



**LANGUAGE AND ECOLOGY:
A SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR ANALYSIS
OF THE MAU FOREST CONSERVATION IN KENYA**

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Abstract:

This paper explores political leaders' utterances in regard to the Mau Forest complex in Kenya. The paper adopts an ecolinguistic approach to critical discourse analysis to shed light on how political leaders use language to encode their perceptions and feelings about environmental conservation in general and Mau Forest restoration in particular. Awareness on such language use is important because of the understanding that political leaders are part of the elite members of society who inform and direct public opinion on many critical issues in society. The political class also controls the agenda of public debate on many societal issues. Using Critical Discourse Analysis within Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) approach, this paper brought to fore how the political class uses language to (de)emphasize or conceal meanings depending on whether such meanings or beliefs are for or against the political leaders' interests. The findings revealed that the political leaders perceived the forest conservation programme as oppression, distortion and provocation to ethnic-based violence. In addition, the politicians' lexical choices indicate that the politicians perceived the Mau Forest restoration programme as a falsehood propagated by the political rivals.

Keywords: lexical choices, metafunctions, beliefs, SFG, forest conservation, Kenya

1. Introduction

The language those in authority use, especially the political class, during their public addresses will inform and influence public perceptions about forest conservation. Public perception and behaviour are key components in changing societal attitudes towards critical issues in society such as forest conservation. Public perceptions and behaviour are, therefore, essential components in the Mau Forest restoration agenda. The conceptualization and definition of the Mau Forest restoration issue and the magnitude

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of the effects of human activities in the forest areas depends on how conservation is described through language. According to Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), language choice enables one to convey meanings of different kinds.

Halliday (1994) argues that language is a 'system of making meanings'. That is, people use language to express meaning, hence the view that it is by understanding the theory behind the assembling of words to form a grammar that meaning can be interpreted correctly. From this perspective, Halliday sees language as being made up of semantic units, hence the need for a functional grammar to bring out the meanings of wordings. Halliday (1992) reiterates that this kind of analysis is functional, because it involves analyzing language in use according to context. Consequently, Halliday identifies three functions that language performs, namely; ideational, interpersonal and textual. The ideational metafunction is concerned with the representation of processes, events, actions, sensations that constitute life, the world and everything (Halliday, 1992; Halliday & Ruqaiya, 1985). That is, the ideational metafunction deals with the encoding of reality.

This means that language enables human beings to build a mental picture of reality and to make sense of what goes on around or inside them. In other words, speakers use language to conceptualize and describe their experiences, whether of the phenomena of the external world or of the internal world of their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions.

In this respect, Halliday argues that the lexical choices speakers make enable them to encode both semantically and syntactically mental pictures of the physical world and the world of their imagination. This study investigated the lexical choices in Kenyan politicians' utterances on the Mau Forest conservation programme so as to describe their perceptions, opinions, and attitudes towards the conservation of the Mau Forest issue. This is based on the view that in serving the ideational function, language gives structures to experience and helps to determine our way of looking at things, so that it requires some intellectual effort to see them in any way than that which our language suggests to us.

Language also serves the interpersonal metafunction (Halliday, 1994; Halliday & Ruqaiya, 1985). The Interpersonal metafunction is concerned with the ways in which people interact through language. That is, the lexical choices speakers make serve to reflect their opinions and attitudes towards those they interact with in society (Halliday, 1992). The words, phrases and expressions speakers choose to use in specific contexts will be embedded with their feelings and attitudes. This implies that the lexical choices speakers use to refer to persons, groups, social relations or social issues depend on different contexts. These include social context (group membership), socio-cultural context (norms, beliefs, values), and personal context (mood, opinion) (Halliday, 1994). These contexts are ideology based. Therefore, speakers choose specific words, names, and personal pronouns to refer to members of in-group and those of out-group depending on their feelings and opinion (Halliday, 1992/1994). As such, specific names and pronouns

chosen to serve to reveal what the speaker feels and how he perceives the addressee. The same applies to social relations or social issues.

Apart from the ideational and interpersonal functions, language also serves the textual metafunction (Halliday 1994; Eggins, 1994). This function is concerned with how words and sentences are organized to make the text and to steer the reader or hearer's interpretations of events and people (Eggins, 1994; Halliday, 1994). That is, the type of sentences a speaker chooses to construct can serve the purpose of managing important information or beliefs. Such syntactic structures can be used to emphasize, de-emphasize or conceal meanings and beliefs depending on whether such meanings and beliefs are consistent or inconsistent with the interests of the speaker (Van Dijk, 1993). For instance, negative actions will be syntactically played down by the use of agentless passive constructions (Van Dijk, 1993).

In this context, positive actions are highlighted with actors being given prominence in active sentences. This suggests that if members of in-group are involved in bad actions, the speaker de-emphasizes this by use of agentless passive sentences (Van Dijk, 1993). On the other hand, if members of the out-group are the focus, they do form the subjects of the sentences that the speaker constructs, thus giving them prominence.

The question of the Mau Forest restoration keeps recurring on the Kenyan political scene and it is one of the key topics in the current political discourse in the country. Despite the heated political debate on the importance of conserving the Mau Forest, the dissenting political propositions are still on the rise. The forest restoration programme has in the recent past sparked a war of words between political leaders from different political camps. The question on what is in the minds of these political leaders in regard to forest conservation needs to be answered so as to save the Mau Forest from depletion.

The Mau complex is Kenya's largest water tower. It spreads over four hundred thousand hectares, making it Kenya's largest closed canopy ecosystem (Ministry of Environment, 2010). It is the single most important water catchment in Rift Valley and Western Kenya. This is because it is the source of all the rivers which form tributaries from as far as Lake Turkana in the North to Lake Natron in the South and also to Kenya's most populous Lake Victoria basin (Ministry of Environment, 2010). The Mau complex regulates water flow, controls flooding, regulates ground water recharge and most importantly mitigates climate change by storing carbon (Ministry of Environment, 2013).

In spite of its national and global importance, many areas of the Mau complex have been deforested and degraded in the past few decades (Ministry of Environment, 2010). Degazettement of forest reserves and continuous widespread encroachment has led to the destruction of over one hundred thousand hectares since the year 2000 (Ministry of Environment, 2010, Kenya Forestry Service, 2018). This scenario has impacted negatively on rivers originating from the Mau Forest. In this way, forest loss has greatly resulted to ecological and hydrological changes that have threatened the sustainable future of areas downstream (Ministry of Environment, 2013; Kenya Forestry Service, 2018).

In the year 2010, the Kenyan Government initiated a move to evict forest dwellers from the Mau Forest so as to allow for the rehabilitation of the depleted sections of the forest. What is more, the Government and other stakeholders had so far spent over two hundred and thirty-one billion shillings in the previous ten years on the forest conservation programme (Ministry of Environment, 2010). Despite these efforts, over two thousand households had returned to the forest areas, even after being forcefully evicted by the government in the year 2015 (The Standard, March 4, 2015). In response, the Kenyan government re-initiated the forest eviction programme in 2018, targeting over four thousand households that had encroached on the forest areas again (Daily Nation, July 20, 2018). This move triggered a series of political campaigns against the eviction exercise, with political leaders claiming that their communities were being oppressed by their political rivals for political reasons. Consequently, the Mau Forest restoration programme was turned into a political issue and has been used as a campaign tool during different electioneering periods (Kagwanja, 2010). In the meantime, large tracts of the forest have been cleared and turned into farmlands (Kenya Forestry Service, 2018).

The consequences of such practices have been observed in Kenya in terms of persistent dry spells, flooding and unpredictable weather patterns (Ministry of Environment, 2010). It is on the basis of the aforementioned developments that this paper seeks to analyze the political leaders' forest conservation discourse. Political leaders are part of the elite members of society who inform, influence and direct public opinion on many societal issues (Van Dijk, 2005; Jones & Peccei, 2004). There is need, therefore, to study the politicians' language use so as to determine its implications for forest conservation in Kenya.

2. Literature Review

The social impact of language is powerful. This is because language can be used to lead and mislead, distort reality and to shape our perceptions of the world (Goshgarian, 1998). In this context, politicians use language to make their hearers form opinions favourable to their predetermined ends. This understanding is reiterated by Ralph and Stanyer (2007) who note that what politicians say sets the agenda for discussion among the public. Such discussions play a significant role in shaping people's opinions on many different issues manifest in political speeches. This is because the language that politicians use plays a huge role in influencing public perception on various issues in society (Ralph & Stanyer, 2007). Along similar lines, Van Dijk (2000) and Potter (2009) note that politicians use language in ways that ensure they win support from the public. That is, political leaders use language to bond the minds of the public masses in favour of the politicians' viewpoints.

Political discourse is concerned with how language can be used to manipulate thoughts (Wodak, 2009). Further, Van Dijk (1998) notes that politicians seem to want to hide the negative within particular formulations such that the public may not see the truth or horror. That is, politicians use language to conceal the reality so as to achieve

particular political goals. The language speakers use, the type of sentences they construct, and the lexical choices they make can be analysed to reveal how they perceive environmental issues (Couto, 2014). This understanding is in line with Fill and Muhlhausler (2001) that language shapes the way human beings perceive and construct the physical environment. Similarly, Halliday (1992, 1994) emphasizes that the way we use language shows our perception of the world around us. This perception is revealed through the lexical choices and types of utterances the politicians make. This paper sought to examine the political leaders' speeches about the Mau Forest restoration programme with the aim of establishing, assessing and describing their perceptions of the Mau Forest conservation programme for social action.

Ecolinguistics is an umbrella term for all approaches in which the study of language is in any way combined with ecology (Fill, 1993; Fill & Muhlhausler, 2001). It entails among other things, the awareness of the presentation of environmental problems in texts. Ecolinguistics was originally defined in 1972 by the Norwegian linguist Einar Haugen as the study of interactions between any given language and its environment (Haugen, 1972). Notice, however, that current interpretations of Ecolinguistics differ widely. In this context, many linguists relate the term 'ecology' to 'context' or 'language environment' in order to describe problems associated with language which are embedded either in a sociolinguistic, educational, economic or political setting and are not decontextualized. Some leading Eco linguists such as Fill and Muhlhausler (2001, 2003), and Bang and Door (2007) define Eco linguistics as the ecological approach to language that takes into consideration the complex network of relations that occur among the environment, languages and the people speaking these languages. The environment in this context concerns the biological, physical, and social environment (Wendel, 2005).

Environmental concerns have been expressed from different disciplines, in which case, scholars have interrogated the subject of environment from diverse perspectives. For instance, from the viewpoint of religion, the issue of environment and its preservation is as old as mankind. After God created Adam and Eve, He put them in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 1:27). God gave Adam the task of naming every plant and creature that He made. Adam was also given the task of tending the Garden (Genesis 1:27-30; 2:19). This means that, the connection between language and the environment dates back to the time of creation. Man was placed at the centre of the environmental conservation cause from the time of creation for his own good and that of other creatures.

The subject of environmental conservation has also caught the attention of linguists, hence the emergence of the sub-discipline of language- Eco linguistics. This sub-field concerns itself with the interrelationship between language and the environment. This explains the existing vast body of both academic research and activist, political as well as journalistic work in Eco linguistics that has been produced in the past three decades (Alexander & Stibbe, 2014). This study was also intended to contribute to this broad body of academic research work by shedding more light on the interrelationship between language and forest conservation in Kenya. The pivot of most work in Eco linguistics in Kenya is the sustainability of the ecosystem, including human life,

especially that of posterity. Eco linguistics is committed to helping humankind transcend anthropocentrism that marks man's relationship with other species (Alexander & Stibbe, 2014). Anthropocentrism allows humans to view themselves as the centre of the universe. That is, man is under obligation to do anything in the environment to benefit himself, regardless of the harm it causes other species. Eco linguistics is geared towards relationships which sustain life. This understanding is echoed by Fill and Muhlhausler (2001), and Alexander and Stibbe (2014) who posit that Eco linguistics is the study of the impact of language on the life-sustaining relationships among humans and other organisms, including the physical environment.

In Couto's (2014) view, Eco linguistics is a platform for the study of all language phenomena, including the morphosyntactic, phonological, and phonetic domains. This means that Eco linguistics transcends sociolinguistics and eco-critical discourse analysis by incorporating theoretical and methodological ideas from the social and psychological sciences. That is, the language speakers use, the type of sentences they construct, and the lexical choices they make can be analyzed to reveal how they perceive environmental issues (Halliday, 1992; Alexander & Stibbe, 2014). This study was also concerned with the political leaders' lexical choices and syntactic structures and their implications for forest conservation in Kenya. This was in line with the view that language is part of reality, a shaper of reality, and a metaphor of reality (Fill & Mulhausler, 2001). That is, language is part of the physical and psychological environment, where it shapes the way human beings perceive and construct the physical environment.

This understanding draws on Halliday's (1992) view that the way we use language shows our perception of the world around us. Such a perception is revealed through the lexical choices, metaphors, and types of sentences speakers construct. This means, for instance, that the lexical choices and metaphors speakers use indicate their perception of natural resources. In this regard, resources such as water, gas and oil can be expressed as non-count nouns, hence portraying them as inexhaustible (Halliday, 1992). This view was also adopted in our study that sought to examine the political leaders' lexical, metaphoric, and syntactic constructions as regards the Mau Forest restoration. This was aimed at unearthing and describing their perceptions of the Mau Forest conservation programme. A critical analysis of ecological texts sets out to unearth what is deeply embedded in and/or hidden by certain linguistic choices (Alexander & Stibbe, 2014). Language has been used to conceal environmental harm from the public eye. Halliday (1994) argues that the lexico-grammatical choice of climate change is most likely designed to play a big role in an ideological discursive formation that seeks to shift responsibility for environmental harm away from the biggest culprits (ibid). This is done primarily by presenting environmental problems as happening on their own. For instance, corporate entities manipulate language to conceal their lack of concern for environmental conservation (Rowell, 1999). Such manipulation of language is evident in names of corporate funded groups, such as the Global Climate Change Coalition, and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, which, despite their pro-environment sounding names, support unregulated resource extraction and are engaged in an active

campaign of dissuasion. Ecolinguistics not only analyses language to reveal what communities say about the environment, but also, judges these stories according to an ecosophy (ecological philosophy). Further, Eco linguistics resists stories which oppose the ecosophy and contributes to the search for new stories about the environment (Stibbe, 2014). Against this background, Eco linguistics seeks to explore linguistic phenomena found in inter-language, inter-human, and human-nature relationship from the perspective of ecological philosophy (ecosophy). In this context, Eco linguistics adopts 'ecosophy' as its principle narrative framework (Alexander & Stibbe 2014). Central to the notion of ecosophy is the commitment to ecological equilibrium, which, unlike positivist worldviews, rejects the separation between human beings and nature and proposes that ecological crises require, not only scientific solutions, but also, moral introspection of anthropocentric activities (Naess, 2008).

These views fall under ecologism, which is a field of study of new ways on how man interacts with nature (Alexander & Stibbe, 2014). Ecologism has three tenets, namely anthropocentrism, ecocentrism and moral extensionism. Anthropocentrism is about concern for humans at the expense of the other creatures in the environment (as long as humans' benefit, there should be no worry about the environment). Ecocentrism focuses on protecting the environment from man's destructive activities, whereas moral extensionism holds that the environment has a right to live, just like humans. There is need to connect the growing body of specific literature on political ecology of conservation to some of the often-overlooked main conceptual components emerging from political anthropology and geography (Vaccaro & Beltran, 2013). According to Vaccaro and Beltran (*ibid*), such components as sources of legitimacy, governmentality, territoriality, political economy (commoditization) and culture-based conservation policies are the basis of contemporary analysis of the conservation policies and their consequences. Such analyses are aimed at finding solutions to conservation issues in society. Consequently, an effective response to contemporary environmental problems demands an approach that integrates political, economic, and ecological issues (Bryant, 1997). That is, the field of environmental conservation (forest conservation) requires collaborative efforts of experts from diverse fields. In this context, linguists should also claim their position in responding to the contemporary environmental problems.

On the one hand, everyday communications, nature and non-human creatures are addressed in mere categories of usefulness, which demonstrates the sense of utilitarian anthropocentrism embedded in daily use. On the other hand, ecological issues are often escalated by discourses promoting non-sustainable actions. Halliday's (1990) remarks on the interplay between language and ecological issues broadened the original elaboration of 'language ecology', hence the birth of the term Eco linguistics that witnessed the publication of books in the field of Eco linguistics in the 1990s. Consequently, the new millennium saw an increase in the number of publications in this field, hence the fact that Eco linguistics is now a well-established discipline. This study will also form part of the field of Eco linguistics, by adding to its existing literature.

Language plays a pivotal role in ecological issues and the environmental problems which affect a wide range of groupings and individuals (Fill & Muhlhausler, 2001). As far as forest conservation is concerned, it is a mistake to believe that technical experts and natural scientists are the appropriate or only experts in this field (Finke, 1998). As Finke (ibid) reiterates, the problems of the environment are problems of the consciousness of our self and its role rather than problems of nature itself. Finke, further notes that linguists should be regarded as experts on some of the issues involved, more especially, in reforming man and his attitudes towards nature and conservation in particular. This study addressed Fill and Muhlhausler's (2001) concerns by analyzing critically the political discourse on the Mau Forest, so as to reveal the hidden ideologies and interrelationships between language and forest conservation.

Many environmental issues involve power struggles between opposing groups, and these struggles frequently take place in, and over language (Fill & Muhlhausler, 2001). SFG and CDA can help us become more systematically and critically aware of the language in which environmental matters are discussed, especially by those in power (Halliday, 1992, 1994; Fill & Muhlhausler, 2001). Such awareness can help us understand the ideological presuppositions of environmental texts. The viewpoint a political leader chooses has a great impact on how the public view environmental issues (Kristen & Barbra, 2000). This implies that what an individual actor says can change the way people think about environmental issues.

Kristen and Barbra (2000) cite examples of leaders in various parts of the world, whose speeches and writings on environmental issues have been known to influence the way many people think about environmental conservation. These include John Muir (American writer), Theodore Roosevelt (US President), Rachel Carson (British Writer), Marjory Douglas (American Journalist) and Wangari Maathai (Kenyan Biologist and politician). Other world leaders like John Muir founded the Sierra Club in 1892, which, not only promoted the setting aside of wild areas as National Parks, but also led to the establishment of Yosemite National Park. Similarly, President Roosevelt championed the protection of the brown pelican and established the first National Wildlife Refuge on the Pelican Island (1903). Many other areas have since then been reserved for endangered species.

By the same token, Wangari Maathai founded the Greenbelt Movement, an organization that encouraged the restoration of forests in Kenya and other African countries. Maathai's initiative has seen millions of trees planted and other forest areas conserved in Kenya over the years. In Uganda, William Amanzuru founded 'Friends of Zoka'; a network that has raised levels of awareness through campaigns against deforestation. Notice that these are few examples of individuals whose speeches and writings on environmental conservation are known to have had a positive influence on people's attitude towards wildlife and environmental conservation. These individuals spoke and wrote persuasively about conserving the environment for future generations. Further, they won hearts for their cause, raised awareness among governments and influenced policies that favoured environmental conservation in various parts of the

world. In the modern times, former US President, Barack Obama and the leader of the Roman Catholic Church, Pope Francis are among the key leaders who have expressed concern over environmental degradation. For instance, in his State of the Union address, the then US president, Barack Obama, observed that climate change was no longer an issue for future generations but a reality for the current generation (The White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2015). Further, Obama noted that taking a stand against climate change is a moral obligation and promised to rally all world leaders to champion this course so as to save the world from the looming climatic catastrophe.

On his part, Pope Francis told the 70th United Nations Assembly that there was need for urgent action to halt the earth's destruction through environmental degradation (The Guardian, 2015). The Pope emphasized that he had launched a teaching document to champion the rights of the environment and that the environment has rights that nobody has the authority to abuse. In view of this, the pope urged world leaders and governments to take action against those who were responsible for environmental degradation, because of selfish and boundless thirst for money. These sentiments also featured prominently during the World Summit on Climate Change (COP21) held in France in October 2015. World leaders at the summit agreed to set timelines in the fight against climate change, with the hope that the deliberations would help in influencing world policy actors to set commitments in tackling climate change. It was on these grounds that our study looked at the utterances made by key political leaders during the 2010 Mau Forest conservation debate in Kenya and their implications for forest conservation. This was aimed at ascertaining how such leaders perceived the Mau Forest conservation issue, hence connection between their language use and forest conservation, during the Mau Forest restoration debate.

Based on the aforesaid, it is arguable that communities that live close to nature always use their languages to create solidarity between themselves and the environment and for 'exploitative discourse' (Harre & Muhlhausler, 1999). In this context, one can use CDA framework to analyze such speakers' discourse by looking at the words, syntax and pragmatics of spoken and written texts. Harre and Muhlhausler (1999) argue that such analysis focusing on texts such as political speeches, and articles on the environment will enrich Eco linguistics as a thriving field of study. This study aimed at providing a response to Harre's and Muhlhausler's concerns. The findings will enrich the field of Eco linguistics as an emerging area of study.

3. Methodology

The speeches by political leaders and senior government officials on the Mau Forest debate formed the population of the study. These included speeches made by political party leaders, president(s), presidential candidates, ministers, cabinet and chief secretaries, and members of parliament, during the Mau Forest restoration debate. Downsampling procedures were used to select samples of political utterances made during the Mau Forest restoration debate. In this context, 20 speeches were selected for

analysis. These texts were selected from articles in the different electioneering periods, parliamentary debates, interviews, and government press briefings ranging from 2002 to 2019. Only speeches based on the Mau Forest conservation programme were selected for the study. The Mau Forest gained prominence due to the rapid destruction caused by widespread encroachment. The Mau Forest restoration issue featured prominently during the 2002, 2007, 2012, and 2017 general election campaigns, and speeches about the same topic were recorded and are publicly available in the national archives as well as different media platforms such as YouTube and other websites.

The primary sources of data for the study were the politicians and senior government officials' recorded speeches sampled from the media, as reported and presented during the Mau Forest restoration debate. The audio-recorded utterances made by political leaders on the Mau Forest conservation programme were transcribed and translated into English where appropriate. These speeches were obtained from the national and media archives, as well as other platforms such as YouTube. Political discourse on forest conservation is historical and could be understood in relation to context (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). The notion of context embodies psychological, political, ideological, and historical components. The historical background of the Mau Forest issue in Kenya was significant for making sense of the political discourse surrounding the Mau Forest restoration debate. Samples were analyzed using Fairclough and Wodak's (1997) CDA framework.

4. Discussion and Results

4.1 Ideational Metafunction

Political leaders used different lexical items to define forest conservation as a form of oppression. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (fifth edition) defines oppression as the act of ruling in a hard and cruel way. The specific words political leaders chose to use in their speeches were taken to be indicative of brutality or cruelty, hence oppression. The key lexical choices such as oppress, push, dictate, and brutality brought on board concerns of oppression and unfairness in the eviction of the forest settlers, a concern which the political leaders seem to use in order to gain political mileage. These key words are elaborated in detail in the following discussion. These lexical items above portray those advocating for the conservation of the Mau Forest as oppressive and devoid of human feelings. That is, those advocating for the eviction of people from the Mau Forest were perceived as being cruel and unjust to the people of Rift Valley.

This is illustrated by: *you oppress people imagining Mau; does all the water come from Mau?* (Example 1). These speakers felt that the people who had encroached on the Mau Forest had not done anything wrong to warrant their eviction from the forest as illustrated by *'it is unfair to say it is because of Mau'* (example 2). In this context, the political leaders argued that the people occupied the forest legitimately and that the activities they engaged in were not the cause of the drought in the country. Therefore, those who were calling for their eviction were allegedly being taken by the Rift Valley leaders to be unfair,

dictatorial, and oppressive. The conservation programme was therefore perceived as unnecessary and out to oppress the forest settlers and the people of Rift Valley in general. This is illustrated in example 1 below.

Example 1

*“Who comes from Rift Valley- is it not me?
Even before you were born- and then you keep on
Running up and down making unnecessary noise
I will see how far they will go.
I did what I did to protect forests-
They don’t even want to recognize that!
They keep on mixing up issues-
drought and Mau conservation issues.
Why Nai- Lake Naivasha- is it not dry? -
Have they queried about it- or elsewhere?
Drought which has never happened before...
Even in my lifetime-drought which has not happened.
...You **oppress** people, imagining Mau-
...**does all the water** come from Mau!”*

The speaker in example 1 above feels that the Mau Forest conservation exercise was a form of oppression being unleashed on innocent citizens. This is brought out through the proposition ‘*you oppress people*’ in the second last line of example 1 above. The speaker further questions whether the Mau Forest is the source of all the rivers and dams in the country (*does all the water come from Mau*). Consequently, the speaker alleges that there is no justification for the removal of the people from the Mau Forest. The speaker in sample 1 cites examples of drying water bodies that lie outside the Mau Forest catchment to give credibility to the argument that Mau Forest is not the cause of drought, hence no justification for eviction of the settlers. The aforementioned water bodies together with the lexical items serve to indicate that the speakers perceived the forest conservation programme as being unfair and oppressive.

The citing of the water bodies such as Lake Naivasha is meant to give credibility to the speaker’s claims that the conservation programme is being inhuman and cruel. This is illustrated in example 2 below.

Example 2:

*“I don’t know whether these days Mau Forest stretches
All the way to Nairobi! Ndakaini Dam is drying up.
Do you want to tell me that Mau is the source of water in Ndakaini Dam?
...It is **unfair** to say it is because of Mau... (Appendix A, speech 1)*

*...You **push people** in the name of water catchment areas...
...You **push people, are people rats**...
...You **shout eviction!** Eviction! ...
...they keep on running up and down shouting **Mau! Mau!**"*

The speaker in example 2 above laments that the conservation exercise has turned brutal as indicated by: *you push people in the name of water catchment areas* and *it is unfair to say it is because of Mau*. This is because those advocating for it are dealing with Mau settlers as though they were not human beings, which is indicative in the use of the image of a rat (*are people rats*). This suggests that the Kenyan government was using force to drive them out of the Mau Forest as though they were vermin, instead of talking and negotiating with those occupying the forest on the way forward. The recurrent use of the term '*you push people*' and '*it is unfair*' in example 2 above can be said to be indicative of the politicians' view that the decision to evict the Mau settlers was not fairly done, but forced on the victims. This is further illustrated in example 3 below.

Example 3:

*"...An outsider, or even leaders from outside to come
to **dictate** what people of Rift Valley should do.... are there
no men or leaders in Rift Valley?...
it is mandatory to **consult** the people even on the Mau Forest issues."*

Those supporting the Mau Forest conservation agenda are ostensibly perceived as dictators. This is because they are presented as imposing their decisions on the people of the Rift Valley instead of consulting and discussing with them. This understanding is illustrated through the use of the terms '*dictate and consult*' in example 3 above. This, according to the speaker, amounts to brutality and oppression as is further illustrated in example 4 below.

Example 4:

*"... we do not want **brutality**...
...we do not want **forceful evictions**...
...we want people to be moved in a **humane way**..."*

From example 4 above, it can be argued that the conservation exercise was perceived by the politicians as being brutal and inhuman (*we do not want brutality/forceful evictions*), which explains why the political leaders were not supportive of it because it allegedly oppressed their people: '*we want people to be moved in a humane way*'. The terms *brutality* and *humane way* express contradictory meanings. According to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2012), *brutality* means cruel treatment, whereas

humane way refers to treating people in a way that is not cruel and causes them as little suffering as possible. Consequently, the speaker seems to portray the forest conservation programme as inhuman, hence rejects it. Similar sentiments can be illustrated by what other political leaders said. That is, the leaders emphasized the idea that the conservation exercise debased the people in the Mau Forest, thereby suggesting that those advocating for the conservation of the Mau Forest did not have any regard for human life. Example 5 below is illustrative of this perception.

Example 5:

*“...If forests are important then human life is more important...
...You shout eviction! Eviction!
...I have to take care of the human being first...
... We should bear in mind that we are dealing with human beings –not chicken...”*

Drawing on the use of language in example 5 above, we could argue the speakers in question seek to portray the Mau Forest conservation exercise as inhuman. This is better illustrated through the repeated emphasis on the need to take care of human beings/human life. The speakers emphasize the sanctity of human life as seen in the proposition ‘*human life is more important*’ and ‘*human being first*’. Those advocating for this conservation programme are equally perceived as being inhuman as seen through the use of the image of the chicken in *we are dealing with human beings-not chicken*, suggesting their lack of human feelings towards the people in the Mau Forest. Consequently, they seem to view the conservation exercise as oppressive. The speakers in question seem to present the forest conservation programme as oppressive, so as to perhaps, persuade their followers to denounce the programme and its advocates for political gains.

Oppression is further reinforced in example 6 below by the assertion that the people in the Mau Forest are holders of valid title deeds issued by none other than the president himself as illustrated by the proposition ‘*title deeds have been issued some signed by the president himself*’. From this assertion, it is arguable that people could be feeling that the Mau settlers have a right to continue with their activities in the forest areas. As such, those advocating for their eviction were allegedly infringing on their rights to occupy the forest area, which was taken to be rightfully theirs by virtue of the title deeds in their possession. This is illustrated in example 6 below.

Example 6:

*“...We agreed that those in the Mau Forest ... should
be resettled and those with title deeds
be compensated before they leave...
...Title deeds have been issued... some signed by the president himself
and others by the government.*

*...a title deed is very important to any citizen...
...there is a complete difference to other citizens...
settled where there was proper excision, proper survey...
proper documentation...complete with issuance of title deeds...
...some by the first president...second president... and the
current president..... how do you tell a citizen ...
who was given title deed...by none other than the
president... that the document given
by the president is a piece of paper?"*

The speakers in example 6 above use the key words *title deed*, *president*, *government*, and *citizen*, which are indicative of the argument that the people living in the Mau Forest live there by right and not choice. This is suggested by the argument that the title deeds they hold were issued by the president himself (*title deeds issued by first president. second president.. current president*), and the president is the head of government, hence making them valid and authentic. In the Kenyan context, the president's word in certain circumstances is taken to be law. It is in this regard that the speakers in sample 6 seem to wonder how such people could be told to move out in the name of forest conservation. This, to them, is tantamount to trampling upon the rights of those occupying the forest areas. The speaker repeatedly mentions the president and title deeds to justify his claim that the Mau Forest conservation programme is cruel to the settlers. Such title deeds signed by the president and issued by the government cannot be invalid (piece of paper). In summary, it can be observed that the speakers in the excerpts above used words that portrayed the Mau Forest conservation exercise as unfair, cruel and oppressive. According to Fairclough and Wodak (2003), the specific words speakers choose to use convey what such speakers feel about a given phenomenon. Such words, according to the scholars, can either bear a positive or negative connotation, depending on the feelings of the speaker (Fairclough & Wodak, 2009). The examples of lexical items such as oppress, push, shout, dictate and outsider in samples 1-9 indicate that different speakers used lexical items with negative connotation when referring to the forest conservation programme. Similarly, according to Halliday (1992), the aforementioned lexical items and phrases could be said to serve the ideational metafunction. As a result, the Mau Forest conservation programme was construed to be a form of oppression meted out on the people of Rift Valley whom the speakers seemed to fight for. Consequently, the political leaders used these lexical items to persuade the public to ignore and resist the conservation programme. Such sentiments could influence the peoples' perception of the Mau Forest conservation issue, hence negatively affecting the forest restoration agenda.

4.1.1 Forest Conservation as Distortion

The lexical choices the speakers made during the Mau Forest restoration debate indicated that they perceived the Mau Forest conservation issue as a falsehood. The data findings indicated that this falsehood was being propagated by all the political leaders from across

the political divide. The lexical choices indicated that the politicians did not find any connection between the destruction of the Mau Forest and the drought in the county. As such, those advocating for the eviction of settlers from the Mau Forest areas so as to conserve the water catchment in order to avert the drought crisis are perceived as lying to the public. Thus, the Mau Forest conservation issue was presented as a distortion of the truth. In our interpretation, such distortion was meant for political mileage. Example 7 below illustrates this further.

Example 7:

*"There have been **insinuations** that other- settlers- in other areas
Mount Kenya- and I don't know which other forests-
Were removed without being compensated –
I want to ask Wangari Maathai and the other people
who are making those **allegations**,
To tell **the truth**."*

The speaker in example 7 above alleges that what those who were advocating for the eviction of settlers from the Mau Forest were saying was not true. This was evidenced by the use of the terms '*insinuations*', '*allegations*' and '*tell the truth*' above. That is, those supporting the Mau Forest conservation programme were perceived to be lying to the public; hence the speakers' call for them to tell the truth. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, insinuation is an act of suggesting something bad about someone in an unpleasant and indirect way, whereas allegation refers to the act of stating something as a fact without proof. In this context, the aforementioned terms bear a negative connotation. Consequently, the speaker in example 16 claims that those advocating for the eviction of Mau settlers are portrayed negatively. This is negative-other presentation (Van Dijk, 1998). The propositions '*those making allegations...to tell the truth*' implied that the information the conservationists were giving about the Mau Forest conservation was allegedly false as further exemplified below.

Example 8:

*"...citizens who were settled
where there was **proper excision**...
proper survey...**proper documentation**...
and issuance of title deeds. How do you tell such a citizen...how do you persuade a citizen
who was given a title deed by none other than the president
Himself, that whatever document that was given to him...is a piece of paper!"*

The speaker in example 8 above disputes the claim that those who occupied the Mau Forest were doing so illegally. This is evidenced by the use of the terms *proper*

excision, proper survey, and proper documentation. The term 'proper' is indicative of the process being genuine. The repeated use of the term 'proper' implies that the Mau settlers went through legal processes to acquire title deeds. Further still, the settlers were given title deeds (legal documentation) signed by the President himself, thus making them authentic (genuine).

As a result, the politicians dispute their opponents' claim that such documents could be invalid (*a piece of paper*). The aforesaid speakers, hence, attack the rationality of their opponents (Van Dijk, 1998), who claim that the title deeds in question were invalid. Therefore, the parcels of land the Mau Forest settlers occupied were officially sanctioned by the government, which is evidenced by the issuance of the title deeds by '*none other than the president himself*' (example 6). As a result, the speaker alleges that those who claimed that the people in the Mau Forest were illegal occupants could have been telling lies. This is further illustrated by the terms '*issuance of title deeds by the first president...second president... and current president*'. Invoking the office of the presidency serves to give credibility to the speaker's claim that the title deeds in question were genuine.

The politicians' insistence that the Mau Forest settlers were issued with title deeds by the president himself (see example 6, 8) was meant to give credibility to their claims (Wodak, 2009), hence justify their call for the aforesaid settlers to continue staying in the Mau Forest. Moreover, the politicians' emphasis that the Mau Forest settlers were in possession of title deeds signed by the government officials was meant to legitimize the settlers' continued stay in the forest areas. The process of occupying such areas is thus labeled as *proper* and lawful whereas the calls for eviction are labeled *insinuations* and *allegations*. The lexical choices made by the political leaders serve to reveal how they perceived the forest restoration programme.

Other speakers argued that some people were using the drought situation in the country as an excuse to call for the eviction of the settlers from the Mau Forest. These speakers argued that the claim made that Mau Forest was responsible for the drought crisis was false. They cited examples of regions outside the Mau Forest catchment which were experiencing drought: '*I don't know whether these days Mau Forest stretches all the way to Nairobi*' (example 1, 2). Therefore, if these regions were dry, and yet they were not within the Mau Forest catchment area, then the Mau Forest was not the cause of the drought in the country: '*Lake Naivasha, is it not dry? Have they queried about it, or elsewhere?*' (Example 1).

This argument in itself is a distortion of the truth because some of the areas mentioned, such as Lake Naivasha and Ndakaini (examples 1, 9 & 15), which fall outside the Mau Forest watershed served to justify the speakers' claim that the Mau Forest conservation issue was a distortion of the truth as exemplified by '*do you want to tell me Mau is the source of water in Ndakaini*' (example 2).

According to the speakers, the degradation of the Mau Forest does not affect these regions but since these regions also experienced drought, then the Mau Forest was not responsible. As a result, the politicians felt that those blaming the Mau Forest needed to

tell the truth. This claim is in itself a distortion of the truth. The speakers shy away from informing the public that destruction of forests leads to drought. The speakers' assertion that the Mau Forest was being blamed for every social ill in the country: *I don't know whether these days Mau Forest stretches all the way to Nairobi... Now Mau is responsible for everything* (example 1) is illustrative of this distortion. For instance, water levels in Lake Naivasha and Ndakaini Dam among other water bodies were reported to have receded significantly (NEMA, 2008). However, since these water bodies were not within the Mau Forest catchment area, the aforementioned political leaders argued that there was no need to evict the people because of drought: *'you oppress people, imagining Mau, does all water come from Mau'* (example 1, 2).

According to these political leaders, the Mau Forest was not responsible for the receding water levels in Ndakaini Dam and Lake Naivasha (example 1, 2). However, similar destructive human activities in the Mount Kenya and Aberdares forests had caused the fall in water levels in Lake Naivasha and the other areas mentioned by the speakers (NEMA, 2008).

The speakers further claimed that there was destruction of forests going on in other regions and wondered why focus was on the Mau Forest alone. This is evidenced by the proposition *'we do not deny it, charcoal burning and felling of trees is going on... but telling us that a deadline has been set for people to be evicted by force-we will never let it happen'* (example 10) Therefore, they ask those asking for the eviction of people from the Mau Forest to be honest, sincere and tell the public the truth behind the Mau Forest conservation agenda. The aforementioned speakers acknowledge the presence of destructive human activities in the forest but decry forced evictions of the settlers on the basis that such evictions unleashed suffering on their people, leaving them with no option other than rejecting the forest conservation programme on moral grounds (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997).

Example 9:

*"...we ask those making the allegations to tell the truth
...I want us to be very sincere..."*

The speakers in example 9 above disputed the assertion that the settlers had refused to move out of the Mau Forest to pave way for its restoration. It is in this context that the speakers alleged that since the Mau Forest settlers were legally occupying the forest area, they had not refused to move out of the forest.

As such, it was the government that had refused to negotiate their relocation and resettlement as exemplified by *'those citizens have not refused to relocate unless they are first shown where they will be moved to'* (see example 10). Therefore, those calling for their forceful removal from the forest were not telling the public the truth. These sentiments are illustrated through the phrases *'tell the truth'* and *'be very sincere'* in sample 18 above. This is further illustrated in example 10.

Example 10:

*“...we agreed that those in the forest should be resettled... be compensated before they leave, we do not deny it, charcoal burning and felling of trees is going on...
...those citizens in the Mau Forest have not refused to relocate
...those Kenyans in the Mau Forest have not refused to leave...
... can't we dialogue and agree on how people will be moved...
But telling us that a deadline has been set for the people to be moved
By force- we will never let it happen!”*

Example 10 above indicates that those urging the government to evict the Mau Forest settlers by force are portrayed as liars. The terms ‘we agreed’, ‘have not refused to leave’ are indicative of lies being told by those advocating for the eviction of the aforementioned settlers. The speakers in example 10 above allegedly feel that the opponents could not distinguish facts from lies. The political leaders claim that they had agreed on relocation, resettlement and compensation of the settlers in the Mau Forest. However, it was the government which had allegedly reneged on its part of the bargain. The leaders therefore, vowed not to allow the Mau Forest settlers to be moved until what was agreed on in regard to the relocation and resettlement of people in the forest was fulfilled: ‘we agreed that those in the forest be resettled’. As a result, they expressed their protest against what they claimed to be lies told by outsiders about the Mau Forest. The speakers claimed that the drought in the country was not related to the Mau Forest hence the need to leave the Mau Forest settlers alone: ‘drought which has never happened before, even in my lifetime’ (example 1). The aforementioned speakers seemed to blame their opponents for not getting the facts about such drought right, hence distorting the truth about the drought.

Other political leaders further claimed that those advocating for the eviction of the Mau Forest settlers were confused and did not have a clear idea of what they wanted in as far as forest conservation was concerned. Example 11 below is illustrative of this understanding.

Example 11:

*“...Even before you were born... and then you keep on running up and down...
...you keep on mixing up issues –drought and Mau conservation issues...
...drought which has never happened before... even in my lifetime...drought
...which has not happened...you oppress people imagining Mau...
...they mix up issues about this drought and the Mau.”*

Example 11 above indicates what the speaker felt about the drought and those calling for the eviction of the Mau Forest settlers. They were described as people who were confused.

The phrases *'you keep on running up and down'*, *'they keep shouting Mau'*, and *'they mix up issues'* above indicate confusion occasioned by lack of facts about the drought in the country. The speaker feels that the drought in question was a rare occurrence and could thus not be attributed to the Mau Forest because it was unprecedented. This is evidenced by the proposition *'drought which has never happened before'* above hence, the suggestion that those blaming the people in the Mau Forest for the aforesaid drought were being dishonest and insincere. This suggests that they used the drought situation as an excuse to evict the people in the Mau Forest.

The speaker further says that those advocating for the eviction of people from the Mau Forest cannot distinguish facts from lies since *'they mix up issues about this drought and the Mau'*. This excerpt implies that what the people were being told about the Mau Forest was not true. Those who supported the eviction of the Mau Forest settlers were therefore called upon to get their facts right. Otherwise, the politicians dismissed their claims as mere imagination and unnecessary noise: *'you keep on running up and down shouting Mau! shouting eviction!'* (Example 1, 2, 11)

4.1.2 Forest Conservation as Ethnic Provocation

Different political leaders chose various lexical items which portrayed forest conservation as an exercise that was meant to hurt a specific ethnic group. Consequently, the political leaders had to raise their voices so as to defend their ethnic communities.

The choice and use of the lexical items in the examples below were found to be indicative of the idea that the Mau Forest conservation issue was perceived as an affront to the people of Rift Valley by non-ethnic members (outsiders). That is, the use these lexical items could be said to be indicative of the political leadership's displeasure with the strangers who had taken it upon themselves to dictate what the people of the Rift Valley had to do in regard to the Mau Forest conservation issue. The strangers (outsiders) had reportedly ignored the aforesaid leaders and the natives of the Rift Valley (see examples 1,3, 9 & 11) and went ahead to roll out the conservation programme (without the local leadership's consent). The speakers openly declared that this provocation could lead to violence, hence their rejection of the Mau Forest conservation programme.

The argument that the leaders were forced to oppose the forest conservation programme so as to avoid loss of life and property is indicative of moralization strategy (Van Leeuwen, 2008). As a result, the political leaders seem to claim that their actions are based on the moral standpoint they had allegedly taken for the sake of the public. For instance, they argued that the leaders of Rift Valley had to be consulted first and that if the settlers were evicted from the Mau Forest without such consultation, then there could be no peace in the region. This is further illustrated in example 12 below.

Example 12:

*...those people who do not understand the importance of peace
are the ones running up and down ...*

*Thinking that Rift Valley is just like any other province...
...Rift valley has its own people...
and the people have their own leaders...*

From the examples in example 12 above, it can be argued that the speakers in question were bitter and that they intended to resist the activities of those advocating for the conservation of the Mau Forest. This was because the conservation agenda seemed to exclude the people and leaders from Rift valley. The speakers in question said this would lead to ethnic based violence: *'those people who do not understand the importance of peace are the one running up and down.'* They claimed that the Rift Valley region had unique socio-political set up which the natives and their leaders understand best: *thinking that Rift Valley is just like any other province'*. That is, if this set up was to be disturbed, then there would be no peace in the region. Consequently, the aforesaid leaders used this claim as the moral basis for their rejection of the conservation programme (Fairclough & Wodak, 2009) and accused the outsiders for ignoring this hence describing them as *'people who do not understand the importance of peace'*.

Example 13:

*"...an outsider or even leaders from outside...
...come to dictate what people of Rift valley should do...
...are there no men and leaders in Rift valley?...
...Members of parliament are not the only leaders...
It is mandatory to consult, even on the Mau issues..."*

Example 13 above serves to show that the Mau Forest conservation issue was regarded as an affront by non-ethnic members to disturb the ethnic communities occupying the Mau Forest. The phrases *'an outsider'*, *'leaders from outside'*, and *'are there no men in Rift Valley'* are indicative of the speakers' rejection to the conservation programme. The speakers threaten to resist this programme as a way of defending their people against the *outsiders* and their intentions. The outsiders were accused of dictating what the natives of Rift Valley should do as if there were no leaders in this region. Therefore, the speakers felt that this was contempt on the natives and their leadership. The terms *outsider/ leaders from outside* serve to portray the conservationists as a group with values and beliefs that are contrary to the speaker's group. As a result, those advocating for the Mau Forest conservation were deemed to be disturbing the peace the people of Rift Valley had enjoyed.

In this context, being told to move out of the forest was taken to be a recipe for ethnic violence. The aforesaid speakers argued that they did not see any reason as to why the *outsiders* were the ones calling for the settlers to be evicted from the Mau Forest. They claimed that the people were being harassed for no good reason: *'it is mandatory to consult the people'*. They viewed the conservation programme as a well calculated political scheme

that targeted the people of Rift Valley alone. The speakers further seemed to argue that the forest conservation programme served to demean and debase the people of Rift Valley. The terms '*are people rats and cats*', '*bear in mind that we are dealing with human beings, not chicken*' (example 2, 5) are illustrative of this view. The image of the rat, cat and chicken above indicates how lowly the *leaders from outside* regard the people of Rift Valley. Consequently, the speakers vowed to resist the Mau Forest conservation programme so as to protect the dignity of the people of Rift Valley...*that a deadline has been set for people to be evicted by force, we will never let it happen...* (Example 10). The examples above indicate that the Mau Forest issue was perceived to be targeting the said speakers' ethnic community alone. Those supporting the eviction of people from the Mau Forest were thus perceived as strangers with ill motives to the people of Rift Valley: '*you keep running up and down shouting Mau...eviction*' (example 9, 10).

The political leaders therefore voiced their rejection of the conservation programme and by extension called for the people to reject it as a way of defending their dignity as an ethnic community. The speakers equally called on the members of parliament to join the other ethnic community's leaders in opposing the outsiders and the Mau Forest conservation agenda. Further, the speakers argued that the ethnic community members were being targeted wrongfully. For instance, the terms '*title deeds signed and issued by the president himself*' (example 3) and '*a document that was given to him by the president is a piece of paper*' (example 14) illustrate the fact that they were Bonafede owners of the parcels of land within the Mau catchment areas. The speakers argued that their people were legally allocated land in the Mau Forest by the government. Consequently, the political leaders in question insisted that the people could not move out until they were either relocated or compensated. Unless this was done, the speakers emphasized that the people were to continue with their activities in the forest areas: *that a deadline has been set for people to be evicted forcefully... we will never let it happen* (example 10).

This will degrade the forest further and lead to more environmental catastrophes. As a result, the political leaders could be said to propagate environmental illiteracy for short-term political gain.

The title deeds referred to by the speakers above had been issued during electioneering periods. It had been observed that the political class used land to entice the communities of the populous Rift Valley region to support the different political parties in the country (Kagwanja, 2010). The issuance of title deeds by the presidents could have been for political expediency. It is our observation that the title deeds never cushioned the region and the entire country from the adverse effects of the destructive human activities in the Mau Forest. This could be the scenario in the other water towers such as Mount Kenya, Aberdares and Cherang'any forests mentioned by the speakers. The aforesaid political leaders must have overlooked the ecological impact of forest excision because of political reasons. The politicians could go to any extent, including hiving off large tracts of forest land so as to gain political power.

However, the consequences of such political moves will affect the entire region, including the political leaders' supporters themselves. Therefore, although the politicians ask their rivals to tell the truth, they themselves are equally expected to tell the truth for the benefit of all the citizens. Therefore, they did not see any justification for the eviction of the settlers from the Mau Forest, hence their assertion that '*we will never let it happen*' (example 10). This is indicative of violent confrontations with the law enforcement agencies.

Therefore, the Mau Forest conservation programme was perceived as being meant to hurt their people and yet they were lawfully allocated the parcels of land they occupy by none other than the then president of the Republic of Kenya.

Example 14:

*"The politicians in Rift Valley who obviously whose communities
Are the ones who greatly benefitted from this part of the Mau-
Are the ones, who are putting- pushing the government to compensate,
Because they want their people to be compensated.
I want to remind us that in Enosupukia, Kikuyus were evacuated-
By force, and we remember people even died.
But, surely, if we removed people from Enosupukia,
In the name of protecting the water shed area,
Shouldn't we remove people from the other side of the forest,
In the name of protecting the same forest area?"*

The speaker in example 14 above argued that if members of the Kikuyu community had been forcefully evicted from the forests in the past, they did not see the reason as to why those in the Mau were being spared: '*I want to remind us that in Enosupukia, Kikuyus were evacuated-by force, and we remember people even died*'. It is such sentiments which the political leaders of Rift Valley vowed to resist: '*we will never let it happen, we don't want forceful evictions, those who don't understand the importance of peace*' (example 10, 12). The speakers' assertion here that the Mau settlers ought to have been evicted by force just as it had been done in the past was perceived negatively, hence a call to violence.

The political leaders say that the conservationists who were urging the government to use force to evict the settlers out of the forest never understood the importance of peace as illustrated above. They further argued that Rift Valley was a volatile area: *thinking that Rift Valley is just like other provinces* (example 3).

This implied that the people of Rift Valley were to be left alone; otherwise, there was going to be violence. However, it is worth noting that the allocation of land within the Mau Forest complex was allegedly done for political expediency. The human activities and widespread encroachment on the forest areas have proved to be detrimental to the Mau Forest ecosystem (*forests are burning everywhere...trees are being*

felled like...), hence necessitating termination of human activities in the forest (Ministry of Environment, 2010). The political leaders who must have been aware of this fact refused to acknowledge it.

This is because their selfish interests for short term political gain overrode the long-term benefits that accrue from a healthy forest biodiversity (Ministry of Environment, 2013). It is our view that the speakers' emphasis on compensation and resettlement could only worsen the situation for their ethnic community members and the rest of the citizens alike because adverse weather conditions could affect everybody; that is, those in the Mau Forest and the rest downstream.

Example 15:

*"...there are those who are saying that these people...
or that the calamity they are facing is faked...
...that these people are **shedding crocodile tears**...
that these people are thugs-are criminals...
God help them –those who call themselves leaders
And call Kenyans faced with such humanitarian crisis
... and the crisis itself ...as fake!..."*

The terms '*faked*' and '*crocodile tears*' indicate mockery of the settlers by the *outsiders/leaders from outside*. The speaker used the terms to allegedly show that the settlers were being laughed at despite the '*humanitarian crisis*' they were in. These examples indicate that those who were spearheading the Mau Forest conservation agenda (*outsiders*) disregarded the suffering the people of Rift Valley were being subjected to: '*there are those who are saying that the calamity they are facing is faked*'.

The speakers felt that members of their ethnic community (*our people*) were being ridiculed and that their suffering was dismissed as being faked, that is, not genuine. It is in this context that the speakers viewed this as a provocation and mockery on the settlers who were faced with a humanitarian crisis. Therefore, the leaders seemed to call on their supporters (settlers) to rise against such mockery by strangers (*outsiders*).

The expressions such as *...are there no men in Rift Valley.....those who do not understand the importance of peace...You push people...are people rats and cats.....should bear in mind that we are dealing with human beings- not chicken....we must help our people...served to express the speakers' feelings that the community members needed to step out and repulse the intruding outsiders. These expressions could be said to be indicative of the Mau Forest conservation programme as a recipe for ethnic based violence. The speakers claimed that those who were traversing the expansive Rift Valley region to sensitize the communities about the importance of conserving the Mau Forest were stirring the community to rise against others.*

According to the speakers, peace meant letting the community members exploit the Mau Forest (without disturbance) regardless of the consequences of their activities:

'because forests are important, human life is equally more important. Those citizens in the Mau Forest cannot relocate unless they are shown where they will be moved to' (see example 5, 10).

The speakers felt that the conservation programme and its proponents were out to provoke the people who were busy with their activities in the forest. As a result, the speakers made a call to the other leaders in their community to join them in their quest to fight off their adversaries who were allegedly out to treat the settlers as though they were insignificant and troublesome pests (chicken, rats and cats). The reference to men in the phrase *'are there no men in Rift Valley'*, above implies that those supporting the Mau Forest conservation programme despised the community. That is why, according to the speakers, the outsiders (non-ethnic community members) traversed the Rift Valley region to sensitize the community about the importance of conserving water towers.

Further still, that is why the *outsiders 'push', 'oppress' and 'dictate what the people of Rift Valley should do'* without consulting them. These lexical items bear negative connotation (Chilton, 2004), hence serve to indicate how negatively the aforesaid political leaders perceived those advocating for the settlers to be evicted out of the Mau Forest. They felt that such eviction eroded the dignity of the aforesaid settlers, hence necessitating the speakers' rejection of the forest conservation programme.

This view exemplifies negative- other presentation (Van Dijk, 1998) of the outsiders. The metaphorical reference to men in: *'are there no men in Rift Valley'* in the extract above implied that the leaders of Rift Valley needed to rise and counter the advances of those spearheading the Mau Forest conservation programme. History has shown that communities that did not have brave warriors (men) were prone to attacks from their enemies and their communities could be taken into captivity to work as slaves. Based on this understanding, the speakers in the excerpt above urged their members to be men enough and repulse the outsiders who had regarded them as cowards (women). This was an incitement to violence that was being made by the political leaders for political expediency. This view echoes those of Mutz (1996), Mercer (2000) and Barasa (2014), who posit that politicians manipulate language to persuade and influence their hearers' perceptions so as to achieve specific interests. The political leaders used such terms as *'crocodile tears', 'fake', and 'men'* to arouse their hearers' emotions and make them form opinions and make decisions favourable to the politicians' view that Mau Forest conservation programme could lead to violence. The findings further agree with Wodak (2007, 2013) that a critical analysis of political discourses on conservation is necessary in raising awareness on conservation struggles taking place in and over language, so that the public could make better decisions (Muhlhausler & Harre, 1999). The politicians argued that such activities which were being spearheaded by leaders from other ethnic communities outside the Rift Valley region (outsiders) could stir the people to violence. They used the aforementioned argument as the moral basis for justifying the continued occupation of the Mau Forest areas despite the harm such occupation was causing the rest of the communities downstream (Fairclough, 2007).

The aforesaid political leaders' claim that the *outsiders* singled out the Mau Forest and yet there were other water towers that needed to be focused on, served to strengthen

their argument that Mau Forest was only used as an excuse to punish the settlers for political reasons: *forests are burning all everywhere...all over and they keep shouting Mau!* (See example 10). The leaders from other communities (*outsiders*), who were campaigning for the conservation of the Mau Forest were thus perceived as a nuisance to the people of Rift Valley.

They were accused of making unnecessary noise (campaigning for forest restoration), hence had to be stopped: *'we do not want to hear people making senseless roadside remarks about it'* (example 4). Otherwise, the speakers claimed that they would disturb and agitate the people of Rift Valley, leading to ethnic violence in the area. The presence of these alleged 'outsiders' was perceived to mean that the people of Rift Valley and their leaders were politically insignificant, hence the outsiders' role in directing them on what to do. However, this perception was false and was only most likely meant to solidify the political base of the speakers for politics' sake.

4.2 Interpersonal Metafunction

This language metafunction serves to indicate the speaker's feelings. That is, the lexical choices speakers make indicate their feelings towards the forest conservation issue. The examples below are illustrative of the speakers' dislike of the conservation cause and its supporters. The speakers describe the forest conservation programme and its supporters negatively. Example 16 is illustrative of this view. The example indicates a consistent pattern of speakers using derogatory and diminutive lexical items to refer to the forest conservation cause and those supporting the same. That is, those supporting the forest conservation cause are identified with lexical items which signal brutality, insensitivity and alleged abuse of human rights.

Example 16:

*"An **outsider** or even leaders from outside
come to **dictate** what people of Rift Valley should do-
are there no men and leaders in Rift Valley?
You **push** people in the name of water catchment areas...

You **shout** eviction! Eviction!"*

The speakers' lexical choices reveal that those in support of the forest conservation programme are perceived as people out to cause pain and suffering to the people of Rift Valley. The pronoun 'you' which refers to those supporting the conservation cause co-occurs with verbs that signal inhuman treatment, hence negative-other presentation (Fairclough, 2008). These verbs include *push*, *dictate*, and *shout*. The speakers feel that these people are inhuman and that the forest conservation programme they espouse is equally insensitive to the plight of the people of Rift Valley (*our people*). The speakers

therefore seem to dislike the entire forest conservation programme, hence their negative attitude towards the same.

The use of the term '*outsider*' carries a negative connotation. The speakers in example 16 above use this lexical item to refer to the leaders who support the eviction of people from the Mau Forest. The aforesaid speakers regard them as foreigners who are not supposed to tell the people of Rift Valley what they have to do in as far as the forest conservation issue is concerned. Therefore, the word *outsider* expresses the speakers' hatred towards the crusaders of forest conservation, hence negative attitude. Other lexical choices made, such as *brutality*, *forceful evictions*, *insinuations*, and *allegations* (sample 58) equally reveal the speakers' negative feelings towards the forest conservation issue. These lexical choices indicate abuse of human rights. The forest conservation issue was thus regarded as an abuse of the people's rights, hence speaker's disapproval of the forest conservation issue.

They describe the programme negatively as a form of brutality and one that involves excessive use of force on the people. The speakers therefore express their rejection and opposition to this programme. The use of the terms *insinuations* and *allegations* carry negative connotation. In this context, those advocating for the Mau Forest conservation programme are perceived as malicious and dishonest. These lexical items imply that the people in support of the Mau Forest conservation issue have sinister motives as signalled by the aforementioned lexical signaled choices. The speakers, therefore, express their disapproval of these people and the entire forest conservation programme. The speakers also used derogatory terms to refer to the forest conservation issue. The use of derogatory items could be said to be indicative of the speaker's contempt towards the forest conservation issue, hence, negative attitude.

The use of derogatory and diminutive words to refer to those in support of the Mau Forest conservation programme therefore, indexes the speakers' negative feelings and perceptions about the entire forest conservation issue, hence their negative attitude towards the same (Teubert, 2005). The use of words with negative connotations serves to express the speaker's dislike (Stubbs, 2002) for the forest conservation programme. These words can be said to serve the ideational language function as expounded in Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Grammar. The speakers' negativity towards the forest conservation programme is further exemplified by the linguistic metaphors manifest in their speeches. Example 17 is illustrative of this.

Example 17:

*"You push people- are people **rats and cats**?
We should bear in mind that we are dealing with
Human beings, and not **chicken**!
An outsider or even leaders from outside-to come and
Dictate what the people of Rift Valley should do-are
there no **men** and leaders in Rift Valley?"*

*We have told Nyayo to shut up...
We are currently clearing up the mess he created.
We are clearing his vomit...let him shut up!"*

Example 17 above indicates the different metaphors the speakers used to express their opinions about the forest conservation issue. The speakers loathe those advocating for Mau Forest conservation. The metaphors 'chicken', 'outsider', 'rats and cats', 'vomit' and 'men' above show that the speakers perceived the forest conservation programme as unpleasant to the people of Rift Valley (*our people*). The image of the rat serves to portray those advocating for forest conservation as brutal and merciless. The speaker implies that they regard forest settlers as troublesome and destructive vermin (rats) that ought to be exterminated without mercy.

Rats are usually troublesome and destructive, often residing where they are not required to – hence the need for their elimination. As a result, the use of the metaphor rats and cats indicate disapproval of the forest conservation programme. The speakers above argued that the programme was out to punish the people unnecessarily. They alleged that people were being pushed in the name of water catchment area.

That is, the forest conservation programme was being used as an excuse to debase the people of the Rift Valley. According to the aforementioned speakers, those who supported the conservation programme seemed not to value the people of Rift Valley as human beings. The speakers, therefore, felt that this programme was inhuman because it regarded the people of Rift Valley as insignificant (rats). It equated the people to vermin; hence the aforesaid speakers expressed their dislike and rejection of the Mau Forest conservation programme. Similar sentiments were expressed by other speakers who felt that those advocating for the forest conservation programme were inhuman, and therefore, did not regard the Mau Forest settlers as human beings. The speakers therefore express their dislike for the conservation programme. Example 18 illustrates this.

Example 18:

*".... But even as we do so - our conscience must be very clear...
...we should bear in mind that we are dealing with human beings –
And **not chicken**....
...but when trees compete with **a child, a mother...
an old woman**....my priorities are very right.
I will have to take care of the human beings first- **child, mother** and then
I can take care of my trees."*

Example 18 above shows the speakers' dislike for those advocating for the Mau Forest conservation programme. The use of the expression '*I will have to take care of the human beings first- **child, mother** and then I can take care of my trees*' above shows that those advocating for Mau evictions consider trees more important than humanity hence, their

portrayal as a group without a conscience. The image of 'child' and 'woman' in this context is indicative of the vulnerable and defenseless members of society, who need mercy and protection. According to the speakers, it is this group that the conservation programme is targeting. The programme is therefore perceived as out to brutalize the Mau Forest settlers (Kahenda, 2016).

The speakers, therefore, express their dislike for this programme because it appeared to treat human beings as though their lives were insignificant and inconsequential. In other words, the people of Rift Valley and their livelihoods were threatened by the conservation programme. The speakers, therefore, argued that those in support of the conservation programme had no feelings about the plight of women and children that could suffer the consequences of eviction, hence their portrayal as inhuman and insensitive. This makes them disregard the plight of the vulnerable members of the community like women and children who are targeted for eviction (*mother, children*). Instead of sympathizing with such groups, the conservationists are allegedly out to push them out of the Mau Forest, thereby plunging them into suffering. Hence, they treat them as though they are vermin. Further, the image of 'chicken' in the proposition 'and not chicken' above *indicates* the speakers' loathing towards those in support of the conservation programme.

Other speakers also used metaphors, which portrayed those against eviction negatively. These speakers felt that they were being hindered from carrying out the noble task of rehabilitating the Mau Forest. The aforesaid speakers blamed their opponents for the destruction of the Mau Forest, hence portraying themselves as saviours out to solve this crisis. Example 19 below illustrates this view.

Example 19:

*"We have said that we want to conserve the Mau Forest...
Those in the forest should leave...
we have told Nyayo to shut up...
He should stop making noise and yet
he is the one who is responsible for our current woes.
we are clearing his vomit.... let him shut up."*

Nyayo (*footsteps*) in this context is a derogatory term that refers to Moi (the former president of Kenya) and his government (Mehler & Walraven, 2009). The *Nyayo* (*follow the leader's footsteps*) era has been described as dictatorial and oppressive. The excesses of the Moi regime triggered a series of campaigns and demonstrations, which culminated in the amendment of the constitution to allow for multi-party democracy. The Moi regime was finally defeated during the 2002 elections, paving way for a new regime (Mehler & Walraven, 2009). The speaker's choice of the word '*nyayo*' to refer to the former president indicates abhorrence. That is, although the former president had a name which the

speaker was aware of, the speaker chose not to use it and instead refers to him by his government's philosophy tag (Nyayo).

This tag 'nyayo' is associated with all the negative characteristics of the Moi regime (Mehler & Walraven, 2009). This implies that the former president could not offer any suggestions on forest conservation considering that his government had previously failed to provide leadership and solutions to the forest conservation crisis. Similarly, the speaker uses the word 'vomit' in the proposition 'we are clearing his vomit' above to refer to Moi's mess in the forest conservation programme. In our observation, the choice of this word expresses the speaker's disgust and irritation towards the former president. One's vomit is disgusting and cleaning it is usually unpleasant and irritating. The speaker's use of this term in this context implies that the former president was responsible for the destruction of the Mau Forest.

In other words, the extent of destruction is so much that the former president should have been ashamed of pretending to offer suggestions in regard to forest conservation issue. The speaker, therefore, expresses bitterness towards the former president and blames him for the destruction of Mau Forest. On the other hand, the speaker presents himself positively so as to enhance people's acceptance of him as a selfless leader who is so humble to the extent of volunteering oneself to clean somebody else's vomit. Metaphorically, this implies that the speaker is willing and ready to go an extra mile in ensuring that the unpleasant things and blunder of the *Nyayo* regime in the forest conservation area are rectified. The public should, therefore, trust the speaker and follow his perception about the Mau Forest conservation issue. These assertions are in agreement with Van Dijk (2000) and Fairclough's (2003) view that the words and expressions speakers choose to use mean much more than what is said.

Analysis of such words and expressions, based on background information can reveal the speakers' hidden feelings and perceptions (Van Dijk, 2000). That is, speakers' utterances are meant to correctly make hearers accept their viewpoints. Therefore, the speakers' words and expressions are not just words, but also mean more in terms of attitude and perception formation towards forest conservation. The aforementioned words are meant to influence the hearers to accept the speakers' perceptions in as far as the Mau Forest conservation issue is concerned.

4.3 Textual Metafunction

The utterances which speakers make serve to indicate what they foreground or background. In this context, speakers used agentless passive constructions to conceal those who were responsible for forest degradation. This is because they were the same members, they were soliciting support from in order to achieve their predetermined political ends. Although the speakers understand the dangers of forest destruction, they still rise against forest conservation. This is selfish political ambition. Example 20 exemplifies this.

Example 20:

*“We do not deny it- charcoal burning and felling of trees is going on.
Forests are burning all over.
Trees are being felled like ...”*

The speaker in example 20 utilizes agentless passive formations such as *forests are burning all over* and *trees are being felled* in which the actors are not foregrounded. The mention of trees being felled and making of charcoal is indicative of the rapid degradation of the Mau Forest. Despite acknowledging the presence of destructive human activities, the speaker avoids mentioning those responsible for the felling of trees and making of charcoal in the Mau Forest. The speaker does so to ostensibly avoid antagonizing the people who he claims to be fighting for to remain in the forest areas. Antagonizing them could most probably ruin his political career. As a result, the speaker chooses to conceal the culprits of charcoal burning and felling of trees in the forest for political survival.

5. Findings

Politicians make lexical choices which portray forest conservation negatively. That is, forest conservation is perceived and defined as oppression, distortion of the truth, discrimination against the speakers' ethnic communities and abuse of the rights of the people of Rift Valley. Consequently, the political leaders urge their hearers to reject and oppose the forest conservation programme since they perceived negatively and portrayed it as political struggle for dominance by their political rivals.

The political leaders used language to conceal the culprits of forest degradation for political reasons, thus duping the public to continue with their harmful activities in the forest areas in total disregard of the resultant ecological effects. Such language use entailed the construction of agentless passive sentences aimed at concealing those responsible for forest degradation and the horrors of their activities.

6. Conclusion

Language plays an important role in environmental issues. Conservation has become an integral part of modern politics the world over. This explains why issues of climate change and conservation have become the new battle fields for political wars in many parts of the world. Consequently, language has become the new weapon with which these wars are fought (Alexander & Stibbe, 2003). However, most conservationists, policy makers and governments seem to be unaware of the power of language to influence the public in terms of behaviour and attitudes towards forest conservation. This is because the connections between language and conservation are usually hidden (Finke, 1998).

Linguists should, therefore, use their expertise in language to discern these connections for social action.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

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