate withdrawal of Kenyan troops from Somalia where they are fighting Al Shabaab militants as part of an Africa Union peacekeeping mission.

Kenyan newspapers were involved in dissemination of information to the Kenyan readers about the emerging issues in regards to the *Saba Saba* rally; and because different news editors take various

approaches when reporting news, taking into account the editorial policies of a particular media house, it was important to investigate the speech acts of reporting, contemplating and attesting, and whether or not the actions of the editors of the two leading daily newspapers amounted to Peace Journalism or War Journalism. Therefore, in analyzing language texts, it is possible to examine propositional content, intentions, and effects of utterances in order to establish various ways in which language can be used to perform actions.

In reporting speech acts, news editors of various newspapers are guided by the code of conduct for the practice of journalism. Therefore, the news editors are charged with the responsibility of ensuring that corrections, condensation, organization, and other modifications are done with an intention of producing correct, consistent, accurate and complete work. However, there are instances where news editors are compelled to adhere to media policy frameworks and also deviate from the code of ethics and engage in activities of biased, unbalanced reporting as well as use of alarming statements that amount to War Journalism.

We live in a society where conflicts and violence are inevitable. Fairclough [4] asserts that we live in an era whereby power is not demonstrated through coercion but consent. He states, "... in developed capitalist countries, we live in an age in which power is predominantly exercised through the generation of consent rather than through the breaking of skulls. Part of this development is an enhanced role for language in the exercise of power. It is mainly in discourse that consent is achieved, ideologies are transmitted, and practices, meanings, values and identities are taught and learnt" [5]. The study concentrated on textual content in newspapers to highlight speech acts that played different functions at the *sabasaba* political rally of July 2014.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a theory and method was employed in this study. The theory provides empirical study of the relations between discourse, cultural developments and society in different social domains. Therefore, the data was analyzed and interpreted by Fairclough's approach to critical discourse analysis. The emphasis was on deictic expressions that constitute textual practices in Kenyan newspapers. "Critical Discourse Analysis is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysis takes explicit position to expose and ultimately resist social inequality" [6].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Deictic expressions that amount to speech acts

With regard to expressions that amount to three speech acts of reporting, contemplating and attesting, it was established that both papers maximized the use of the three speech acts though with a variance.

Firstly, on July 8th, the two newspapers splashed the *Saba Saba* stories on their front pages with almost similar pictures of the event as indicated in the jump line and were given prominence in the subsequent pages 2,3,4,5 and 6.

Headline: Raila's 13-point Agenda (Kicker): Cord leader launches Okoa Kenya, a possible vehicle for mass action, and demands referendum. Daily Nation Tuesday July 8, 2014.

The Standard newspaper also gave the same prominence to the *Saba Saba* stories and pictures by splashing them in the subsequent pages 2,3,4,5,6 and 7. The Standard gave the story one extra page. This is how it was done;

Headline: REFERENDUM: Raila, Kalonzo and Wetangula launch OKOA Kenya movements to push for change and list 13 resolutions on way forward. The Standard Tuesday July 8, 2014.

Guided by the principle of news values, the two newspapers gave prominence to the story and chose to comprehensively report to Kenyans on what transpired during the event. From the above headlines, the two newspapers reported and therefore informed their readers about the 13 resolutions, and the Okoa Kenya movement. The similarity was not by default but was by design, informed by the professional principle of the inverted pyramid which puts the most important items at the top of the news story and by extension at the headlines. This proves that both papers still considered that the task to report and inform their readers was their fundamental role as is the practice in the journalistic profession globally [7].

Secondly, the second speech act of contemplation was played out vividly by the two newspapers. They generated debate on the *Saba Saba* political rally by getting views from varied voices. On the eve of the rally, the front page of the Standard newspaper carried a story of the CORD coalition leaders assuring Kenyans that the rally would be peaceful. The story also indicated that Jubilee government had beefed up security.

Headline: Raila makes pledge on Saba Saba rally The Standard July 7, 2014

Kicker: CORD co-principle joins Wetangula and Kalonzo in assuring Kenyans they don't want violence even as Jubilee beefs up security in areas it calls 'hotspots' *The Standard July 7, 2014.*

Similarly, though in a different style, the Daily Nation carried a story that said the opposition leaders had promised that the rally would be peaceful and that the police had unveiled a security plan. They also put a story on the same front page of the prayers of the church for peace ahead of the rally. This is how it was captured;

Front page: Nairobi Rally will be peaceful, opposition leaders say as police unveils security plan *The Standard July 7, 2014.*

Front page: Church prays for peace ahead of rally *Daily Nation July 7, 2014.*

The two newspapers, The Standard and the Daily Nation used varied voices of church members, the government and the opposition to build up the debates in contemplation component of speech act. The 'intertextuality' [8] enables the newspapers to uphold objectivity which ensures that the newspapers do not inflame emotions but rather 'cool' tone. This is done through multiple voices in the newspaper.

Thirdly, on the speech act of attesting, both papers gave their voice of reason and expected Kenyans and the leaders to make a moral judgment. Four days to the rally, both papers carried similar stories reporting of mounting tension over the rally. The Standard reported in the front page that the rally had generated heat for both president Kenyatta and opposition leader Raila Odinga. They quoted the Catholic bishops who told President Kenyatta that the rising political temperatures would jeopardize the nation's unity and progress. They also reported a 25 member team of members of parliament who wanted to broker a deal on national dialogue and they gave a rejoinder from the leader of majority in the national assembly who trivialized the caucus as fruitless.

Headline: Saba Saba Heat *The Standard July 3, 2014*
Kicker: Pressure growing for both Uhuru and Raila to abandon their hard line positions on national dialogue.

Picture: Uhuru Kenyatta, with caption; met Catholic bishops who said political temperatures are too high for rallies. Said he is ready for dialogue but within constitutionally mandated institutions. *The Standard July 3, 2014.*

On the same day, the Daily Nation carried a headline story that said Raila was gearing up for the rally despite the tension. They also reported eye witness

accounts of some Naivasha residents that had fled for their lives after hate leaflets were circulated in the town over the rally. The paper also reported that in Kisumu traders expressed fear for a repeat of 2007 looting of their properties and they called for the rally to be called off. This is how the front pages appeared on July 3, 2014;

Headline: Raila gears up for rally amid tension
Teasers: Naivasha: Frightened residents flee town after hate leaflets are circulated over rally (stories on pages 2,3,4&5). Kisumu traders: Traders fearing of 2007 looting, up in arms over meetings and ask they be called off. Stories on page 2, 3, 4 &5. *Daily Nation July 3, 2014.*

The papers used the voices of eye witnesses to express their moral positions on the rally especially when the Daily Nation quoted the traders in Kisumu who called for the rally to be called off because it was likely to cause a repeat of looting that was witnessed in 2007 during the post election violence.

The effects of speech acts

Concerning the effects of the use of the speech acts; reporting, contemplating and attesting on Kenyan readers, it emerged that the media reported and informed the public, generated debate and discussions, and called for moral judgments so consistently that at the day of the rally most shops and businesses were closed even though it was not a public holiday. This was confirmed by a picture story on page 3 of the Daily Nation of July 8th which had a caption which said,

Cord supporters at Uhuru Park. Many businesses remained closed over fears of mass looting despite the heavy security presence.

As indicated by the headlines of both papers on July 8th as cited before, Cord supporters in their numbers attended the *Saba Saba* rally at Uhuru Park. This was the direct effect of the information which the media relayed to the public. As indicated on page 2 and 3 of the Daily Nation of July 8th security was beefed up in Nairobi as Cord supporters attended the rally. In Kisumu, The Standard newspaper captured in its second page a picture of what they called GSU officers trying to quell a protest at Kondele in Kisumu. Two police officers were seen whipping a civilian. The information, debates and the call for action by the media had culminated in those incidences.

When both papers reported on July 3, that the imminent rally had generated fear and heat across the country, the Jubilee government responded the same day and said it would deploy 15,000 police officers to avert possible chaos during the rally. This reaction was captured in the headline of the Daily Nation of July 4 as shown below;

15,000 officers deployed to guard Saba Saba rally The discourse on Kenyan newspapers

In regards to whether the discourse on Kenyan newspapers amounts to Peace Journalism or War Journalism, the linguistic analysis indicated that The Standard newspaper used the deixis with cataphoric reference in the kicker that was trying to shed light on the headline. This defeats the purpose of the kicker. In this statement;

Cord leader says President Kenyatta has left them with no option after rejecting their demands.

It is difficult to understand the person deixis, *them* which is actually an anaphora (deixis that replace an initial expression) and the deixis, *their* which is a cataphora (a reversal of the antecedent where antecedent is the initial expression). Ordinarily, to understand an anaphoric and cataphoric reference depends on inference. Because the statement is attributed to Cord leader who is Raila, then *them* would refer to his colleagues in the Cord coalition and *their* also refers to the unmentioned demands of the Cord leaders. The newspaper chose to use dichotomy of *us vs them* which aggravates tension instead of solving a conflict. This reflects War Journalism.

On the other hand, the Daily Nation tended towards Peace Journalism through the use of the deixis of the past tense suffix-*ed* in the word *deployed*. The headline states;

15,000 officers deployed to guard Saba Saba rally.

To eradicate any ambiguity that may arise in the statement/headline, the editor chose to introduce a kicker to help clarify the statement. For example, through the use of deixis of future auxiliary, *will*, the Daily Nation newspaper informs the readers that the government is committed to ensure that the rally would be peaceful.

Journalists and media personalities such as editors in the newsroom do report and inform their audience by the use of linguistic elements such as deixis. In order to be accurate in dissemination of information to the audience, they use linguistic elements such as time, person and places. These elements in linguistics are known as deixis. Deixis involves how language encodes features of utterances or speech events and the context. The analysis is done with respect to interpretation of the speech or utterance and the context [9].

According to Buhler [10], there are three categories of deixis: person deixis which point at people and objects, spartialdeixis which point at location and

temporal deixis which point at time. The author argues that for us to interpret all the deictic expressions, we have to be conversant with what the speaker has in mind with regards to person, time and place.

The speech act of reporting was relatively inconsistent in both newspapers especially on July 6, 2014 when the two newspapers parted ways in their choice of topics to give prominence. The Standard on Sunday of July 6, 2014 gave the Cord leader Raila Odinga wider coverage while the Sunday Nation on the same day covered the plans by the police but both were concerning the *Saba Saba* rally. This is how it was done:

Headline: Police map out hotspots as Kenyans urged to stay calm *Sunday Nation July 6, 2014*

Kicker: Political and church leaders as Cord and Jubilee supporters urged to maintain peace as focus turns to city rally. *Sunday Nation July 6, 2014.*

The use of tense morphemes was used in the headlines of both papers. The Standard used deixis of future auxiliary *will* in the headline;

Rally will be a defining moment.

Even though the full colon after the noun *Raila* originally indicated that the statement originated from Raila but by the time the statement was deliberately chosen by the editor to be the headline then the deictic center shifted from Raila to the Standard on Sunday newspaper. This implies that the newspaper wanted to inform their readers that the rally would be a defining moment that would change the history of the country. This would mean that the paper had taken sides and supported Raila's position.

The Sunday Nation used the deixis of the past tense suffix-*ed* in the word *urged*. This was in the headline;
Police map out hotspots as Kenyans urged to stay calm.

In the same vein, while the headline does not seem to attribute the urge for calm to anybody, the fact that it was amplified as a headline by the editors implies that the newspaper is urging Kenyans to remain calm even though the police were mapping out the hotspots. The use of deixis worked positively for the Sunday Nation.

In contemplation, The Standard was guilty of using Fairclough's [11] intertextuality to make certain arguments and debates more significant than others. Discursive analysis shows that The Standard paper intertextuality ignored informing Kenyans on the plans of the police concerning the rally. It is intentional because headlines are deliberately chosen and structured by editors. On the contrary, the Sunday

Nation chose to report and informs their readers of the plans of the security officers and through a kicker it reported the political leaders and the clergy calling for peace. The Sunday Nation balanced their reporting. However, the Standard on Sunday amplified the statement of Raila that the rally would be a defining moment. This is how it was captured;

Raila: Rally will be a defining moment

This headline was one sided, it quoted Raila alone. Therefore, it was promoting exclusivity at the expense of inclusivity which is the key in times of tension and conflict.

The same script had been played out on July 4 when the two newspapers amplified two different issues in their headlines. This is how it was;

Headline: Raila Rally agenda

Kicker: Cord leader says President Kenyatta has left them with no option after rejecting their demands. The Standard July 4, 2014.

Headline: 15,000 officers deployed to guard Saba Saba rally

Kicker: Security personnel will be stationed around the city center, on major roads and slums to prevent possible chaos. Daily Nation July 4, 2014.

The discursive analysis would indicate that The Standard Group denied their readers the information about the plans by the government to provide security during the rally. This was intentional because it was a deliberate choice which was repeated as indicated in the previous example. But the Daily Nation was consistent in reporting to their readers on security plans by the police.

The model of Peace Journalism [12] that was originally formulated by Johan Galtung puts forward the dichotomies that can help journalists to differentiate Peace Journalism from War Journalism. Peleg [13] asserts that War Journalism is “war-oriented, focus on conflict arena, 2 parties, 1 goal (win), war, zero-sum orientation, makes wars opaque/secret, uses *us-them* journalism, propaganda, voice, for *us*, see *them* as the problem, focus on who prevails in war, dehumanization of *them*; more so the worse the weapon, reactive: waiting for violence before reporting, focus only on visible effect of violence (killed, wounded and material gain).” Therefore, as discussed above, it is evident that The Standard newspaper tended towards War Journalism. The newspaper uses the dichotomy of *us vs. them* or the “politics of inclusion and exclusion” [14]. The use of such dichotomies has the potential to create tension that can result to conflicts among the Kenyan readers.

On the other hand, the Daily Nation propagated Peace Journalism through the use of deixis of the past tense such as the use of suffix-*ed*. For example, the word *deployed* as it appeared in the headline. The kicker had the deixis of future auxiliary, *will*. The paper was indeed reporting to the readers that the government had shown commitment to ensure that the rally would be peaceful. This, for the second time indicated that the Daily Nation was bent on promoting peace. Lynch and McGoldrick[15] assert that “Peace Journalism uses the insight of conflict analysis and transformation to update the concept of balance, fairness and accuracy in reporting. Peace Journalism provides a new roadmap tracing the connection between journalists, the sources of the story they cover and the consequences of the interaction. Peace Journalism builds an awareness of non-violence and creativity in the practiced job of everyday reporting and editing.” Therefore, any story that adhere to the principles of journalism reflects more than two sides, spreads peaceful ways to understand structure, culture and the process of tension and conflict. It is also sensitive to audiences’ psychological and emotional well-being.

Lynch and McGoldrick[16] denounce all other ways of reporting as ‘War Journalism,’ as it is biased and in favor of war. Johan Galtung has a borne to chew with ‘war journalists’ of reporting war in an enclosed time and space, ignoring the context and covering up peace initiatives and making wars ‘opaque/secret.’ Galtung therefore calls upon journalists to be part and parcel of peace proposals which can be embraced by all parties [17].

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is apparent that the linguistic and discursive analysis of the findings of this paper established that the media indeed used the speech acts of reporting, contemplating and attesting to deliver the message of the *Saba Saba* rally to Kenyans. Kenyans were informed, they were engaged in discussions and they were called upon to make moral judgments on the best way to go. However, the two newspapers did the performative speech acts differently. The analysis established that The Standard newspaper propagated War Journalism while the Daily Nation tended towards Peace Journalism. While the news editors are charged with the responsibility of correcting, condensing, organizing, and performing other modifications with an aim of producing correct, consistent, accurate and complete work, some news editors deviate from this and even violate the code of ethics for the practice of journalism which amount to War Journalism. The three basic functions of the media are to inform, educate and entertain. Therefore, any media house that deviates from this puts the credibility of that media house into question and such actions may

have far reaching implications on the readers which include violence.

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