

A Linguo-Stylistics Analysis of Newspaper Reporting of ICC Cases in Kenya: A Case Study of the Daily Nation and the Standard

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Abstract

Newspaper writers have been accused of manipulating information to achieve their aims and sometimes serve their interest. This research paper took a critical look at the way English language is used in newspaper reporting to communicate sensitive issues and sometimes manipulate information. This research explored the linguistic and communicative significance of newspaper reporting of International Criminal Court case in Kenya against the President and his Deputy. Its objectives were to identify those linguistic features of grammar, lexis and semantics that have been used distinctively by the newspapers to report about the case and whether they were used to manipulate information. The investigation was based on the analysis of seven articles in the two leading dailies in Kenya: 'The Standard' and 'Daily Nation' newspapers between 20th and 30th September 2014. The reason why the two newspapers were chosen was because of their perceived contrast in political affiliation, availability and extensive readership in the country. This research paper demonstrated that a 'good' writer consciously manipulates linguistic and stylistic devices in order to communicate effectively.

1. Introduction

Linguistic stylistics is a very complex domain and a very fertile ground for investigation. There is an intricate web of linguistic stylistic functions in any text i.e. literary and non literary that pleat so as to create the individuality of the discourse itself, and the impact of the text on the reader. This is obvious in the newspapers reportage under study.

The concepts of style and stylistics may never be clearly defined. Due to its highly interdisciplinary nature, linguistic stylistics displays multiple levels of analysis related to various language- study domains, i.e. lexical classes, morphology, syntax, semantics, discourse analysis, etc. Style results from the many choices the writer makes in the course of his writing and it is these choices that set apart one writer from the other. Newspaper reporting share relatively common features, but they differ in style and organization depending whether it's editorial, opinion column or news column.

A considerable amount of work has been done within the area covered by the study such as that done by Leech and Short (1981), Crystal and Davy (1976) among others.

The definitions of concept of style are inexhaustible considering the inherent vague nature of the concept. Leech and Short are of the opinion that the term style: Sometimes apply to the linguistic habits of a particular writer at other times; it has been applied to the way language is used in a particular genre, period, school of writing or some combination of these epistolary styles...From this definition, style is seen as a manifestation of the individual.

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The common thing about newspaper reporting is that they shape public opinion by dealing with topical issues or up-to-date events within the society or elsewhere. Opinions are not forced on readers; rather, readers are expected to be able to differentiate between facts and opinions.

However, Newspaper reporting influences the opinion of the public and tries to gain control of people's minds through manipulating information. The newspapers objectivity in reporting topical issues was tested through stylistic analysis of sampled articles on a common subject of ICC Cases against the President of Kenya and Its Deputy.

- **Statement of the Problem**

Newspaper language is an issue that we face in our everyday life. It is a linguistic feature of our daily reality that we should know more about. Sometimes when you read newspapers and compare how the same news/story/case is presented in different newspapers, you realize that the information has been manipulated to suit the papers' interest, ideology or political affiliation. It is important to analyze those linguistic features that are used distinctively by the newspapers to report and whether they are used to manipulate information.

- **Purpose of the Study**

This research paper explored the linguistic and communicative significance of newspaper reporting in Kenya. The aim of this work therefore involved the manner in which language is used in conveying messages to the public, the effectiveness of the choice of language and whether the information is manipulated.

- **Scope of the Study**

In carrying out this research, the data which was used for analysis was limited to seven newspaper articles drawn from 'Daily Nation' and 'The Standard' newspapers of between 20th and 30th September 2014.

2. Methodology

- **Introduction**

The use of linguo-stylistic variables selected from graphology, phonology, lexis, syntax, and cohesion was being employed in analysing the newspapers.

- **Research Design**

The researcher used an ex-post facto design. This is a research design where the researcher does not have direct control of the independent variable because their manifestations have long occurred.

The researcher investigated the independent variable, that is, the articles in Daily Nation and The standard Newspaper articles. The researcher could not change any data within the selected issues of the newspapers. The independent variable, the articles in The Daily Nation and The standard Newspapers newspaper were investigated in relation to dependent variable, linguo stylistic features and manipulation of information.

- **Sample Text Population**

The study targeted the text population. The investigation was based on the analysis of seven articles in 'The Standard' and 'Daily Nation' newspapers between 20th and 30th September 2014. The sampled newspapers are the leading in Kenya and have great readership from the two main political divides, the government and opposition. The Standard is perceived as 'opposition' friendly while 'Daily Nation' is perceived as 'government' friendly. The reason why the two newspapers were chosen was because of their perceived contrast in political affiliation, availability and extensive readership in the country

- **Data Collection Procedure and Analysis**

The study used issues of ‘The Standard’ and ‘Daily Nation’ newspapers between 20th and 30th September 2014 for data collection. The approach adopted for this study was Discourse and General Stylistics analysis. The use of linguo-stylistic variables selected from graphology, lexis, syntax, and figurative language was employed in analyzing the newspapers.

3. Analysis and Discussion

The use of linguo-stylistic variables selected from graphology, phonology, lexis, syntax, and figurative language were employed in analysing the newspapers.

- **Graphological Analysis**

According to (Crystal and Davy 1969: 18-19) graphology is the “analogous study of a language writing system or orthography as seen in the various kinds of hand writing or topography.

Graphology in its linguistic sense is the study of symbols that has been devised to communicate language in written form. It must be clearly distinguished from the psychological sense of the term. Thus, graphological features entails the foregrounding of quotation marks, ellipses periods, hyphens, contracted forms, the full stop, the colon, the comma, the semi colon, the question mark, the dash, the lower case letters, bold print, capitalization, small print and so on.

This feature is used to capture the attention of the readers. This is enhanced by the juxtaposition of different shapes and sizes of words and phrases which are eye catching.

Consider the following samples of Daily Nation Headlines on ICC.

- I made up story, witness tells ICC.
- Uhuru seeks ICC nod for video link.
- Why cases against Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto won’t end.
- As a matter of courage and dignity, Uhuru should travel to the Hague.

Samples of the Standard Headlines on ICC

- ICC witness: my claims were never verified.
- Uhuru seeks to excuse himself from appearing before ICC.
- Will president listen to his conscience or defer to legislators on ICC.

The headlines are linguistic syntagms which aim to attract the attention of the reader to the topic of the news story. The linguistic signs which are employed in the headline suggest to the reader the appropriate codes which are needed to understand.

The significant thing about a newspaper headline is that it contains a clear, concise and if possible intriguing message. This is to stimulate interest in the potential reader, who on the average, is a busy person looking for what may capture his attention. The major means of producing ‘eye-catching’ effects is by making use of the full range of graphic contrasts.

The first alphabet is boldly typed with a larger font size than all other alphabets. This method is used in the two newspapers under study but not throughout. The use of bold were employed throughout the texts to direct the reader in making meaning of the text and point out what the newspaper deem to be of particular significance to the understanding of the news .

There is a slight difference between the two papers under study. Whereas the first alphabets of content words in both papers are written in uppercase and function words in lowercase, there is something different about the content (implied meanings) of the headlines.

This may be in their attempt to manipulate information to appeal to their readers who as stated earlier are from varying political divides and differ in their perception of this emotive subject of ICC. Consider the following headlines of news coverage of the same ICC witness by the two newspapers published on the same day:

- Nation reads: ‘Uhuru seeks ICC nod for video link.’_‘but
- The Standard reads ‘Uhuru seeks to excuse himself from appearing before ICC.

The meaning portrayed may be the same but there is a slight difference if you read critically. In the first statement, the expected ‘doer’ of the action is ICC while in the second the expected ‘doer’ of the action is Uhuru. The first statement seems to portray him as law abiding but the second seems to portray him as a person who can ‘excuse himself’. The implication varies depending on the political divide of the readers. No wonder the paper varies in popularity depending on the political affiliation of the region in question.

Graphic codes were also considered in the headlines. The photographs used in the newspapers usually undergo a process of selection. One image will be chosen over another as it connotes a message that the selectors of the photograph want to communicate. The images are also used to ‘work out’ the readers’ emotions. It has been argued that before a photograph is used in a newspaper, it’s worked on and constructed according to professional, aesthetic or ideological norms

Consider the following differential selection of newspaper headlines based on the same ICC witness and stories:

- ‘Uhuru seeks ICC nod for video link vs ‘Uhuru seeks to excuse himself from appearing before ICC.
- I made up story, witness tells ICC vs ICC witness: My claims were never verified.

Possibility of Manipulating information in the headline: There seems to be deliberate attempt by both newspapers to ‘take sides’ in their reporting of the ICC case. Consider this reporting of the same witness in ICC: I made up story, witness tells ICC (Daily Nation)

The story starts... A witness yesterday said he lied that Deputy President hosted more than 2,000 youth for three days at his Eldoret home to plan violence...

The story ends... witness 604 and 495 have also admitted lying when they gave evidence in the past two weeks.

The story in the Daily Nation emphasizes that the witness admitted that he lied to the ICC to implicate the deputy president because he was promised money. The story also ends by stating that there are other witnesses who have admitted lying to ICC to implicate deputy president. The connotation seems to be that he is innocent and possibly a victim of something else. It is treated as good news worth space. (Daily Nation is perceived by many as pro-government)

ICC witness: My claims were never verified. (The Standard)

A witness accused the International Criminal Court (ICC) investigators of failure to verify his allegations against deputy president....

The story in The Standard emphasizes on ICC failure rather than witness admission that he lied to the court. The headline is in smaller font and occupies relatively small space compared to that on Daily Nation. This seems to be bad news to the newspaper. The connotation seems to be disappointment that ICC investigators did a ‘shoddy’ job and justice may not be served. (*The Standard* is perceived by many as pro-opposition).

Interestingly, each newspaper version used different photographs. The Daily Nation used the photograph of ‘smiling Uhuru’s lawyer’ with the caption ‘This meeting is of great importance and significance’. This photograph may connote optimism and positivism. However, ‘The Standard’ photograph carried emotionalism because the picture showed a subdued president Uhuru at the ICC Chambers during the pre-trial hearings. This photograph may connote impunity, tragedy, guilt or injustice.

Paradigmatically, photographs involve connotations, and thus the significance of the particular photographs which have been chosen can be seen more clearly when considering what other paradigmatic connotations might have appeared in their place. For example the connotations of the picture of Uhuru at the ICC chambers during pre-trial would change considerably if he was not in court chambers. Likewise, the connotations of the picture would change if he was not looking directly at the judges.

The conclusion is that newspaper reporters select events which they consider to be worthy of being printed as news, and excluding news which they perceive to be irrelevant, insignificant or unworthy of news coverage depending on their affiliations and readership.

- **Lexical-Semantic Analysis**

Lexical-Semantics is a subfield of linguistic Semantics. It is the study of how and what the words of a language denote (Pustejovsky, 1995). Words can be taken to denote things in the world or concepts, depending on the particular approach to lexical semantics.

Words are essential in language and they influence the outcome of whatever we write or say. The diction a writer uses has great influence on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the message being passed across.

- **Use of Registers**

It is a technical term for words, phrases or sentence structures which are associated with a particular group of writers or professional .e.g. legal, medical and so on.

If a register is inadequately used, communication will be impeded. The writer may decide to employ simple and concrete words or abstract and obscure words and expressions. In this section, attention was paid to the meaning(s) generated by the lexical items. The newspaper writers in their choice of lexical items drew from a wide range of registers.

(i) Legal Register in both newspapers.

...Kenya's withdrawal from International Criminal Court (ICC)

...ICC as a political, neo-colonial and racist co

...Screening asylum-seeker

...International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha

...Trial Chamber V (B) to adjourn the status conference

...The defense lawyers, Examination-in-chief, prosecution lawyer.

...recanted statement. Prosecute, evidence, the chambers

iii. Number of persons:

... hosting more than 2000 youths.

...witness number 516 told the court.

...witness 604 and 495 have also admitted lying...when you hear a country has lost 190,000civilians in a war

- **Foregrounding**

Foregrounding means the most important or prominent position. Foregrounding has been employed in Eve magazine to construct gender. The magazine's name itself 'Eve' foregrounds women. Biblically Eve is the first woman in the whole world. Eve magazine works to "anchor" some meanings in preference to others. Hall calls this the 'preferred meaning' (Hall, 1980:7). However, readers of magazines like Eve are not completely powerless. They can offer oppositional readings, which actively resist the 'preferred'

meaning. That explains why men readings *Eve magazines* are unlikely to fit comfortably into the identity of the reader constructed.

- **Quotes**

Almost all news stories have comments from those involved in the story or from onlookers who claim to have first hand information.

...’the meeting is of great importance and significance’ Uhuru Defense lawyer Steven Kay, Daily Nation Friday 26th September 2014.

‘Mr. Kenyatta explicitly waives his right of attendance and will be represented by his legal team...’ Uhuru Defense lawyer Steven Kay, The Standard Friday 26th September 2014.

Their function is to make the article more objective by keeping a balanced viewpoint. Alternatively, they can make the article more subjective by indicating bias.

- **Cohesion**

Cohesion is the organization or creation of ties between sentences by lexical and grammatical means through the use of references, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion.

Examples of cohesion in our data are:

...however, in court, the witness said he was coached by two persons he met for three hours...

...recently, in a surprise testimony before the ICC, witness number 604 said he also made false allegations against Ruto... (The Standard Friday 26th September 2014).

...meanwhile, Attorney General Githu Muigai is also required to attend the first day of the status conference... (Daily Nation Friday 26th September 2014).

- **Figurative Language Analysis**

Any study of language and style which ignores the figurative use of language is to a large extent impoverished and shallow. We use figures of speech sometimes when we speak or write to make our ideas clearer, vivid and even to add aesthetic value to what we say or write. This feature has not been ignored by the editorials under study.

Generally, figures of speech add artistically to the quality of the newspaper reporting. In as much as ICC is a sensitive issue in Kenya, the newspapers still passed their messages across. It’s upon the readers to read between the lines and avoid being tricked by manipulated texts.

African Proverbs and Wise Sayings

The sampled article ‘As a matter of courage and dignity, Uhuru should travel to the Hague’ (Daily Nation, Friday September 26th 2014) starts and ends in a proverb. It’s a persuasive article meant for convincing the president of Kenya to accept attending the status conference in ICC.

Proverb 1: Don’t insult the crocodile while your backside is still in water.

In the African setup, a crocodile has lived with human beings for ages. It remains harmless so long as you keep off from its home, that is, water.

The literal meaning is that you can insult it when you are on dry land since it cannot reach you. After all, any attempt of the crocodile to leave would be suicidal. However, you insult it while in water at your own risk!

The symbolic meaning is that crocodile symbolizes the Western countries which are believed to manipulate ICC at will to punish African states. Being in water means being in dependency of the Western countries for financial and other aids.

Therefore the proverb means that Kenya and by extension Uhuru is dependent on the Western countries and cannot afford to defy ICC. The only option is to 'smile' at the crocodile since you are already in water!

Proverb 2: As the Nigerians would say, the frown on the face of the goat will not stop it from being taken to the market.

The literal meaning is that whether the goat is happy or not, it will not stop the owner from taking it to the market. The owner has absolute powers over the fate of the goat.

The symbolic meaning is that the goat symbolizes Kenya/Africa and by extension Uhuru and being taken to the market symbolizes being prosecuted in Hague. It means that Africans will be subjected to ICC proceedings whether they are happy, like it or not.

Metaphoric Features

Metaphorical statements are essential in good writing. It is a kind of spice of good writing and reading.

The sampled article: Will president listen to his conscience or defer to legislators on ICC. (The Standard Monday September 22nd 2014).

Examples are:

'...accuses the government of Kenya of stonewalling and withholding crucial evidence''

Stonewalling is the refusal to communicate or cooperate. In most cases, stonewalling is used to create a delay compared to putting the conversation off forever

...tantrums thrown by local politician will not intimidate the court. This means to become very angry and unreasonable.

• Paradox and Irony

A statement containing two opposite ideas that make it seem impossible or unlikely, although it is probably true. An example is in the article:

'Why cases against Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto won't end '(Daily Nation Tuesday September 23rd 2014.

'...The OTP, the office of the registrar and judges know that if they bring the two Kenyan cases to a close, they will become jobless. So it does not matter whether there is evidence against President Kenyatta and Mr. Ruto; the cases will be kept pending for as long as possible. That is international 'justice for you'.

The idea of lack of evidence and the case pending as long as possible is paradoxical. Then, reference that prolonging a case whether there is evidence or not as international 'justice' is ironical because it is actually lack of justice. Otherwise how can you explain procrastination of justice merely for people to earn money as international justice?

• Repetition

It is repetition of language units in speech (separate words, word-combinations or sentences) for a purpose.

For example, in the newspaper article: As a matter of courage and dignity, Uhuru should travel to the Hague, the symbolic word crocodile is repeated four times. The crocodile symbolizes the Western countries which are believed to manipulate ICC at will to punish African states

• Rhetorical Question

A rhetorical question is a figure of speech in the form of a question that is asked in order to make a point. The question is posed not to elicit a specific answer, but rather to encourage the listener to consider a

message or viewpoint. They are questions that require no actual reply. The answers are already implied in the context. Examples from the text are:

- Will president listen to his conscience or defer to legislators on ICC? (The Standard Monday September 22nd 2014)
- Why cases against Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto won't end. (Daily Nation Tuesday September 23rd 2014)
- My view is that as a matter of personal courage and dignity, the president should go to the Hague, step into crocodile's mouth as it were .Why? (Daily Nation ,Friday September 26th 2014)

Rhetorical questions, as a stylistic device is important in daily language because of the significant change it can bring about. The absence or presence of a rhetorical question in some of newspaper reporting would change the impact altogether.

A rhetoric question enhances the expressiveness of speech. Used in oratory style, rhetoric questions aim at catching the attention of the audience, making the sequential sound persuasive and significant.

4. Conclusion

It is obvious from the analyses of the newspapers carried out in this study, that the language of newspapers reporting is more often than not exhibiting some unique features. Language and news reporting is inseparable. Linguistic items were carefully selected by the newspapers to achieve their intentions and goals.

The following stylistic features were also used: text font, graphics, use of figurative language (paradox/irony, repetition, rhetorical questions, metaphorical features, African proverbs/Wise Sayings, Lexical semantics features, cohesion and quotes.

It was also discovered that the writers used simple and exact words which enhanced the clarity of their work. Various sentence types were also employed to sustain the readers' interest.

It was observed that information was manipulated. Reading analytically and thinking a bit more deeply showed that even newspaper reports on the same thing differed in meaning.

It seemed as if the views of newspapers are sometimes predetermined by their political ideology i.e. which political divide they support.

Thus news is a social construct dependent on what is deemed to be important by those who work in the 'news industry' based on certain codes of behavior which have been learned by news workers in order to do their job.

5. Recommendation

Readers should avoid being tricked by the manipulation of texts by identifying bias when reading newspaper articles.

More research should be done on how the media manipulates information to suit their interest.

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