

# Discourse on Semiotic and Functional Perspectives of Narratology

by

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## Abstract

*This paper dialogues narratology from semiotic and functional perspectives. It focuses on creativity and innovativeness within the information industry for marketing needs in the information society. Narratology is associated with oral literature within the context of commercial advertisement and political discourse. It argues for advertisement as a social text in which are mythologizing effects of oral literature. Narratology in mobile phone and banking discourse and narratology in political discourse are used for illustration.*

Key words: Narratology, Semiotic, Discourse, Intermedial, Functionalism Intermedial, Narratology, Semiotic, Discourse, Functional

## Introduction

A version of this paper was originally prepared and presented at the annual Kiswahili colloquium, (being the 23<sup>rd</sup> in a series), of the University of Bayreuth's African Literatures unit in 2005. The debate that ensued, coupled with controversy among scholars on the acceptability/unacceptability of the approach I had taken, a controversy that is also evident in various positions held across publications herein referred to, further motivated and inspired the preparation of this paper. The paper as presented at the colloquium was titled *Oral Literature from a semiotic and functional perspective*<sup>1</sup>. Focus was on the properties in commercial advertisement and political discourse, amongst other textual forms, that are narrative following the integration of literary devices, especially of the oral literature nature. The pragmatic function of such oral literature devices was therefore core to the presentation. They were seen to communicate variously across the demographic strata and socioeconomic divides of the Kenyan clientele (receiver and consumer).

My goal then, as is now, was to stir debate and make case for an approach to discourse analysis that is interdisciplinary while at the same time foregrounding narratological identity, function and techniques. The synergies in such an approach should be seen to draw from semiotic, pragmatic and functional dimensions of language use on one hand, and inter-medial and interdisciplinary convergence and cross-fertilization on the other, hence multidimensional perspectives to narrative appreciation. Factors that underlie aspects of everyday language use domains in social contexts will therefore be seen to contribute in making up networks and pools from which such an approach can be pursued in academic search. Eclecticism becomes inevitable though not exclusive.

A glance at the current trend and situation in literary criticism shows that narratology is alive, well and sprouting via many emergent perspectives and text manifestations. In spite of the continued search for universal patterns in narratology, there is an increasing focus on the specifics of the disciplines and contexts that apply, either directly or indirectly, narratology techniques in their fields of inquiry. Such approaches include continued focus on context and historical contingency of theoretical systems; redefinition of narrative epochs as opposed to distancing self from universal patterns; concern with actual empirical social data that benefits from linguistic approaches of discourse analysis; and the more emerging post structural de-constructivist paradigms (Meister, 2005)<sup>ii</sup>, that are broader and all embracing when viewed from an interdisciplinary and eclectic prism.

Meister<sup>iii</sup> (ibid) observes:

We had hoped that it would be relatively easy to turn the debate about the object domain of narratology into one about narratological theory itself on a reflexive metalevel but this was probably a *deformation professionnelle* typical of literary critics ... would seem positively hubristic to natural scientists, and it must strike those involved in empirically or historically oriented human and social sciences as somewhat strange at best. ...crossing so easily from the discourse of data to that of theory, however, cannot but seem unusual when ... working with empirical evidence ... the participants ... and contributors ... who have narratological but non-literary interests. (P. xii).

It is with this fore-bearing in mind that this paper dialogues aspects of inter-medial approach to narratology from a semiotic and functional dimension. Dialogue on theory, definitions, perspectives and paradigms; and the place of oral literature in narratology are dialogued. The paper position is further illustrated by references and citations of commercial adverts and political discourse from a Kenyan environment.

## Narratology

Documented methodology shows a shift in approaches to narratology. A shift that seems to skew away from the dominance of formalism and structuralism towards a wider range of theoretical paradigms (Thornborrow et. al. 2005; Threadgold, 2005; Herman, 2001). This move seeks to formulate theoretical perspectives of narratology that are more inclusive, interdisciplinary and permeable at the borders. Such approaches engage more and more with cross disciplinary undertakings that include the non literary. What therefore is the desired definition of narratology from this wider perspective?

Future narratological discussion should ... by means of informed reflection, examine the methodologies and evolution of narratology from a firmly meta-theoretical perspective. ... With each new cross disciplinary application of narratology theorems – the central concept of narratology itself, narrativity, is still not well sufficiently defined. ... divergent definitions most of which are distinctly media specific ... predominantly literary text based and tends to draw links between them ... traditional definitions which derive concept of narrativity from quasi material properties of narrating texts ... scale of disagreement in definition of narrativity. ... Recent years have seen the proposal of various functional definitions. They operate by identifying the function of narrativity ... postulated rather than developed by means of argument and can take very different forms in each particular case. (Meister, *ibid.* xiii).

In this paper we use the above contention as springboard towards our contribution to this debate. We set our argument upon semiotic functionalism by drawing from synergies across multidisciplinary and multidimensional platforms. In as much as the scope set in the citation above is much broader than that set by this paper, the reflection given serves as framework upon which to dialogue. In setting the framework, three minimal requirements of a functional definition are laid requiring that such a definition should:

- i. Be valid, meaningful and resourceful for all media that can be seen to contain representations that can intuitively be classed as narrating media.
- ii. Be moderate and neutral enough to stipulate criteria and categories that feature in all forms of symbolic representation.
- iii. Relate to various forms of symbolic material.

The product invoked as ultimate reality and source of narratology therefore should manifest semiotic constructs designed to yield meaning through narrative ordering. Such a view should benefit from de-constructivist approaches that elicit potential for multi-varied interpretive strategies. It should lay parameters for uncovering the multiple layers of meaning and function possible from such texts.

Thus will be fulfilled a desire to reconstruct the development of narratology study while playing part in broadening the scope under which it can be perceived, conceived, packaged, disseminated, appreciated and reacted upon by scholars and practitioners, (Shitemi, 2005)<sup>iv</sup>.

We dialogue narratology as dynamic and multidimensional. We dialogue systems of application in which the signified is granted an existence through the narrative, often becoming independent of the signifiers that produce semiotic discourse with time. Such applications lay bare multiple ways of assigning meaning and function to semiotic texts. In this discussion therefore, narrative, being features of given media, are juxtaposed against extra-literary dominants, events, perceptions and/or structures. In these therefore is search for discursive maneuvers within given interpretive paradigms thus further emphasizing the multi-level dimension and platforms.

Embodied in this discourse is a search and identification of inter-mediality characteristics by which narrative is variously foregrounded. We hypothesize that such an approach can only function adequately when applied to perspectives beyond limitation set by literary criticism. We advocate for synergizing inter-disciplinarity and cross disciplinary dialogue following conceptual imports and discovery of mutually shared values and properties. By so doing, value is added in manners that tap on/from knowledge, practice, intellectualism, multi level and multifunctional applications that enhance networking and interdisciplinarity.

The cultural dominant from an African context cannot be ignored while considering semiotic text packaging. In order to promote the interpersonal aspect of the given discourse while maintaining political correctness (read cultural correctness), the semiotic text should be seen to speak individually and directly to all target clientele and consumers of the said product. By so doing, the dominants of acceptability and correctness are enshrined, protected and foregrounded. The result is that there often appear variables of the same text designed to reach variant audiences as directly as possible. Such could be by way of varying languages, pictures and representations on the text in order to capture specific cultural contexts and linguistic differentiations. Such variation is very evident in radio advertisements where the local language FM stations strive to communicate in the local languages as much as possible. The geospatial distribution of such stations therefore determine the languages used and hence the packaging of adverts to reach each audience as if they are the only ones being addressed.

## **Semiotics and Functionalism and Information Society**

The current times are aptly referred to as the information age. Intellectual stimulation, entertainment, production industry, lifestyle modeling, service packaging and delivery, not to mention incitement and influence for adoption and conformity to set standards are all dependent and/or associated with media images and graphic depictions. Such text and textual constructions integrate various and differentiated communication strategies.

Assimilation and reaction to various forms of media texts from narratological perspectives is gaining currency much more than ever before. These developments serve as prescriptive templates for conceptualization, planning, structuring social action, behavior and interpretation, beings ingredients in the much sought after holistic satisfaction of information packaging, dissemination and consumerism (Danesi, 1995).

Such approaches further abound in thematic, social, economic and political signification as contextualized in texts of multi-readable properties. These in turn serve as embodiments of situated sub-texts, (Meister, 2005; Ryan, 2005). The principal concern of this paper therefore, as has been shown and will be illustrated, is to dialogue the textual implication and transposition of the selected discourse on communication and information consumption.

Burgin (1986, 1992) in referring to Mukarovsky (1934) discusses the pitfalls awaiting the Art theorists who lack a grasp of semiology thus attempting to treat the work of art as purely formal constructs. He advises that theory should be seen to grasp the development of art as an immanent movement which has a dialectal relation to the development of other domains of culture. Narratives are no exception, (Shitemi, 2005).

Semiotics denotes anything that is seen to be a signifier of something else. In other words, it can be anything that has meaning within a given culture or conceptual framework. Semiotic analysis can be applied to communication and information representation contexts of various media. In semiotic analysis are identified instruments and tools of mass communication deriving from media such as television and radio programs; films; cartoons; newspaper and magazine articles; posters and other forms through which information packaging and dissemination are achieved. In each one of these are to be found sets and subsets of information layers and clusters.

For example, a 'text' (such as a printed advertisement, an animated cartoon or a radio news bulletin) is in itself a complex communication sign containing layers and subsets of signs. An initial analytical task of the narratology inherent in it should therefore seek to identify the signs to be found in the text and the codes within which these signs can be unlocked. The process of unlocking will further expose the inherent pragmatic and communication characteristics and properties that mark the paradigm sets of structural relationships between the signifiers (syntagms) and signified thus giving the ideological functions of the signs in the text as a whole, (Chandler<sup>v</sup> 1995, 2007; Ryan, 2005). From a semiotic point of view one can therefore ask, what sort of reality does the text construct and how does it do so? How does the text seek to naturalize its own perspectives within the context and specifics of the target clientele and purpose of text? What assumptions are made about the recipient and how does this further impact on the formulation of the super text and its sub-texts and layers?

The super text is a narrative that possesses a variety of narrative properties. Being narrative implies a predication on specific semiotic objects produced with intent to invoke narrative script in the mind of the audience/receiver. On the other hand, possessing narrativity implies the ability of the receiver to evoke narrative script whether the author intended the nature of invocation that particular analysis arrives at or not; or even more, whether there is a specific 'author' to be referred to or not as is the case of commercials which owe their existence to a variety of contributors, (Ryan, *ibid.* p. 6), and lingual-specific renditions and literary referents, especially those that draw from cultures and oral literatures of given clientele settings.

Cognitive constructs typical of narratives emerge in response to affordances and stimuli that originate from within the given sub text context and its manner of packaging and presentation. Properties of being narrative and possessing narrativity, however, vary just as do audiences and their capability to reconstruct scripts and recognize narrative intent. It is at this point that interpretation tools, instruments and receiver competences play major role on text message and impact decoding. Any assumed and actual deficiencies in the decoding ability will negatively impact on the communicative and artistic intent thus arousing frustration in narrative achievement desire.

In this respect, Roland Barthes (1957), as referred to by Danesi (1995:24) draws attention of semioticians to an appreciation of advertisement as text and field of study in which are significations of meaning making. He calls for appreciation of what 'text' and 'textual' properties are in adverts; properties that make them join the league of narrative texts. Halliday,<sup>vi</sup> (2003) further dialogues the levels of language functionalism. These include the *Ideational*, *textual* and *interpersonal* levels to be found in a text. These come to play variously while aiding and lending weight on the signification of narratology of texts. It further contributes to the analysis and illustration of the semiotic methodology in a manner that not only blends various inter-medial properties within the narratology crucible but also one which facilitates empirical consideration and identity of text properties from a semiotic perspective.

From this perspective, the semiotic methodology is seen to appreciate both surface and underlying levels of communication and text structure. At the surface level are manifestations of the actual iconic and verbal signs of the super text. In it are reflexes of, and traces to, the inferences to be found at the underlying level thus making up constitutions of subtexts and their subsets. Surface-level-elements should therefore cohere in order to signify a system that conjures arrays of connotative meanings as embedded in the underlying system. The structures, visual and verbal, at this stage are often mythic and archetypal, working at psychological and sub-threshold levels of the mind by creating variant forms of symbolism (Danesi, *ibid.*)

In actual sense, the decoding of the underlying subtext could however elicit quite contradictory realism and/or symbolism from the hidden message. Generally, the mind, body, intellect and even culture end up being stimulated and foregrounded in the text whether the text be audio, visual or both. Out of these emerge binaries and tropes of surface structure and communication indicators being functions of the “message take out” from the super text.

This semiotic method works well for the argument in this paper. It lays a foundation upon which the strategy for decoding messages from the semiotic texts is cited. By looking and applying the semiotic method we argue more for the text and inherent textual property in adverts thus further arguing for the functional aspects of information packaging and dissemination as derived from non literary purposes. Within this method it is possible to talk about how the adverts work as texts. Significant features therefore include:

### **Encoding Strategies:**

At a general level, the entire super text is a sign in which are layers and levels of sub-signs depending on approach and perspective. These are expected to cohere thematically in order to weave and project the message. The Saussurean identification of signifier and signified applies here. The signifier in this case is the physical, actual substance as manifest at surface level; while the signified is the underlying object or mental image created in the mind and intellect of the receiver. Just as expected in the textuality of a text, that is, an advert as text is required to manifest a textuality that coheres between structure and message at all levels, on one hand and the interactive expectations of the receiver at interpersonal level on the other. Paradigmatic features of the signifier therefore allow perpetual systems in the advert to be differentiated. The designer of the advert ensures a purposeful relation between signs and their signification. It is, for example, at this level that the author should be sensitive to cultural and lingual signifiers thus ensuring appropriate choice for given functional expectations. For example, the information targeting the fight against HIV & AIDS in Kenya has been packaged variously in response to spatial, linguistic and cultural variations across the population. The same message was packaged by use of different local languages but with the similar pictorial representation. On the other hand, different pictures have been used to present the same message differentially packaged and disseminated by use of the same or different languages. This in a way is an attempt at capturing the geo-cultural and social identities of the target clientele.

### **Icons, Index and Symbols:**

This involves the selection and design of semiotics signs for use in the creation and packaging of message and meaning. These require sensitivity to environmental, cultural and significant characteristics worth considering knowing that something is deliberately being fashioned to stand for and communicate something else. Denotation and connotation forms and characteristics are to be specifically identified and integrated in the text design. The cultural realms of the mega and micro signs need therefore to ensure compliance and conformity to the target cultural and socio-economic landscapes. Connotations of value, belief systems and symbolism should also be considered in order to ensure conformity to norms and ethics in the icons, indices and symbols applied. It is not surprising therefore, as has been mentioned above, that the same advert will take different forms as it goes across different cultural and social settings in response to given values and social norms. Some adverts will try to encapsulate (crystallize) as many icons, indices and symbols as possible so long as they ensure non-abuse of the given cultural renditions and considerations.

### **Decoding Strategies:**

In the semiotic methodology too, are the decoding strategies. These draw from recipient's competence and knowledge of the various kinds of signs and the relations inherent in them. Decoding of advertisements as text should work at the presentational level to which reaction is elicited in terms of feeling subject to the constraints of image, imagery and language used. Hermeneutics and the discursive techniques become relevant for the receiver to be able to decipher the message as intended and/or perceived individually thus reacting to the advert.

Together, the coding and decoding strategies govern choice of form and content of the macro and micro signs that make layers and elements of the semiotic text. This in turn facilitates the differentiations in story evocation, manner and mode of presented, purpose of communication and experiences to be drawn upon by the receiver. These strategies can be categorized into three aspects of semiotic domains: the semantic, syntactic and the pragmatic domains.

**Semantic Domain:** Involves the crafting of plot and story in the semiotic text. Different media avail different approaches, elements and styles of crafting plot and story. The basic cognitive template, (mind), forms the common denominator in the possibilities and range of elements that facilitate capture, interpretation, reception and narrative goal attainment.



**Syntactic Domain:** This is the component of discourse and techniques applied in the semiotic text. The media may produce different ways of presenting stories hence touching or eliciting different interpretive strategies on the part of the user or consumer. Some media genres and registers have specific general frames of discourse. These are, however, variously manipulated and open for adoption and adaptation. For example, a context that brings together the properties of a comic strip and an accompanying linguistic package. The former is visual as opposed to the literary rendition yet the two have to be blended and integrated in order to make a super text endowed with variant semiotic signs and function. The cartoon depends primarily on graphic imagers while literary works depend on verbal imagery for information packaging and aesthetic rendition. Either way, images evolve continuously following the narrative 'pace' and 'speed' of event turn taking in the semiotic text. Such identification and blending of elements requires deeper insights and re-visitations of competence and orientations in order to create coherent and cohesive texts.

**Pragmatic Domain:** This is the use and application of narrative properties in a semiotic text. Different media invoke different manners of user involvement, interpretive techniques and association with pragmatic properties inherent in texts. The recipient is then stimulated differently depending on how the text impacts on them at both affective and effective levels. The banking and mobile phone industries as herein referred to, within this context, are seen to compartmentalize the target consumer by how they package services and products on offer. They actually give cues that sharpen clientele identification and selection of product being marketed.

Besides the medium and content, it is therefore important to spare thought for the functional aspects of the text as the designer seeks to achieve the desired super text. The choice of medium and forms of semiotic text packaging should therefore be the one that best synthesizes the various domains thus creating optimum impact on the target.

Medium and genre limit the kind of story to be told; actually they limit the manner in which a story can be packaged and told, that is,

- Genre is defined through freely adopted conventions, chosen for both personal and cultural reasons. Genre uses limitations to maximize expression to the semiotic channel expectations while at the same time facilitating communication.
- Medium imposes possibilities and limitations on the user thus requiring tools and instruments of affordance and working round the limitations that arise. The user needs to penetrate the walls and boundaries imposed by the various text properties in order to make them assets and partners in message deciphering and utilization. This is where the benefit of competence in inter-media approaches can be useful. Such competence equips one with tools and instruments of appreciation and interpretation.

The point being made is that semiotic narratives are conditioned by properties of their supporting medium. For example, computer games are dependent on the interactive nature of the digital environment and electronic textuality. They cannot be taken from the computer setting. Advertisements on the other hand are dependent on a variety of tools and instrumentations. Message, product and medium are all multivariied whether the advert is visual and/or audio – electronic, billboard, flyer, newsprint and so on (Danesi 1995).

Generally therefore, diversity in narrative analysis that seeks to make benefit of inter-mediality are best built upon an appreciation and utilization of emergent modes of communication and resources as assets through which the intersection and interrelations in narrative classification and analysis can be facilitated.

### **The Oral Literature Dimension**

Oral literature is art form that has withstood the weather and storms of time; and the ravages of the convergence and divergence of cultures, languages, lifestyles and environmental dynamism. It has been exposed to the charade of translocation and transposition in modes of inception, focus, utilization, transmission and propagation. Most could not be captured in the European languages leading to the threat of extinction and absolution. However, oral literature, being part and parcel of modes of social expression, survives over time as a genre that aptly adapts to changes and challenges. These include creation, transmission, usage, preservation and emergent orientations that require expression and commentary. Shifts in ‘signifie’ and ‘signifiant’ within the contextual frameworks and referents of the narratives as by the social settings continue to inject new life and dimensions into it (Shitemi, 2005, 2006; Njoguvii 2006).

Oral literature presents in multifunctional and multidimensional manifestation of artistic expression in identifiable genres. It adopts and adapts to social dynamism, needs and challenges by continually being archived, rejuvenated, and metamorphosed in order to take on new forms, thus 'speaking' differently yet aptly and relevantly; while playing instructional and referential roles; and embodying aesthetic and rhetoric properties. It is instrumental, directly and/or indirectly in setting trends, norms, limits, goals, criteria and interpretive/applicative frameworks for its recipients. Its openness to adaptation and adoption facilitates the ease with which it is integrated into contemporary instruments and interventions of mass communication.

Africa has a long literary tradition although very little of such literature is documented. In the absence of widespread written literacy, African literature was and still is primarily oral and passed from one generation to the next through memorization and recitation. On the other hand, most of Africa’s written literature is documented in European languages, owing to European colonization of the continent from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. European languages, being live relics of colonial dominance supplanted and continue to take the place of African languages in government, education, business, and to a great extent, in daily communication.

When one mentions oral literature, what comes to mind instantly is the rich repertoire of literary expression in forms and varieties that embody literary expression drawn from specific cultural orientations and traditions. The genres of oral literature that come to fore include, myths legends, customs, folktales, songs, poems, names, nicknames, proverbs, riddles, puns, epigrams, tongue twisters (Finnegan, 1970, Bukenya et.al. 1997), all of which are presented artistically and aesthetically by use of verbal and non verbal signs at performance level.

Traditionally, in the case of oral literature, narrativity was located in the act of telling and performance including the props that supported the two. The setting, environment and instruments were such that they not only determined the impact and effect but also were an indication that the 'act of telling' was the most available and effective means of presentation. Oral literature was fused and very much integrated in day to day life engagements through communication, language use and other modes of transmitting knowledge, norms and social ethics. Celebrations such as weddings, planting & harvest seasons, child birth and naming ceremonies; initiations and pass out functions; tragedy, often in the face of death hence funeral functions or other calamities such as epidemics hence cleansing or search for godly intervention served as medium and platforms through functional features of oral literature were manifest. It was then, as is now, an instrument and medium for mass communication.

In the absence of performance and interpersonal contact derived from 'live' audience and 'live' narration and collaboration as was of old, the emergence of modern media contributes in rejuvenating and reinventing oral literature, lending new platforms of expression and diversification in form and content while ensuring reader and receiver presence as audience. Besides the actual stories derived from the texts, the inflected oral literature properties and characteristics contribute in rendering narratological value to given semiotic signs.

Since Kenyan, (read African) languages are numerous and diverse, it is hardly possible to exhaustively outline the stylistic properties of oral literature as manifested in every literary tradition. This aspect is compounded by the fact that few publications available today capture these elements exhaustively, (translation complications and limitations leading to lose of elements and dominants also play a role in these loses or non capture. Some cultural and aesthetic elements are not sufficiently transferable through translation). In an effort to holistically capture African literature as authored by women, the researchers in Women Writing Africa book project (Amandina et.al. 2007) (*footnote- complexity in capturing and naming what qualifies for African literature*) state that:

Africa's entrenched oral traditions called for a different response to the discursive modes of expression on the continent. To this end, reconceiving the notion of "writing" marked a conceptual break though in determining how to name a project aimed at capturing African Women's creative landscape. "Writing" in Women Writing Africa metonymically suggests a blend of verbal and written forms of expression embodying the experience of African women in envisioning their lives in relation to their societies. The project's matrix of spoken and scripted words represents the creative interaction ...

Similarly therefore, incorporating stories from the oral tradition into the repertoire of oral theatre, and transforming materials from contemporary written fiction into their peculiar formats of oral dramatic performance goes to show that oral literature has a continued vitality for modern-day society and medial platforms. Its integration in day to day life and social expressions lends its function to any platform that cares to apply it. Works therefore keep showing attachment to modes of behavior and expression characteristic of oral literary expressions and cultures thus making advertisements and political discourse no exception.

Basic theoretical principles are therefore necessary for an understanding of the phenomenon of African oral literature in its varied contexts. As is with the term oral literature, oral narrative gives primary emphasis to the medium of expression of this form of art - the word of mouth. Take proverbs, for instance. Because they are frequently used in normal, everyday speech-situations, native speakers of African languages are far more likely to encounter and to use them than stories or songs. Also, because of their neatness of structure, sharpness of poetic appeal and rich rhetoric, they might to some extent be seen as a finer form of art than the longer forms of literary expression yet could escape the eye of an analyst as works of literary art. They serve as instruments of information compression and catchy delivery with each element being foregrounded for either individual or collocation function.

Oral literature is therefore not just a literary form that belongs to archival and diachronic studies but it is a dynamic, live, and volatile art form endowed with sufficient synchronic characteristics worth noting. Oral literature being a medium of narrativity therefore has two key elements. The diegetic and the mimetic. The diegetic being the verbal story telling act, an aspect that presupposes language be it written or oral, from the traditional sense. Texts representative of this include the novel, short story and oral story telling. Mimetic involves showing a spectacle with a focus on the receiver. The recipient works under guidance of authorial consciousness that could have direct and/or implied narratorial magnitude. Interrelations at various levels of interpretation therefore keep intruding into each other to add value and spice rhetoric, (Meister 2005; Ryan, 2005). This therefore brings us to the point of considering the inter-medial tapping from oral literature and other literary devices for semiotic information packaging. In this is to be found the emergent adoption and adaptation across media innovation in information packaging and semiotic text creation including the graphicalization of a story line.

Media are differentially endowed with narrative abilities thus drawing differently from oral literature. The adaptation of oral literature to the print media and association with pictorial illustration is elsewhere cited while strengthening the argument for emergent functionalism of oral literature from a semiotic and pragmatic perspective within the inter-medial perspective dialogued herein.

Such signs serve as representations that call to mind given meanings or signified communications of a contextual nature through mental imagery. Mental images end up being built on the cognitive templates to be found in the receiver's intellect. The mental images are however constructed by independent agent-perceptions, (receiver) and interpretive endowments of pragmatic function. There emerge networks of connections leading to message coherence, impact, motivation, closure, intelligibility and others which determine logical and cognitive characteristics of literary dimensions. Similarly, this paper perceives stories as readable from the texts herein cited, especially as we search for overtones and undertones of stylistic oral literature devices. There also emerge various types of media and identification of media depending on approaches and orientations. For example, Ryan, (2005:14), outlines five significant media instruments and tools, to which I add a sixth.

1. Sociology of cultural criticism: defines media to include TV, radio, cinema, internet.
2. The art critic: music, painting, sculpturing, literature, drama, opera, photography and architecture as domains endowed with narratology potential and attributes.
3. The Artist: clay, bronze, oil, watercolor, fabrics, grass, feathers, empty cans etc out of which they derive mixed media works.
4. The information theorist and historian of writing: sound waves, papyrus scroll, codex books, silicon chips
5. The philosopher: visual and aural media, verbal, tactile, gustatory, olfaction
6. The literary artist: works of art across genres<sup>viii</sup> – novels, plays, poetry, short story/novella, (auto)biography, letters, oral literature forms, and the list goes on and on.

Media theory therefore requires a scope that constitutes identification of objects of investigation on one hand and their specific attributes following need and purpose of investigation (Ryan 2005:14). Aspects of the semiotics of text, material, verbal and technological on one hand and the contextual paradigms on the other become significant in determining investigator perceptions.

Stories can be represented in media as different literature, paintings, song etc. They are seen to migrate from one medium to another while creative varying cognitive consequences. The core meaning is often retained while traveling across media yet the narrative and interpretive potentials are always subject to variables in reception, function and actualization as differentiated in the receiving and applying medium.

Story is independent of the techniques that bear it along. It may be transposed from one to another medium without losing its essential properties; the subject of a story may serve as argument for a ballet that of a novel can be transposed to stage or screen; one can recount in words a film to someone who has not seen it. These are words of a film to someone who has not seen it. These are words we read, images we see, gestures we decipher, but through them it is a story that we follow; and it should be the same story (Ryan, 2005:1 on Chatman 1978:20)<sup>ix</sup>.

## Advertisement as Social Text

Advertisement is currently an integral component of contemporary information societies, highly manifest in urban areas. There however is growing and selective presence in the rural areas depending on the nature of communication, product and service under consideration. They carry persuasive messages that are designed to influence perception; organizations; identification of products and services; they disseminate information bearing on knowledge acquisition, lifestyle, change of habit and empowerment amongst other functions in given domains and dimensions.

Advertisements are to be found on billboards, radio, TV, buses, *matatus* (public transport vehicles like mini buses), magazines, newspapers, flyers, clothes, shops, shoes, hats, pens, and so on. The size of the billboard is getting bigger and bigger as competing enterprises try to 'outshout' and 'outdo' each other in advertisement; The radio is getting more and more artistic and rhetorical in its packaging and use of sound and sound effect for appropriate audio effect; The TV applies sharper and catchy images endowed with high level aesthetics and rhetoric; the bus and *matatu* industry in Kenya, especially of the 1990s, not only had peculiar and unique language forms (still apparent in form of variants of SHENG), but also graphic and pictorial depictions and literary forms that could pass more as graffiti. The manner of dressing for the *matatu* industry personnel coupled with the decorations on the vehicle bodies were also platforms of communication and social textualization, (Graddol 1994; Montgomery, 2005;). The youth and pop-culture that is loaded with Western cultural overtones take up most space in such social contexts. All other media used as platforms for semiotic textualization are no exception. Such tools and instruments are variously manipulated in order to sufficiently play the tripartite role of semantic, syntactic and pragmatic function thus building plot, form and information compression.

This scenario mirrors the late 20<sup>th</sup> C and current 21<sup>st</sup> C obsession with information manipulation that continues to grow, variously stirring debate while seeking to quench an ever growing thirsty audience derived from the critical masses. Verbal and non verbal symbols are applied as means for packaging messages in a manner that makes them integral to modern day social discourse, (Danesi, 1995:7) in order to further satisfy the highly consumerism nature of contemporary society. The response to consumer product advertisement functions as a vehicle that facilitates social communication more than ever before. It imbues and defines the contemporary psyche, modes of shaping thought, personality styles and behavior, while tapping on consumption and aspirations of the consumer. Such modes of communication through adverts present:

- i. Implicit messages
- ii. Specific presentation styles
- iii. Application of visual images that supplement or present and represent the message.

The following steps apply in advert narratology analysis, (Danesi, *ibid*:8), as does in the citations herein.

- i. An analysis of the advertising code – surface structure, similar to identifying and analyzing features and characteristics of genre and register.
- ii. Decoding underlying messages and meaning as woven in advertising texts that promote consumption and product awareness
- iii. A semiotic analysis benefiting from an eclectic base of approaches including communication theory, media studies, psychology, culture studies, discourse analysis, and of course, linguistic and literary analysis.

Positioning and designing of adverts are therefore very important considerations, ensuring that the three components of semantic, syntactic and pragmatic semiotic domains are well packaged and reflected in the information and product, and target the right recipient dependent on the nature of the product while attaining the goals as set. The brand image should be seen to appeal to the consumer in manners that either create or motivate affinity while minimizing repulsion. The product name, advert textuality, manner of packaging and its intended function, not to mention price, are intended to manifest recognizable attributes that appeal to the consumer and or target audience. The target audience as mentioned earlier, is therefore compartmentalized according to levels and categories that further facilitate product reception and consumption. These include levels of education, class/affluence in society, social attitudes, target consumer, spatial location, environment and culture, among others.

The adverts should therefore be seen to speak directly to the target audience by using the right communicative markers and choices such that it is made acceptable and appealing yet eliciting the required behavior and reaction which is to market and sale the commodity while attracting as much returns as possible. Advertisements are therefore social texts open to scrutiny, analysis and appreciation.

## **Mythologizing Effect of Adverts**

If advertisement is acceptable as semiotic and social text, then the elements that go with text on one hand, and social function on the other, need to be seen to be present in this kind of the semiotic text. Of significance is need for identifying the subliminal form of persuasion (Danesi 1995), besides other functional expectation as packaged in the advert. This is similar to the identification of various foci in literary texts, out of which are to be found myriads of functional interpretation potential dependent on the communication package on one hand and the recipient orientation and expectations on the other.

In advertisements, just as discussed earlier, the medium functions as both channel and message, being visible at a variety of levels – surface and underlying. This is a typical case of semiotic text being a text with subtexts underlying the form and content. Such text makes benefit and function from mediated effects, (Danesi 1995). These include:

a) Mythologizing effect

Adverts imbue characters with mythological aura in which personages are intentionally sculpted to look like mythic characters and mythical heroes. Actions are perceived to constitute events of momentous proportions, almost unreal and other-worldly in nature. These are infused with deified quality by their looks and also by virtue of the fact that they are perceived within the mythical space created by the commercial or advert.

b) Event fabrication effect

This refers to the common perceptual state induced in the recipient or viewer. Adverts are seen to transform ordinary happenings into momentous events. The medium in this case holds up and encodes events as significant, meaningful and worthy of acquiring, applying, and possessing hence the affective and effective impact on the receiver.

c) Information Compression effect

Adverts present information globally and instantly. They inhibit reflection on topics, implication and words as contained in the texts. They present new ways of perceiving the messages and meanings that are unique and reflective of the emerging information consumption cultures, traditions, age and landscapes. These cultures are driven by, and also imply a reaction and response to short attention spans, requiring variety in information content and presentation that is also expected to be captivating. This component also acts in response to an ever increasing habituation for large doses of visual images and catchy phrases that are edited and stylized for effortless mass consumption.

The three functions: mythologizing, event fabrication and information comprehension effects derive from the semantic, syntactic and pragmatic domains thus impacting on recipients and eliciting differentiated interpretive strategies.

## **Narratology in Mobile Telephone and Banking Industry Discourse**

The semiotic methodology, semiotic domains (semantic, syntactic and pragmatic); social text paradigms, (Mythologizing, event fabrication and information compression effects); and interpretive strategies that include the autonomous, illustrative, receptive, participatory, literal and metaphoric ensure coherence and cohesion in all the elements that together make up advertisement as text endowed with textuality properties. These in turn impact on personal and interpersonal relations that should be seen to elicit the intended behavior towards the text, society, self, or competitor, all of whom are target recipients.



Interpretation of commercials and other semiotic renditions of narratology, therefore, require uncoupling the narrative from non verbal and verbal expression through the adoption of a cognitive definition within the set scope and paradigms. Granted, language is best suited for telling stories. Visual pictures often lack the code derived from grammatical and syntactic rules that could be necessary for verbalizing, interpretation and articulation of specific meaning. Three elements are therefore requiring in the interpretation of commercials in a manner that foregrounds the narrativity in them. These are reflective of the social text paradigms and semiotic domains as discussed above (Denise 1995; Ryan 2005).

- The propositional act: Involves the picking or extracting of referents from a given background and distributing to its properties selected from a horizon or scope of possibilities.
- Picture mode: The graphic or pictorial presentation of the message which gives a general frame of the area that contains the many shapes and features to be deciphered functionally.
- Language mode: This easily zeroes in on objects and properties thus expressing causal relations that hold the narrative together.

The function of narrativity in this case therefore foregrounds mental images derived from the pictorial depictions of commercials and supplemented by verbal language where appended or left for the receiver to insert as affected and influenced by the semiotic text. The narrative mode triggers frequency of the direct or indirect discourse, perspective and focalization distinct to how the communication is received and interpreted. It draws from both internal and external layers (exophoric to the text), and surface and underlying levels (endophoric to the text) for interpretation. The meaning is coded in representations of material signs which textualize the message on one hand while being couched in the non textualizing component of mental and cognitive levels on the other (Ryan, *ibid.* P. 9).

## **Mobile Phone and Banking Service Providers in Kenya**

This section focuses on the two types of adverts that have targeted the marketing of a variety of services as products on offer. The array and range of potential consumers/clients on one hand, their assumed financial positions and spatial distribution on the other are significant variables.

The paper refers to SAFARICOM & CELTEL (now ZAIN), mobile phone service providers and select banking facilities being financial service providers. The services peddled by the phone service providers include tariff and money transfer services whereas the product focused upon from the bank is the array of loan products that have been placed on the market. What is significant from the two cohorts is the rhetoric and style applied in packaging the commodities hence the discourse on narrative and narratology.

## Safaricomx

This enterprise sells and offers services that are basically dependent on the mobile phone for utilization. For each of the commodity and service there is claim for uniqueness, uniqueness that the consumer and client should be able to see from the manner in which the commodity is packaged and delivered. Often, apart from the names used to identify the packages one does not actually see any difference. What, however, is even more enticing and interesting are the names chosen as labels to the commodities. Kiswahili labels and some drawn from SHENG are strikingly foregrounded. They are probably assumed to be reflective of consumer identification and target alongside their affluence and appropriateness for the given product and/or service. The graphic presentation of this packaging is given as annexure.

- ***Jambo tariff:*** This is described as a tariff that gives constant contact to the client during the day. Jambo is a greeting word in Kiswahili which translates as 'how are you', casual and friendly hence no formality and stress! Functionally in this case, therefore, it denotes aspects of familiarity and desire of getting to know about each other's welfare without inhibition. In the label therefore is a metaphoric and pragmatic function on the interpersonal relations among the people. This is made even more appealing by the picture used to advertise it. The figurative and catchy usage of the label appeals to the properties of oral literature. The choice of a Kiswahili label is also functional in that it bridges the gap between the provider and the critical masses that are the main target. The more customers that can acquire the product, the better for the company. What better way therefore than to show them that the commodity, labeled in the national language is probably as friendly and as patriotic as they are!
- ***Taifa tariff:*** This is a tariff that is described as "...call whoever, whenever, anywhere in Kenya at a simple fixed rate". The word taifa denotes nation. The product is therefore associated with the national borders hence setting limitation. It however is also in Kiswahili thus establishing rapport with the potential clients drawn from the critical masses. The chord of patriotism is once again plucked. This in a way appeals to the clients because once again the providers present themselves as one with them politically and patriotically, hence the consumer should not see any sinister exploitative undertones since they are one. A figurative and metaphorical usage that is aesthetically appealing too.

- **Tarrific tariff:** Now we have an English label. This is interpreted as, "... constant contact during the day. Use mobile a lot with off-peak considerations". The word Tarrific is not an English lexicon but it sure sounds English especially with the duplication in usage. Appeal on tongue twister as well as colloquialism is most appealing to Kenyan's. This is innovative and creative style that continues to be applied in the SHENG communication code. A specific category of people is therefore targeted. Not the jambo and taifa, who are probably the common citizen or 'mwananchi' from the rural areas. Tarrific, being associated with SHENG is therefore probably aimed at the urban, particularly youth who identify more with SHENG.. In here therefore, we have pragmatic and aesthetic function drawing from a register in which social membership is specific. The graphonological properties further enhance its artistry. Nothing specific about its uniqueness is, however, highlighted in the advert.
- **Sema tarrif:** Once again this is a tarriff that draws on the demographic, linguistic and financial-affluence social strata. *Sema* functions variously in both standard Kiswahili and in the SHENG communication code. It literally means say/speak/talk. Its usage here, however, draws from the SHENG function-code. In the context of SHENG, it is used as a greeting word just like jambo above. Two responses can be applied; an English one, *fit* and a Kiswahili one *poa* (cool) are interchanged at will. The English response in this context therefore takes on new functional semantics for meaning. The Kiswahili response, *poa*, functionally has a ring of SHENG to it although it has the given translation; cool as semantic meaning too in standard Kiswahili usage. This form of greeting being also peer specific is used more among the youth, hence demographically specific too. It denotes more familiarity and age/peer membership, especially among the youth in very informal and relaxed setting. It also has an urban spatial characteristic on it hence probably its being packaged for urban young consumers. This is a category of high spenders with lots of interpersonal connections that require connectivity. What better way to put one at ease and facilitate communication that just seems right and tailor made for them! Not to worry about the cost, after all it is very friendly. Of course the more casual and friendly the consumers are, the more they will talk, and the more SAFARICOM will make their money in return.
- **Saasa tarrif:** This is describes as a tariff which facilitates ease of being able to, "... to talk early, to enjoy early off-peak hours, 2pm-8pm. Lowest off peak calls". *Saasa*, just like *Tarrific* for English is not a Kiswahili lexicon. It is a stretch of *sasa*, a word that means *now*. It has an appeal that rings musically to the ear. It is also friendlier with the sharpness of blurting out *sasa* (now) removed and diluted through the stretch. It therefore becomes friendlier too, appealing to those who like code mixing and code switching as is with SHENG.

Therefore, is the urgency of taking action now while at the same time consoling that it is not very bad action that is being taken (The proverbial rat, in African sayings, at least from my part of Africa, who bites and soothes at the same time, interchangeably, so that the victim is not quick to realize the damage and pain being inflicted). SAFARICOM is therefore able once again to bite into the youth and get many more clients by associating with them linguistically.

- **Safari tariff:** This label is serious, standard and Kiswahili. Simply, safari means travel. No beating about the bush. It is explained to be, “prepaid roaming” facility. The clientele here is therefore rather serious and does not need convincing. All they need is to know. The traveler is, however, comforted to know that spatial relocation does not deny one the ease and pleasure of communication.

*M-pesa* is a money transfer facility offered by the mobile phone provider. This has been touted as, “the new, easy and affordable way to send money home”. Note the source and target of the money or rather, the flow of the money – home, regardless of the source or origin. The assumption here is that the urban people will always need to send money to their rural relatives, at least once a month. They tapped on the fact that some rural places are not well connected with banking services, some people not having bank accounts at all. In this way, therefore, one is not denied the pleasure and convenience of sending money to loved ones. Mark also the choice of words and audience targeted. *Pesa* means money in Kiswahili. The possibility of transferring money by the mobile phone is very enticing to the common mwananchi hence possible enhanced consumption of the commodity and service. The target audience is once again specific, the rural and middle to low level consumer who are the majority demographically.

*Bonga* points safaricom reward’s scheme. The more you spend on credit, the more you are rewarded. It creates a competitive setting for one to strive to get the prizes that are on offer; meanwhile, SAFARICOM is hauling in their catch in consumption fees. *Bonga* is a SHENG word for *talk, communicate, dialogue*, all of which denote the *sema* product as above. The catch here, therefore, is securing as many *bonga* points as possible, which means more purchase of air-time and subsequent enhancement of safaricom business.

*Nguruma tena* competition: In English this means 'Roar again'. Probably you roared before so roar again! In this promotion which comes periodically, pick- up trucks are to be won following raffling of tickets issued whenever one purchases air time or fills some coupon in the media, of course with evidence that they are SAFARICOM clients. This competition has been dependent on how many Ksh. 100 worth of airtime purchase and topping up one makes hence more consumption of the product to the benefit of Safaricom.

The safaricom products are many more and they change shape and package over time to make them appear new with offers to consumers ever so often.

### **CELTEL Mobile Phone Service Provider**

This is a competitor of SAFARICOM. The fight for turf between the two giants in Kenya has actually been to the benefit of the consumer. This service provider also packages and markets services and products more or less the same way as SAFARICOM. They both capitalize on the appeal of Kiswahili for the common citizen, and specifically SHENG for attracting the urban youth and promotions to lure the consumer. Products include:

#### ***Uhuru Umoja plan***

This is a postpaid plan for the consumer. The *Uhuru Umoja* postpaid plan allows one to call any network in Kenya for the same rate and cost throughout the day. Very convenient for busy and serious people who do not want to keep wondering across providers. The straight-forwardness of the label, simply, *uhuru pamoja*, (free together) rings of a tone like, 'take it or leave it!' *If you are a new Celtel client and wish to sign up for this plan simply visit your nearest Celtel Shop, sign a contract to get your Celtel line*, the advert says.

#### ***Uhuru kwa umoja***

Playing with words and the minds of the people. What is the difference between this and the one immediately before? The advertiser knows. It states on the advert, “*Do you frequently make calls across all the networks in Kenya? Call any network in Kenya for one low rate. You can now talk for longer no matter which network they are on. Get connected to Celtel today and talk more with Celtel's flat rate plan, Uhuru Kwa Umoja*”. CELTEL, unlike SAFARICOM, is rather extravagant with words and does not seem to have catchy labels, (my perspective). The uniqueness here is that the label communicates *freedom for unity*. It is not easy to quickly infer the nature of clientele targeted.

**Uhuru tariff:** Not explained by service provider therefore no accompanying literal text.

#### **Uhuru Jamii plan**

The product is explained, *The Uhuru Jamii postpaid plan allows you to call any network in Kenya at great off-peak prices*. It literally means *freedom, society/community*. Not very syntactic, neither is it stylistic, (my perspective again).

## **Uhuru kwa jamii plan**

*Freedom for the family/community/society* depending on the standpoint of the interpreter. It is explained, “*Feel free to communicate with your family and friends regardless of what network they are on, wherever they are in the country. Our Uhuru Kwa Jamii plan is ideal if you use your phone to make calls across all networks, peak and off peak. Our Uhuru Kwa Jamii plan offers you convenient off peak times from 5.00 P.M to 5.00 A.M Mondays to Fridays, all day Saturday, Sunday and Public Holidays*”. This is quite self explanatory, a case where the surface and underlying levels seem to be in agreement, until, one reads and searches for the real underlying message which will definitely always vary according to the many variables at play.

The catch words for CELTEL product and service packages therefore are *Uhuru* and *jamii*. One therefore sees it to be friendlier to the family or cooperate consumer in the option of spreading the gains and loses while getting by anyway.

## **The Banking Service Provider**

Most of the banking promotions are packaged in form of flyers that capitalize on pictorial and verbal texts. They are long and more educative besides outlining the product on offer. Some of the products and services marketed by the banks include:

- *Maziwa* loan from the Cooperative Bank. *Maziwa* is Kiswahili word for milk. The product is aimed at easing the financial constraints on the dairy farmer while enabling them to substantially increase their yield. The promotion package has the farmer, dairy cow and accessories for such a vocation. The use of *Maziwa*, also speaks more closely to the target client who definitely is a rural farmer.
- *Chama* account at Bank of Africa. *Chama* means association. The product therefore targets groups or associations with common agenda and membership criteria. It aims at developing a unique savings product having identified a market for investment groups yet to be tapped. Identified also the abundance of investment/welfare/cooperative/association groups that can be targeted as clientele. The *chama* concept is locally Kenyan (African?) embracing a culture widely practiced by women and which is increasingly emerging to be a micro income generating and financing strategy through regularly periodic *merry-go-round* and *table-banking* forms of funds borrowing and lending at a stipulated fee. The core here is the aspect of group savings and investments that denotes the concept of safety in numbers.

The Barclays bank in Kenya has for a long time been associated with “*reputation as a straight-laced bank, steeped in the English traditions where banks represent the dull and dour aspects of corporations*” while having no room or patience with the individual low income earner. It too has broken this image by going *local*xi, put differently, it has gone local by applying information packaging and advertisement strategies that employ semiotic embodiments of narratology-like communication strategies that are intended to entice and attract the client from across the demographic and affluent ranks. The Bank seeks to speak directly to them in a manner that creates interpersonal relations of a personal nature. Products and services offered and advertised by this bank include:

*Mkopo wa salo*, and *Akaunti ya Benki* (salary loan and bank account). *Mkopo wa salo* is a sheng jargon that can hardly be interpreted sufficiently in semantically linguistic terms yet one that is pragmatically functional to the enterprise. *Salo* is the sheng version of salary. This therefore is a loan plan that targets those with salaried income. *Akaunti ya bank* is literally initiating ownership of a bank account against which one can get a loan. The specifics of each, of course, are to be found in the underlying texts. On the surface it looks so simple. Simply have an account or a payslip!

K-rep bank has offers such as *Mshahara* account; *Malkia* loan; *wakulima* account, meaning salary loan – *mshahara* is *salary* in standard Kiswahili; *Malkia* is *Queen* hence the *Queen* loan targets female clientele since it is not expected that a queen can be male! Note also that not all women can be queens hence the product is definitely selective. The details of who qualifies and what the requirements are can only be found in the underlying text, variously interpreted of course. *Wakulima* (*farmers*) account simply targets the farmers.

The language of money, as seen in all these adverts, could have changed but the aim of the business fraternity remains the same. It is expected that the product, appropriately advertised in a form of semiotic text packaging that is appealing for Africans to appreciate and identify with, hence more interpersonal closeness and rapport will achieve magic in wooing clients. This in turn will pick up and enhance the banks' investments, income and growth. And more ‘interesting products’ and equivalent packaging for marketing and communication is on the increase. In one of the communications during bank marketing strategies, the officer declared:

“We want to make sure we talk to Kenyans in a way they understand, identify with and relate to ... all this gives us an image. We talk to people, and we hear what they want, and then go back and give them that ... when we go back to the rural areas, we have to go back with products for the people we want to serve. ...we are looking for deposits. Its a question of having deposits to lend and it gives access to thousands of customers who would like to have an account with Barclays”, (Waruguru Muchira, *ibid*).

The bank is happy with the response to the *communication*. This is a bank which in the 1990s shunned the rural areas and the mwananchi, common citizen, by either raising the deposits or allowing minimums on the accounts, or out rightly closed their bank branches in the rural areas without caring what the people were going to do, especially with the transport problems. The bank shut out the larger common population whose meager finances it is now trying to attract through artistic and creative language usage that is heavily laced with narrative and narratology attributes.

## **Narratology in Political Discourse**

In recent times, political discourse in Kenya has taken on various dimensions that are manifest in the nature of political discourse to be witnessed. Politicians use illocutionary and rhetoric ability to woo and ensure retention of followers, to market their visions and to design and market their party manifestos. They apply artistic devices that cut across intermedia collaboration and cooperation in manners similar to that in commercial advertisements but within a different context. They employ literary, graphic and pictorial devices to create aesthetic discourses that are couched with semiotic functionalism. The political arena is turning out to be more and more a platform for politically inspired theatric performances.

Oral literature, within its specific and broad manifestations, therefore, variously serves political objectives and agenda. It facilitates expression in which are self appraisals and aggrandizement on one hand and cajoling and ridiculing of opponents on the other. Politicians use song, dance, costumes, metaphors, stories and sayings, in order to sell themselves and outdo each other. Such aspects of language use borrow heavily from cultural expressions hence are best presented through the local languages or at best through Kiswahili for want of cutting the national image. Narrative endowed with interdisciplinary and intermedial properties abound both in the spoken and written discourses. Topical issues are thus presented in manners that not only attract the listener's ear but also in a convincing manner. Whether they are eventually accomplished or not is normally left for the critic and observer. The dramatic expressions of the same politician cease after elections only to come to the foreground next round when there is need for soliciting votes and wooing followers.

At political gatherings and rallies, a proverb may be variously used by politicians for a variety of purposes. It then can be defined as a piece of folk wisdom, (depending on ones standpoint as either supporter or opponent), expressed with terseness and charm. The "terseness" implies a certain economy in the choice of words and a sharpness of focus associated with the pragmatic effect desired upon the audience. On the other hand, the "charm" with which it is presented conveys the touch of literary or poetic beauty in expression so much so that often the aesthetic overshadows the significant and semantic.



Ndungo, (2006:111-112) discusses some of the oral literature characteristics under the employ of politicians hence a growing focus on this nature of discourse and narrative forms. The surface and underlying levels of text designs (even verbal text); the semiotic sign methodological dominants that respond to the semantic, syntactic and pragmatic as discussed earlier are often very much at work. Some of the characteristics of political discourse that make it even more of narrative includes the art of:

- Expanding, underplaying, and/or changing or camouflaging meaning in order to foreground exactly what the politician wants to communicate and to keep the listeners within his/her grasp.
- Foregrounding the entertainment and rhetoric aspects of their language use against the substance of what they actually say. This touches on the emotive and emotional aspects of the recipient so that they are entranced not by what the politician is saying but how he/she is saying it.
- Their assessment and utilization of paralinguistic features including the identities and characteristics of the audience enhances the semiotic aspect of their discourse thus contributing in making the super verbal semiotic text.
- They charge and inspire the audiences in manners that underplay reasoning and objectivity thus making them hysterical, fanatical and often operating as mobs instead of individuals. The manner of language use and discourse presented has a way of trapping the audience to either unconditionally fall for the politicians whims or on the contrary seek to eliminate the politician or their opponents, depending on their inclinations.

Various platforms and media complement the verbal political discourse. Radio, TV, audio visual documentaries, and blogs on the internet are best applied in capturing the audio visual aspects of such semiotic texts. The print media too is used but the affective derived from the audio visual is often either lost or toned down in print. Other platforms also include public functions at which politicians are often recognized when in attendance. Such include public awareness and empowerment meetings at which the politicians often derail the participants to talk about their agenda and to sell themselves as a political commodity.

Unfortunately often after derailing the meeting, entrancing the participants with their rhetoric, they leave and the meeting has to recollect itself and look for ways that will ensure covering of their agenda within the minimal time left. Funerals, especially of major people in society have been a well utilized platform by politicians too. Lately the music industry is also applied in the construction of semiotic texts for political and even commercial advertisements. Popular politicians therefore find their ideologies captured in song or they even commission musicians to create songs that tell of their ideologies and praise. These are then competitively marketed and shot down in manners that continue to create more politically inclined semiotic discourse.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper has dialogued narratology from semiotic and functional perspectives. It has focused on discourse deriving from creativity and innovation within the information industry. An appreciation of intermedial convergence in the construction of semiotic texts for pragmatic purposes has seen the debate and discussion around aspects of advertisement and marketing needs in the information society; the oral literature dimension; advertisement as social text; narratology in mobile phone and banking discourse; and narratology in political discourse. It has argued for an appreciation of advertisement as social text in which are mythologizing effects of oral literature and narrativity in general.

The paper recognizes, as has been with other scholars, that narrative study is not a preserve of literary studies. The object of study under narrative study draws objects of inquiry from a whole range of disciplines including sociolinguistics, social anthropology, social psychology, business and commercial fields and even politics. Narrative is not only to be found between book pages but it should be seen to have a continued pervasive role in everyday life and its significant play in the social fabric and interpersonal interactions. It is therefore a challenge upon intellectuals with an interdisciplinary interest to pursue the line that seeks to identify the area of convergence and mutual interests hence a contribution to broad yet specific perspectives in the narratology theoretical searches. The discursive resources of narrative and narratology as employed variously across the range of socio-economic, socio-cultural and socio-political contexts and settings need to be dialogued and pursued empirically. Interesting areas could be an exploration of narratives in the construction of gender and the gendered nature of narratives so that efforts at mainstreaming gender, empowerment, negotiating and reconciling workplace solidarity, not to mention guarding against politicians' wives can be assigned appropriate methodology and instrumentation for the benefit of society and enhancement of multidimensional art.

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## Endnotes

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- i Shitemi N. L. **Oral Literature from a Semiotic and Functional Perspective**. A paper presented at the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Kiswahili Colloquium, University of Bayreuth, Germany 13<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> May 2007. (Unpublished).
- ii In the Introduction to **Narratology beyond Literary Criticism: Mediality and Disciplinarity**. Meister, Jan Christoph et. al. (Ed.) (2005) Walter de Gruyter, Berlin.
- iii Meister's publication is a collection of revised presentations made at the second international colloquium held by the Narratology Research Group of Humburg University in November 2003. The observation here in quoted is therefore an evaluation of the colloquium's output and achievement as by the set goals. That the set goals were not sufficiently achieved is illustration of how young and probably alien the approach is still perceived.
- iv In *Narratives: Towards Interpretive Approaches for Multi-level Functionality*. Published in MAARIFA, VI. 1 Issue 1. A Journal of Arts and Humanities, School of Arts and Social Sciences. Moi University Pp. 10-18.
- v Daniel Chandler, a visual semiotician of the theatre, film and television studies discipline and lecturer of theatre and communication. The two works, **The Act of Writing: A Media Theory Approach**, Anthony & Adams, University of Cambridge,(1995); and **Semiotics: The Basics**. Routledge Publishers (2007) are core to the insights required on the inter-medial approach to narratology.
- vi **On Language and Linguistics** edited by Jonathan Webster. In this book are captured and summarized almost all of Halliday's postulations and dialogues on Language and linguistics. *Language as Social Semiotic*, pages 295 – 432 captures his thoughts across functional basis of language, sociological semantics, act of meaning and language in relation to evolution of human consciousness thus variously addressing language functionalism with a focus on semiotic approaches as desired in this paper.
- vii Both Shitemi (2006) and Njogu (2006) are found in **FASIHI SIMULIZI YA KISWAHILI (2006)** A Kiswahili publication following review of some of the papers presented at the 2003 annual CHAKITA conference on Oral Literature and emerging cultures . Njogu's article is *Fasihi Simulizi na Nadharia ya Fasihi ya Kiafrika* whereas Shitemi's article is *Fasihi Simulizi katika Miktadha ya Matumizi ya Lugha Kisanii na Kiamali*. Published by Twaweza Publications, Nairobi, Kenya.

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viii See definition of African literature from Women's creative perspectives and note the complexity of exhaustively listing and stating characteristics of oral literature, not to mention African literature. The introduction to **Women Writing Africa, The Eastern Region**. Eds. Amandina Lihamba, Fulata L. Moyo, M. M. Mulokozi, Naomi L. Shitemi & Saida Yahya Othman. The Feminist Press at the City University of New York.

ix ***On Theoretical Foundations of Trans medial Narratology***. (P. 1-23) in **Narratology beyond Literary Criticism: Mediality and Disciplinarity**. Meister, Jan Christoph et. al. (Eds.) (2005). Walter de Gruyter, Berlin.

x Information sourced from the print media, radio and the provider's website: [www.safaricom.com](http://www.safaricom.com) searched in April 2007.

xi Waruguru Muchira (ibid) in justifying why the money industry has to go *local* in communication.