



Hashtag Activism: Examining #RutoMustGo and #RejectFinanceBill in Showcasing Kenyans on X as an Imagined Community of Language Users

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Abstract

This paper explores linguistic features used by Kenyans on X by examining the role of hashtags in showcasing Kenyans on X as an imagined community of language users. #RutoMustGo and #RejectFinanceBill were selected for this study. The paper was guided by the objective to examine linguistic features used by Kenyans on X. This paper used multimodality theory to analyze how different modes of communication—such as texts, images, hashtags and emojis—interact to create meaning and shape discourse. It showed how Kenyans on X create social identities by expressing themselves through a variety of semiotic resources. It helped understand how different modes work together to shape and reflect Kenyans on X social identity. This theory helped to unravel how Kenyans on X form a collective identity through language and hashtag usage. Data was elicited from tweets under the two hashtags and analyzed using content analysis method. Purposive sampling technique was used where only tweets that showed how language used by Kenyans on X help in forming an imagined community of language users were selected for this study. Qualitative research design was used for this paper. A total of 47 tweets were used. Findings revealed that Kenyans on X use a variety of linguistic features that showcase them as a community of language users. Hashtags play an important role in activism and uniting Kenyans on X as a community.

Subject Areas

Linguistics

Keywords

Imagined Communities of Language, Hashtag, Activism, X, Social Identity, Linguistic Features

1. Introduction

Communities of language encompass groups of people who show a shared sense of language use norms. Communities of language include speech communities, discourse communities and imagined communities. [1] Gumperz (1999) posits that a speech community arises when a group of people use similar linguistic codes. What distinguishes them from other groups is their differences in language usage. A discourse community, on the other hand, refers to people who share a set of discourses. [2] Luluk (2013) notes that every community possesses its own language and gestures that are characteristic of that group only. According to [3] Spolsky (1998), a discourse community and a speech community may not be fully separated because a discourse community uses discourse in the speech community. These descriptions show that shared linguistic norms help in formation of communities and thus language becomes a crucial tool for creating social identities. With the coming of social media, there has been creation of new communities that surpass physical boundaries that defined traditional communities. Such a community is the notion of imagined communities.

The concept of Imagined Community was proposed by [4] Anderson (1983), who described ways in which citizens of a nation conceptualize their own imaginary communities. He introduced the idea that communities are not solely grounded in physical interactions but are imagined constructs held together by shared linguistic and cultural practices. The growth of social media platforms like X has accelerated the establishment of these Imagined Communities, amplifying the construction of identities that transcend geographical limits. These digital communities are united through the use of a common language and symbols enabling individuals to foster a sense of belonging. [4] Anderson's (1983) idea is that a nation is imagined since the sense of membership is such that members of such communities have never met and do not often know each other but they imagine themselves as belonging to a parallel collectivity which can be attributed to matters such as language, common beliefs, history and traits. The operation of these Imagined Communities is based on the aspects of "inclusion" and "exclusion" in that there are "insiders" and "outsiders." Insiders have characteristics that cannot be readily encompassed by description in terms of identity by the outsiders. These distinguishing features are key defining features for any group that considers itself distinct. Such groups can be found on X groups.

Social media discourse has emerged as a critical focal point for academic research as it provides a channel for individuals and communities engage in discussions on platforms like X, Facebook and Instagram. Through discourse, ideas and information are shared online. Social media enables the creation and exchange of user generated content [5] (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). As explained by [6] Thorne, Sauro & Smith (2015), social media discourse results in group identification and cohesion. Analysis of language on social media provides a useful perspective on how collaborative affiliations are created and preserved. Social media becomes a medium where people create new types of nations [7] (Kim & Vorobel

2016). They believe that such platforms generate new forms of connections and social actions through their features and functions. Utilization of social media platforms has become a fundamental aspect of contemporary communication facilitating the participation of individuals and groups in a wide range of dialogues, dissemination of information and expression of viewpoints.

[8] Marwick & Boyd (2011) explain that every individual has an imagined audience in an act of communication. They explain that though we may understand that social media audience is limitless, we act as if it were bounded. Sharing, commenting and liking posts on social media helps to shape conversations by creating a cooperative atmosphere. [9] Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden (2011) suggest that it is important for social media users to envision a wider and more varied audience since social media content reaches a very large audience. [10] Marwick & Lewis (2017) show that the absence of an audience makes it necessary for communicators to engage in a language that entices individuals who are physically absent during communication. This imagined audience is a collection of individuals imagined by a communicator for whom the content is made to appeal to.

There is an interplay between ways in which people use language to express themselves and their social identity groups that they relate with. [11] Tajfel & Turner (1979) argue that people classify themselves into ingroups based on their affiliations with social groups that are of interest to them. Speaker's linguistic behaviour shifts depending on their assumptions about the social identities and that of their conversation partners. [12] Haslam, Oakes, Turner & McGarty (1995) posit that individuals tend to perceive their ingroup as more homogenous than those of outsiders. This perception is influenced by social identity processes where ingroup members place greater emphasis on ingroup members and have a tendency to magnify differences between their group and other groups. To them, de-personalization occurs where members self-categorize as members of a social group and perceive themselves as a social group. [13] Tufekci (2017) observes that in the context of hashtag activism and social movements, social identities play a significant role in daily activities. Users rally around hashtags in order to mobilize support and create awareness regarding pertinent social issues, organize protests and advocate for society transformations

X is a computer-mediated online communication platform that contributes significantly in shaping an emerging social structure. X was founded in 2006 with the intention of making users share short text based updates from any part of the globe. [14] Boyd (2014) posits that Connections on X are facilitated by currently trending discussions and topics. X has real-time discussion power as users provide live updates on what is going on anywhere in the world. Users on X do not need to be "friends" to view tweets from other users, such as those on Facebook. For X, connections are primarily through ongoing discussion and popular topics other than close networks. [15] Bhayani & Huang (2009) consider X's rich amount of data to be its most significant strength. [16] Pradyumn (2018) notes that X is one of the biggest "human generated opinion data collections" because it produces 200

Billion tweets per year. It also enables acquisition of trending news since it has ability to generate real-time data.

The phrase Kenyans on Twitter (KOT) refers to Kenyan Twitter users. Etymological study of the phrase Kenyans on twitter shows that it emerged organically in 2011 as a way to identify and represent the collective presence of Kenyan individuals who engage in discussions, share information and participate in various online activities on twitter [17] (Origin of #KOT, 2023). KOT has become a very powerful and influential force on social media landscape. Their collective voice has brought about significant changes in the country. These changes include holding political leaders accountable, addressing issues related to gender-based violence, such as the famous hashtag #Mydressmychoice and the use of #covid19KE to coordinate relief efforts in 2020 during covid pandemic. KOT also currently refer to themselves as KOX (Kenyans on X) after twitter was renamed X. Kenyans utilize language to establish and sustain social relationships on X and this language use touches on more general socio-political, cultural and economic concerns in the nation.

Hashtag usage among KOX has revealed how digital activism fosters a vibrant online community by rallying around hashtags such as the famous #SomeoneTellCNN that was used to challenge international media's negative portrayal of Kenya after CNN referred to Kenya as a "hotbed of terror" ahead of president Obama's visit to East Africa. KOX effectively mobilize and shape public opinion. This showcases a collective solidarity as an online community of Kenyans. These hashtags not only amplify voices but also create a shared linguistic space where users share common linguistic practices that reflect them as a community of language users.

2. Methodology

This paper employs descriptive qualitative research method as results are presented in form of descriptive essays. The population of the study consists of all tweets by Kenyans on X under the hashtags #RejectFinanceBill and #RutoMustGo that show linguistic features used by Kenyans on X to signal a collective identity of KOX as a community of language users. Purposive sampling technique was used to select tweets that show a sense of KOX as a community of language users. In purposive sampling, the researcher deliberately selects what to include in the sample. Purposive sampling was used to select tweets that displayed how language use on X contributes to the formation of an imagined community of Kenyans on X and how use of language helps in creation of online social identities. Tweets were retrieved from X and content analysis was done to examine how KOX use hashtags and linguistic features to signal group memberships.

3. Linguistic Features Use by Kenyans on X

3.1. Use of Inclusive Language

Inclusive language refer to the use of words that show a sense of belonging to a social group. These terms show a sense of belonging an ingroup as they mark as

markers of belonging to a community of language. Kenyans on X show characteristics of common ways of using language. Shared linguistic norms helps in KOX forming an imagined community of language. Inclusive language also show that KOX see themselves as a group as these terms express solidarity and unison in their push for activism.



“#TooLate
#RutoMustGo
#RevolutionNowOrNever
#RejectFinanceBill not return
#OccupyStateHouse
#kdf we are your brothers. We don’t need to fight, state direct tomorrow. Ruto must go. Kenya is us, not you”.




KOX! You lit a fire that can’t be turned off.



All roads are heading to JKIA on Tuesday. Let us turn up guys.

 @S5  [Follow](#)

The digital wankers sent Zakayo's cabinet home. Next week we are back in the streets, and since we the people are the majority need to find ways to identify goons and expose them. We must also go after their financiers. We shall not let thugs and killer cops stop us. [#RutoMustGo](#)

 @S6  [Follow](#)


We are still in police custody. Tuko kwa Subaru ya mambaru. They can unlawfully arrest, and hold us but they cannot arrest all of us. This is a movement, and the younger generation is woke and cannot be shaken. Tomorrow we meet at [#OccupyParliamentReloaded!](#) [#RejectFinanceBill](#)

“We are still in police custody. We are in police's Subaru. They can unlawfully arrest and hold us. This is a movement and the younger generation is woke and cannot be shaken. Tomorrow we meet at [#OccupyParliamentReloaded!](#) [#RejectFinanceBill](#)”.

 @S7

Good morning KOX, Tupatane Tuesday
[#RutoMustGo](#) [#OccupyJKIA](#)

Good morning KOX. Let us meet on Tuesday [#RutoMustGo](#) [#OccupyJKIA](#)

 @S8 [Follow](#)

Na wewe Mzee Ole Sapit, Gen Z & Millennials will not allow to confuse us! Choose whether you want to play politics or Giving Word of God in pulpit! You can't be praying & sympathizing with bad leadership always!! Tupatane Tuesday
[#RutoMustGo](#) [#GenZPollRelease](#) Health CS
Ogolla

 @S9 [Follow](#)

Replying to [@edgarwabwire_](#)

It seems Ruto is preparing for counteroffensive measures on KOX against trends
[#RutoMustGo](#), [#TupataneTuesday](#), [#OccupyKenya](#) and other trends that paint him bad.

And you old man Ole Sapit. Gen Z and millennials will not allow you to confuse us! Choose whether you want to play politics or giving word of God in the pulpit! You cannot always pray and sympathize with bad leadership!! Let us meet on Tuesday. #RutoMustGo #GenZPollRelease Health CS

Ogolla



@S11

Round this ukisema anything to do with #butcherofsugoi immediately KOX wanakugeuka...😂😂😂

Mumekasirika.

#RutoMustGo

If you say anything to do with #butcherofsugoi this time round, KOX go against you immediately. You are very angry.

#RutoMustGo



@S12

Follow

Uyo jamaa itabidi atuue sisi wote on Tuesday, hatuezi endelea kuishi kama maumbwa #RutoMustGo

This guy will have to kill all of us on Tuesday. We cannot continue living like dogs.

#RutoMustGo



@S13

Follow

Kumbe #StayHomeStaySafe ni ya uganda let's focus on #RutoMustGo simple and clear

So #StayHomeStaySafe is for Uganda. Let us focus on #RytoMustGo. Simple and clear.

In these screenshots, tweeps have used inclusive terms to signal group membership to an online community of Kenyans. S1 argues that it is too late to relent on their fight for revolution. He uses inclusive term “we” to inform KDF (Kenya Defense Forces that they are brothers and should not fight them as they protest. He further states that “Kenya ni sisi” (Kenya is us) and tags the tweet to @KOT (Kenyans on Twitter). This shows a sense of belonging to a wider community on Kenyans on X. S2 also mentions KOX in his tweet and remind them that they lit (mliwasha) a fire that cannot be switched off. S3 uses the hashtag #KOX and uses “our ancestors” and “our souls” to indicate a common heritage, thus showing

KOX as one. S4 urges KOX to show up (tujitokeze) at Jomo Kenyatta international airport for protests. S5 uses the phrases “we are back”, “we the people are the majority”, “we must go after financiers” and “we shall not let thugs and killer cops stop us” to indicate a sense of acceptance among a community of KOX. S6 also states that “the police cannot arrest all of ‘us’”. S7 urges KOX to meet (tupatane) on Tuesday. S8 Uses inclusive term “us” and “tupatane” (let us meet). S9 employs inclusive term KOX. S10 urges KOX to nominate their own cabinet. S11 says KOX are very angry. S12 claims that the president cannot kill all of “us” while S13 says “let’s focus” to refer to KOX.

These examples of the use of terms that signal belonging to a community show a sense of unity and acceptance among Kenyans on X. KOX’S usage of inclusive language on X shows a sense of an imagined community where members feel a sense of belonging to a larger community of Kenyans on X. This ensures that KOX feel involved in the events of the tweet and feel free to engage the tweet by commenting and retweeting. Inclusive terminology use by KOX fosters inclusivity by creating a welcoming environment to engage a tweet. Use of inclusive language also fosters unity by recognizing commonalities and shared experiences among KOX. For instance, the above tweets are geared towards rejecting finance bill 2024 and pushing the president to resign. Inclusive language also promotes hashtag activism as KOX come together and push for a common agenda and create echo chambers via hashtags.

3.2. Direct Address

KOX use direct address by mentioning and tagging a character in a tweet. This ensures that the addressee gets the message. Using @ followed by the target’s username ensures that they see the tweet. They may choose to reply or not. Direct address may be used among friends as a way to interact with each other. It may also be used to address government leaders and other notable tweeps to call them to action or accountability.



@S14

Follow

1 you clearly do NOT understand socialism

2 @Nakhumicha_S & @DavidNdii are implementing the AMERICAN MODEL where healthcare is SABOTAGED & controlled by CAPITALIST PRIVATE SECTOR

3 AMACO

#RutoMustGo
#OccupyMOH
#RejectSHIF
#RudisheniLindaMama

@mbiti_mwondi
@Dr_AustinOmondi

 @S15 Follow

STFU [@DavidNdii](#)

Aren't you part of this government?!!

1Billion Shilling Economic Advisor and Co.

STFU

[#RutoMustGo](#)



 **David Ndii** Follow
@DavidNdii

You put thugs in power and demand saintly government? The joke is on you.

1:25 AM · 7/10/24 From Earth · 42 Views

2 Reposts 1 Like

 @S16 Follow

Katumbo [@DavidNdii](#) uko na missed call msee

[#RutoMustGo](#)



 **Droid** Follow
@droid254

When they want to tax us they compare us with Singapore but when it comes to accountability suddenly we are compared to Sudan

10:40 · 14 Jul 24 ·

Small stomach [@DavidNdii](#) you have a missed call man.

[#RutoMustGo](#)


 @S17 Follow

Everything CS Nakhumincha touches, breaks! Now the Senate has rejected the SHIF due to serious incompetence from [@Nakhumincha](#) & her team!

Thank you Kenya Senate for doing your job! As for the Kenya Parliament, you are a stain to the People of Kenya!

[#NakhumichaMustGo](#)

[#RutoMustGo](#)

 @S18 Follow

Notably, From work Not protests..🙄
So far Zero pressor &/ explanation from
[@WilliamsRuto](#) [@itumbi](#) [@DCI_Kenya](#) [@ODPP_KE](#)
[@InteriorKE](#) [@HusseinMohamedg](#) on ongoing
abductions & killings..👮

[#RutoMustGo](#) [#OccupyEverywhere](#)

 **NTV Kenya**  @ntvkenya · 4d

Pains After Protests:

One of the two young men killed by police in Kibwezi had discouraged his peers from taking to the streets.

 @S19 Follow


Ala! They will not believe!!!! Mtukufu lies
[@WilliamsRuto](#) you should fire your bloggers and
communication team including [@Itumbi](#) and
yourself! 🙄👮 Otherwise [#RutoMustGo](#)

 **Pauline Njoroge**  @paulinenjoroge · 15 Jul


I am feeling dizzy! Very dizzy! You know why?!

The Government spokesperson told us that the
anti-Finance Bill, anti-bad governance protests were
sponsored by Russia. ...

Ala! They will not believe it!!! Your Excellency liar @WilliamRuto you should fire your bloggers and communication team including @Itumbi and yourself! Otherwise #RutoMustGo

 @S20 Follow

I didn't knew you were that cheap!! Hell to
you [@RailaOdinga](#)! I regret the wars I've
been fighting for you here in Meru!! Bure
Kabisa! [#GenZPollRelease](#) [#RutoMustGoNow](#)
[#RutoMustGo](#)

 @S21 Follow

[@RailaOdinga](#), the Darling of the revolution has
betrayed it! In who's hands are we safe???

[#RutoMustGo](#)

S14 tells KOX that they do not understand socialism. He tags along @Nakhu-micha_S and @DavidNdii to the tweet as the implementers of this American model. S15 replies to @DavidNdii's tweet where he claims KOX and other Kenyans put thugs in power and now expect them to be saints. He directly addresses

him reminding him to shut up as he is also part of the government. Direct address to him ensures that he sees the tweet. S16 also addresses @DavidNdii by telling him that he missed a call from another tweet by @Droid254. S17 addresses @Nakhumincha and her team saying that anything she touches breaks due to incompetence. S18 addresses @WilliamRuto. @Itumbi, @DCI_Kenya, @ODPP_KE, @InteriorKE and @HusseinMohameddg in his tweet that complains about ongoing abductions and killings of protestors who are against the government. S19 @WilliamRuto and @Itumbi. He directs president Ruto to fire his blogger Itumbi and also fire himself. This is after government spokesperson claimed that protests are financed by Russia. S20 directly addresses @RailaOdinga by stating that he regrets fighting for him after realizing he is cheap and can be bought by the government. Similarly, S21 addresses @RailaOdinga calling him a darling of revolution who has betrayed his followers.

The above screenshots show that the direct address linguistic feature is common among KOX and is important in political commentary to address poor leadership and traitors. It provides an avenue for direct communication as finding top leaders offline and addressing them is not easy, but on X, tagging them in a tweet may make them see it. It is also a way to invite the addresses for engagement in the tweet so they can reply and keep the conversation going.

3.3. Emojis

Emojis are employed by KOX to enrich communication. They are also vital in expressing different emotions that texts may not be able to reveal. KOX are able to express empathy, humour and personality in tweets. A combination of texts with emojis help tweeps to be more expressive.





S22 uses an emoji of a vomiting face to emphasize his strong disgust after the president says the young people on protests are his sons and daughters. The emoji is a reinforcement of the word “yuck”. This amplifies his feeling of disgust. He also uses a dizzy face to suggest disbelief in such words even after police killed some protestors. S23 uses flexed biceps to represent strength and resilience and a goat commonly used as an acronym for Greatest Of All Times. This is in reference to a protester who managed to enter parliament and occupied speaker’s chair and recorded himself saying Ruto must go. The Kenyan flag as an emoji has been used by S25, S26 and S28 to symbolize national identity and pride to Kenyan community. S26, S27 and S28 employ a raised fist emoji to symbolize solidarity, resistance and empowerment. This is in connection with the protesters fight for change. S27 uses an alarm clock to show that the long awaited Tuesday has arrived and it is time for action. Use of several clocks reinforces the message.

The above examples show that emojis play a significant linguistic functions. They complement textual communication by acting as visual cues. This add to tone in tweets and helps in clarification of meanings. Emojis also make tweets to be visually appealing and attractive to read thus attracting a wider audience the use of Kenyan flag by KOX reinforces a collective identity thus reinforcing KOX as a virtual community.

3.4. Symbolism

Kenyans on X use objects, figures and words to signify something else in their tweets. Within KOX's virtual community, symbols add taste to communication and induce thoughts beyond surface level



@S30

Iconic. Revolutionaries don't buy fear from illegitimate tyrants, murderers, looters and thugs like @WilliamsRuto. Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday - until Zakayo falls! Aluta continua! Viva!

[#RevolutionNow](#) [#NoToDialogue](#)
[#RutoMustGo](#) [#RutoMustGoNow](#)



@S31

Follow

Nani ameangusha political promises za ruto
[#rejectfinancebill](#)



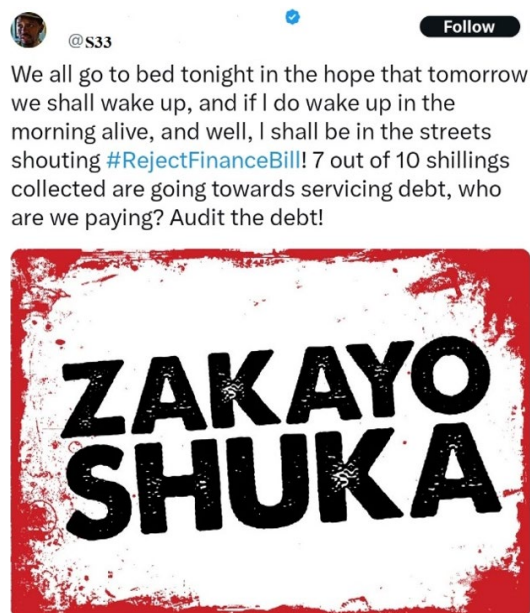
Who has dropped Ruto’s political promises
#rejectfinancebill

S30 urges protestors to show up for protests on many days until “Zakayo” falls. “Zakayo” is a term used symbolically by KOX to refer to the president of Kenya. This name alludes to the biblical Zacchaeus who was a tax collector in the book of Luke. Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector. Tax collectors were seen as collaborators with the Roman Empire and were often accused of corruption and therefore, the Jewish community hated them. Calling the Kenyan president Zakayo is a result of his appetite for collecting taxes among Kenyans. This name is therefore used symbolically. S31 uses a visual as a symbol where the image shows a garbage truck that has overturned. He tweets asking who has dropped Ruto’s political promises. The promises in this tweet are the garbage. This symbolizes that Ruto’s promises are garbage and have not helped the citizens. Hashtags are also used among KOX as a symbol for fighting for the same cause. For instance, #RejectFinanceBill and #RutoMustGo have been used as a symbol of a movement with a common goal. #KOT and #KOX have also been used as symbols for community identity. #OccupyJKIA #Maandamano (protests) and #TupataneTuesday (lets meet on Tuesday) have been used in the above screenshots as event and moment identifiers.

Therefore, the use of symbolism in the analyzed tweets shows its powerful role in communication among KOX. Emojis act as symbols of unity and empowerment. They also show various emotions by tweeps. Hashtags also serve as symbols for collective movements and shared grievances among KOX.

3.5. Visuals

Kenyans on X make use of images that serve as communicative strategies. They are more engaging compared to plain texts on tweets and help to capture the attention of audience faster than plain tweets.





@S34

Follow

TUJIANGALIE 🤔

#RejectFinanceBill

Translate post



@S35

Follow

#RejectFinanceBill



If brains are hair, the government is bald headed.



@S36

Follow

#RejectFinanceBill

IS IT CRACK?!



#REJECTFINANCEBILL2024
SAY NO TO OVERTAXATION



@S37

#RejectFinanceBill

OCCUPY NYERI

**CITIZENS, RISE AGAINST
OVERTAXATION BY
ZAKAYO!**

#REJECTFINANCEBILL2024

THURSDAY **JUNE 20
2024**

DRESS CODE: BLACK

CARRY: PLACARD, HANDKERCHIEF, & A BOTTLE OF WATER

MEET UP: WHISPER'S PARK, 9:00AM

WE SHALL GATHER TO KEEP VIGIL

SECURITY: IG KOOME TO PROVIDE POLICE TO PROTECT US AS HE RESPECTS

ARTICLE 37 OF THE CONSTITUTION: THE RIGHT TO PROTEST AND PICKET.





@S39

Follow

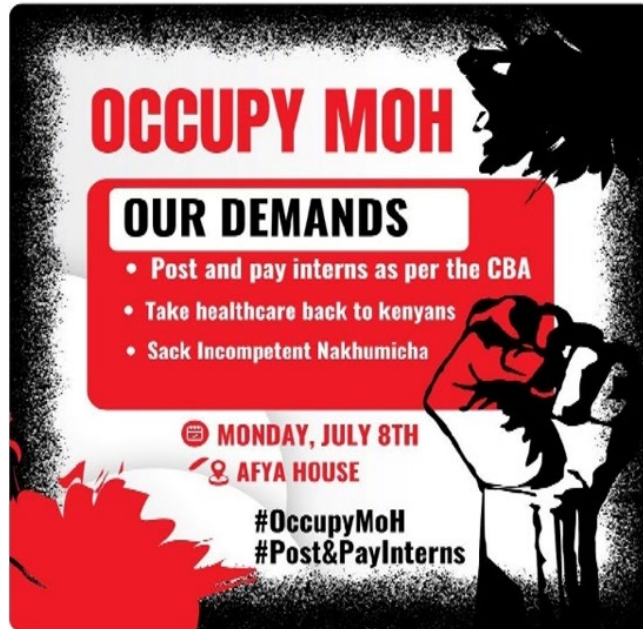
This country must work for each and every one of us.

🗣️ Post medical interns!

[#RutoMustGo](#)

[#RejectFinanceBill](#)

[#OccupyMoH](#)



@S40

Follow

[#RejectFinanceBill](#) [#RutoMustGo](#)





@S41

Follow

Classroom in Turkana County in 2024. While DPs Residence is being renovated at 660 million shillings. #RutoMustGo #Rejectfinancebill



@S42

Follow

Mangai hamnifollow....I'm following everyone under this tweet... #inject #FreeBillyNow #REJECTFINANCEBILL #rutomustgo




My God! You are not following me...I am following everyone under this tweet... #inject

#FreeBillyNow

#REJECTFINANCEBILL

#rutomustgo

 @S43 Follow
Scenes za Thursday same place same time, Ruto must feel the pain we endure as youths, hatuna jobs so job ni kuandamana Hadi ashuke [👉](#)
[#Rutomustgo](#)
[#RejectFinanceBill](#)



Thursday's scenes same place same time. Ruto must feel the pain we endure as youths. We have no jobs so our job is to demonstrate until he comes down.

[#RutoMustGo](#)
[#RejectFinanceBill](#)

 @S44 Follow
[#SabaSabaMarchForOurLives](#)
[#RutoMustGo](#)
[#KOX](#)
[#SabaSabaMarchForOurLives](#)





@S45

Follow

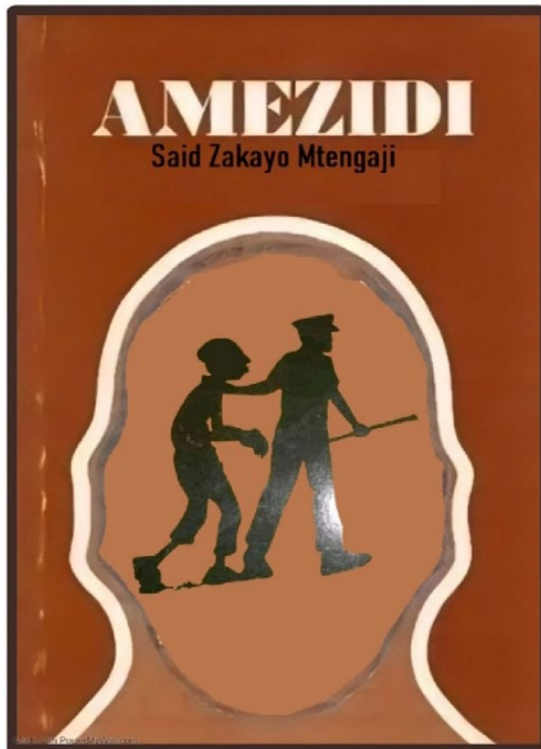
#KoX, we can have one voice against this thuggery regime but the saddest part is that we have more sellouts than patriots amongst us.
#RutoMustGo



@S46

Follow

Zakayo Amezidi! #RutoMustGo



Zakayo has gone overboard. #RutoMustGo



S33 is a visual comprising bold text, “Zakayo shuka” (Zakayo come down), with a red border. This direct language conveys a sense of urgency and serves to mobilize KOX to join the #RejectFinanceBill movement. The visual is powerful and eye-catching that conveys intensity. S34 also uses a visual with the words “amkeni tunaibiwa!!” (Wake up, we are being robbed) in a red background, taped on corners with #RejectFinanceBill below. The language in the tweet demands attention and emphasizes urgency and alarm. This calls for protestors to “wake up” to the perceived injustice. #KWANINIKESHO (why tomorrow?) questions the delay in taking action and emphasizes that action must be today. S35 states that “akili ni nywele, serikali ni kipara” (wisdom is like hair, but the government is bald). This is a metaphor implying that the government lacks wisdom. Similarly, S36 is a visual that urges KOX to say no to over taxation by rejecting finance bill 2024. S37 calls protestors to occupy Nyeri town on 20th June 2024 and gives further instructions. The raised fist is used to show strength. S39 calls for protestors to occupy MOH (ministry of health), S40 calls for 1 million people to march to the city to reject finance bill. S41 uses a visual to explain why KOX and other Kenyans need to reject finance bill that allocates millions of Kenyans shillings to renovate deputy president’s residence while pupils in Turkana County lack classrooms. S42 is a visual stating that Sugoi is not far since even colonialists went back to their countries. S43 uses a hand pointing the audience and asking them to reject finance bill.

All these instances show that play important linguistic roles among KOX. They are more likely to attract attention than plain texts. Use of bold colours and striking fonts mixed with compelling images draws viewer’s attention and increase their chances of engagement. They also evoke emotions quickly and enhance the power of a tweets persuasion. Visuals also have power to pass messages quickly

through symbolism. They show a sense of solidarity and community belonging among KOX as they easily grasp and relate with the content.

4. Conclusions

Kenyans on X use different linguistic features in their tweets that act as powerful tools for the establishment of an imagined community of language users. Emojis add depth to tweets as they convey emotions and attitudes that plain texts lack. They also make tweets catchy and appealing. Direct address serves to engage fellow users directly, thus bridging the gap between tweeps and those being addressed. It also acts as a way to capture the attention of leaders and other organizations as they tag a tweet in order to view it. Visuals as linguistic features serve to enhance the visibility of tweets and also simplify messages that would otherwise require many words to explain. Their attractive designs make them appealing to the eyes hence they capture attention of KOX. The use of symbolism among KOX enables them to show a representation of ideas using indirect and humorous language.

KOX establish a shared linguistic repertoire that foster a sense of identity, solidarity and belonging. Shared linguistic practices as well as common hashtags create shared experiences and a feeling of belonging and connection among its diverse members. Activism is made easy as hashtags help bring people fighting for the same cause together. Therefore, this paper finds that through language use, KOX construct an imagined community of language users where linguistic diversity is embraced and celebrated making X a linguistic playground for Kenyans on X.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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