



Can't Pay. Won't Pay; Discourse of Kenyan Teachers in their Quest for Better Terms and Remuneration

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Abstract

Kenyan teachers' strikes and struggle for better pay and terms of service stretches back a long time. Teachers have formed groups on Facebook and WhatsApp where they share issues touching on their profession. These are most active during strikes. They are also active on Twitter. Data was collected from these social media platforms. Can't pay won't pay; Discourse of Kenyan Teachers in their Quest for Better Remunerations discusses the manner in which teachers discuss issues touching on them. They have a unique language with coded words, phrases and sentences. This jargon that the teachers use reveals their attitude towards their job and towards the insistence of the governments not to pay them. Critical discourse analysis provides the theoretical framework for the study. It is used both as a theory and a method. Descriptive survey research design was employed. It is hoped that the study will assist in understanding the strikes and general malaise in the education sector in a bid to reach out to the major stakeholders and bring back sanity to education.

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Kenya has been led by Presidents Jomo Kenyatta (1963-78), Daniel arapMoi (1978-2002), MwaiKibaki (2002-2013). His Excellency Uhuru Kenyatta was sworn in as President of Kenya on 9 April 2013. William Ruto is the Deputy President. Teaching has continued to lose popularity with each government. With a population of 42 million, Kenya has a population of approximately 280000 teachers employed in public schools. Kenyan teachers are represented by two unions; KNUT, Kenya National Union of Teachers and KUPPET, Kenya Union of Post Primary Teachers.

Kenya is a multilingual country. English is the official language in Kenya. It is the medium of instruction in schools as well as the language of trade and diplomacy. Most Kenyan are also fluent speakers of Kiswahili and mother tongue languages; L1. English functions as the language of education, international commerce, the judiciary, parliament debates and administration. *Swahili* is also another of Kenya's official language, however, spoken by the majority of the Kenyans after their 'mother tongue'. Social media has made it easier for people to share and discuss oral literature forms. Facebook, Twitter, blogs, YouTube—all of these are now common ways of global sharing of diverse cultural compositions. This ties in with the idea of the Internet breaking down boundaries and space.

The Information Technology (IT) era has put to use the computer and applied the internet to create a platform for communication. Kenyan teachers are disillusioned and many teacher trainees are not enthusiastic about their future prospects as teachers. Some believe that it is a last resort job and when they get other job offers, they quit. The conflict begun in 1997 after the government failed to honour a collective bargaining agreement (CBA) signed with the union.



There have been improved terms over time as teacher unions like Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) have not relented in representing teachers. The government argued that Kenyan teachers are well paid compared to others in the region. However, the teachers feel they are underpaid.

Statement of the Problem

Teachers discuss issues touching on them online. They have a unique language with coded words, phrases and sentences. This jargon that the teachers use reveals their attitude towards their job and towards the insistence of the governments not to pay them well. They are also unhappy about their inability to control students after corporal punishment was banned as well as stagnation due to slow promotion policy. Delocalization also affects teachers in management level. The manner might be jocular but the recent hash tags like Teach and Go Home reveal the genesis of all the major problems facing the education sector today.

Aims and Objectives of the Study

The main aim of the study was to discuss the language that Kenyan Teachers use in their online discussions in their quest for better terms and remuneration. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To discuss some common topics the Kenyan teachers, discuss and what they reveal about their perception towards their career.
2. To identify unique linguistic strategies, words, phrases and sentences used by Kenyan teachers in their online discussions that reveal their attitude towards the challenges they face.
3. To investigate ways that can be used to improve the welfare of teachers and by extension the quality of education in Kenya.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following questions:

1. What are some of the topics the Kenyan teachers discuss and what do they reveal about their perception towards their career?
2. What unique linguistic strategies, words, phrases and sentences do Kenyan teachers use in their online discussions that reveal their attitude towards the challenges they face?
3. What can be done to improve their welfare and the quality of education in Kenya?

Significance of the Study

There is need for action to improve teachers' welfare and by extension the overall performance in the education sector. It is hoped that the study will assist in understanding the strikes and general malaise in the education sector in a bid to reach out to the major stakeholders and bring back sanity to education. The study will provide valuable data for further study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter presents a review of literature related to this study and the theoretical Framework. The aim of this review is to identify knowledge gaps this study seeks to fill.

Kenyan Challenges



There is poor distribution of qualified teachers which denies a portion of our public-school students' access to a high and quality education. Sometimes a teacher may have a great work load that denies him or her chance to even prepare well for teaching a lesson. Teachers continue to have little voice in creating the policies and programmes needed to ensure that every student has a good teacher. Most of this work is decided upon by other bodies and teachers are only to follow these guidelines when teaching. There is a large number of entrants of teachers in the profession. There is so little consensus about how to recruit and in some areas especially in rural set up, recruitment of untrained teachers has been high. The ignorant belief that anybody can teach has left the profession to be thought of as low. In reality, you can only know what to teach and how to teach after being trained.

Lack of commitment to the teaching profession, for example a number of teachers is likely to leave teaching due to poor pay, too little respect and time factor. However, with the current salary talks and agreements set to level teachers' salaries with other civil servants, the problem is set to be solved soon. Poor remuneration, compared to other professionals has always been a challenging factor for teachers. Maintaining energy and enthusiasm is a challenge for even the most experienced teachers. It is said that many teachers do not voluntarily choose teaching as a profession. Most of the teachers at the lowest levels choose teaching profession as a last resort and therefore give in just bare enthusiasm in teaching. Students with bad behavior have always been hard to cope with. Teachers have therefore been discouraged to help such students and even teach them with interest.

Factors affecting status of the teaching profession in Kenya

The status of teachers has always been seen as low even after several attempts to improve it. Teaching profession engages untrained teachers. It is only in teaching where you find untrained teachers as compared to other professions where only qualified individuals perform their duties. Remuneration is poor compared to other profession. Even after trying to level the teachers' salaries with others, professionally, teaching is not at the same level with other professions.

Teachers have no autonomy; they teach syllabus made by other bodies. They operate with a code of ethics made for them by other bodies. Teaching profession lacks unity, it is fragmented for teachers and this has been a factor affecting the status of teaching. Manning different levels of education have different academic and professional training. This results in different remuneration packages and the associated status and prestige. For instance, University lecturers have high status almost comparable to status of other professions. Nursery and primary teachers have low status. Teachers do not generate money like profit making industries.

Teachers are not perceived to deal with life threatening issues, like doctors, lawyers and others. Some people believe that they can still survive without school education. Women dominate the teaching profession. Overall women are placed low in the occupational ladder. Hence teaching has acquired low status because it is occupied by people who are disadvantaged in the society as perceived by other people in general. Working conditions of teachers are very poor particularly in rural areas compared to other professions.

Linguistic Strategies



Linguistic Strategies refer to the manner in which language is used to bring out meaning. Teachers use a number of strategies including euphemism. A euphemism is a word or expression which is used to respond to a particular style of speech prompted by a specific context of situation that requires decency and politeness. The euphemized items are said to be tabooed, that is, the corresponding lexical items are avoided or prohibited in formal speech (O'Grady et al. 1996). The function of euphemism is to protect the speaker/writer, hearer/reader, or all of the above from possible effrontery and offence. This offence may occur in the broaching of a taboo topic, e.g. religion or death, or by mentioning subject matter to which one party involved may be sensitive, such as politics or social issues. In order for communication to progress smoothly and without conflict, accommodations are continually, and often subconsciously, made. Interpretation varies according to context, i.e. whether the speaker means the term to be euphemistic, and the hearer interprets it in that light (Warren, 1992). With euphemism being so entwined with context, however, classification of a term as 'euphemistic' becomes difficult. This study aimed to analyse euphemism among other linguistic strategies used in the Kenyan teachers discourse in their discussions of topics touching on them. They are discussed in the study

Theoretical Framework

Critical Discourse Analysis Theory provided the theoretical underpinning for this study. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of discourse that views language as a form of social practice and focuses on the ways social and political domination are reproduced in text and talk. It is relevant to this research because it is a study of language used in interaction. CDA was first developed by the Lancaster school of linguists of which Norman Fairclough was the most prominent figure. Ruth Wodak has also made a remarkable contribution to this field of study. The approach draws from several disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, such as critical linguistics. Fairclough developed a three-dimensional framework for studying discourse, where the aim is to map three separate forms of analysis onto one another: analysis of (spoken or written) language texts, analysis of discourse practice (processes of text production, distribution and consumption) and analysis of discursive events as instances of sociocultural practice.

These three approaches are important as per the objectives of the study. Particularly, the theory combines micro, meso and macro-level interpretation. At the micro-level, the analyst considers the text's syntax, metaphoric structure and certain rhetorical devices. The meso-level involves studying the text's production and consumption, focusing on how power relations are enacted. At the macro-level, the analyst is concerned with inter-textual understanding, trying to understand the broad, societal currents that are affecting the text being studied.

In order to examine ideologies and power relations involved in discourse. Language connects with the social through being the primary domain of ideology, and through being both a site of, and a stake in, struggles for power. Ideology has been called the basis of the social representations of groups, and, in psychological versions of CDA developed by Teun A. van Dijk and Ruth Wodak, there is assumed to be a sociocognitive interface between social structures and discourse structures. The historical dimension in critical discourse studies also plays an important role.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY



Research Design

Descriptive survey research design was used in this study. This design was chosen because it describes more appropriately the nature of the phenomenon as they are or as they happen rather than manipulation of variables (Orodho, 2005). Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) observe that descriptive survey research design enables the researcher to explain as well as explore the existing status of two or more variables of a phenomenon or population.

Location of the Study

The study was carried out in Kenya. The researcher is a nationality of the country and can easily interact and collect data. Moreover, there are few studies similar to the one under investigation that has been done in the research area in the recent past.

Target Population of the Study

This study targeted teachers' speech.

Sample and Sampling Procedures

Purposive sampling technique guided sample selection for this study. This is because with this method the researcher was able to obtain the expected data.

Sampling Location

The study was carried out in Kenya using information from teachers' online discussions.

Sampling Speech

Nine teachers' discourses have been analysed. They were selected based on the frequency in their use.

Instruments for Data Collection

This study was carried out using text analysis as per the objectives of the study.

Data Analysis

The data was collected from electronic data searches and written in a separate file for analysis. Selected discourse was analysed as per the objectives. The linguistic strategies were identified based on the researchers own understanding. The interpretations were analysed and compiled for its implications and suggested solutions compiled

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

Kenyan teachers have formed groups on Facebook and WhatsApp social media platforms where they share issues touching on their profession. These are most active during strikes. Can't pay won't pay is a phrase that was coined by the Kenyan media after President Kenyatta gave a speech insisting there is no pay in the 2015 strike which saw teachers go unpaid for one month. This dealt a blow on the Kenyan Teachers in their activism for better remunerations. A unique code emerged of words, phrases and sentences the teachers used to reveal their attitude towards their job. In this chapter, a number of words and phrases have been identified and discussed. The researcher identified the linguistic strategies employed in the discussion. This section discusses the findings too. The teachers combine words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs in several



strategies that captivate the listeners. Lexical borrowing, implicature, coinage, idioms, code switching, hyperbole, and symbolism are the major linguistic strategies that have been identified from the discourse. The findings also include the interpretation of the utterances and the challenges portrayed. There are suggestions on how the negativity can be reversed.

Teachers Common Topics

1. Teachers are concerned about:
2. Upward mobility
3. Transfers
4. Corruption
5. Inflation
6. Study Leave and School based learning
7. Promotion
8. Salary
9. House and Medical allowance
10. Indiscipline
11. Delocalization
12. Performance

Teachers' Jargon

EXPRESSION	SOURCE	MEANING	LINGUISTIC STRATEGY
1 Peanuts	Union	little pay.	Symbolism
2.Simsim	Union	Improved pay	Symbolism and lexical borrowing
3. Smoke	Vatican	Black smoke to mean the pay is not yet in the account. Grey smoke to mean the pay will be released to the account anytime because the payroll is ready. White smoke to mean the salary is in the account	Allusion and symbolism
4. MPIGS	Kenyans	Referred to the Members of parliament at the time they increased their salaries at a time Kenyans were suffering from high cost of living.	Metaphorical
5.Kitchen cabinet	Politicians	A group of teachers who are close to the principal and are used to report any opposition from other members of staff.	Coinage



6. Can't pay Won't pay	Media	Can't pay, won't pay. Can't teach, won't teach was a slogan used during the strike after the government declaration that they will not pay and the teachers' decision not to go back to work.	Allusion to a famous Italian Marxist play.
7. Teach and go home. (TAGH)	Teachers	After corporal punishment and remedial teaching was banned teachers created the phrase to advice others not to get into trouble	
8. Watuwa a e i o u	Deputy president	Refers to teachers as people who teach vowels.	Nickname
9. TPAD.	Employer .	TPAD is an acronym for Teachers Appraisal and Development tool.	

4.4. Linguistic Strategies

1. Peanuts is symbolic for little pay.
2. Simsimsymbolised improved pay.
3. Smoke alluded to the manner in which the pope is elected.
4. Black smoke to mean the pay is not yet in the account.
5. Grey smoke to mean the pay will be released to the account anytime because the payroll is ready.
6. White smoke to mean the salary is in the account
7. Watuwa.a.e.i.o.u; People of aeiou to mean teachers from a quote of the deputy president's speech in reference to striking teachers. This trivialized the profession to show that it was just a simple task of teaching vowels.
8. Nicknames are commonly used for example Kitchen Cabinet is a group of teachers who are close to the principal.
9. Can't pay, won't pay. Can't teach, won't teach was a slogan used during the strike after the government declaration that they will not pay and the teachers' decision not to go back to work. Will pay, might pay was coined after the union-initiated talks with the employer which led to a new Collective Bargaining Agreement.
10. Can't vote, won't Vote was the teachers' ultimatum that they will revenge by not voting in the current government because of their withheld salary and denied increment.
11. Teach and Go Home has been trending as an act of self-preservation. After corporal punishment and remedial teaching was banned teachers created the phrase to advice others not to get into trouble by engaging in the acts which would lead to their arrest.

4.5. Challenges and Perception

At the time it was reported that the teachers were highly paid in comparison with other African countries, the media begun to portray teachers in bad light. Everyone went on a rampage castigating the teacher. They claimed they should all be fired and new ones employed. The



teachers still remained on strike until relief teachers were given contracts by Teachers Service Commission (TSC) the employing body. There was a lot of self-expression on the topic. Kenyans claimed that anyone could teach. They said it was not compulsory for one to be trained to be a teacher.

It was a dark September in the year 2015. Teachers' salary was frozen and their pay slips read 000 that month. Incidences of teachers' suicide were reported. Terms were coined to describe the teachers including calling them 'watuwaa, e, i, o, u' People of a 'a,e,i,o,u' to trivialize their work. Lessons were learnt. Teachers were very active on social media. Some had plans to quit, others advised that there should be other sources of income to cushion them from such ugly scenarios. The unions called off the strikes when the pressure became unbearable. No money was released from the treasury. Teachers knew that there was money. It was now the turn of the students to self-express. They swore they would never become teachers, they asked question like how the teachers had performed poorly in school and ended up in that situation. Therefore, the teachers lost face.

In Kenya, teachers are placed in hierarchy the highest being the principal followed by the headmaster then the head of department. In Kenyan schools, there is equal school life and politics and the structure puts the principal or headmaster at the top with a deputy principal or headmaster followed by senior teachers, head of departments and subject teachers at the lowest. In the new scheme of service, the management are paid higher salaries and allowances. However, the majority of teachers are in lower job groups.

Most learners lack exposure to the outside world as they have never gone out of the villages. Teachers who come from a foreign country or even the town find a problem fitting in. A teacher's life becomes public life in the place they teach in. They should be good role models. Teachers get a challenge from wrong attitudes. The impact of positive or negative attitudes is critical. Attitude of parents, peers, and community towards education, the school or the teachers, has an impact on learning. It eventually affects the learners' choices and behavior. If negative, then the results will be negative. Students' indiscipline, school fights and pranks are common in Kenya. School strikes are common in the Kenyan education sector. They often lead to destruction of life and property. Bullying is another vice that needs to be addressed.

4.6. Suggested Solutions

In Kenya, we attach a lot of importance to education. Academic becomes the center of life once schooling begins. It seems like everything else stops. If a child performs well then, they are very confident in all other areas. The parents are very proud. The children who cannot fit in become frustrated. The parents are disappointed and the pressure is felt. Teachers are told to put more effort. It is a paradox that we love good performance but we don't treasure the teachers. I agree that some contemporary teachers are a shame. They have been accused of being chronic absentees, of negligence of duty, of insubordination and incitement and of all other evils. We also have another group that is doing the right thing at the right time. Unfortunately, they are rarely rewarded. This should be revisited.

It is time for a national discourse. For a long time, the government has been treating the symptoms while ignoring the disease. Teachers are a group of unhappy individuals in charge of



our country's future generation. We have issues in our schools for example drug and alcohol abuse is a problem among youth. The gap between the rich who take their children to elite schools and the poor of public schools is wide in my opinion, we should restore the dignity of the teacher. We should listen to the teachers' grievances. Promotion to administrative positions takes long. Teachers with higher qualifications are rarely considered. This makes it appear like a teaching degree has lesser value than other degrees.

Cheating has also been an issue in Kenyan schools. Apart from some teachers that encourage the vice, some parents are also to blame. The students want to please their parents by performing through all means. Some parents place too much pressure on their children. All these are sources of pressure that end in blame being shifted to teachers.

Conclusion

A child can only be as happy as the mother. When the mother is unhappy, the child will know. The children will talk in hushed tone, their faces creased and the play subdued. They will peer at the mother's face to see how safe it is to ask for a favor. They will live in fear and doubt. When mummy is happy there is laughter in the house. Children will play hide and seek, they will tag at her skirt, they will ask endless questions and she will smother them with hugs and kisses. The children will be brave and confident.

The purpose for the analogy above is to relate a mother's relationship to their child with a teacher's relationship to their child with a teacher's relationship with his/her students. A student can only be as happy as the teacher. We owe our children happy mother's. We also owe them happy teachers. Whether at the crèche or at the nursery or at the primary, or at the secondary level; whether at the middle level colleges or at the polytechnics or at the universities; one thing is clear- our children can only achieve their maximum potential when they have contented teachers, tutors or lecturers nobody loves to fail. However, a comparison between a number of public and private schools shows private schools do better probably because of better terms, conditions and management.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of findings, conclusions, recommendations and recommendations for further research.

Summary

The main aim of the study was to discuss the language that Kenyan Teachers use in their online discussions in their quest for better terms and remuneration. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To discuss some common topics the Kenyan teachers, discuss and what they reveal about their perception towards their career.
2. To identify unique linguistic strategies, words, phrases and sentences used by Kenyan teachers in their online discussions that reveal their attitude towards the challenges they face.
3. To investigate ways that can be used to improve the welfare of teachers and by extension the quality of education in Kenya.



In this study, utterances and their sources were analysed and interpreted. Emerging education trends were discussed under topics and linguistics strategies employed identified. Finally, suggestions were given for the improvement of teachers' welfare as suggested by the teachers themselves.

Conclusion

The findings reveal the following:

1. There exist a number of teachers' jargon. Some are direct and others indirect references.
2. The teachers use symbolism, implicature, code switching, code mixing, lexical borrowing, allusion, idioms, hyperbole, dialogue and coinage. There are many ways in which they are used to communicate amongst themselves.
3. The utterances portray teachers' perception towards their career and have also influenced the learners and overall performance.

Recommendations

This study focused on: Can't pay won't pay; Discourse of Kenyan Teachers in their Quest for Better Terms and Remuneration. The objectives were met based on the findings. There exists several direct and indirect and a number of linguistic strategies that were identified and discussed. The study also highlighted major challenges of teachers revealed in their discussions and recommends dialogue and intervention to improve teachers' welfare and education in Kenya.

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