



A Critical Analysis of Emerging Attitudes from the Mau Forest Restoration Discourse in Kenya

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Albert Moinani, Margaret Barasa & Eucabeth Ong'au

Department of Linguistics, Languages and Literature,
Kisii University, Kenya

Corresponding author email: albert.mogambi@yahoo.com

Abstract

This essay seeks to examine attitudes towards forest conservation as covertly expressed in the Mau Forest conservation discourse. It was based on the assumption that political discourse informs and influences social attitudes towards environmental conservation. The study was guided by Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework. The study adopted a qualitative research design. The study focused on a population of 35 speeches. Downsampling procedure was used to select 20 speeches by political leaders on the Mau Forest debate. These speeches were obtained from the media for transcription and analysis. The CDA analysis was carried out on a sample of texts from the corpus and the data were analyzed using qualitative techniques. The data analysis was based on the lexical choices and language features and their social implications for forest conservation in Kenya. The results indicated that various language techniques such as lexicalization, metaphors, and rhetorical questions served to express the speakers' hatred, contempt and dislike for the forest conservation cause. The data was presented as transcripts or excerpts of political utterances. The findings of this study would be beneficial to the Government and policymakers by showing that language can help achieve a shift in attitudes and behaviour on forest conservation issues.

Keywords: forest conservation, ideology, language techniques, political discourse, social attitude



1.0 Introduction

Nature, conservation for instance, as a very important part of modern politics, nearly everywhere in the world trails way behind the necessary dimension. More often than not, connections between language and conservation are hidden and can only be seen by the erudite eye (Finke, 1998). Linguists should therefore use their knowledge and expertise to reveal these hidden connections between language and conservation for social action. The linguists' efforts would therefore go a long way in educating the people and informing policy makers on the interrelationship between political discourse and forest conservation. Goshgarian (1998), Malvern (2000), Potter (2009), Njoroge (2011) and Barasa (2014) have indicated that political discourse plays a big role in influencing hearers' attitude formation towards many societal issues. These studies have largely focused on how political leaders' utterances have influenced people's attitudes towards political viewpoints. There is need therefore to focus on the connection between political discourse and attitude formation towards forest conservation. Most studies on political discourse have focused on the power of the politicians' voices in influencing masses to form opinions and attitudes towards political viewpoints. There is need therefore, to shift focus to other emerging issues such as the politics of climate change and global warming. This is largely due to the fact that politicians are part of the elite members of society who inform, influence, and direct public opinion on many societal issues. Therefore, it is important to study the politicians' language use so as to determine its implications for forest conservation in the country. The question of the Mau Forest restoration keeps recurring on the Kenyan political scene and is one of the key topics in the current political discourse in the country. Despite the heated debate on the importance of conserving the Mau Forest, the dissenting political voices are still loud enough. The forest eviction programme has in the recent past sparked the war of words between the political leaders from different political camps. However, the question on who will save the Mau Forest still remains unanswered. This question needs to be answered urgently so as to save the Mau complex and the other forests in the country.

The Mau complex is Kenya's largest water tower. It spreads over four hundred thousand hectares making it Kenya's largest closed canopy ecosystem (Ministry of Environment report, 2010). It is the single most important water catchment in Rift Valley and Western Kenya. This is because it is the source of all major rivers which form tributaries from as far as Lake Turkana in the North to Lake Natron in the south and also to Kenya's most populous Lake Victoria basin. The Mau Forest complex regulates water flow, mitigates flooding, regulates ground water recharge and most importantly mitigates climate change by storing carbon. The forest is therefore globally important for mitigating climate change.

In spite of its national and global importance, many areas of the forest had been deforested and degraded in the past few decades (Ministry of Environment report, 2010). The Government and development partners embarked on a programme to rehabilitate the forest. This project cost two hundred and thirty one billion shillings in the last ten years (National Climate Change Response Strategy, 2013). Despite such efforts, political leaders from Rift Valley came out strongly and campaigned in public rallies against the Mau Forest restoration programme (NCCRS 2013). The forest restoration programme was turned into a political issue. For instance, between 2005 and 2019, the forest conservation featured prominently in political campaigns in the Rift Valley, especially during electioneering periods. In the meantime, large tracts of forest had been cleared and turned into farmland (NCCRS 2013). The consequences of such practices had already been observed in Kenya: shrinking arable land, persistent dry spells, flooding and an unpredictable weather pattern (Ministry of Environment report, 2010). Ironically, many areas of the Mau Forest Complex had been deforested or degraded in the past few decades, in spite of its national and global importance (NCCRS, 2013). Degazettement of forest reserves and continuous widespread encroachment had led to the destruction of over one hundred thousand hectares since 2000 (Ministry of Environment Report, 2010). This scenario impacted negatively on rivers originating from the western and eastern slopes of the Mau Forest. These include Ewaso Nyiro, Mara, Sondu, Molo and Njoro. The forest loss had therefore resulted to ecological and hydrological changes which threatened the sustainable future of areas downstream (NCCRS, 2013).

The Government, development partners and other stakeholders campaigned hard for environmental conservation. Such efforts were aimed at restoring Kenya's forest cover which UNEP 2010 reports indicated stood at two percent instead of the globally recommended minimum of 10 percent. UNEP and other environment agencies warned that unless this minimum forest cover was attained, the country risked catastrophic ecological disasters. UNEP and other stakeholders had committed millions of dollars in forest conservation projects in the country. The Government initiated a move in 2010 to evict forest dwellers from the Mau forest so as to allow for rehabilitation of the depleted sections of the forest. The Government and other development partners had so far spent a total of two hundred and thirty one billion shillings in the last ten years for the forest conservation programme (NCCRS, 2013). However, over two thousand people had returned to the forest in spite of the forceful evictions carried out by the government in 2015 (The Standard, March 4, 2015). In 2018, the government re-initiated the forest eviction programme targeting over four thousand households who had encroached on the forest areas again (Daily Nation, July 20, 2018). The move triggered a series of political campaigns against the eviction exercise with politicians claiming that their communities were being oppressed by their political rivals for political reasons.

What politicians say sets the agenda for discussion among the public (Ralph & Stanyer, 2007). These discussions or public debate go a long way in shaping people's opinions on many different issues manifest in political speeches. This is because the language that political leaders use plays a big role in attitude formation towards various issues in society. Politicians use language to convey information, persuade their hearers, and convey attitudes, feelings and emotions. There was need therefore to find out the relationship between language use and forest conservation in Kenya. Discourse analyses of political utterances have equally shown that political utterances exhibit language techniques which make hearers form opinions favourable to speakers' predetermined ends. Therefore, political leaders have been known to use language to lead and mislead, distort reality and to shape society's perception of the world (Goshgarian, 1998). This study sought to find out the language techniques manifest in the political discourse on forest conservation and their social implications for forest conservation in the country. Therefore, there is more that linguists need to do to reveal the underlying interrelationship between language and conservation. This is because many conservationists seem to be unaware of the potent messages of language and its ability to influence people and society in terms of attitude and behavior (Schultz, 1992). This study therefore set out to investigate the Mau forest discourse and examine its implications for forest conservation in the country.

2.0 Literature Review

Political discourse is concerned with how language can be used to manipulate thought (Wodak, 1989). Such manipulation is also of great concern to political discourse. Politicians seem to want to hide the negative within particular formulations such that the public may not see the truth or horror (van Dijk, 1998). That is, politicians use language to conceal the reality so as to achieve political goals. This concern formed the thrust of this study. This study sought to bring to light the attitudes and ideologies about forest conservation hidden behind the politicians' language use. Political discourse is characterized by the different features. They include competitiveness, aggressiveness, ideological character, and theatricality (Wodak, 1989, Mazayev, 2005). Competitiveness refers to continuous dialogue or duel between the party in power and opposition in which opponents attack each other from time to time. This competitiveness is usually seen during parliamentary debates and pre-election campaigns. Aggressiveness on the other hand refers to violent or hostile attitude/behaviour. Aggressiveness is connected with struggle for power, social status, recognition, and strengthening territorial positions. Verbal aggression is presented by specific speech acts (such as threats and slogans). Highlighting such speech acts is a demonstration of political force directed to downgrade the status of the addressee. Ideological character refers to the systems of social representations, group knowledge,

beliefs, and opinions based on group values, norms, and interests. Theatricality is based on the view that every political event is seen as a performance played for the addressees. This performance has a fascinating plot and unpredictable end. Politicians communicating with each other or media are aware of 'spectator' audience. The politicians therefore intentionally or unintentionally act or 'work for the public' trying to make an impression. This implies that the political 'theatre' is based on the image of the politicians. Political discourse therefore becomes suitable for politicians as a way of enticing their audience to accept the speakers' perceptions, viewpoints, beliefs and values about forest conservation. The analysis of the linguistic features politicians use in their discourse and the implications of such strategies for forest conservation was a major concern for this study. This is because political discourse is concerned with power struggles geared towards making major changes in public opinion in regard to who makes decisions, who controls resources, and who controls other people's behaviour.

The issue of environment and its preservation is as old as mankind. After God created Adam and Eve, He put them in the Garden of Eden. God gave Adam the task of naming every plant and creature that God made. Adam was also given the task of tending the Garden (Genesis 2:19). Thus, the connection between language and the environment dates back to the time of creation. Man was placed at the centre of the environmental conservation cause from the time of creation for his own good and that of other creatures. Environmental concerns have been expressed from different disciplines and from different parts of the world. Scholars have interrogated the subject of environment from diverse perspectives. The subject of environmental conservation has also caught the attention of linguists and this has led to a sub-discipline of language known as ecolinguistics. This sub-discipline concerns itself with the interrelationship between language and the environment. A vast body of both academic research and activist, political as well as journalistic work in ecolinguistics has been produced in the past three decades (Alexander & Stibbe, 2013). This study also was intended to add to this pool of knowledge besides shedding more light on the interrelationship between language and forest conservation in Kenya. The pivot of most work in Kenya in ecolinguistics is the sustainability of the ecosystem, including human life, especially that of posterity. Ecolinguistics is committed to helping humankind transcend anthropocentrism that marks man's relationship with other species (Alexander & Stibbe, 2013). Anthropocentrism allows humans to view themselves as the centre of the universe. That is, man should do anything in the environment to benefit himself regardless of the harm it causes other species. Ecolinguistics is therefore geared towards relationships which sustain life. Thus, ecolinguistics is the study of the impact of language on the life-sustaining relationships among humans and other organisms and the physical environment. This study also investigated the relationship between politicians' language use and forest conservation in Kenya.

Ecolinguistics is a platform for the study of all language phenomena, including the morphosyntactic, phonological, and phonetic domains (Cuoto, 2013). Ecolinguistics therefore must transcend sociolinguistics and eco-critical discourse analysis by incorporating theoretical and methodological ideas from the social and psychological sciences. That is, the language speakers use, the type of sentences they construct, and the lexical choices they make can be analyzed to reveal how they perceive environmental issues. This study was also concerned with the political leaders' lexical choices and syntactic structures and their implications for forest conservation in Kenya. Language is part of reality, shaper of reality, and metaphor of reality (Fill & Mulhauser, 2001). That is, language is part of the physical and psychological environment. Language also shapes the way human beings perceive and construct the physical environment. In other words, the way we use language shows our perception of the world around us (Halliday, 1992). This perception is revealed through lexical choices, metaphors, and types of sentences speakers construct. For example, the lexical choices and metaphors speakers use indicate their perception of natural resources. This study also looked at the political leaders' lexical choices, metaphors and syntactic constructions so as to describe their perceptions of the forest conservation phenomenon.

A critical analysis of ecological texts sets out to unearth what is deeply embedded in or even hidden by certain linguistic choices (Alexander & Stibbe, 2013). Language has been used to conceal environmental harm from the public eye. For instance, corporate entities have been observed to cause environmental harm but they use language to conceal this. Nominalization is one of the linguistic strategies used to conceal those responsible for environmental harm. For example, switching the terminology from global warming to the agentless nominalization climate change could have been an attempt by corporate power brokers with immense control over media discourse to present environmental problems as inevitable and natural (Alexander & Stibbe, 2013). Ecolinguistics analyzes language to reveal the stories we live by, judges these stories according to an ecosophy, resists the stories which oppose the ecosophy and contributes to the search for new stories to live by (Stibbe, 2015). Ecolinguistics seeks to explore linguistic phenomena found in inter-language, inter-human, and human-nature relationship from the perspective of ecological philosophy. Ecolinguistics adopts 'ecosophy' as its principle narrative framework. Central to ecosophy is the commitment to ecological equilibrium, which, unlike positivist worldviews, rejects the separation between human beings and nature under Cartesian dualism and purposes that ecological crises require not only scientific solutions but also moral introspection of anthropocentric activities (Naess, 2018).

These views fall under ecologism, which is a field of study of new ways on how man interacts with nature. Ecologism has three tenets namely anthropocentrism, ecocentrism and moral extensionism. Anthropocentrism is about concern for humans

at the expense of the other creatures in the environment (as long as humans benefit, there should be no worry about the environment). Ecocentrism focuses on protecting the environment from man's destructive activities whereas moral extensionism says that the environment has a right to live, just like humans. These rights should be respected. This study was also concerned with the analysis of political leaders' stories about forest conservation in Kenya. The stories were analyzed under the CDA framework so as to unearth the speakers' perceptions and attitudes towards forest conservation for social action. Language plays a pivotal role in ecological issues and the environmental problems which affect more and more groupings and individuals (Fill, 2001). As far as conservation is concerned, it is a mistake to believe that technical experts and natural scientists are the appropriate or only experts in this field. The problems of the environment are problems of the consciousness of our self and its role rather than problems of nature itself (Finke, 1998). Linguists should be admitted as experts on some of the issues involved, more especially in reforming man and his attitudes. This study addressed Fill's concerns by analyzing critically the political discourse on the Mau forest so as to reveal the hidden ideologies and show the interrelationship between language and conservation.

The viewpoint a political leader chooses has a great impact on how the public view environmental issues (Kristen & Barbra et al, 2000). This implies that what one individual says can change the way people think about environmental issues. In the contemporary times, former US President, Barack Obama and the leader of the Roman Catholic Church, Pope Francis are among key leaders who have expressed concern over environmental degradation. In his State of the Union address (Daily Nation, August 3, 2015), President Obama observed that climate change was no longer an issue for future generations but a reality for the current generation. He said that taking a stand against climate change is a moral obligation and promised to rally all world leaders to champion this course so as to save the world from a looming climatic catastrophe. Pope Francis on his part told the 70th United Nations Assembly that there is need for urgent action to halt the earth's destruction through environmental degradation (Daily Nation, September 29, 2015). The Pope said that he had launched a teaching document to champion the rights of the environment. He said that the environment has rights and mankind has no authority to abuse them. He urged world leaders and governments to take action against those who were responsible for environmental degradation because of selfish and boundless thirst for money. These sentiments have also featured prominently during the World Summit on Climate Change since 2015 to date. What is said or written by political leaders therefore affects the targets' attitude. These effects can be manifested or hidden from natural observations (Potter, 2000). Some of these effects can be cognitive, affective or attitudinal. The attitudes are inferred most often through affective measures which include verbal statements of an evaluative nature. When people are exposed to media

messages, they compare those messages (or elements within those messages) to their standards thus making value judgment of those elements. Those value judgments are their attitude. This study focused on the value judgements discernible in the politicians' discourse on forest restoration. This made it possible for the researcher to describe the politicians' attitudes towards forest conservation. The politicians' value judgements offer rich descriptions of patterns of behaviour and patterns of thinking thus revealing the effect. This study was informed by Potter's work on methods of describing the influence of political discourse on hearers' attitude formation.

2.0 Theoretical Framework

Different theories have been advanced in the study of political discourse. This study was guided by Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The CDA framework adopted by this study incorporated the tenets of Corpus Linguistics (CL) so as to account for the statistical significance of specific key words in the forest conservation corpus. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a practically-oriented form of discourse analysis aimed at addressing social problems. It seeks not merely to describe language but also to offer critical linguistic resources to those wishing to resist various forms of power. Therefore, the goal of CDA may be seen as to uncover the ideological assumptions that are hidden within texts. CDA is a form of discourse analysis which uses Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) to study how formal linguistic features of text, such as vocabulary and grammar, are related to social power. The relationship between text and power is mediated by ideology. People are often unaware of this ideological mediation of power in language. Therefore, the goal of CDA may be seen as to uncover the ideological assumptions that are hidden within texts. According to CDA and SFG, speakers use language to express how they perceive the world around them, hence their feelings about their environment. This is for both physical and social environment. The formal language features such as specific lexical choices, metaphors, rhetorical questions, and repetition make political discourse persuasive. Persuasive speech provides speakers with the means to convince and influence their hearers to accept perceptions, viewpoints, opinions and attitudes favourable to the speakers' interests (Halliday, 1992). Fairclough also borrows from Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). This theory is concerned with how language choice enables one to convey meanings of different kinds. According to Halliday (1985, 1994), a language is a 'system of making meanings'. People use language to express meaning and therefore it is in understanding the theory behind the assembling of words to form a grammar that meaning can be interpreted correctly. Thus, Halliday sees language as made up of semantic units and that a functional grammar is needed to bring out the meanings of wordings. Halliday states that this kind of analysis is functional because it is about analyzing language in use according to

context. Halliday identifies three functions that language performs, namely; ideational, interpersonal and textual.

The ideational metafunction is concerned with the representation of processes, events, actions, sensations that constitute life, the world and everything. That is, the ideational metafunction deals with the encoding of reality. This means that language enables human beings to build a mental picture of reality, to make sense of what goes on around them and inside them. The lexical choices speakers make enable them to encode both semantically and syntactically mental pictures of the physical world and the world of their imagination. Therefore, in serving the ideational function, language gives structures to experience and helps to determine our way of looking at things, so that it requires some intellectual effort to see them in any way than that which our language suggests to us. Language also serves the interpersonal metafunction which is concerned with the ways in which people interact through language. That is, the lexical choices speakers make serve to reflect their opinions and attitudes towards those they interact with in society. The words, phrases and expressions speakers choose to use in specific contexts will be embedded with their feelings and attitudes. This implies that the lexical choices speakers use to refer to persons, groups, social relations or social issues depend on different contexts. These include social context (group membership), socio-cultural context (norms, beliefs, values), and personal context (mood, opinion). These contexts are ideology based. The speakers therefore choose specific words, names, and personal pronouns to refer to members of in-group and those of out-group depending on feelings and opinion. Thus, specific names and pronouns chosen serve to reveal what the speaker feels and how he perceives the addressee. The same applies to social relations or social issues. Thus, lexicalization is ideological. Apart from the ideational and interpersonal functions, language also serves the textual metafunction. This function is concerned with how words and sentences are organized to make the text and to steer the reader or hearer's interpretations of events and people (Eggins, 1994, and Halliday, 1994). That is, the type of sentences a speaker chooses to construct can serve the purpose of managing important information or beliefs. Such syntactic structures can be used to emphasize, de-emphasize or conceal meanings and beliefs depending on whether the meanings and beliefs are consistent or inconsistent with the interests of the speaker (van Dijk, 1993). For instance, negative actions will be syntactically played down by the use of agentless passive constructions. On the other hand, positive actions will be highlighted with actors given prominence in active sentences. This study was guided by SFG in the analysis of political leaders' speeches and particularly on lexical choices made by political leaders in the Mau forest restoration discourse. The context was instrumental in the interpretation of the speakers' lexical choices and the embedded attitudes and perceptions. This aimed at revealing what speakers felt based on their experiences of the real world including the inner world of their consciousness. What the speakers felt was to be reflected by the

lexical choices they made, consequently revealing their attitude towards forest conservation.

In sum, SFG just like CDA informed this study in the analysis of the politicians' language use during the Mau forest conservation debate. This analysis revealed how the politicians view the conservation debate through their choice of words and the structure of their texts. The analysis of language use would therefore reveal the values and ideological constructs found in the politicians' discourse on Mau forest conservation. It is these values and ideological constructs that the speakers intended to share with the people through discourse. Because of SFG's social constructivist conception of language, and CDA's practical-orientation to addressing social problems, together they have been used in many spheres of social struggle. Many environmental issues involve power struggles between opposing groups, and these struggles frequently take place in, and over, language. SFG and CDA can help us become more systematically and critically aware of the language in which environmental matters are discussed. Such awareness can help us understand the ideological presuppositions of environmental texts. Those groups who are in control of most influential public discourses, that is symbolic elites such as politicians, journalists, scholars, teachers and writers, thus play a special role in the reproduction of dominant knowledge and ideologies in society (van Dijk 2005). Since prejudices are not innate, but socially acquired, and since such acquisition is predominantly discursive, the public discourses of the symbolic elites are the primary source of shared ethnic prejudices and ideologies (van Dijk, 1993). This study looked at the implications of the political discourse in regard to forest conservation in Kenya. This study also looked at the ideological foundations of what the politicians say in relation to conservation. Having found no work in similar area, it is our belief that this study is of great contribution to CDA as theory.

4.0 Methodology

This study used a Qualitative research design. The design presents a qualitative analysis, comparison and interpretation of the study's findings to find a solution to significant problems in society (Glesne, 2012). The qualitative approach also makes it possible to analyze attitude, behaviour and values (Creswell, 2012). Human phenomenon that cannot be investigated by direct observation such as attitude and other emotions can be studied using qualitative methods. Qualitative research makes it possible to deal with intangible realities which can only be studied holistically. Such realities exist as constructions only in the minds of people and cannot be divided into parts that yield measurable characteristics (Kothari, 2004).

5.0 Results and Discussion

5.1 Attitudes which emerge from the Mau Forest Restoration Discourse

This study sought to reveal the attitudes, and ideologies underpinning the political discourse on the Mau Forest conservation issue. The Government initiated a move in 2010 to evict forest dwellers from the Mau forest so as to allow for rehabilitation of the depleted sections of the forest. The Government and other development partners had so far spent a total of two hundred and thirty one billion shillings in the last ten years for the forest conservation programme (NCCRS, 2013). However, over two thousand people had returned to the forest in spite of the forceful evictions carried out by the government in 2015 (The Standard, March 4, 2015). In 2018, the government re-initiated the forest eviction programme targeting over four thousand households who had encroached on the forest areas again (Daily Nation, July 20, 2018). The move triggered a series of political campaigns against the eviction exercise with politicians claiming that their communities were being oppressed by their political rivals for political reasons. The following are some of ways the politicians used to covertly express their feelings.S

5.2 Lexicalization and Attitude Formation

Speakers chose to use specific lexical items to refer to the Mau Forest conservation programme. The words chosen bore either positive or negative connotations depending on each speaker's feelings, hence attitude towards the forest conservation issue. The following samples display a consistent pattern of speakers using derogatory and diminutive lexical items to refer to the forest conservation cause and those supporting the same. Those supporting the forest conservation cause are identified with lexical items which signal brutality, insensitivity and abuse of human rights. The following example illustrates this.

Sample I

An **outsider** or even leaders from outside
come to **dictate** what people of Rift Valley should do-
You **push** people in the name of water catchment areas...
You **shout** eviction! Eviction!...
You **oppress** people-imagining Mau!
Does all water come from Mau?..(speech 10 line 3-4,12-14)

Sample I indicates the speakers' hatred towards those advocating for the conservation of the Mau Forest. The speakers' lexical choices reveal that those in support of the forest conservation programme are perceived as people out to cause pain and suffering

to the people of Rift Valley. The pronoun 'you' which refers to those supporting the conservation cause co-occurs with verbs which signal inhuman treatment. These verbs include *push, dictate, oppress, and shout*. The speakers feel that these people are inhuman and that the forest conservation programme they espouse is equally insensitive to the plight of the people of Rift Valley (our people). The speakers therefore dislike the entire forest conservation programme, hence negative attitude. Other lexical choices made equally reveal the speaker's negative feelings towards the forest conservation issue. These lexical choices the speakers made indicate abuse of human rights. The forest conservation issue is thus regarded as an abuse of the people's rights, hence speaker's disapproval of the forest conservation issue. The following example illustrates this.

Sample 2

*...we do not want **forceful** eviction...*

*...we do not want **brutality** of people...*

*.....there have been **insinuations** that other- settlers-*

in other areas- Mount Kenya- and I don't know

which other forests- were removed

Without being compensated- I want to ask –Wangari Maathai ...to tell the truth

(speech 15 line26-29)

(speech 15 line26-29)

Other making the people allegations to tell the truth speech 14 line 1_4

Sample 2 indicates the speakers' disapproval of the forest conservation issue. The use of such words as *brutality, insinuations, allegations, and forceful* indicate the speakers' dislike and detestation for the conservation programme. They describe the programme negatively as a form of brutality and excessive use of force on the people. The speakers therefore express their rejection and opposition to this programme.

5.3 Metaphors and Attitude Formation

A metaphor is a word or expression with an underlying meaning which is different from the literal meaning of such an expression. The following examples focus on the linguistic metaphors manifest in the Mau Forest conservation discourse and their implications for forest conservation. Linguistic metaphors are usually opinion-based and they imply speaker's attitude.

Sample 3

*You push people- are people **rats and cats?**
We should bear in mind that we are dealing with
Human beings, and not **chicken!** (speech 13)
An outsider or even leaders from outside-to come and
Dictate what the people of Rift Valley should do-are
There no **men** and leaders in Rift Valley?(speech 10)
We have told Nyayo to shut up...
We are currently clearing up the mess he created.
We are clearing his **vomit...**let him shut up! (speech 18).*

Sample 3 indicates the different metaphors the speakers used to express their opinions about the forest conservation issue. The speakers loathe those advocating for Mau forest conservation. The metaphors show that the speakers perceived the forest conservation programme as unpleasant to the people of Rift Valley (our people). The image of the rat serves to portray those advocating for forest conservation as brutal and merciless. The speaker implies that they regard the people in the forest as troublesome and destructive vermin (rats) which should be exterminated without mercy. The metaphors indicate disapproval of the forest conservation programme. The speaker argues that the programme is out to punish the people unnecessarily. The people are being pushed in the name of water catchment area. That is, the forest conservation programme is being used as an excuse to debase the people of Rift Valley. The speaker therefore feels that this programme is inhuman because it regards the people of Rift Valley as insignificant (rats). It equates the people to vermin, hence speaker dislikes and rejects the forest conservation programme.

5.4 Rhetorical questions and attitude formation

The following sample gives examples of the rhetorical questions speakers used.

Sample 4

*why Nai- Lake Naivasha- is it not dry ?
Have they queried about it-or elsewhere?
Do you want to tell me that the Mau forest
is the source of water in Ndakaini dam?
you oppress people- imagining Mau –
does all the water come from Mau?
Sundu Miriu is drying up...is Mau there?*

Sample 4 indicates the speakers' ridicule on the forest conservation programme. The speakers argue that those who are blaming the Mau Forest for the drought in the

country should be laughed at because of their ignorance. The rhetorical questions above reveal the speaker's contempt towards those who support the forest conservation cause. According to the speakers, the destruction of the Mau Forest is not related to the drought in different parts of the country. Therefore, those linking the Mau Forest to the drought in various parts of the country are displaying their ignorance hence should be ignored with contempt. The speakers also cite Ndakaini Dam which falls outside the Mau forest catchment. They also cite Lake Naivasha and Sondu Miriu which also fall outside the Mau Forest catchment area. The speakers then wonder aloud why the people in the Mau Forest should be disturbed in the name of protecting the watershed area. The speakers, although wrong, are convinced that the Mau Forest is not related to the drought in the country. Consequently, they argue that those calling for the eviction of the people from the forest are purportedly arguing out of ignorance hence should be ignored. The use of the rhetorical questions reveals the speakers' detestation and contempt about the entire forest conservation programme. The speakers use rhetorical questions to express their doubt about the argument that Mau Forest is the cause of the water crisis in various parts of the country. The rhetorical questions portray those advocating for the forest conservation as ignorant and misinformed. The speakers therefore laugh off their misinformed arguments hence negative attitude. However, it is important to note that the speakers' arguments are also misinformed. The water crisis in many areas they mention is attributed to the destruction of different watersheds. The political leaders' assertions can therefore be said to be meant to lure their people to support them for political reasons.

6.0 Conclusion

The critical analysis of the linguistic data indicates that the speakers' utterances are focused more on the political leaders winning public support for the viewpoints they represent. The political discourse on forest conservation is manifested with positive and negative representations. Each speaker praises his group and blames the other. However, those who support the forest conservation cause are described using lexical items with negative connotation. The forest conservation cause is also described using words with negative connotation hence making it appear undesirable and unnecessary. The politicians value consolidating grassroots support not for conservation but political reasons. Although they acknowledge that forest degradation is still going on unchecked, they seem less worried about this and they openly declare their rejection of the conservation cause. Even those who declare that they want to conserve the forest have covertly indicated that they do not mean it. This is manifest in their reluctance to name those responsible for allocation of forest land to individuals. Their failure, reluctance or refusal to reveal names implies that the speakers are not ready to antagonize the powers that be. If they do so, they risk losing their space in the local and national political arena. Consequently, the forest conservation turns out to be a

public relations exercise meant to hoodwink the masses. It is discernible from the data analysis that the political leaders have made their choice: political gain at the expense of forest conservation. In spite of being aware of the importance of forest conservation, it was evident that the political class disregarded it for selfish short-term political gain. Therefore, speaking publicly in support of conservation and yet condemn forest evictions at the same time is hypocritical. If the public does not wake up to this reality, the political class will hoodwink the public to destroy the Mau Forest, hence plunging the entire region into an ecological disaster. If the public, conservationists, experts and linguists make a choice to conserve the Mau Forest, their efforts will avert environmental disasters. This is true because when choices made by millions of people are added together, each individual's actions can make a difference (Kristen & Barbra, 2000). Yes, the common people can make a big difference in conserving the Mau Forest.

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