

KENYANS ON X AS AN IMAGINED COMMUNITY OF LANGUAGE USERS

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DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Declaration

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

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved wife, Jackline Kaimenyi and our wonderful son Elvis. Jackline, your encouragement and prayers have been my anchor throughout this journey. You have been my constant source of strength and inspiration, and I am eternally grateful for your support. Elvis, your boundless energy and joyful spirit remind me daily of the purpose behind all my efforts. You will grow to scale higher heights than this. You both are my greatest motivation and I dedicate this work to you.

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ABSTRACT

Members of an Imagined Community possess similar beliefs and linguistic patterns that make them unique compared to other groups. Such groups are evident among Kenyans on X as they possess similar characteristics. This study explored Kenyans on X as an imagined community of language users with focus on their language usage. Members of such groups possess a sense of membership even though most of them may have never met and may not know each other physically. This study focuses on tweets made by Kenyans who use X platform. The study was guided by three objectives: To investigate linguistic features used by Kenyans on X, to analyze the role of perceived invisibility and anonymity in shaping linguistic interactions of Kenyans on X and to examine the use of mock politeness as a communicative strategy by Kenyans on X. The study used multimodality theory and impoliteness theory to analyze, interpret and discuss the data collected. Multimodality theory by Kress & van Leeuwen (1996) was essential for this study since it helped to interpret how Kenyans on X use different modes of communication in their tweets. Impoliteness theory by Culpeper (1996) provided a platform to study the use of mock politeness by Kenyans on X. The data was elicited from Tweets and analyzed using content analysis method. Purposive sampling technique was used where only tweets that showed language usage by Kenyans on X and those that exhibit a notion of imagined community among Kenyans on X were selected for inclusion in this study. Qualitative research design was used for this study. Descriptive qualitative research technique was used in data analysis. The researcher used a total of 234 tweets based on the principle of saturation where they provided adequate data for analysis. The data revealed that Kenyans on X use a variety of linguistic strategies in their interactions on X. The findings also revealed that X discourse is highly influenced by the perceived invisibility of Kenyans on X that acted as a form of a shield to protect tweeps from real world consequences. The study also found that Kenyans on X utilize mock politeness in their tweets as a form of humour, entertainment, social commentary and calling out social ills. The study recommended that This research is important as its findings add to the existing literature on social media discourse. The findings of this study also provide more insights on formation of online imagined nations.