| **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

Language and Political Messaging in Electoral Processes: A Literary Examination of Trends in Kenya's 2022 and Uganda's 2021 Elections

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| **ABSTRACT**

Competitive politics is a game of numbers. Candidates often employ various strategies to secure victory. One of the strategies politicians employ is the meticulous use of language to give voters lofty promises and paint their opponents negatively while projecting themselves as messiahs. This paper argues that Language and Literature play critical roles in electoral processes. The two disciplines are conjoined twins in political campaign messaging as they shape opinions in specific predetermined ways by manipulating information and delivering it in an informative, targeted, and exciting manner. This area is yet to be subjected to extensive research to establish the nexus between Literature and Linguistics and communicative approaches deployed by competing groups. The paper interrogates the extent to which opposing political campaigns in Kenya and Uganda exploited strategic communication, mainly linguistic and literary resources, to give impetus to their campaigns. Specifically, we study the slogans and other targeted messages used to gain an advantage over opponents. This exploratory study seeks to ramp up interdisciplinary collaboration between Political Science, Literature and Linguistics. The study commences by discussing the place of strategic communication in political campaigns and the consequent connection between Linguistics and Literature. The paper proceeds to discuss the methodology employed in data collection, analysis and findings of the study. The paper concludes by pointing out opportunities for future research.

1. Introduction

Generally, political campaigning is about getting the mandate of the people through universal suffrage to provide political leadership. In Africa, political campaigns are about forming governments to control national resources, especially revenue generated from taxes and lucrative government institutions. The campaigns are tough contests in which violence is often unleashed and lives and property are lost. Though it is never stated in the campaigns, politicians employ all tricks they can master to win elections and ascend to power. Political contests are about who gets what, when and how. Elections control how power and influence achieve specified aims (Lasswell 1960, 1977). The high-stakes game in local politics is exacerbated by the mantra of "the winner takes it all," coupled with widespread corruption, abuse of power, and use of other undemocratic strategies to subvert the will of the people (Mimi Sonderberg Kovacs and Bjarnesen, 2018). To understand how the reception of messages is carefully thought out, the paper interrogates some of the slogans, jokes and offensive messages that politicians make on election campaign trails to illuminate the impact of such utterances on the audience. The paper discusses when these strategies are used negatively to pillory political opponents and diminish their reputation. Finally, we comment on the work that election campaign entertainment and emotional outbursts play as a tool to marshal support for the politicians. Due to time constraints, the paper does not evaluate

the audience's reaction and responses to the slogans, jokes, trolls and other election campaign messages and is, therefore, an opportunity for further research.

2. Justification

A study of how political campaign platforms meticulously exploit imagination and language is timely, especially in the era of the mediatisation of politics. Kent Asp describes the mediatisation of political life as a process in which "a political system to a high degree is influenced by and adjusted to the demands of the mass media in their coverage of politics" (Wikipedia).[1] Strömbäck & Esser (2009:157) correctly observe that personalisation and mediatisation of competitive politics impact how political communication is designed, moving towards media-oriented practices. In East Africa, where traditional media and new media such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter have catalysed audience democracy, elections are seemingly won on media platforms even before the votes are cast and ballots counted. A study of the mediatisation of politics in East Africa is unique. It explores how young democracies navigate the urge to entrench democratic ideals while simultaneously pandering to the mischief of winning power at all costs. The use of slogans and other elections communication strategies, such as jokes, satire, sarcasm and other emotional expressions in commercial and political campaigns, has generated a corpus of academic studies and research in the past decades which has defined their attributes in persuasive communication (Díez de Castro & Galán, 1988; Ortega, Mora Antón &Rauld Campos, 2006; Kemp, Bui & Chapa, 2012; Boerman & Kruikemeier, 2016; Fuchs, 2017; Ociepka, 2018).

Though multiple studies have been conducted on political communication during elections (FitzGerald, G. (1991), O'Keefe, M. and Cunningham, S. (2010), Muhindi and Angonga et al. (2015)), much has not been achieved due to what Esser and Strömbäck refer to as a fragmented field. The two scholars are correct because research in this area is carried out within several different disciplines, such as communication, political science, and marketing. Within these disciplines, there may be several different theoretical assumptions, approaches, and topical foci. Second, there is a lack of broader theories that can guide and unify research on political communication in election campaigns. Third, there is a tendency to focus on political communication in single election campaigns in single countries, often providing detailed descriptions of singular cases but less theory-driven research (Jesper Strömbäck and Spiro Kiousis,110). The paucity of a unified approach to research in political communication during election campaigns has also been perpetuated by the tendency to avoid a multidisciplinary approach that can harness the methodological and theoretical contributions from both the humanities and social sciences.

Moreover, the overconcentration of statistical approaches to analysing political communication through polling agencies has glorified statistics, graphs and charts glamorously presented for optical satisfaction without giving primacy to the voices of the voters targeted by the messages. For this reason, our study expands the disciplinary territory of political communication research to tap the contributions of Literature and Linguistics. It is undeniable that politicians seek to persuade voters to agree with their point of view by using Language imaginatively in a way that not only informs the audience but also entertains them. It has been expected that in nearly all public political rallies, there is much music, singing and dancing. Invariably, politicians and their key supporters try to outdo each other by introducing exquisite dance moves that excite their audience. The assumption is that the campaign message, music and dance styles resonate with the image of a respected leader capable of representing the electorate as the President or as a member of the county or national assembly.

2.1 Language, Literature, and Strategic Communication

Language is specific to human beings. Although other species have their ways of communicating, it is only humans who have mastered cognitive language communication. Language allows human beings to share ideas, thoughts, and feelings. It is a glue that, when used well, fosters national unity. Nevertheless, Language can also tear countries apart if (mis)used to promote negative ethnicity, plunder, human rights abuse, chauvinism, and hate. Essentially, language facilitates communication between the sender and the receiver. However, communication is about more than just the two participants. Other variables are hardly discussed but are exploited in a political contest for the maximum effect, such as the message, the medium used, and the context in which it is used. This paper demonstrates that political campaigns thrive on understanding the vulnerabilities of the target audience, the campaign context and the medium that effectively delivers the desired information.

Politicians and their inner campaign teams are skilled users of the language. They do not use language like other ordinary people to inform and entertain. They deliberately manipulate lexical, semantic, phonetic, and syntactic possibilities of Language to achieve desired effects of swinging voter preferences in their favour. Political campaigns exploit linguistic and technological resources to win followers regardless of whether the messages are misleading, maligning, confusing or spreading hate speech.[2]. When Language is used deliberately to further the objectives of politics, it is referred to as the Language of politics. The Language of politics is the centrepiece of our study. In other contexts, it is termed 'political Language.' Barber (1999, p.27) examines the

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[1] Mediatization (media) – Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org>wiki>Mediatization_(media)
[2] Busolo, Doreen & Ngigi, Samuel. (2018). Understanding Hate Speech in Kenya. 70

significance of Language and Communication in Political Campaigns and asserts that Language enables us to influence one another's behaviours and thereby makes human cooperation possible. It is a vehicle with which human feelings and wishes are expressed. It is also used to exercise an authority vested in an individual. In line with these schools of thought, Gutberlet (2005, p.299) opines that democracy demands an understanding of Language not only as a communication tool but as a reflection of the symbiotic relationships between polity, culture, and identity. In politics, Language is a robust device for communication as it carries many different shades of meaning. It is the tool of political discourse.

Boulton (1978:41) attested to the harmful social intent of Language from the perspective of its potential for complexity. She also observed that "Language is often used, not to communicate but to deceive, which is true of political and religious propaganda." The intention to manipulate people's minds and thoughts are symbolically expressed through print and broadcast media, mainly during political campaigns and in the eventual practice of politics in a given society (Aduradola & Ojukwu, 2013:104). The paper agrees somewhat with Boulton that Language is mainly used in campaigns for ulterior motives. In communication, persuasion is not immoral. In many cases, candidates articulate issues of concern to the electorate without necessarily misleading them. Further, Boulton's assertion assumes that the electorate is generally ignorant and can easily be confused and misused. Nevertheless, during political campaigns, a section of the electorate suspends their rationality and, due to what Wanyande calls ethnic-based politics, willingly agree to be misinformed by candidates so long as the message pandies to the ethnic nationalism of the group.

The Language of politics is embedded in strategic communication, which has become a growing category in public relations.[3] It refers to an entity's purposeful use of communication to fulfil its mission. Holtzhausen and Zerfass (2013: 74)[4] define strategic communication as "the practice of deliberate and purposeful communication that a communication agent enacts in the public sphere on behalf of a communicative entity to reach set goals. Building on Holtzhausen and Zerfass's foundational publication of strategic communication, Swanson and Nimmo (1990) apply the concept to communication in politics. The two scholars define political communication as "the strategic use of communication to influence public knowledge, beliefs, and action on political matters." Swanson and Nimmo emphasise the strategic nature of political communication, highlighting the role of persuasion in political discourse. McNair (2011) is quite succinct and clarifies that political communication is "purposeful communication about politics." Political communication does cover not only verbal or written statements but also visual representations such as slogans, caricatures, or other non-verbal illustrations.

For an election campaign to be effective, targeted communication is critical to ensure that the grand objective of convincing most voters to support the preferred candidate or political party, even if they hold contrary views, is achieved. Campaigns focus on undecided voters as they have the potential to flip election victory. In such circumstances, political communication is required to reach out to voters through public rallies, phone calls, home visits, and interpersonal discussions with voters. Creative packaging and disseminating election campaign messages is critical because campaigns are about shaping the information environment to position the campaign and its candidate as favourably as possible and opponents as a looming catastrophe that must be avoided. An effective campaign must be good at political communication. It must also be a creative engagement with the dynamics of the electoral landscapes and the electorate's propensity to buy into particular messages or be turned off (Jesper Strömbäck and Spiro Kiousis, 109).

Initially, strategic political communication centered on traditional media, print, and electronic communication channels. The rise of new media platforms with a propensity for short, rapid, and dynamic messages, such as Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok, has reshaped the political communication landscape. While intermediality has revolutionised election campaigns tremendously, it has also created unimaginable challenges due to the facelessness and anonymity on which social media communication thrives. Political campaigns in social media have turned into havens for invisible hatemongers peddling imagined differences to win votes from the disaffected populace. The political communication landscape has been revolutionised by the proliferation of new media (Abdi & Daene, 2008). Busolo and Ngigi similarly observe that hate speech has shifted from mainstream media to social media platforms. For example, in the 2013 general elections in Kenya, large numbers of threats and incitements to violence in Kenya were reported on social media networks in Kenya. The growth of social media users in Kenya keeps on increasing yearly. Social media Stats Counter Kenya revealed 71.04% Facebook users, 10.39% Pinterest, 8.84% Twitter, 4.34% youtube, 2.66% Reddit, and 1.08% Instagram (Statcounter, 2017). This percentage has increased exponentially due to increased access to the Internet and the affordability of essential smartphones.

In East Africa, the political arena is defined by three fundamental concerns: who has the power to govern? What will be the outcome? Furthermore, how exactly will this happen? These are played out through activities such as deliberation, argumentation,

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[3] Frandsen, Finn & Johansen, Winni. (2017). Strategic Communication. 10.1002/9781118955567.wbieoc194.

[4] Holtzhausen, Derina & Zerfass, Ansgar. (2013). Strategic Communication – Pillars and Perspectives of an Alternative Paradigm. 10.1007/978-3-531-18961-1_4.

lobbying, protesting, campaigning, and voting (Danziger, 1998, p. 104). The key variable in lobbying for political power is the use of Language in politics. It beats repeating that though Language is a career of culture, it is primarily a medium of communication. A language is a powerful tool for everyday communication (McDougall, 1975, p. 104). By implication, Language is a vibrant part of all life endeavours. It is essential to building relationships, expressing thoughts, ideas or a need, and responses provided as feedback, which may also be positive or negative (Jesper Strömbäck and Spiro Kiousis. Pg. 105).

One of the strategies employed by politicians in campaigns is the use of slogans. In this study, a slogan is understood as the brilliant, lasting and efficient linguistic expression of a corporate, political or institutional communication strategy. This definition includes two key concepts of the slogan: brilliance and longevity. Thus, political communication connects with classical rhetoric, which advocates concluding a speech with a brief, brilliant and lasting phrase, summarising what was stated before. In this sense, a slogan should be like a 'flash' (Vaes, Paladino & Magagnotti, 2011) or the 'abridged constituent' of advertising (Adam & Bonhomme, 2000; Song & Jeon, 2018). (Pg. 157). A campaign slogan is a simple, catchy phrase accompanying a logo or brand that encapsulates the aim and objective of the political candidate. It is a key phrase connected to a political party or candidate for a position (Pg. 107). Manuel Garrido-Lora *et al.* have conducted a robust study on strategy and creativity in the use of political slogans in Spain's 2019 elections.

The study set out to determine the attributes of electoral slogans regarding their semantic density, complexity, use of rhetorical devices, core focus or communication efficiency in the elections campaigns. The study analysed an extensive corpus of 197 slogans selected according to the criteria of comprehensiveness, relevance, and representativeness. The trio identified new developments in the use of creativity in political messaging, such as briefness, the use of double or triple slogans, expressive focus, bilingualism, the use of visual resources (such as emoticons) or digital Language (contractions), and the presence of rhetorical devices (Pg. 155). The exploitation of political slogans in elections campaigns to sway public opinion and build or deny support to candidates have attracted the attention of many researchers such as (Chan, 2000; Muñiz, 2005; Hernández, 2007; Samuelsen & Olsen, 2010; Kemp, Bui & Chapa, 2012; Garrido, 2013; Hartig, 2018). These studies apply critical and sociocognitive language models to explore how new discourses are built, fostering social change through creative discourse strategies (Morales López, 2016, p. 157).

Literature and linguistics employ rhetoric to sway public opinion. Rhetoric is the art of speaking well to persuade people. It is a language full of unnecessarily long, formal, or literary words, which are also often insincere and untrue. Persuasion is when someone, usually by reasoned arguments or logic, appeals to sound judgment to attain his set goals. Persuasive Language soothes the voters, particularly when topics or issues that revolve around problems that affect them are repeatedly mentioned during the campaign. The essence of rhetoric in politics is mainly to display individual or their beliefs in the most favourable light (Harris, 1979, p.58). In view of this, George Orwell argues that 'political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable' (Harris, 1979, p.58). It also follows that the Language of political campaigns embodied in propaganda and rhetoric is persuasive because most politicians adopt these linguistic devices to cajole the electorates into voting for them and their political parties by presenting themselves as the only capable individuals for the position (Omozuwa & Ezejideaku, 2007, p. 107). Propaganda, an inferior version of rhetoric, is the expression of opinions or actions deliberately by individuals or groups to influence the opinions or actions of other individuals or groups for predetermined ends through psychological manipulations (Jacque, 1965).

3. Methodology
The study collected election-season campaign slogans and targeted messages from the leading political parties in Kenya and Uganda's presidential races. Data collected on Ugandan elections covered the period between August 2020 to January 2021. Data on Kenyan elections covered messages during the period between February 2022 and August 2022, covering six months before polling day. Data consisting of 20 election campaign videos were downloaded from the YouTube channels of four television stations, namely: Citizen TV Kenya, NTV Uganda, NTV Kenya, and UBC Television using a software called Y2Mate. The videos were then converted to MP3. The audio files were then converted to text using a program called Veed.io. The data were analysed using Content Analysis, a research method used to identify patterns in recorded communication. The researchers chose YouTube videos of the aforementioned TV stations because the data obtained would be from publicly available sources. Data from Political Party Manifestos was also publicly available from the respective Party websites. The Television channels in the study were selected because they have the most extensive viewership in the two countries, and arguably, they were the ones that aired reports in real-time. The researchers watched the clips severally before transcribing and translating those that were not in the English language. The data collected was then subjected to content analysis in two major areas, namely, the rhetorical/literary devices used in the slogans and political messages; and language use and structure.

4. Discussion
This paper employed content analysis, which is a tested technique in field communication studies (Evans & Clark, 2016). Consequently, we analysed an extensive corpus of NTV Kenya, NTV Uganda, and Citizen TV Kenya, whose clips we obtained from YouTube channels of the respective TVs. The content analysis technique has proven to be efficient in achieving our research

objective in this area, as it is a procedure "to make replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use" (Krippendorff, 2004 [1990], p. 18). This technique is instrumental in this case as it is not invasive, being sensitive to the context of emission to understand data as symbolic phenomena. It is, hence, highly suitable for analysing innovative products generated in advertising communication (Evans & Clark, 2016; Rivas-de-Roca & García-Gordillo, 2020). The clips were purposively selected according to comprehensiveness, relevance, representativeness, and viewership criteria. The units of analysis were manually content analysed from a qualitative approach. We segregated the data based on the identified linguistic categories, as the sample analysis was performed on a corpus of Presidential election campaign slogans. For the content analysis, a worksheet was designed with the following variables: Presence or absence of slogans; The complete text of the slogan; Total number of words; Presence of the candidate and the party; Presence of images, symbols or icons; Presence of rhetorical devices; Core focus (candidate, party, ideology/program or voters); and The proportion between lexical and function words (semantic density). The above tool assisted us in identifying the kinds of messages used in the campaigns by either of the competing political camps, how they targeted their messages, the intended outcome, and our evaluation of the effectiveness of the strategies employed.

We reiterate that the study focused on messaging of the campaigns and not the soundness of the political parties or candidates' manifestos, public approvals, campaign funding and infrastructure. The approach ensured that we remained neutral in a highly competitive race. Using the analytic parameters in the table above, we were able to identify which political party used which slogan and the tangent of the slogan in terms of whether it addressed social and economic issues or just vain attacks on opponents' personal lives. We were able to look at the choice and use of words, incredibly emotive words that evoke pathos and ill feelings or excitement about the candidature of a person. We also assessed slogans that used words that threatened or evoked fear about the likelihood of a particular candidate winning the elections. Therefore, the study emphasised lexical choices and semantic density of the words within a given national, regional, or ethnic context in an election environment.

In the 2022 General elections in Kenya, the two major competing political coalitions, that is *Kenya Kwanza,* led by Deputy President Wiliam Ruto, and *Azimio la Umoja* coalition, led by the opposition leader Raila Odinga used campaign messages to appeal to the voters. Kenya Kwanza had the slogan "Freedom is Coming", while *Azimio* had "Freedom is Here." These are rhetorical devices meant to persuade voters. The choice of nearly similar words, save for the word order, demonstrates the strategy of each camp. While the former focused on the lack of freedom hence the need to vote wisely to be free, the latter celebrated the status quo and sought to perpetuate it. Again, while Kenya Kwanza had "Hustler", referring to the poor populace, Azimio had "Inawezekana" (It is possible). It is apparent that each campaign was developing its message to either respond to the opposing camp's messaging or to chart a new discourse on how best to win the voters' hearts. In one of the clips, the Kenya Kwanza candidate, William Ruto, tells a rally in Mt. Kenya, *wera ni wera* (meaning any job, however low paying, is vital to earning a dignified life. It also meant that any hustle matters in an environment of widespread joblessness blamed on the government. The DP also popularised the slogan "*Bottom-up"* to dramatise the centrality of putting ordinary men and women first. The slogan was transformed from a modle in development economics to a literary device, a metaphor for change that valorizes ordinary people. Poor voters were excited because they assumed the slogan meant that poor people would have more say on governance matters in the new government. They also assumed that the resources would flow directly to them as hustlers.

The Ruto camp popularised sarcasm and played victim to win sympathy from voters. For instance, Ruto repeatedly referred to Uhuru Kenya and Raila Odinga disdainfully as "handshake brothers" who had perpetuated state capture. When analysing campaign messaging in Kenya's presidential elections, it is a game of contrast. One camp was sarcastically branded "Dynasties", which is determined to cling to power and national wealth against a new breed of "Hustlers," whose toils contribute to the wealth they hardly enjoy. The two conflicting terminologies determined the ideology and leaning of two major groups in Kenya. It became a contest of metaphors as the two terms were employed to refer to qualities beyond their denotative meaning. It was further interpreted to mean that "Dynasties" favoured "status quo" while "Hustlers" were for "change." Further, to controvert the claim that Azimio was after extending and furthering the ideology of dynasties, the Odinga campaign introduced a slogan for change which never picked up as expected: "Mwamko Mpya", "New Dawn." This was a literary device of symbolism which politicians used to signify hope for a new beginning in which problems of poverty, inequality, disease and insecurity that had bedevilled the old government would all become history. Regarding the vote-rich Mt. Kenya region, against Azimio and Kenya, Kwanza rallied voters using slogans. Kenya Kwanza referred to Ruto as a mountain region "Insider" as opposed to Odinga, an "Outsider." To rebut Ruto's othering, Azimio referred to Mt. Kenya people as "homeowners" who cannot be dictated to by Ruto, a "visitor", on how to vote. These banters though political in nature, borrowed heavily from literary devices to persuade and tilt the opinions of the electorate to either of the political formations. As opposed to Ruto, whose messages focused on solidifying his political base, Azimio campaigners dissipated energy on personal attacks against president Ruto. In a number of the clips reviewed, Junet Mohammed, the chief Raila Odinga campaigner, is heard inciting the public against Ruto of Kenya Kwanza as a thief: "Nani ni mwizi? (Who is the thief) Crowd: Ruto!" Opinion pollsters also came out as complicit in partisan campaign messaging. Opinion polls were more propaganda and campaign tools for those who paid them. For instance, The Nation Media Group and conducted by INFO TRACK,

Odinga would gather 49% of the votes, followed by UDA's William Ruto at 41% findings from the latest IPSOS survey also indicated that Raila Odinga would win at 47%.

Compared to Kenyan elections, Uganda is unique because the constitution was reviewed to allow the incumbent to run *ad infinitum*. The scenario has created discontent in the opposition leading to violence, primarily state-sponsored, against opposition presidential candidates, during elections. Among the eleven (11) Presidential Candidates that ran for Uganda's highest office in the period under study, the study singled out the two leading Presidential Candidates, Yoweri Museveni, the incumbent President and leader of the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM), and Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, leader of the biggest opposition party, the National Unity Platform (NUP). This election process occurred partly under strict covid-19 lockdown and during the latter half when covid-19 restrictions had been eased. During the campaigns for Uganda's 2021 presidential election campaigns, the two leading parties: National Resistance Movement (NRM), led by the incumbent President, Yoweri Museveni, and the National Unity Platform (NUP), led by musician-turned-politician, Robert Kyagulanyi, also known as Bobi Wine, used their slogans to rally their supporters.

The NRM slogan was "Securing your Future", which became a rallying call for the ruling party for Ugandans to act responsibly and protect the gains of the ruling party. The NRM Presidential Flagbearer used the slogan to inspire confidence among the electorate and promise a secure future for them if they vote for NRM. The slogan was in sharp contrast to the NRM's candidate, who was perceived mainly as an octogenarian and a dictator. The NUP slogan, which initially was "People Power", a slogan that symbolised that power lies with the people, was dropped, and a new one, "A New Uganda", was adopted just a few weeks before the 2021 general election. NUP realised that their opponents were subverting the meaning of power to be a metaphor for dictatorship by the youth. NUP campaign also challenged the incumbent government's human rights abuses by popularising the slogan "Justice is untouchable, freedom is untouchable." Indirectly the campaign was attacking low regard for the sanctity of human life that the NRM government was vilified for. The slogans resonated with the voters who thronged opposition rallies, especially in Kampala and other towns.

To counter the spiralling NUP popularity based on fresh ideas and youth energy, the NRM mounted its campaign on the slogan of "Securing your Future." The slogan depicts the ruling party as a reliable custodian of the future of the electorate. By singling out security and the future, the slogan reminds voters of their history and the achievements of the ruling party. By adding the slogan "Do not gamble your future away," the NRM depicts the NUP as a weak, visionless party of young upstarts who cannot be tasked with the onerous task of nation-building, alone securing the gains made. The NRM logic is further cemented by the slogan, "The mantle of securing the future of Uganda is a great task for one to play bets on – it is not a gamble." When one examines the choice and use of words by NRM, it turns out that brevity and use of words that appeal to the emotions of the electorate gain primacy in campaign messaging.

4.1 Stylistics and Political Messaging

We have analysed how various slogans and phrases used by competing parties were deliberately chosen to maximise vote harvesting from the electorate in the two countries. We now look at how linguistic structures and various literary devices we sued in the two campaigns. In the analysis, we examined the linguistic structures, patterns, and manipulation in the formulation, use, and deployment of Party slogans and the widespread use of political language. We present the data on the slogans of the top political parties under study, closely examining the names of the political parties and their slogans and structure. Stewart (1997:297-308) argues that slogans create impressions, alter perceptions, provoke emotional responses, make demands, and pressure opponents. The ambiguity of slogans allows them to function as verbal bridges from one meaning to another, causing individuals and groups to interpret them based on their views and needs.' Slogans, in general, simplify complex problems and circumstances while demanding immediate corrective action. These slogans are distinct and easily associated with specific social movements, especially political parties in developed democracies. The slogans in question are:

Kenya Kwanza (Kenya First) – 'Bottom Up'.

The other slogan was *Azimio la Umoja* (a National Accord)

From the linguistic perspective, this study identifies and then explores the denotative meanings of the slogans. The slogans are derived from the manifestos of the political parties under study. Each slogan is displayed alongside the political parties represented in the table below:

Political Party	Slogan	Meaning
Azimio la Umoja One Kenya Alliance	Inawezekana	It is possible
Kenya Kwanza One Kenya Coalition	Mwamko mpya	A fresh start
National Resistance Movement (NRM)	Securing your Future	Securing your Future
National Unity Platform (NUP)	A New Uganda	A New Uganda

The political parties under study in Uganda had their slogans in English. However, in the case of Kenya, the slogans were in Kiswahili.

4.2 Political speech and construction of Political Party slogans
The creation, application, and dissemination of party slogans are all processes that entail the use of symbols and political language. These processes and strategies include language used to construct a fundamental message or statement, which entails employing a short, popular, and clear catchphrase that prompts people to reflect on a particular political party name or slogan. Media outlets and public spaces are flooded with posters to make the slogans noticeable. The strategy enables individuals to visualize scenarios and incorporate them into their own desires, perceptions, and emotions. It also ensures that the slogan resonates with the intended voters and is received as credible, acceptable, and genuine. For example, The NUP popularized their slogan, 'A New Uganda,' and even composed a song that resonated well with the ordinary people. It was titled "Tuliyambala engule" (We shall wear the crown), and some of the lyrics go like this:

Olutalo nga luwedde	(When the battle is over)
Tuliyambala engule	(We shall wear the crown)
Tuliyambala engule	(We shall wear the crown)
Tuliyambala engule	(We shall wear the crown)
Olutalo nga luwedde	(When the battle is over)
Tuliyambala engule	(We shall wear the crown)
Tulivimba mu Uganda empya	(We shall 'swell' and walk with a swagger in the New Uganda)

Concerning the effectiveness of slogans in electoral campaigns, we noted that Slogans are linguistic statements designed to produce an emotional connection between politicians and their audiences. We also observed that slogans that contain promises inspire hope in the electorate and succeed in making them emotionally charged, as in the case of the NUP song, *Tuliyambala engule* (we shall wear the crown). The above slogans appeal to the politicians' audiences. The catchphrases frequently serve as a clarion call for the electorate to rally support for their preferred candidate.

4.3 The Art of Language Manipulation
Political party slogans and language of political campaigns utilizes artistic language and style. The study established that the following linguistic strategies were applied in the language of election campaigns. The most excellent strategy was employing rhetorical devices and other complementary literary devices. Slogans are designed for easier memorability or impressiveness. For instance, *Inawezekana* (It is possible) is a catchphrase that can be memorized easily. Slogans can also be employed to denigrate opponents; for example, the NRM's candidate, Yoweri Museveni, portrayed himself as the 'saviour of the nation' bent on securing their future while at the same time ridiculing his rival as being untested for the serious job of president.

Similarly, the NUP candidate Kyagulanyi ridiculed NRM's candidate Museveni by saying, "*ow'ekikofiira atya ow'akakofiira*" (someone with a big hat fears the one in a tiny hat), alluding to Museveni's 'signature' big hat that has come to identify him, and how he was supposedly afraid of the newcomer wearing a red beret. Dissuasion also turned voters against the targeted candidate by presenting a counter-narrative. For instance, candidate Museveni de-campaigned his opponent as a marijuana smoker with no visible developmental plans.

The study further identified parallelism as one of the strategies used in the campaigns. Parallelism or parallel structures concern the aligning the arrangement of words or sentences in similar ways, i.e. the recurrent usage of related grammatical items. For example, when NUP candidate Kyagulanyi complains about his arrest, he says, "So it is not about me, it is about injustice". We have a repetition of "not about; it is about". Alliteration was also used to add musicality to the messages, cementing their memorability. Example: Azimio la Umoja has *mwamko mpya*, which became a famous slogan throughout the campaign.

Allusion as a narrative technique was also employed by competing campaigns to highlight their perceived differences from their opponents. A case in point is the statement by the NUP candidate, "We are the change we want to see in our country Uganda", which alludes to Mahatma Gandhi's famous expression, "Be the change in the World". In so doing, he evokes feelings of social responsibility. Repetition was also very popular with different candidates. The NUP candidate said: "I want to make it categorically

clear that we do not invite the people to come and congregate; *they are yearning for freedom, they are yearning for change, they are yearning for our message.*" The word "yearning' is repeated several times in the statement to dramatize the perceived thirst in the electorate for total freedom. Another one is from the Azimio la Umoja candidate, Raila Odinga: "*I will shake the hand if I win, and I will shake the hand if I do not*, where "I will shake the hand" is repeated. Another strategy employed by campaigners was the use of rhetorical questions. Rhetorical questions with suggested answers were common among all the Kenya and Uganda candidates. For instance, the Kenya Kwanza candidate states in these remarks: *Walikuwa wanaturingia, ati "Nobody can stop Reggae". Lakini Reggae imekwama, imekwama. Reggae imefika? Samaki haijafika? Imefika mwisho, haijafika?* (They used to boast that "nobody can stop reggae", but reggae is stuck/has failed. Reggae has arrived, but fish has not arrived. Has it not reached its end?).

Some political party slogans are catchy and to the point. Framing phrases, in this way, increase their impact and recognition. For example, "*Inawezekana*" (It Is Possible) (Azimio) and "A New Uganda" (NUP). Samples in the data showed a wide use of imperatives. When we form imperative sentences, we use the imperative mood; the imperative mood is a grammatical mood that forms a command or request. Example: NUP candidate Kyagulanyi says, "Stop killing our people" Slogans are stylistically designed to appeal to voters' emotions. As such, UDA's "Bottom-up Economic Transformational Agenda" is designed to instil confidence in the voters that they will thrive under the new government.

Similarly, NRM's "Securing your Future" inspires voters to vote for the NRM. Some politicians use the rhetorical contrast of ideas through parallel arrangements of words, clauses, or sentences, for example, the Kenya Kwanza candidate William Ruto: "… but even before the ink has dried on the mysterious coalition agreement, the edifice is already unravelling". Politicians used metaphor or kenning to spite and expose their opponents to ridicule. Kenya Kwanza candidate described the outgoing President, Uhuru Kenyatta and Raila Odinga, as "Handshake brothers" when he said, "The Handshake brothers need to apologize to Kenyans." The grammatical structure of the names of the political parties is that of a Noun Phrase (NP). These NPs have headwords in pre-modification, post-modification, and intra-modification positions. All of the Parties in this study share a common vocabulary or key phrase within the NP. In such instances, the variation in naming occurs solely at the level of modifiers and not at the headword level. There was also an instance of code-mixing in one of the political parties, i.e. Azimio la Umoja One Kenya Coalition. At the same time, the other three Parties had English-only names, Azimio la Umoja One Kenya Coalition code-mixed Kiswahili and English in its Party name at intra-phrase.

Based on the data analyzed and the findings, we can surmise that politicians use language and literature to sway public opinion in favour of themselves and their respective political parties by employing the art of political rhetoric.

Political campaigns in Kenya and Uganda are organised to influence decision-making within a specific group or environment. It can also be viewed as the mobilisation of forces by an organisation or individuals to influence others to effectuate an identified and desired political change. The 'message' sent to the electorates seems vital in any political campaign. A campaign message is an essential and potent tool that politicians use to express views and feelings to the public to reshape and redirect the electorates' opinions to align with theirs. Adekunle (1994, p.15) discusses the sociology of Language by pointing out that "Society is seen only as a factor of language development and functioning." This view corroborates Raymond Ross' functions of Language, which are to entertain for pleasure, persuade for empathy and appeal, and to inform by creating and disseminating knowledge and understanding. In any communicative event, Language will be used to fulfil the three functions either separately or collectively.

Though all major campaigns employed strategic communication strategies in the mobilization of voters, in the two countries' presidential elections, the results were starkly different. In the two elections, the incumbent in Uganda won and the candidate supported by the incumbent in Kenya lost. It left many questions as to whether campaign messaging played a role in the two elections. Preliminary findings revealed that effective messaging only succeeds where the democratic process is insulated from state interference, especially state-sponsored violence, censorship, clamping down on free media and open rigging.

5. Findings
The study has established that Language and Literature were employed effectively by political campaigns with varying degrees of success. The study has established that slogans, jokes and other forms of emotional expressions play a significant role in the ability of a political candidate to win followers or lose them. Popularity ratings of candidates are fluid because perceptions and not facts drive politics. Once Language is used to paint a candidate negatively, it takes much effort to undo the damage. Conversely, candidates with integrity issues may also put Language to their aid to divert the attention of the inquiring public from their past transgressions. The paper proposes a more in-depth study of how stylistic devices are employed by politicians to promote or negate the principles of inclusivity of women, youth, persons with disability and other minorities in political leadership.

Politicians use social media platforms during elections to publicise their political ideologies, glorify their development records and malign opponents. Attempts to control hate speech and divisive sloganeering during elections have been frustrated by the thin

line between the constitutional protection of free speech and the criminalisation of hate speech. Any attempt to punish hate speech is considered a threat to freedom of speech as it instils fear in the citizenry. Article 33 of the *Constitution of Kenya 2020* protects freedom of expression. While it protects the freedom of every person to seek, receive and impart information or ideas, it also limits this freedom by criminalising propaganda for war, incitement to violence, hate speech and advocacy of hatred based on discrimination. Freedom of speech is further bolstered by Article 34, which protects the freedom and independence of the media.

The study revealed that even though the new media has flooded its audiences with many platforms through which one can access news, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and TikTok, these new platforms, as flashy as they are, are not the core avenues for accessing information about elections in Kenya and Uganda. The more significant segment of the population in the two countries still trusts and follows traditional media, especially Television channels, due to low-income levels coupled with low IT literacy. The popularity of TV has been enhanced by the stations introducing applications that allow for live streaming by viewers that make news accessible anytime to anyone with a simple smartphone. Our study has revealed that with increased digitisation of the media, campaign communication in Kenya and Uganda remains heavily television centred because even the social media platforms mainly upload video clips from reputable media houses. The predominance of traditional media in the age of new media explains why, for most people, television remains the most important source of information about politics (Plasser, 2009; Purcell et al., 2010). This study relied on campaign information aired through TV channels because, over the years, with the liberalisation of the airwaves, and passing legislation expanding freedom of access to information and freedoms of speech and the media, the number of TV channels has increased in East Africa.

The study has also established that in the election campaigns in the two countries, the Internet has become increasingly important. There is always a deliberate attempt by competing campaigns to disseminate their campaign messages through traditional media while also expanding audience size by employing new media for a wider reach. The strategy holds for traditional web pages and blogs and social media such as Facebook and YouTube. We observed that in the election campaigns under review in the two countries, more people turned to the Internet for information about party politics. Political parties and campaigns focused more on web campaigns using hired cyber warriors (Hendricks & Denton, 2010; Lilleker & Jackson, 2011). Many viewers who watched TV messages also did so through the Internet using their mobile phones. It is, however, important to recognise that the Internet is a platform rather than a challenger to traditional media in terms of audience competition. Most of those who turn to the Internet for information turn to the online versions of traditional media to confirm the reliability of what they encounter online (Purcell et al., 2010; Smith, 2009). In that respect, it often needs to be more accurate to discuss the increasing usage of the Internet as a threat to traditional media since media practices are dynamic and consistently adopt emerging technologies for relevance and profit.

Political communication is distorted and deliberately misleading**.** Political communication presumes the honesty of politicians to deliver objective information. The expectation is only sometimes the case. Due to power and information asymmetry, politicians have more resources, control the media, can afford technology and certainly can hire the best propagandists to sugarcoat their messages. Wanyande P (2002) observes that most of the political communication in Kenya has been tribal. It focuses on political opponents instead of the development agenda. Often political communication is so distorted that the public or particular sub-groups, like women or undecided voters, fall easy prey to the propaganda, thus negatively impacting the citizens and development. As Wanyande (2002) correctly observes, the potential danger lies in the impact of exposure to different types of mediated messages on the citizens (Aborisade, 2006).

6. Conclusion

This paper investigated Language and Political Messaging in Electoral Processes in Kenya and Uganda elections. We did a literary examination of trends in Kenya's 2022 and Uganda's 2021 elections and examined the place of Language and Literature in the whole electoral process. Our research shows that Language and Literature are inseparable partners in political campaign messaging, working together to manipulate information and present it in a way that is both effective and engaging for the intended audience. The paper interrogated the extent to which opposing political campaigns in Kenya and Uganda exploited linguistic and literary resources to give impetus to their campaigns. According to the findings, candidates frequently exploit the meticulous use of language as a strategy to give voters grandiose promises, present their opponents in an unfavorable light, and project themselves as messiahs. The study established that messaging and language manipulation in politics are rhetorically employed with one goal in mind: to increase a candidate's chance of being elected. The messages are powerful mental images that shape how the electorate thinks, feels, and acts. If voters had a better understanding of how rhetorical techniques and images intended to persuade during political campaigns, they might have a better understanding of how candidates attempt to affect their perceptions. The paper has revealed that politicians use language and literature to inform, influence, persuade, denigrate, and sway public opinion in favour of themselves and their respective political parties by employing the art of political rhetoric. Several techniques of persuasion and manipulation in political speech, including the use of catchphrases and other rhetorical strategies, were uncovered. These include metaphor, allusion, repetition, antithesis, rhetorical questions, alliteration, parallelism, and

dissuasion. This study is significant in the sense that it brings to the fore the importance of language. It clarifies that: Language is a significant ideological instrument that performs a significant ideological function as a tool that conceals the manipulative goals of politicians from the public. Further, linguistic manipulation emerges as an effective strategy of political rhetoric due to its ability to strongly persuade the public to take specific political actions. Having established that Language and Literature play crucial roles in election processes, it is imperative that extensive and specialized research is undertaken in this field to interrogate the influence of the New Media on literary and linguistic political communication approaches during electoral campaigns. Future research should also focus on multidisciplinary approaches involving Language, Literature, Information and Communication Studies and Political Science.

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