

The Social Media Neologisms: A Case Study of Facebook Users in Kenya.

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ABSTRACT:

This study sought to investigate the Kenyan generated neologisms as used in social media. This study was informed by the fact that human language is a dynamic and an ever-changing phenomenon only stable in performing its communicative function. The researcher conducted a Facebook survey as a representation of other social networking channels. The researcher purposely sampled 50 neologisms of Kenyan origin on Facebook and thereafter, using a descriptive qualitative data analysis approach, made a description of one of the commonest sites of social networking in Kenya, people from various walks of life engage on a litany of matters concerning their lives, be it political, socio-economic or even personal. Facebook was chosen explicitly for its wider outreach among Kenyans in comparison to other social networking channels. 50 neologisms belonging to Kenyan origin were purposively sampled on Facebook aftermath; a descriptive method of data analysis approach was used, to make a description of the word-formation processes, which are involved in their generation. A vast number of neologisms on Facebook belonging to Kenyan origin could be identified and documented by the study, most of them laced with a local flavour. Furthermore, the study analysed the word-formation processes that were involved in their development. Some of the neologisms with Kenyan origin documented in this study are; *uhunye*, *saitan*, *isorait* amongst others while some of the most common word formation processes employed include; loan translation, error, compounding and others. This study advocates for research on how words and expressions from indigenous Kenyan languages are being adopted in multicultural discourse among the diverse members of the Kenyan speech community through social media and general cross-cultural interactions.

Key terms: Neologisms, back-formation, compounding, repurposing, conversion.

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INTRODUCTION

The richness of language allows us to speak differently and, over time, create new words, which are termed neologisms. A neologism refers to a new way of expressing a concept or an idea that was initially expressed using other words or, in rather, non-existent at all. Neologisms permit the speaker's succinct expression of the intended meaning. Alternatively, it is a refreshing method of finding what life has to offer. Moreover, it gives people the chance to curry senses in a flavour befitting the communicative act from its situational context. This research was based on the human language dynamic property, which agrees to the change in form to reflect the community's speech communicative needs in reference to the ever-changing economic, social, technological and political environment. The malleable and dynamic nature of human language has enhanced humanity to provide a fresher outlook to day-to-day concerns to meet the human desire for novelty, which is insatiable.

Social media in Kenya portrays a new front of communication whereby people can exchange information instantly by just swiping the screen. In Kenya, the five biggest platforms of social media include Snapchat, Instagram, and Linked-in, Tiktok, Whatsapp, YouTube and Facebook. Twitter, a micro blog, is also a common means of communication among Kenyans however unlike Facebook it only deals with tweets and therefore it has fewer uses. From this point of departure, this study chose to make a study of Facebook to discover and document neologisms of Kenyan origin. Facebook, as it is, is the melting pot of diverse speech peculiarities existing among Kenyans as a speech community; Facebook also has given Kenyans the opportunity to shape, reshape and share their meaningful experiences in a language that best expresses their feelings, thoughts, experiences, observations and ideas. This study sought to identify, analyse and document

emerging peculiarities in the language in the name of neologisms related to language use among Kenyans in the social media as represented by Facebook.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Dotsavvy.com,(2016) Facebook is ranked as the biggest Kenyan social media platform with more than six million active users; it pointed out that the figure is increasing, additionally, "Facebook has gone so mainstream that even Kenyan grandparents use the platform to stay in touch, from this perspective, it's no brainer that you need to use Facebook to make any kind of decent impact via social media in Kenya." Wyche (2015) stated that "You get on Facebook you feel advanced, you have friends, you can send them snaps, and they can exchange." She adds that almost all Kenyans have a Facebook account.

From this perspective, it is obvious that Facebook is a very important communication platform among Kenyans and for any serious scholar who would want to track language development and linguistic trends among Kenyans then Facebook as a melting pot of linguistic discourse among Kenyans from diverse linguistics would be the most appropriate platform to undertake such a study.

According to blog.oxforddictionaries.com (2014), the words that surround us daily influence the words we frequently use. Since most written language is now on our computers, tablets, and smart phones screens, language is partly evolving through our technological interaction. Since the language we use in communication tends to be more flexible than formal writing, the personal communication, mass audience and combination of informal which is afforded by social media is a recipe for quick language change. On this account, this study will demonstrate the role of the social media in propagating and disseminating

linguistic innovations. Social media also plays a very big role in making novel expressions as well linguistic idiosyncrasies the norm among members of a particular speech community.

According to Clark (1979) and Clark Corrig quoted in Mworja (2015), neologisms are newly coined words in the language we commonly use. Gontasavara, (2013), asserts that Neologisms are new words and expressions which are created for new things irrespective of their scale of importance usually attributable directly to a specific period, person, publication or event. According to Kandie, (2010), a neologism is a term with broader meaning, which includes an entirely new lexical item, and an existing word altered in what is termed as a semantic extension of semantic shifting. Neologisms are always introduced when an individual establishes a lack of equivalence in existent lexemes to express the desired meaning. Neologisms with a local flavour and Kenyan origin are used by Kenyan Facebook users to express new concepts and pave the way for a local interpretation of matters and finally anchor them in a Kenyan view, which would not be understood or interpreted in a brief manner than can be expressed with a local taste.

In this research, it has been established that there exist a number of mechanisms involved in the generation of neologisms; discussed in this study are linguistic mechanisms employed by Kenyan Facebook users in generating neologisms tainted with a local touch. Similarly, it is worth noting that “*boda boda*”, a neologism of East African goes down, has been introduced to the English dictionary and is now in widespread usage as a lexeme in the English language; Star, Kenya (2017). This study presumed that many more of the neologisms, which are encountered in this study, are in a position to be filtered into widespread usage of world languages, for instance, English and Swahili.

According to Boddle, A (2016), derivation, backformation, compounding, abbreviations, reduplication, coinage, compounding, and many others are some of the methods available to the language users in the process of new word-formation. A study conducted by Mworja (2015) advocates for the study of Kenyan generated neologisms in social media; it is from this premise that this study derives its authority. Mahianyu (2016) conducted a study in lexeme, which is based on morphological analysis of English based Facebook neologisms; this study investigates the indigenous Kenyan neologisms, which are encountered on Facebook. This study is an advance from the two studies in that it makes an exploration of neologisms generated in Kenyan on social media, this study attempt to make an analysis of word formation methods adopted by Kenyan to manipulate the linguistic resources readily available to develop new ways to express meaning in a very reflective manner of the political and socio-economic environment Kenya.

L, Bauer (1983) quoted in Stekauer, P (1998) defines nonce formation as a certain specific in the life of a new word, the stage from birth to its dissemination in a speech community, this is a stage referred to as institutionalization. This study looks at the role of Facebook in the dissemination and institutionalization of social media neologisms in Kenya, many of which seep into mainstream language usage.

METHODOLOGY.

This study employed a qualitative research methodology and more so the descriptive researches design. According to Creswell (2016 cited in Mahianyu (2016) “Qualitative research is innovative as well as emergent and is concerned with individuals and their perceptions rather than with numbers and figures which are abstract and out of context.” This study did a survey of Facebook as a

representative of the social media in Kenya. Facebook was chosen purposely over other media in that it has the biggest outreach among Kenyans from all cadres of life in comparison to other social Media such as Twitter that are viewed as *classy* by the local populace. It was the presumption of this study that Facebook is a reflection of peculiarities in linguistic habits not only in social media but also in the general populace making up the Kenyan speech community. The research purposely sampled 50 neologisms deemed to be of Kenyan descent from a variety of interactions on Facebook by Kenya users on a diversity of socio-economic and political discourse. For the purpose of conciseness, only 30 of the sampled neologisms were discussed in this study. Upon sampling, a qualitative,

descriptive data analysis approach was employed in determining the word formation processes used in the creation of the neologisms. This study made a tabulation of the neologisms with a Kenyan touch encountered and the respective technique employed in their creation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Upon data collection and analysis, this study was able to document the following as neologisms of Kenyan origin encountered in Facebook interactions among Kenyans from diverse linguistic, social and geographical regions. Important to note is that in their usage, semantic equivalence is achieved without the need for amplification.

Table 1: Neologisms of Kenyan origin as encountered on Facebook

No.	Neologism	Literal English gloss	A Kenyan interpretation
1.	<i>Tibbim</i>	Tee beam/ T beam	A politician in many instances worth support. Its meaning can be extended to cover any other form of moral support.
2.	<i>Chaget</i>	Jacket	A Kenyan ethnic group's reference to the English word jacket.
3.	<i>Thitima</i>	Electricity	Anything illustrating excitement
4.	<i>Fisi</i>	Hyena	An individual with lax moral attributes especially sexual.
5.	<i>Ficha white</i>	Hide the white ball	The Concept of withholding very crucial information or items from the public or person.
6.	<i>Isorait</i>	It is all right	Everything is right
7.	<i>Okuyus</i>	Kikuyus	A Kenyan term referring to members of the Kikuyu community.
8.	<i>Kula nyama</i>	Eating meat	A Kenyan way to refer to the advantages of being politically connected.
9.	<i>Kweraa</i>	Back off	An expression of discontent/disgust
10.	<i>Team hustlers</i>	A team of hustlers	A cadre of people who struggle to make ends meet or any other persons engaged in the initiative.
11.	<i>Muguka</i>	Khat/ miraa	A term used to refer to a local stimulant consumed by some sections of Kenya's population.

12.	<i>Saitan / saitani</i>	Devil	A dismissive term. Commonly used to refer to an object of irritation by users of the social media.
13	<i>Ulliam</i>	William	An unofficial word used to refer to a top political figure in the politics of Kenya.
14.	Uhunye	Uhuru Kenyatta	A term used to refer to Kenyan president informally.
15.	Rech	Fish	Refers to a meal of fish locally.
16.	Ndani ndani ndani	Deep inside	An expression of deep political support.
17.	Kaa rada	To be alert	State of being at attention.
18.	Kula kwa macho	Lust over an object	Craving over an object beyond one's reach.
19.	Brathe	Brother	Referring to a brother informally.
20.	Luo-pean	Dholuo speaker	Special reference to members of the Luo community and especially with regard to some of its members' attitude toward living big
21.	Ticha	A teacher	A teacher
22.	Vindu vichenjanga	Things change	Political reference to change in political ideology and alignments.
23.	Furahiday	Friday	Concept of Friday being a fun day
24.	Momo	Plus size lady	Plus size lady
25.	Nduthi	A motorbike	A motorbike, especially one on Boda boda service
26.	Nganya	Passenger service vehicle	A well-decorated matatu/a souped-up public service passenger vehicle.
27.	Ulliam	William	A famous Kenyan Politician with the name William his first name.
28.	Mwaest	Superb/perfect	An exclamation allowing perfection, especially on taste or looks.
29.	Kuzo	Cousin	A term referring to a cousin informally.
30.	Nomaree	A difficult situation	A hard situation
31.	Tialala	Shizzle	Something enticing.

From the findings above, it is worth to note that Facebook has offered Kenyans the chance to showcase their creativity as it pertains to language use, just like Gontasavara,(2013), states, neologisms are new words and expressions which are created for new things irrespective of their scale of importance usually attributable directly to

a specific period, person, publication or event. Social media has also helped to propagate and disseminate linguistic idiosyncrasies which at the end of the day become the norm in language use within the speech community. From this study some of the notable neologisms of Kenyan origin which have been propagated within Facebook include; *fisi* (an amorous personality), *isorait* (it is all right), *kweraa* (back off) amongst many others.

The second part of this discussion looks at the word formation processes employed in the creation of these neologisms as encountered in Facebook interactions among kenyans.

WORD FORMATION PROCESSES EMPLOYED IN THE CREATION OF NEOLOGISMS.

This study discovered the following common techniques used in the generation of local neologisms amongst the Face bookers in Kenya.

Table 2. Analysis of word-formation processes in the neologisms

NO.	NEOLOGISM	TECHNIQUE CREATING WORD	EXPLANATION
1.	Chaget	Loan translation	Word closely translated from English word <i>jacket</i> to the local accent in Kalenjin.
2.	Thitima	Loan translation	<i>Stima</i> is a Swahili translation that is equivalent to electricity.
3.	Fisi	Conversion	Borrowed word <i>Fisi</i> from Swahili word and given a new sense.
4.	Ficha white	Compounding and borrowing	A Swahili and English root compounded
5.	Isorait	Loan translation	This is a close translation of the phrasal English language “ <i>it is all right.</i> ”
6.	Okuyus	Coinage	This is certainly a new term.
7.	Kula nyama	Compounding	These two are Kiswahili language roots, <i>Kula</i> to mean eat and <i>nyama</i> to mean meat, are compounded and given a new sense.
8.	Brathe	Error	The word <i>brother</i> is misspelt and mispronounced
9.	Kweraa	Error	The Swahili word ‘ <i>kwenda,</i> ’ the equivalent of the phrase “ <i>go away</i> ”, has been mispronounced and misspelt.
10.	Team hustlers	Compounding	<i>Team</i> and <i>hustlers</i> compounded and allowed a local touch.
11.	Muguka	Borrowing	This word is derived from a native language and obtained a national outlook in meaning.

12.	Saitan /saitani	Error	The Swahili word <i>shetani</i> ; (devil) is misspelt and mispronounced to give it a fresh and localized outlook.
13.	Uhunye	Back-formation	Uhuru Kenyatta's first name and the last name are compounded and clipped.
14.	Rech	Borrowing	This word is obtained from Dholuo and generally used, understood commonly and referred to by myriad Face bookers of Kenyan descend.
15.	Kaa rada	Compounding	Combination of Swahili and English roots. Kiswahili root <i>kaa</i> means to stay and English term, 'radar.
16.	Ndani ndani ndani	Reduplication	Swahili term ' <i>ndani</i> ' (inside) is lengthened and reduplicated for intensifying.
17.	Kula kwa macho	Compounding	These are three Swahili terms compounded to draw a local sense.
18.	Brathe	Error	This is an English term "brother", which is mispronounced and misspelt to make it look and sound local.
19.	Luopean	Blending	This is a Luo word that is clipped from European then compounded.
20.	Ticha	Error	This is a misspelt English term "teacher" to give it a local meaning.
21.	Vindu vichenjanga	Borrow and compound	This is a local Luhya language term: <i>vindu</i> , to mean things, and <i>vichenjanga</i> , to mean change; they are compounded to draw a political reference in downplaying.
22.	Furahiday	Loan translation	This is an English word <i>Friday</i> translated loosely to Swahili to allow it to be interpreted locally as a fun day.
23.	Momo	Borrowing	Refers to a word borrowed from the Kikuyu language to mean a truck that is heavy.
24.	Nduthi	Borrowing	The word is borrowed from a local language to refer to a motorbike.
25.	Nganya	Borrowing	A word borrowed from Sheng variety; a marginal language in Kenya
26.	Ulliam	Error	Mispronunciation of the name William
27.	Mwaaest	Coinage	A purely new word without any connection to any other

	/Mwaest		existent word. They mainly serve as an adjective.
28.	Kuzo	Loan translation	This term is obtained from an English word <i>cousin</i> , clipped and translated loosely with local meaning.
29.	Nomaree	Coinage	Completely new word
30.	Tialala	Onomatopoeia	This term mirrors a shizzle to refer to something with dazzling nature.

From earlier discussion, Boddle A, (2016), highlights, derivation, backformation, compounding, abbreviations, reduplication, coinage, compounding, and many others as some of the methods available to the language users in the process of new word-formation. From this study it is worth noting that the same word formation processes are replicated, in the findings of this study as discussed above, worth to note is the occurrence of error, loan translation, coinage compounding and borrowing as some of the most common word formation processes in the discourse of Kenyans as encountered in Facebook.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: From this study, generally dynamic and an ever-changing phenomenon open to manipulation to create a fresher outlook of life and to reflect some new cultural inclinations amongst its users. In addition, there is

a cooperative effort amongst Kenyans as a community with common speech both on the outside and in social media in promoting and propagating the development of new vocabulary and new senses with a local outlook. Finally, the various linguistic word creation methods are available to language users who may want to reflect on their surroundings and may use language to shape their thoughts and experiences. It is also the presumption of this study that many of the neologisms encountered in this study are likely to seep into mainstream language use.

Recommendation: This study advocates for research on how words and expressions from indigenous Kenyan languages are being adopted in multicultural discourse among the members diverse of the Kenyan speech community through social media and general cross-cultural interactions.

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