

**MULTIMODALITY IN KENYA'S POLITICAL DISCOURSE IN THE SOCIAL
MEDIA**

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**A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Linguistics
of Chuka University**

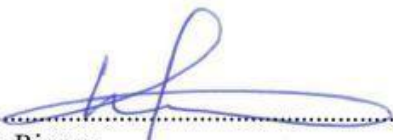
CHUKA UNIVERSITY

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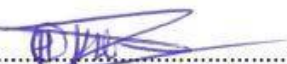
Declaration


This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for an award of diploma or conferment of degree in this or any other University.


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Recommendations

This thesis has been examined, passed and submitted with our approval as University supervisors.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family who gave me the moral, financial and mental strength to undertake and accomplish this study within the prescribed period of time.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to humbly thank God for his divine guidance and for giving me strength to complete this work.

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My heartfelt appreciations go to my family for their understanding and support. Thank you for urging me on throughout the period of this study.

All those who have wished me well, enquired about my progress or somehow participated in making this work a success, I may not have mentioned your names but I am very grateful and may Almighty God bless you all.

ABSTRACT

Discourse is key in expression and reproduction of ideologies. Social media, being one of the most common avenues for communications by politicians is a suitable site for ideology formation. Through it, the social, cultural and national representations circulating in the society at a given time are revealed. This study sought to reveal the role of politics to propagate ideology and also reveal power relations. The texts which include; written texts and images from Facebook and X platforms formed the corpus data for this study. They were examined within the paradigm of Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MMDA) to determine the semiotics modes employed in the social media discourse to represent the politics that happened between 2017- 2021. Specifically, this study was guided by objectives: To analyse the patterns of transitivity in political discourse in the social media, to describe how textual meaning is realized in semiotic modes used in political discourse and finally to interpret the political frames in social media discourse during President Uhuru Kenyatta's second term as president of Kenya. Theoretical sampling was done to select the 'political' texts based on the three strategic functions performed by political discourse. These are; use of language for coercion and resistance, (de) legitimization and representation. A total of 49 clauses and 27 images were analysed. The selected texts were analyzed qualitatively describing the texts in terms of their semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic properties, while interpreting them and explaining their meaning within the social and historical contexts. Transitivity analysis of material, mental, relational, behavioral and verbal processes reveals that language structures can produce certain meanings and ideologies which are not always explicit for readers. Chapter five reveals that text producers utilize Information value, salience, modality, gaze, and size of frame, social distance, loaded lexes, metaphors, emoticons, hash tags, and rhetorics which make the text coherent and empower it with specific textual meaning. Chapter six reveals that social- political players use the frames of conflict, human interest, economic- impact, responsibility and morality to make favorable interpretations prevail with an aim of advancing their own interests or ideologies. In a world of increasingly visual signs, this study empowers people to know that even the most realistic signs are not what they appear to be and such a multimodal analysis reveals such meanings. The findings of this study help in deconstructing and demystifying social media discourse to show the connection between the hidden aspects of discourse and the relations of power that reflect inequalities, prejudice and power abuse. It adds to scholarly literature on social media political discourse by adding knowledge on the semiotics employed by social media users. Becoming aware of such semiotic codes is both inherently fascinating and intellectually empowering.

