WHY CORRUPTION WILL LINGER ON IN THE KENYA POLICE CONTEXT: RE- LEXICALIZATION OF TERMS RESPONSIBLE FOR MASKING CORRUPTION

By Author(s):

Pascalyne Kimaiyo[1*], Dr. Emmanuel Satia[2] & Dr. Simon Nganga[3]
[1.]PhD linguistic Student, Moi University
[2.]Lecturer, Moi University
[3.]Lecturer, Moi University

Abstract

This paper explains why Re-lexicalization of terms associated with suspected corrupt practices is responsible for the continued tolerance of corruption in Kenya. Giving new terms that reduce the negative import associated with acts of bribery among some police officers in Kenya has led to the continued escalating levels of bribery. These lexical terms were used by police officers during a vetting exercise in Kenya in 2014-2016. Police officers who appeared before a vetting panel strategically used ordinary words with ordinary meanings to distance themselves from suspected acts of bribery. Corruption in Kenya has been a serious economic problem in almost all sectors. Transparency International Kenya (2013) rated the Kenya police especially those in the traffic department as the most corrupt individuals who tolerated acts of bribery. Consequently, using qualitative approach this study set to explain how re-lexicalization of terms associated with bribery brings a challenge in pinning down suspected corrupt practices. The researcher used secondary data from online sources and recorded video clips got from media houses. The study purposively selected seventeen vetting interviews that were seen to contain the lexical items that answer to the objectives of the study. The data comprised of key lexical items as used in Kenyan police discourse which allude to bribery. The study demonstrated how re-lexicalization of terms plays a role in masking corruption consequently regularizing the vice. This study hopes to make a contribution in the field of forensic linguistics and especially in police discourse as there has never before been such a process that brought police conduct to the public scrutiny in what I would call "the hunter turned the hunted".

Keywords

Re-Lexicalization, Vetting, Transparency International Kenya, Bribery, Corruption, Matatu, KNPSC.

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* Corresponding author: kimaiyopascalyne@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The police vetting exercise was carried out in Kenya in conformity with the constitution of 2010 which introduced significant changes to the police legal framework including the establishment of the National Police service Commission Act. The NPSC Act stipulates that all members of the NPSC should undergo vetting to assess their suitability to continue being in the service. According to the commission some police officers had been accused of committing certain unlawful acts which included corruption in the form of bribery. Consequently, the commission interviewed police officers to answer to the allegations made against them.

During the police vetting exercise, we witnessed instances of strategic choice of words. Police officers chose to re- lexicalize terms that are associated with corruption using ordinary words with amorphous meanings. This choice of words was meant to serve certain linguistic ends of distancing them from corruption allegations and painting a good image of themselves as hard working citizens whose work is appreciated by members of the public. These lexical choices made by police officers stand out from other explanations offered thus the need to identify them and account for their usage.

The fore grounded lexical items were seen as instances of a marked deviation from the expected forms thus arousing the curiosity in the hearer to try and find out the motivation behind such a shift in language use. When police officers were questioned about the sources of the money they transacted in their mobile phones, they were quick to use hypothetical descriptions of legitimate activities that take place in the ordinary sense. Throughout the entire vetting exercise police officers did not want to acknowledge that their actions portrayed elements of bribery. Reports made by the Transparency International Kenya (2013) indicate that police officers especially those in the traffic department are the most corrupt individuals in Kenya. As a way of resisting the description of being corrupt, police officers who underwent the vetting exercise insisted to the very end that they were not engaged in bribery but in those activities described by the re-lexicalized terms.

What drives this paper is the need to investigate how choice of words and the use of euphemistic terms in suspected bribery appear to be ploys used to mask corruption consequently regularizing the vice and making it hard for the perpetrators to be apprehended. Corruption especially in the traffic department has been blamed for the many traffic related problems. Compromised police officers often turn a blind eye on those road users who break traffic rules provided that they have bought them tea or lunch.

These benefactors will in turn receive police protection while doing their businesses on the road. Although re-lexicalization of terms associated with bribery is to blame for the escalating levels corruption among police officers and members of the public, no in-depth linguistic analysis has been done on the strategic choice of terms to mitigate the abhorrence of corruption. Therefore, this paper aims to present ways in which police officers re-lexicalized terms that are suggestive of corrupt practices, evaluate analogical comparisons of

terms that are suggestive of bribery, explain how their appropriate meanings are derived using the framing theory by Goffman (1974) .

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review for this study is twofold: literature on police interviews and literature on lexical choices. There are several studies that have been done on police interviews, lexical choices and re-lexicalization of terms in legal processes which have made significant contributions to the field of forensic linguistics.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON LEXICAL CHOICES

A lexical choice is a valuable strategy that is employed by lawyers during cross-examination or defendants every time they are in a trial or when answering to allegations made against them. Language use in the legal context especially on lexical choices has attracted a lot of interest among scholars of forensic linguistics namely; (Danet (1980) in American illegal abortion, (Cotteril 2003 in O J Simpson trial, Eades (2008) in the Pinkenba case, Satia (2014) in the construction of identity among inmates.

A couple of other studies have been done in forensic linguistics especially with regard to how language is used in the legal setting but few studies have been done on police interviews. Heydon (2005) as quoted in Haworth (2009) says that police interviews are still under researched and that 'only a book-length' study exist. Nevertheless, police suspect interviews are not a new development in the field of Forensic linguistics as there are a number of scholars who have explored the field. Most of the studies on police interviews have been done outside the Kenyan linguistic environment e.g. the following scholarly studies highlighted by Haworth (2009): Sweden (Johnson &Linell, 1991), Holland (Komter, 2002), Australia (Heydon, 2003, 2004, 2005), the USA (Watson, 1983, 1990; Shuy, 1998). The only literature available on police interviews are those that deal with police officers interviewing suspects, statements made at the police stations during the time of reporting crimes and statements made by police officers at crime scenes (Satia, 2014).

In all the studies cited above, the police officers are key players in giving evidence in legal proceedings. There is no study so far that has been done in the Kenyan linguistic context that involve police officers being interrogated on their conduct while in office in what is commonly known as police vetting. Nevertheless, studies done by the cited scholars above are relevant to the present study as they set the stage for the analysis of lexical choices. While these studies in forensic linguistics deal with lexical choices as used in court room discourses, the present study deals with legal issues outside the court room context. Whereas most of these studies discuss legal concerns outside the Kenyan linguistics context save for Satia (2014), the present study looks at lexical choices in perceived corrupt practices as used by police officers during a police vetting exercise in Kenya.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON POLICE INTERVIEWS

There are some studies on police interviews that have immense significance to the study at hand for instance the work of Coulthard. Coulthard (1996) discusses what exactly counts as

the official version of police–suspect interviews and the process of deriving this official version. The police officers conducting interviews are given extreme privilege and control in deciding what utterances are presented as evidence in court. The interviewing officers chose the 'interview topics through questions' and transcribed the oral interviews into their written format without the input of the suspect concerned.

The written down versions at times could prove to be inaccurate. Suspects in a court of law are not given the privilege and opportunity to challenge what has been transcribed by the police officers. Even in cases when the suspect is given the records to go through, they may not adequately correct everything on account of 'stress, fatigue, and memory losses.

Coulthard(1996) says "in converting verbal interviews into written forms, problems abound especially when the police officers are not given the requisite training in the procedure to be followed during transcription". The police officers are left to their own devices to devise ways of doing the transcription. In the absence of tape recorded interviews the recording officer will not have the advantage of revisiting the recordings for purposes of clarity. The findings of the study revealed instances when police officers "re-created verbatim records of interview with suspects from memory" long after several hours had elapsed. In such cases what the officers are writing fall short of the credibility standards of what a verbatim record entails.

When efforts are made to have the verbal interviews tape recorded, the challenge would still be how to transcribe what Slembrouk,(1992) calls "the disfluency" and other features of spokennes such as intonation, stress, repetition among others (Coulthard 1996). Putting down nonverbal and semi-verbal features of speech into the written form proves to be problematic. Coulthard (1996) observes that the transcription is meant to "serve the ideational and textual over the interpersonal functions".

Coulthard's account of the official version is relevant to the present study which involves police officers being interviewed by a vetting panel. The entire vetting process was controlled by the vetting panel which decided on the type and order of the questions they asked the police officers. The vetting panel also decided on the kind of information to be presented as evidence without allowing the vettees to bring in their own evidence.

Related to Coulthard's quest of the form of the official version are the changes that the collected data go through from the time it is collected orally until the time it is presented as evidence in a court of law. Haworth (2009) looks at the different transformations that interview data go through, the functions they serve and their effect on different audiences in the judicial process.

Haworth's main concern is the fact that the evidence that is finally used in the judicial system is not in its 'preservation state'. A further complication arises when the recorded information is presented before an audience that was not present during the initial stage of data collection. According to Haworth the presence of the future "hidden" audience causes 'miscommunication in the interview room leading to serious consequences for the interviewee' (Haworth 2009:10).

Still on the type of audiences, Haworth (2010) discusses the influence of the various audiences on police interviews. According to Haworth "who you talk to affects what you say". The audiences have an influence on what the speaker is saying (Bell 1984). The information gathered during police interviews will be used by different audiences and for different purposes.

The present study benefits from Haworth's (2010) study in looking at the possible impact that unforeseen hidden audience can have on a speaker's speaking style. During the vetting exercise different types of audiences were present ranging from the vetting panel, media house reporters and the whole process was streamed live on local television channels. Though it might have appeared that the police officers were being vetted by a small panel, they were indeed watched by unseen audiences across the country.

The two inter-related studies by Haworth views police interviews as a multi-format, multi-purpose and multi audience mode of discourse (Haworth 2009:3). Though the present study is not concerned with the different transformations that interview data take and the influence of future audience on the said data, it is worth to note that the police interviewers have more control on the nature of the information presented as evidence.

Macleod and Haworth (2016) investigate the discursive patterns of interaction between police interviewers and women reporting rape in significant witness interviews. The study observed that police officers who are interviewing suspects are privileged in terms of linguistic resources at their disposal that enables them to decide on the kinds of narratives that find their way as evidence in the judicial system. The police officers recording the complainant's confessions control the language used in packaging the statements and subsequently deciding on the final version of the evidence to be presented in the courts. From the findings of the study, they designed a one-day training course aimed at informing the police on the emerging issues and practices that are worthwhile in police interview discourses.

Findings from the study above are relevant to the study at hand in providing a sharp twist of events surrounding the intrigues of power relations. Whereas in the normal circumstances of police- suspect interviews, the interviewing police officers occupy positions of control and privilege while in the police vetting exercise the reverse happened. The police officers were invited by the vetting panel to tell their stories. Volunteer stories are basically controlled by the teller of the story while in invited stories the recipient has a greater control of the kind of stories to be told or heard (Watson 1990) as cited in Haworth (2009: 41).

Still related to unequal power distribution in police- suspect interviews is a study by Ralarala and Rodrigues (2019). The study investigates the socio-pragmatic elements of police interviews. They discuss how evidence as collected and recorded by police officers during interviews can lead to incarceration, incrimination or vindication of a suspect. In the study, the authors assess key issues of interviewing competence, questioning techniques, power relations in the interview interactions and observance of ethics during the whole process of police interviewing.

Though such a study provides useful insights into the complications that arise during the collection of evidence by police officers, there is a significant difference between the study and the present study in terms of the participant roles in the interviews. In the present study police officers are not involved in the collection of evidence but they are responsible for giving out information about themselves and other relevant participants.

A study that is closely related to the present study in terms of thematic concerns is Shuy's work on language of bribery cases. Shuy, 2013 analyses twelve cases of bribery or alleged bribery of United States' senators, congressmen, judges, business men and brothel owners. He looks at how language is used in the legal context particularly on how people "try to get what they want by bribing, trying to bribe or asking for bribes from other people" (Shuy, 2013: 4). His main concern is that lawyers, linguists and other law enforcers fail to use linguistic analytic tools such as grammatical referencing, speech acts, discourse structure, framing, conveyed meaning and intentionality in the analysis of their data in the form of evidence collected. These analytic tools have serious ramifications on the outcomes of the cases discussed (Shuy, 2013).

In order to understand clearly the language of bribery Shuy, (2013) suggests that instead of looking at language features in their immediate small context (myopic focus) the linguist should consider the entire speech event where the bribery takes place. Shuy(2013:7) presented the "linguistic tools in the shape of an inverted pyramid with the largest language items at the top and the smallest at the bottom". Whereas Shuy's work is very relevant to the present study it differs a lot in terms of the context of the conversation. The work by Shuy 2013 looks at tape recorded conversations that culminated into bribery, near bribery or failed bribery attempts in what he calls the "smoking gun episodes". The present study is a departure from bribery speech events where only one participant is suspected of bribery thus summoned to appear before a vetting panel. Responses from these participants who are police officers are analyzed in terms of lexical choices that run away from the negativity associated with graft allegations.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative and descriptive approach in the analysis of its data. The study entailed a detailed description of the data collected. The present research described in detail the selected responses of the police officers during the vetting exercise of 2014-2016 with the aim of finding out and reporting what was going on. The vetting exercise revealed some interesting linguistic issues worth exploring. The major concerns during the exercise were the sources of money transacted in the officers' mobile phones, the sources of the huge deposits sitting in their bank accounts, reasons for minimal or no debits in their accounts and finally the sources of the assets they have. The main accusations made against police officers who are the subject of my analysis are issues bordering on bribery and corruption. Police officers of all ranks underwent the vetting exercise.

The whole vetting exercise covered about 32,000 words. Though some of the interviews are of relatively short length, this does not impinge on the study in significant ways. Length has

not been a big issue in forensic linguistics (Coulthard 2005 and Coulthard 2006) as cited in Satia, (2014). Satia (2014:3) says "forensic linguistics texts are very short indeed –most suicide notes, threatening notes and letters for example are under 200 words and may contain fewer than 100 words".

The study purposively selected information-rich cases from interviews of fifteen police officers who underwent the vetting process. Patton (2015:9) argues that "the logic and power of purposive sampling lie in selecting information- rich cases for in-depth study. This study selected those responses that were felt to answer to the research questions. The study mainly used secondary data from recorded responses of the police vetting exercise that was done in 2014 and 2016. The vetting exercise was carried out to determine the suitability of police officers to continue serving in the police service. Getting primary data from police sources proved to be very hard on account of security implications hence the present study contended with the use of secondary data. These utterances were in audio-visual recordings retrieved from media houses and their websites. The audio-visual recordings accorded the researcher the advantage of playing them over and over for clarification when need arose.

During the process of transcription, ethical considerations were put in place by concealing the identity of the officers involved, places and names of other people mentioned in the interviews. The researcher transcribed the video recordings into written transcripts, gave pseudo names to the interviewed officers. Therefore police officers are labeled as Officer A, B, C etc. The transcripts were attached as appendages but the videos were reserved by the researcher and can be produced when need arises.

The analyzable data for the study were the lexical items and phrases bordering on suspected bribery allegations. These lexical items and phrases were found in the oral responses of the interviewed police officers. The recorded panel's questions and the police officers' responses were listened to and transcribed by the researcher. Those sections that were in Kiswahili were translated using the free translation method. The written excerpts were then examined and analyzed using the framing and positioning theories.

ANALYSES AND DISCUSSIONS

Lexical Choices that Reduce the Negativity that is Associated with Bribery

The following discussion deals with lexical choices that police officers used to sugar coat bribery and make it appear less abhorrent. Throughout the police interviews, not an officer ever admitted to ever receiving a bribe. Instead they chose lexical terms that move away from bribery. These lexical choices comprise of ordinary words that are used in the more general sense by individuals in the society. The discussion below focuses on how words such as tea, lunch money, token of appreciation, contributions, welfare and merry go rounds were used by police officers as instances of re-lexicalization of 'bribery' in a bid to mask corruption.

Tea

The first word that emerged from our data is the word **tea.** The denotative meaning of the term tea is a beverage drink that is usually taken preferable while hot. The word tea when

used among acquaintances headed for a restaurant or tea rooms will just have the denotative meaning of a drink. However when used in the context where some undue favors are to be extended to one of the participants then the word acquires a connotative meaning. The present study observed that the word tea has undergone a process of semantic broadening where it has acquired an inclusive meaning of anything material or monetary that is given out from one person to the other in exchange for a favor.

In the police context any form of bribery is re-lexicalized as tea so that the degree of the corrupt practice is mitigated. The basic properties of the term tea: costs little, taken all the time, a show of good will, an icebreaker, taken by almost everybody in Kenya etc. are transferred to the act of bribery and made to sound normal and acceptable in the eyes of the recipient and the giver.

VETTING PANEL: Tell us finally sergeant Bravo, as an officer working in a base and of course a very senior officer for that matter in terms of years served. Have you been bought **tea** by a matatu driver, matatu owners, bodaboda riders, their owners so that you smoothen things for them, even without you soliciting?

OFFICER A: No

PANEL 1: Now, look at commissioner xyz straight into the face and tell her that you've never **received any monies to influence how you serve as a traffic officer.**

OFFICER A: (Hesitatingly) What I can say… sometimes you are…. You are just doing your…er… checkups on the road, somebody can just stop his Prado, car and says "can I buy you **tea?**" just good heartedly but not from matatus, No. "Nikununulie **lunch, ni kristmas** [can I buy you lunch? It is Christmas].As we are heading for Christmas, somebody will just stop over and says "let me buy you lunch" without even demanding from them.

In the exchange above, both the vetting panel and the police officer used the same lexical term tea as the "uncontested lexical choice" (Eades, 2003). The vetting panel chooses to use the word 'tea' as a way of accommodating the police officer thus adapting to the language of police context. When asked whether she has been bought tea by matatu operators with the aim of "smoothening things for them", the officer was quick to decline.

However when probed further about her receiving any monies to influence how she serves as a traffic officer which is basically a bribe, the officer was quick to respond that sometimes while on duty she can be bought tea. In choosing the term tea as opposed to a bribe (which is meant to influence how she served as a traffic officer), the police officer seems to suggest that the gesture is a positive one that causes no harm after all it was given out of a good will. The word tea as a strategically used in police context is a form of euphemism aimed at downplaying the overall effect of corruption in the form of bribery.

The phrases "smoothen things for them" and "influence how you serve as a traffic officer" seem to insinuate acts of bribery. Shuy (2013:11) defines bribery as a corrupt payment, receipt or solicitation for official action and is considered felony in some jurisdictions.

Therefore the word bribe is negative, incriminating and embarrassing while the word tea which is a beverage is positive and acceptable.

Lunch

The second lexical item that featured during the police vetting exercise in Kenya and is commonly used within police discourse is the notion of l**unch**. This exchange serves to illustrate.

VETTING PANEL: Upon receipt of money in your phone from that person that you did not know. Couldn't you bother to ask him why they sent you the money?

OFFICER B: …….the ideal thing is to call back….. Oh ni wa Kimani(not his real name) amekutumia ni **lunch** yako.[oh it is son of Kimani who has sent. It's your lunch]. So once and it is African Mr. Chairman, when someone tells you nimekutumia [I've sent you] lunch in good faith and you didn't ask for it, it is unkind to return. I thought so.

Officer B attributes the several thousands of money he received from motorists as **lunch** money as opposed to bribes. This case operates in a similar manner as overt correction in Eades, (2003: 4) where the officer openly suggests the terms to describe the few millions of money he received. He claimed that he never bothered to send the money back because it was sent to him without him soliciting for it.

To support his argument the officer says that he didn't see anything wrong with the gesture of giving him lunch money because that was the culture of the people of Geiyo. The buying of lunch is so routinely done to the point that both the givers and the takers don't find it out of place, in fact returning such money would be treated as cruelty on the part of the recipient.

OFFICER B: I did what I was sent there to do. I socialized with the people of Geiyo irrespective of what you gave me. Returning the money to the sender Mr. chairman would be... would render being cruel. They would say I am cruel to the community and I would most likely be not there the next week. So what am saying is real Mr. chairman. Most of those **people** I do not even know them or their names. They sent me money without any prompting that is the culture there. As a means of contrasting the police officers' conduct that reveal a lot of tolerance towards bribery acts, the following exchange from the chair of the NPSC will serve as illustration.

VETTING PANEL: Am not just talking about police officers. I've worked in the field myself and I was doing a job which attracted a lot of interest from mwananchi [common man] … as soon as I landed they were bringing me **milk** which I had not asked for. I stood up and asked "hey what's wrong with you people. I don't want this milk. I'll go to the shops and buy". Clearly I knew what it was.

The chair person claims that he saw the milk as a form of bribe meant to compromise him in his line of duty. According to the chair person such gestures indexed crime in the form of bribery hence he stopped it. He made his point clear to the givers that he was not part of the bribery arrangement. Officer B didn't see lunch as a crime thus entertained it because he

seemed to be enjoying the benefits from it. Consequently the givers continued sending him the lunch money in exchange of supposed protection. The chair goes on to say that any gesture given in the form of food is never done for free for example;

VETTING PANEL: That in essence is what it means for you to be given the money you are saying, you are receiving from well-wishers, people admired your work, and people appreciated you. In Geiyo it can never be for free. In the exchange above the chairperson of the vetting panel introduced other euphemistic terms to bribery like admiration and appreciation of good work. According to the vetting panel bribery by any other name would still sound abhorrent because of the intentions involved. Shuy,(2013:5) says " in a bribery event, the participants recognize the speech event they are participating in, indicate their own agenda, make offers and agreements in clear and unequivocal language". Coming to our data, the lunch is bought by road users in exchange of protection from the traffic police officers. In the end the officer receiving the lunch is compromised, influenced in the way they do their duty.

Similarly, officer A in the exchange cited earlier, talks about people coming to buy her and other police officers **lunch** without them asking for it. This lunch is not the usual meal as we all know it which is bought from a hotel or prepared at home but favours in the form of money.

I think the word lunch is an improvement of tea on account of the amount of money involved in the transaction. With a small amount of money one can buy another person tea but lunch requires a larger amount of money. In using the term lunch the officer seems to suggest that the gesture he got from his benefactors was a necessity. Lunch unlike tea is taken in the middle of the day; almost every person takes a meal during lunch time. Therefore the term lunch is strategically used to indicate that such a meal is necessary to the human species and the police officers are no exception.

The fact that the officer received the money from people unknown to him makes him less responsible for the act. Instead the people sending him the money are to blame for enticing him with money that he did not solicit for in the first place.

To support his argument Officer B further says "Mr. Chairman, I wish you could share in my predicament that in Geiyo (not the real name) the people there and it is a characteristic that they are so social". In saying so the officer wished the vetting panel to sympathize with him and treat him as a victim of circumstance which in this instance is rampant bribery that is manifested as lunch.

Closely related to the word lunch is the more specific food item **meat**. In one of the exchanges one member of the panel used the term to show how bribery is euphemized as meat. She says "He is the back stop so all the **nyamas [meat]** will go to him. That is why in Geiyo you were the back stop. That is why we are tracing this 1.5 million into these deals". Meat is a much sought after delicacy in many medium earning households in Kenya. Therefore to treat bribe money as meat makes the whole event acceptable and normal.

The words tea, meat and lunch share the same semantic property of being food. Food is a basic need that no human being who wishes to stay alive can dispense with. The act of buying food for someone is not wrong in the eyes of both the buyer and the taker because food is a necessity. If a motorist were to say to a police officer "can I give you a bribe? I need a favour from you'', it would sound offensive, uncouth and disrespectful but the use of food items make the bribery act justified, normalized and regularized. Anybody asking for lunch and tea from anyone at any time is not viewed negatively. In the same vein it becomes abnormal and immoral to accuse somebody of crime say bribery just because he or she was given food by a good samaritan while on duty.

The amounts involved in the bribery events also serve to show that the affected officers find it normal and less disturbing to receive bribes from the members of the public. The amounts involved are so negligible that they no longer prick the conscience of a professional police officer. The fact that these amounts are received over and over they have become the norm that is rarely thought much about.

Officer B says "….. If you realize that the amounts are negligible as low as 300. These are not things that will ordinarily change the mind of a professional police officer. As the in charge I don't think 400 shillings will make me turn my head the other way when you have committed a traffic offence".

Token of Appreciation

Another expression that featured during the vetting exercise is the phrase **"token of appreciation"**. This term was used to explain the financial gains that police officers realized outside their normal salaries. Consider the exchanges below:

VETTING PANEL: So when he pays you this money, he pays you for escort duties.

OFFICER E: No. it's **an appreciation,** they appreciate our work.

The strategic use of the term 'token of appreciation' is suggestive of a commendable job worthy of a reward. Officer E says "they appreciate our work". The use of the pronouns "they and us" presents a sharp dichotomy between the participants in the interaction of giving and taking of money. The subject position is taken up by the giver thus giving the receiver a passive role that distances him from direct involvement in the bribery allegation. The same phrase is used by Officer F as a substitute for the lexical item bribe.

VETTING PANEL: kindly face the panel and tell them that you have never taken a bribe

Officer F: I cannot say I have never taken a **bribe** but sir you know a bribe, the specification of a bribe in … according to…. I am forgetting. OK If I have ever taken a **bribe** sir May be an **appreciation**.

The response from Officer F presents a case of lexical substitution where she uses another word to refer to an event or action. This kind of lexical substitution operates in a similar

manner with lexical struggle in (Eades: 2003) where participants in a conversation engage in a kind of "negotiation of meaning" (Matoesian, 1993).

This definition is closer to what (Drew, 1992) calls "alternative description" in reference to "a courtroom strategy of lawyers changing a witness' description or label" and vice versa (Eades 2003:8). In the exchange above, Officer F tried to define the term "bribe" and being aware of the dangerous position she was placing herself in, decided to re-lexicalize the term as an **appreciation.**

In using the term "token of appreciation" Officer F seems to suggest that there is nothing wrong with receiving gifts from members of the public so long as her work is being appreciated. The dictionary definition of the term "token of appreciation" is something you do for someone or that you give them as a way of thanking them.

Appreciation is given out after a good work well done. The use of the term 'appreciation' is aimed at reducing the negative import carried by the plain word 'bribe'. When someone's work is appreciated by another person it becomes a pointer that the work in question is exceptionally good thus should be encouraged to continue. The choice of the term is also a strategic way of doing face repairs aimed at "constructing a positive self-identity" (Satia, 2014).

The two officers cited above do not dispute receiving any favours from motorists and other road users, but their major concern was the terminologies used. The use of terms such as a bribe or a gift is very incriminating and poses a potential harm to the image of the officer(s) in question. The term token of appreciation index a positive image of the officers engaging in activities that are socially acceptable. As a way of further justifying their actions, the officers maintained that the favours received were given to them voluntarily. In essence nobody asks to be appreciated but it is a decision of the one appreciating the work. In treating bribe money as tokens of appreciation, the officers make their actions more acceptable, less abhorrent and are therefore bound to continue unabated.

Welfare

Another explanation advanced by some police officers to account for their mobile money transactions amongst themselves was 'welfare'. The original definition of the term **welfare** is financial help given especially by the state or an organization to people who need it especially because they do not have enough money, are poor or unemployed for a long time (Cambridge English dictionary).The present study found out that the meaning of the word welfare as used in the Kenyan context is any financial assistance given to an individual in a happy or sad situation. In one of the responses during the vetting exercise Officer A claimed that the money she sent to another officer who is her senior was welfare money that was meant to assist the officer's family while the officer was undergoing training in a Police College. Consider this exchange for illustration.

VETTING PANEL 1: You sent him money 10650. What was the purpose?

OFFICER A: Again it was for **welfare.** He was attending a course at the Kenya police training. So we collected the money then gave him so that he can help his family.

A welfare department in any organization is tasked to take care of the wellbeing of its members. The use of the term welfare is indicative of lawful activities. In using the term welfare the officer wished the vetting panel to see her intentions as noble regardless of their occurrence.

VETTING PANEL: It's just ….see the money it is flowing in, in fact we are even wondering with your salary and your OCS not the OCS but the traffic commandant who is your boss and who earns a lot more money you are sending him large sums of money. You sent the OCS, your base commander 70 times, an amount totaling to 131425. It means you are sending him in small bits. What were you paying him for?

OFFICER C: Sir si eti nilikuwa namlipa but ilikuwa kama mtu ako na shida wanasema tuangalie. So ilikuwa kama sisi ni…tulikuwa watu five[it's not that I was paying him but if somebody has a problem they could say we look into it so it was like us, we were five people]
(interrupted)

Officer C: does not use the word 'welfare' but her explanations captures the dealings of a welfare department in any institution. When asked why she sent her boss money seventy times, the officer was quick to indicate that the purpose for that money was for assistance to her fellow police officers. The lexical choice welfare as the reason for the several numbers of times money was sent from one officer to another becomes some kind of a primary framework. Goffman, (1974) says a primary framework is the "first concept" that is needed in the interpretation of a situation. The interpretation of any situation involves the application of an appropriate keying.

The process of keying entails "a systematic transformation" of a known material as a "schema of interpretation" (Goffman 1974). This already understood situation (schema) is applied to a new situation to yield an appropriate interpretation. Therefore the word welfare becomes our primary framework used to interpret what it is that is going on (Goffman 1974). The process of keying leads to the correct interpretation of 'what is it that is going on' thus many participants are likely to have the same version of interpretation. On the other hand, a fabrication requires the differences in features of the schema and the object under scrutiny. Goffman posits that "those in on deception, what is going on is a fabrication, for those contained what is going on is what is being fabricated" (Goffman: 1974:84).

In order to arrive at the appropriate interpretation, the features of a functional welfare should match those witnessed in the money transfers. As a starting point, a welfare department is tasked to assist all the members irrespective of their status in times of need. All members of a welfare group should be contributors so as to benefit from it when their time comes and the members who benefit from the arrangement change. It is not the case that one person in a group goes through problems all the time unless in cases that are extremely exceptional. The

major concern in our analysis of the conversation above would be whether a correct transformation took place or a fabrication.

If it is indeed true that the two officers indicated above are in charge of welfare, then we expected that they received contributions from all the members of the group. Their mobile money transactions should reflect the names of the members who have benefited from the welfare kitty. It cannot be the case that only two members in a thirteen member group whose collections are sent to one person on several times. A good welfare should not only benefit the senior officers but also officers from other ranks. Therefore if the features of the primary framework (welfare) do not match those features of the money transfers then no transformation of activities takes place but a fabrication (Goffman, 1974).

VETTING PANEL: So the only ones who were sending you money in support of colleagues and for welfare were only two officers

OFFICER A: Yah.

VETTING PANEL ….I mean you never had problems for the base commander to send you …. OFFICER C: There is a time I had a problem and the base commander sent me six thousand VETTING PANEL: By what means?

OFFICER C: Mpesa

VETTING PANEL: It is not reflected anywhere. We have analyzed thoroughly. He is not anywhere unless you show us.

The officers' use of the term welfare was meant to divert the attention of the vetting panel from seeing the numerous mobile money transfers as instances corruption into seeing them as legitimate activities. The choice of the word welfare is very strategic as it points out to a good course for humanity. There is no offense in supporting a member of one's immediate group in times of need. The officers claimed that they assisted other police officers who were on training or those with sick relatives. Such help within the welfare department in any institution is very common and police officers are not an exception since they too are members of a society. Welfare money instead of bribery signals legitimate activities that people engage in with clear conscience. This view of bribery as a form of welfare is responsible for the continued tolerance on corruption among police officers (TIK 2013).

Contribution

Another word that serves as a primary frame work is the lexical term **contributions.** Contributions as used by the officers refer to money collected from various officers with a view to help another officer. In one instance an officer admitted to having collected money from his junior officers and sent the same to a senior officer who had asked for financial assistance from him. The officers A, C, D and G explain their receipt of money via their mobile phones as contributions.

OFFICER A: we normally have a welfare where members contribute some money and I being the senior LCO, I keep the money.

OFFICER C: Sir I cannot say is a problem because kama mtu atakuwa na shida Rakon ama Raum (not real names) as a whole tulikuwa tunamtolea ile kiroho yako vile inakuambia. So tulikuwa tunamchangia kidogo especially kama mimi mama walikuwa wananiambia Rachael (not the real name) we ndio utatuma, naweka mpesa namtumia[it was if somebody will have a problem in Rakon or Raum as a whole we were contributing what your heart directs you to. So we were contributing little especially me as a mother they were telling me Rachael you are the one to send. So I deposit in mpesa and sent it to him/her].

OFFICER D: ………The base commander directs to me "kindly talk to your officers a senior officer wants assistance". So you sit down talk to your officers and then under the request of the base commander you sit down and see how much can each **contribute.** That now after putting the money together you are being told now you can send……..

OFFICER G: ….sir, When you tell me like that I just sit down as a commander I tell my officers Mr. OCPD told us he has ABCD so what are we going to do with him? We discuss, the officers tell me "madam let us **contribute** this and this" and we give him sir.

In saying that the cash flows in their mobile phones was for contributions from the members in their base, the officers wished to convince the vetting panel that their actions are noble and are not linked to the graft allegations. These explanations are further backed up by citing instances when specific police officers actually had problems and needed assistance.

When we take the lexical item contribution as our primary framework for interpreting the cash flows, we pattern it with the features that characterize ideal contributions for instance contributions are made voluntarily in varying amounts depending on an individual's ability and willingness. It is possible that the money is put together and one person acting as a treasurer or a custodian sends the money to the beneficiary at one go or as the money is received. In most instances just like in welfare, the beneficiaries vary as per the purpose of the contribution.

In one of the responses given by an officer, the names given as beneficiaries in the contribution were not reflected in the sender's mobile money statement. In fact the greatest beneficiary of the contributions endeavor was her boss. In one instance officer C seemed to be facing a difficulty in justifying the seventy times she had sent money to her base commander. Also contributions are not made for only one person over a number of times. It raises a lot of questions when the beneficiary of those contributions is an officer of a higher rank who supposedly earns more money than his/her juniors.

VETTING PANEL: So it means the traffic commandant always would tell you when he has problems but you never told the traffic commandant when you have problems because we are not seeing any money from the traffic commandant to you.

This study observed that the word **contribution** is a coded word that is used among senior officers to ask for money from their juniors. The senior officer directs his/her junior officers to send him/her some contributions. These contributions are not given out by the directed officers from their hard earned salaries but are bribes collected from members of the public. By asking for contributions from their junior officers, the senior officers are indirectly sending these officers to the members of the public especially road users to collect bribes from them. The chain of bribery runs from the bottom all the way to the top and is completed once the collection is done and the money is sent to the particular officer with financial needs. This assertion is further supported in Nillson(2009:30) who said that in Nakuru district in Kenya one respondent boldly said that one would never find a police officer of a higher rank like an OCPD going out to ask for bribes from the members of the public but he or she still gets a share of bribe money from their juniors.

In another interview a police officer was asked why he collected money from recruits at a police training camp without issuing receipts for accountability purposes. The question was not on the nature of the collection but the panel wanted to know how the collected money was accounted for. In response the affected officer was quick to call the collections a contribution. These contributions were made by the recruits and directed to the senior officer as illustrated below

OFFICER H: Students get sick; they are admitted in the hospital. You tell other people to **contribute** obviously they don't contribute and if they **contribute** it's something very minimal it cannot cater for the expenses in the hospital. So that fund has played a very important role I can say so.

The recruits' medical expenses are met by the government yet their senior directs them to make contributions towards their medical expenses. These contributions are not receipted as expected of any public funds thus the panel's major suspicion of corruption. In calling the collections contributions the senior police officer wanted his actions to be seen as nobly done for the good of the recruits. These officers will continue to ask for the contributions from the junior officers without fear of engaging in any form of irregularity because there is nothing illegal in doing contributions. In the same vein it becomes equally hard to prosecute somebody who is engaging in legal activities done in the good will of the concerned parties.

The present study concluded that the use of the words assistance and contribution were meant to serve the linguistic ends of seeing nothing evil or out of the norm in asking for bribe money from the members of the public. Requesting for assistance is normal among human beings as no man is an island. A senior officer asking for assistance from members under his command is not out of place nor does it carry any negativity. Senior police officers will have no qualms in asking for assistance from the officers under their command whom they direct without using any form of coercion.

Merry Go Rounds

Merry go rounds in the Kenyan context entails activities that are done repeatedly in a cycle. These activities simulate what goes on in a carousels or amusement parks. In a merry go

round members of a group agree to contribute money to one another over a period of time. These contributions will go on until everybody in the group receives their share. Adede A. (2007:16) defines a merry go round as "a self-help organization which mobilizes

their own resources mainly from members' periodical savings, cover their costs and finance their growth using profits arising from credit to members". When police officers were asked to explain the several mobile money transactions that were moving among officers of various ranks their response was that they were engaged in merry go rounds.

VETTING PANEL: To OCPD Ramunga (not the real name) whom you sent fifteen times…

OFFICER J: We sat and tried to find a solution to er…get…you know…to uplift our standards. So ….er…we decided to do a merry go round within us.

Officer J above attributes the several money transfers from his mobile phone to another officer's phone to a merry go round among various officers. Merry go rounds as a reason for the many mobile money transactions was used much to the chagrin of the vetting panel. The panel felt unconvinced to a point of asking the existence of such arrangements.

VETTING PANEL: Do we really have merry go rounds? OFFICER B: Some are real, some are imaginary Mr. Chairman

VETTING PANEL: Any other feature of a merry go round? How would you know who had, whose turn it was… wouldn't you keep some kind of records?

OFFICER B: Yes. There is normally…they give numbers you are number one, you are number two…

VETTING PANEL: Could you remember the members if you were a member of a merry go round?

From the interaction above, it is true that the vetting panel was not convinced by the explanations given by some of the officers because the many cash flows in the officers' transactions did not fulfill all the features of merry go rounds as understood in the Kenyan context. The affected officers could not even remember the names of their merry go round members. There were no records kept that guided the group in determining whose turn it was to be given the money.

In choosing the word 'merry go round' as an explanation to their many mobile money transfers , the police officers wanted the vetting panel to view their conduct in good light. Such noble activities aimed at improving the living standards of its members are very common even among the working class in Kenya.

The present study observed that though merry go rounds are done in a specific way by members of a group, it's use as it emerged during the police vetting exercise is totally different. The police treated any money that was received via their mobile phones as merry go round so that they are seen to be engaging in noble activities for the good of the members of society. This explains the reason why so much money was sent among police officers and

other members of the society in a freely manner. The participants engaging in these activities are at peace within themselves. The following exchange serves to illustrate.

VETTING PANEL: We like to give you an example when they examined his merry go round, he is a senior officer among those whose results we have released. We could see in his Mpesa statements money sent to him and he sends it back. You sent money and he looks at it if he doesn't know the person or he knows the person but he can't remember what they are paying him for he returns the same money and we saw a lot of that there. Are you saying that that officer who was returning money he didn't think he had earned fairly was being rude, cruel?

The word merry go round was used so much by the interviewed police officer that the vetting panel became convinced of their extensiveness. All mobile money transactions came to be broadly seen in terms of merry go rounds.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the choice of words and expressions as used by police officers during the vetting interviews were strategies meant to avoid the abhorrence of corruption. The words tea and lunch share semantic properties of food thus indexing positive actions which are necessary in life. Token of appreciation is closely associated with the police officers' job hence not a negative gesture as long as the work is done well. The words welfare, assistance, contributions and merry go rounds are activities that are mainly done for the greater good of the members of the society. Such noble activities are performed openly by various groups of people thus their use by police officers makes bribery less detestable. The use of euphemistic terms such as tea, lunch, token of appreciation among police officers is a means of making bribery less abhorrent and a justification of its continued rampancy among police officers especially those in the traffic department. There is nothing negative that is associated with these activities thus police officers have continued to engage in bribery with abandon.

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