



Reimagining South African Political Campaigns through Indigenous Language Posters in the 4IR: A Political Communication Perspective

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Abstract

This study sought to explore how the Fourth Industrial Revolution tools or platforms such as digital media technology, social media, and the internet are employed to publicise indigenous language posters for political election campaigns in South Africa. The study was underpinned by a theory of communication in political campaigns to ascertain the importance of communication or linguistic features in political campaign posters. A phenomenological qualitative research method and exploratory research design were employed to address the research problem and objectives of the study. Furthermore, a semi-structured interview was used to collect data from 10 purposively selected respondents. The collected data were thematically analysed to identify, describe, and explain the major themes and sub-themes that emerged. The study established that the previously disadvantaged and marginalised South African indigenous languages were seriously underutilised for political election campaign posters on social media platforms by various South African political organisations. Therefore, the article recommends that, in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, for political parties to participate in the development, preservation, digitalisation, and promotion of these indigenous languages, they should strive to use and post on social media accounts political election campaign posters that are written in the various South African indigenous languages.

Keywords

Development, Elections, Fourth Industrial Revolution, Indigenous languages, Political campaign posters, Political communication

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

For years, politics, language, and strategic communication with reference to the political campaign have continually been used together to steer the development and social change of various democratic and developing countries like South Africa. In most instances, language is central in disseminating information and promoting awareness of issues of national and international importance in a democratic state. Language, like politics, plays a significant role in the political and socio-economic development of a country. South Africa became a democratic country in 1994 and has since experienced innumerable political, administrative, and development vicissitudes. Most of these vagaries were ushered in by the Interim Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 200 of (1993), "which introduced a new system of government, political terrain, and new institutions" on how to govern and run a democratic country. Thereafter, the new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of (1996), section 3(2)(a), states that "all citizens are equally entitled to the rights, privileges, and benefits of citizenship". In Addition, section 19(1)(a)-(c) of the same Constitution indicates that "every citizen has the right to make political choices, which includes the right to form a political party; to participate in the activities of, or recruit members for, a political party and to campaign for a party or cause". Accordingly, the attainment of a democratic

system in developing countries such as South Africa has provided fair, and transparent opportunities for all South African citizens to develop and register diverse political organisations and for citizens to equally participate in any form of general elections without any fear or threats.

Furthermore, in most developing countries like South Africa, during the national and local government elections, various political organisations endeavour to use diverse communication procedures for strategic political election campaigns. Communication strategies to attract potential voters could include posters that may be distributed during canvassing, displayed on street poles, or posted and accessed on social media accounts. According to Mhlongo (2021: 257) "the implementation of the election in [South Africa] is regulated by Electoral Act 73 of 1998 concerning elections, which also regulates the participation of the registered political organisations in elections because, in the South African context, voters do not vote for an individual candidate but a particular political party". In addition, Jimaima and Banda (2019: 1) indicated that in the South African context, there is a "constitutional provision to hold general elections every five years". In a nutshell, the freedom to allow citizens to develop and register political organisations resulted in South Africa becoming a multiparty democracy with several registered political parties that participate in both national and local government elections, such as the African National Congress (ANC), Democratic Alliance (DA), Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP), and Inkata Freedom Party (IFP), just to mention but a few. This shows that political organisations play a significant role in the development and social change of a state or a country.

Language always plays an essential part in communication and development in every sphere or domain of life such as in government, businesses, media, education, and political organisations. As such, The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996, section 6(1) states that in South Africa there are currently 11 official languages of which 9 were previously marginalised and disadvantaged languages that are spoken within the 9 Provinces of the country. In agreement, the United Nations report (2017: 5) notes that "language is central to human nature and culture and is one of the most important expressions of identity, customs behaviour, and values. This might extend to an obligation to recognize or support the use of languages by minorities or Indigenous peoples". Nevertheless, for several decades, indigenous languages have been marginalised and previously deprived of an opportunity to develop, expand, grow, be used, and be promoted not only in South Africa and in other African countries, but also globally to some extent (Cassels, 2019; Chew, 2021; Cru, 2015). Moreover, in a quest to develop, preserve, use, and promote these Indigenous languages most indigenous communities, educational institutions, government departments, parliament officials, and media entities should work diligently to keep these languages equally recognised as official languages in various spheres of life.

In addition, Section 6(2) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996, indicates that the state should "recognise the historically diminished use and status of the Indigenous languages of our people and must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages", whereas sub-section (4) directs that "all official languages must enjoy parity of esteem and must be treated equitably". In agreement, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) Editorial Policy (2020: 4) indicates that "language plays a crucial role in promoting and attaining the goals of building democracy and the nation and protecting and developing uniquely diverse cultures". Remi and Ojukwu (2013: 105) highlighted that "the importance of the language medium for communicating political messages cannot be underrated because language is considered a powerful tool for everyday communication". Cristobal (2022: 46) further said that "by implication, language is the vibrant part in all spheres of life endeavours. It is essential to building relationships, expressing thoughts, ideas or a need and responses provided as feedback, which may also be positive or negative".

Accordingly, the United Nations report (2017: 5) concluded that "issues surrounding language are therefore particularly emotive and significant to linguistic minority communities seeking to maintain their distinct group and cultural identities, sometimes under conditions of marginalization, exclusion, and discrimination". Despite these arguments "research on the role of communication and language used during political election campaigns and promotion remains a rather disjointed field" (Esser & Strömbäck, 2012). In addition, "most research focuses on how campaigns communicate with voters, either directly

or through the news media, or on the overall mode of political campaigning and communication" (Amenyeawu, 2021; Stier, Bleier, Lietz & Strohmaier, 2018; Strömbäck & Kioussis, 2011). However, other methods of communication, such as "internal communication to organize volunteers", and the use of indigenous languages during political campaigns are typically neglected. Esser and Strömbäck (2012: 99) concluded that "political communication in election campaigns is almost exclusively conceptualized as the strategic use of communication to reach voters directly through different forms of controlled communication or indirectly through the news media, or as different modes of communication and campaigning".

Against this background, the main purpose of this study was to explore the South African voters' perspective on the effective use of indigenous language posters for political elections campaigns in the 4IR, especially written language on the parties' social media accounts. Furthermore, the forms and meanings of linguistic symbols as a representation of the characteristics of campaign language in the context of political interaction were scrutinised; as a campaign language, the language of parties' posters is worthy to be studied. The study would further determine the conspicuousness of indigenous language posters for political election campaigns on digital media platforms. This would further discover whether political campaign posters on digital media effectively use and promote indigenous languages and establish whether posters constitute a valuable tool in information dissemination for development, especially during the elections. In a nutshell, to close the identified research lacuna, the study explored the effective use of indigenous languages on political election campaign posters during the Fourth Industrial Revolution in 21st-century South Africa.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The importance of Political Campaign Posters for information dissemination

A poster, according to Sharndama and Mohammed (2013: 61), can be regarded "as a type of written monologue like a (spoken or written) anecdote, proclamation, and testimonial which exemplify the modality distinction". Whereas Cristobal (2022: 46) postulated that "interestingly, the poster has been considered as one of the leading and most effective non-verbal means of communication in society". Likewise, Tasah (2021: 182) specified that "posters aim at presenting information in a succinct and condensed manner and posters are not interactive and often lack in depth, and as such not given the necessary attention they deserve". Similarly, Sontag (1999: 100) once asserted that "posters are commonly thought to convey and communicate messages having different themes, but some scholars go beyond this general function". Recently, Cristobal (2022: 46) further suggested that "posters are a very essential form of visual communication since they convey images and other important graphic and textual details with meaning lying behind it". This shows that posters play a significant role in political election campaigns both in the South African context and abroad.

Furthermore, Atul, K., Richa, Shikhar, Atul, G. and Nakul (2020: 165) highlighted that "the function of a poster is not merely to inform or command but to enforce or change the addressees' attitudes, thoughts, and behaviours by seducing, exhorting, educating, convincing, appealing them to do what the poster focuses on". Prominently, "political campaign posters are most visible during elections because these are the most economical and easiest means of communication between the elected political parties and the voters" (Tasah, 2021: 182). In addition, Sharndama and Mohammed (2013: 61), asserted that "during election campaign periods all over the world, posters are cast-off to acquaint candidates to the electorates and induce them to vote for [political organisations]". While Cristobal (2022: 47) highlighted that in most cases, "it is a custom in politics during election campaigns for politicians to cartel images with words in order to coax the electorates to accept their political ideologies, thereby winning their votes". Presently, "election is a means of gaining and handling power, especially in democratic countries. This requires adopting a political discourse in which politics is metaphorically viewed as a war and the opponent is considered an enemy who must be argued by certain political weapons among which is a poster" (Janulienė & Cibulskiene, 2014: 99). Cristobal (2022: 46) further concluded that most of "these posters

are specially designed with the intentions and purposes of the political parties to the public, especially on persuading the electorates to vote for them".

Significance of language in political campaigns

According to Cristobal (2022: 46) "it is, therefore, worth averring that every political campaign poster is language. Language plays an important role in the political election campaign posters used to promote parties and influence the audience's thoughts and opinions". Beard (2000: 101) said that "the argument entails using language for giving information about the main issues which concern the public. The linguistic content of the poster (textual elements/slogans) is skilfully designed to persuade people to promote one's candidacy". In election campaigns, "political advertising takes the form of campaign speeches, broadcast advertising, walkabouts, online media messages, and campaign materials such as election posters, banners, flyers, and fishtails" (Fox & Menchik, 2011: 11). "Despite the increase in the use of social media for the election campaign, [the] election banner is still an important form of political advertising to influence voters" (Patrut & Madalina, 2013: 233). Likewise, "election posters and banners convey the party's general campaign messages and allow the party to send unmediated messages directly to the voters" (Russmann, 2012: 110).

Language as a means of political communication in developing countries

According to Beard (2000: 103) "as a means of political communication, languages are covered in symbols or messages that can represent the ideas or thoughts of the speakers". Thus, Lirola (2016: 246) assumed that "verbal or visual symbols used in campaign posters in developing countries like [South Africa] certainly have characteristics that may be different from regular speeches in everyday communication or other persuasive communication". Asrini (2019: 217) indicated that "during the time of local and national government elections, various political parties endeavour to use diverse communication techniques in the election campaign". In most cases, "these communication strategies could be in the form of posters that could be seen on the street poles, and on their social media accounts such as Twitter and Facebook to attract voters" (Cristobal, 2022: 46). The political campaign posters usually use linguistic features such as signs, images, words, and languages to disseminate the information and messages to the targeted people or society.

Danziger (1998: 34) indicated that in most cases "politics focuses on 'who gets what, when and how'. It determines the process through which power and influence are used in the promotion of certain values and interests". While Asrini (2019: 217) asserted that "during the time of elections, political parties tend to use various media platforms such as banners, billboards, and posters to give rise to a variety of meaningful symbols that accommodate their persuasive messages". This is the time in which the majority of political organisations compete strategically in the political campaign to promote their parties, slogans and manifestos to attract sundry voters. Furthermore, Lirola (2016: 246) highlighted that "during the time of political campaigns, political leaders speak in public places, on television, on the radio, digital media, etc. However, even if they are not present, their political posters represent them in cities and towns all over the country and on social media platforms". In most cases, political parties would make use of various media platforms for publicity, and that could be seen in the language used in the political party's posters.

Development of the Fourth Industrial Revolution in the Political Domain

In his attempt to define the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Schwab (2016: 1) indicated that "the Fourth Industrial Revolution also known as the digital revolution has been occurring since the middle of the third century. This revolution is characterized by a fusion of technologies that is blurring the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres". McGinnis (2020: 1) said that "the Fourth Industrial Revolution is a way of describing the blurring of boundaries between the physical, digital, and biological worlds". Schwab (2016: 1) further stated that "4IR is a fusion of advances in artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, the Internet of Things (IoT), 3D printing, genetic engineering, quantum computing, and other technologies, which are the collective force behind many products and services that are fast becoming indispensable to modern

life". Moll (2022: 47) indicated that "the Fourth Industrial Revolution or Industry 4.0 is characterized by an exponential pace of technology developments covering wide-ranging fields such as the internet of things (IoT), 3D printing, information and communication technology, materials science, energy storage, and quantum computing, to name a few".

Davis (2016: 11) described 4IR as "the advent of cyber-physical systems involving entirely new capabilities for people and machines". Accordingly, Davis (2016: 11) observed that "while these capabilities are reliant on the technologies and infrastructure of the third industrial revolution, 4IR represents entirely new ways in which technology becomes embedded within societies and even our human bodies". Furthermore, Moll (2022: 48) asserted that for the past years "the possibilities of billions of people connected by mobile devices, with unprecedented processing power, storage capacity, and access to knowledge, are unlimited. And these possibilities will be multiplied by emerging technology breakthroughs in fields such as artificial intelligence, robotics, the Internet of Things, autonomous vehicles, 3-D printing, nanotechnology, biotechnology, materials science, energy storage, and quantum computing". Mhlanga and Moloji (2020: 2) posited that "4IR is affecting almost every facet of our daily life, impacting how individuals relate to technology and changing how and where work is done". This revolution builds on the third industrial revolution, but it puts together technologies from the digital, physical, and biological worlds.

Furthermore, Mhlanga and Moloji (2020: 2) highlighted that "as the physical, digital, and biological worlds continue to converge, new technologies and platforms will increasingly enable citizens to engage with governments and political parties to voice their opinions, coordinate their efforts, and even circumvent the supervision of public authorities". In a similar vein, Schwab (2016: 1) said that most political parties and "governments will gain new technological powers to increase their control over populations, based on pervasive surveillance systems and the ability to control digital infrastructure". On the whole, however, "governments and political organisations will increasingly face pressure to change their current approach to public engagement, political campaigns and policymaking, as their central role of conducting policy diminishes owing to new sources of competition and the redistribution and decentralization of power that new technologies make possible" (McGinnis, 2020: 1). Moreover, Fanoro, Božanić and Sinha (2021: 2) indicated that 4IR can be described as a way of creating connections between digital and physical environments, while Kalsoom, Ramzan, Ahmed and Ur-Rehman (2020: 68) highlighted that "4IR is enlarging the digital space through the Internet of Things (IoT) technologies to enhance the quality and precision of manufacturing processes".

Mawela (2021: 11) further said that "central to the 4th Industrial Revolution is language. The 4th IR is coined, envisaged, and expressed through the medium of language. Without language it is not possible to talk about the 4IR". Whereas Amenyewu, (2021: 3) asserted that "politics which has had a long relationship with the 4IR such as technological media has seen some changes in its campaign and communication due to the evolution of the media. Digital media have proven to be an effective strategy in political communication and campaign". Digital revolution or 4IR is a way in which technological advancements are used to close the gap between the physical, digital, and biological spheres of life. Ultimately, political organisations and various governments should seek to adapt to this new way of operation to access voters and for public engagements. This shows that the 4IR and languages are core in the political sphere and during the political elections campaign for governments and political parties to access and attract voters during the elections. Nevertheless, this study sought to examine how the Fourth Industrial Revolution tools were employed to publicise indigenous language posters for political election campaigns in democratic South Africa.

A theory of communication in political campaigns

The study has been underpinned by the theory of communication in political campaigns. This theory so far has been dominated by the seminal works and research of Petrocik (1996), Riker (1996), Stromberg (2008), Denter (2014), Strömbäck and Kioussis (2011). Communication in political campaigns is the process in which political organisations "spend time or money through television, and radio adverts, public

speeches, and posters in an effort to influence voters' decision at the ballot" (Denter, 2014: 1). In addition, "this kind of influence increases the quality of the policy in the issue as perceived by the voters through policy advertising and makes the issue more salient through issue priming, thereby increasing the issue's perceived importance" (Denter, 2014: 1). Subsequently, Strömbäck and Kiousis (2011: 109) indicated that "communication is most important during the political election campaigns as it builds and maintains relationships and coordinates various political-related activities". Communication as one of the most important tools of political campaigns also "helps to reach out to and help convince supporters or voters to actively support the campaign; lastly, it is important to reach out to voters through phone, outdoor activities or knocking on doors, and for the interpersonal discussion with voters" (Strömbäck and Kiousis, 2011: 109).

During the elections, most political organisations use various strategic communication campaigns such as posters, banners and billboards to publicly advertise their organisations. According to Strömbäck and Kiousis (2011: 20), "strategic political communication is about an organization's purposeful management of information and communication to reach the prospective voters and political objectives it has set out for itself". Furthermore, Manheim (2011: 89) highlighted that "this holds for political parties and campaigns as well as for interest groups, governments or other organizations that are either inherently political or have political agendas. Different organizations want to achieve certain goals, and they use information and communication strategies to reach these goals". Moreover, Amenyeawu (2021: 10) said that 4IR and social media on the other hand reinforce the communication of political election campaign strategies by giving "all political stakeholders the chance to contribute to political campaigns and discourse. The public can engage with politicians through social media by liking, commenting, and sharing their posts. Candidates can also whip up the interest of the public by creating content that resonates with the electorate".

Therefore, the theory of communication in political campaigns is suitable for this study because the Fourth Industrial Revolution, digital media and revolution technologies are essential to disseminate important political campaign communication and information to society through the written and spoken language. In this regard, political election campaigns are also designed using linguistic features such as signs, symbols, and words that intend to convey essential messages and information to potential voters. So, this shows that communication plays a vital role during political election campaigns by various political organisations. Denter (2014: 1) further indicated that in most cases "political office vies for voters' support at the ballot by giving public speeches, publishing television adverts, or by targeting different groups with tailored advertisements on the internet". In other words, most political parties use these various strategic political campaigns to communicate their perspectives, manifestos and policies, and try to convince constituents of their quality as political leaders. Based on this literature, the effective use of indigenous language posters for political elections campaign promotions and advertising could have a vital effect on the electorates in choosing the political party they vote for. Significantly, South Africa as a developing country has limited studies attempting to explore the remaining political election campaigns through indigenous language posters in the 4IR. Hence, the need to conduct this study.

STUDY METHOD

This phenomenological qualitative research sought to explore the South Africans' viewpoints on the effective use of indigenous language posters for political election campaigns in South Africa in terms of the 4IR tools. Dawson (2002), Jensen (2002) and Creswell (2009) describe phenomenological research as the strategy the researcher uses to explore the essence of human attitudes, behaviour, viewpoints, experiences, and perspectives of selected respondents in their naturalistic contexts. In addition, Bhattacharjee (2012: 109) indicated that "phenomenological research requires the researcher to eliminate any prior assumption of personal biases, empathise with the respondent's situation, and tune into existential dimensions of that situation so that they can fully understand the deep structures that drive the conscious thinking, feeling, and behaviour of the studied respondents". In this study, phenomenological qualitative research explored the respondents' attitudes, experiences, and insights regarding the effective use of indigenous language posters on social media platforms for political

election campaigns in South Africa.

Study design

This study employed an exploratory research design. Creswell (2009: 6) stated that "exploratory research design is often conducted in new areas of inquiry where the goals of the research are to scope out the magnitude or extent of a particular phenomenon, problem or behaviour and to generate some initial ideas about that phenomenon". In this study, the exploratory research design was used to explore the extent to which the South African political campaign posters use indigenous languages on social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook to attract potential voters during elections time and the extent to which voters are satisfied with the linguistic content or features of these posters.

Selection of study respondents

In this study, the purposive sampling technique was employed to select 10 apposite respondents to participate in the interview. Bhattacharjee (2012: 69) emphasised that "purposive sampling is a technique in which a sample is drawn from that part of the population that is close to hand, readily available or convenient". The respondents, between 18-60 years of age, were selected based on their characteristics, availability, competence, use of social media for political communication, political activism, and eligibility to vote during national and local government elections. Furthermore, "all respondents were given and signed an informed consent form that clearly describes the purpose of the study and their right to not participate and right to withdraw before their responses in the study were recorded" (Bhattacharjee, 2012: 138). Moreover, the respondents were coded Respondent #1 to Respondent #10 to protect their identity, privacy, and anonymity during the data analysis process. Pertaining to the process, the description of Bhattacharjee (2012) was applied: "Coding of new data continued until data saturation was reached, when additional data did not yield any marginal in the core categories of the relationships".

Data collection method and analysis processes

The data for this study were collected via semi-structured personal interviews to solicit the views, opinions, perspectives, and insights of the selected respondents on the effective use of indigenous language posters for political election campaigns in the Fourth Industrial Revolution in democratic South Africa. The interview schedule comprised open-ended questions and it took the researcher about 10 minutes with each respondent to conduct and record the interview using the smartphone voice recorder. Furthermore, the collected data were analysed via a thematic analysis process where the researcher read the transcripts to get a sense of the data as a whole and to establish units of significance that could faithfully represent respondents' subjective experiences. Bhattacharjee (2012: 113) highlighted that "qualitative thematic analysis is heavily dependent on the researcher's analytic and integrative skills and personal knowledge of the social context where the data is collected". During the analysis process, the researcher further identified, described, and discussed the major themes and sub-themes that emerged during the interviews with the selected respondents.

STUDY RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Social Media use for political election campaigns

The study revealed an extreme use of social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook by political parties for political election campaign purposes in South Africa. The respondents further indicated that most political parties such as the African National Congress, Democratic Alliance and the Economic Freedom Fighters, just to mention a few, have social media accounts to disseminate political campaign information to attract potential voters. Furthermore, Stier, Bleier, Lietz and Strohmaier (2018: 50) indicated that "social media have become ubiquitous communication channels for candidates during election campaigns. Platforms like Facebook and Twitter enable candidates to directly reach out to voters, mobilize supporters, and influence the public agenda". In confirmation, Respondent #3 stated that "*during the time*

of both national and local government elections I receive a lot of messages and notifications on my social media accounts and cellphones from various political parties trying to persuade me to vote for them”.

Furthermore, the study established that during the time of elections, whether national or local government, social media users are inundated with messages and information to persuade them to vote for these political parties. As Amenyeawu (2021: 24) asserted, “with the advent of the internet, social media have revolutionized the scope of political campaigns. Social media fulfils a factor of democracy that calls for the participation of all stakeholders”. Respondent #6 confirmed, indicating that *“over the years, I have witnessed a massive use of social media tools for political campaign purposes as compared to broadcast and print media platforms”*. In addition, these political parties spend time and money creating colourful posters that are branded with their party's name, slogan, a picture of their political leader, and the date on which the elections would take place. Moreover, Respondent #2 alleged that *“most political campaign posters encountered online or on social media display the organisation’s name, slogans, the date for voting written in the English language, as well as a well-dressed political leader’s picture”*.

Availability of indigenous language posters for political campaigns on social media

The study discovered that even though there is a massive use of billboards, banners, and street pole posters written in indigenous languages during the election campaigns, there is a lack of political campaign posters written in indigenous languages on the organisation's social media accounts. Most online political campaign posters are written and presented in English and Afrikaans in the case of the Democratic Alliance. As Respondent #6 said, *“these political parties make very little effort to post political campaign posters in various indigenous languages on social media accounts”*. In agreement, Remi and Ojukwu (2013: 109) suggested that *“the use of indigenous language (Yoruba) in political campaigns creates an impact for instruction, declaration, and grass root effect”*.

Respondent #10 indicated that *“there are few and sometimes no political campaign posters written in different indigenous languages on the parties’ social media accounts”*. This indicates that indigenous languages are mostly not used and promoted on political organisations' social media accounts during political election campaigns. Tasah (2021: 181) highlighted that *“posters written in indigenous languages are not only culturally relevant and well accepted by community members, but also enhance and facilitate respondents’ understanding of [political issues]”*. Moreover, Respondent #2 alleged that *“most political campaign posters encountered online show the organisation’s name, slogans, the date for voting written in the English language, as well as a well-dressed political leader’s picture”*.

Promotion of indigenous languages through political elections campaign posters

When respondents were asked to give their insight on the promotion of indigenous languages through political elections campaign posters, the study established that most political parties ensure the use of indigenous language posters, billboards, and street pole posters in the villages, cities, and areas of the towns where the indigenous people reside, while they do not strive for such use on social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook. Respondent #1 mentioned that *“as a social media user, I have not encountered political elections campaign posters designed, written, and presented in various indigenous languages on the parties’ social media accounts”*. This shows that political organisations are not keen to promote indigenous languages on social media platforms during political election campaigns. This is in contrast with the United Nations report (2017: 5) noting that *“language is central to human nature and culture and is one of the most important expressions of identity, customs, behaviour, and values. This might extend to an obligation to recognize or support the use of languages by minorities or indigenous peoples”*.

In agreement, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) Editorial Policy (2020: 4) states that *“language plays a crucial role in promoting and attaining the goals of building democracy and the nation and protecting and developing uniquely diverse cultures”*. Respondent #5 pointed to a contrary practice regarding political campaign posters, though: *“in most cases, I don’t come across any posters designed and written in indigenous languages on social media and I believe its time political parties start to post such on their online platforms to attract and persuade voters”*. This shows that in this age

of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, South African political parties do not use, but rather underuse, the majority of previously disadvantaged and marginalised South African languages as the best strategies to disseminate, communicate, and persuade voters on various social media.

Influence of online political campaign posters on voters' decision and development

When respondents were asked about the influence of political election campaign posters on voters' decision to vote, the study discovered that even though online political campaigns are not crafted and narrated in indigenous languages, they still have an effect on the voters' decision of which political party, that could contribute to the development of a country, to vote for. As Respondent #8 said, *"because of their textual elements and representation, online political campaign posters influence my voting decision"* his indicates that most voters are influenced by political campaign posters, whether they are written in an indigenous language or English. Recently, Cristobal (2022: 46) further suggested that "posters are a very essential form of visual communication since they convey images and other important graphic and textual details with meaning lying behind it". In agreement, Respondent #7 highlighted that *"whether these political elections campaigns posters are written in indigenous languages, or not, they do have an impact on my final decision of which political organisation I should vote for"*. Cristobal (2022: 46) concluded that most of "these posters are designed with the intention to persuade the electorates to vote for these political parties".

Preferred language political campaign communication

When respondents were asked to describe their language of preference to assimilate information on political election campaigns, they indicated that they would prefer to receive and assimilate the political campaign strategies, information, and posters in their native or mother tongue. Whereas the United Nations report (2017: 5) notes that "language is central to human nature and culture and is one of the most important expressions of identity, customs behaviour, and values. This might extend to an obligation to recognize or support the use of languages by minorities or indigenous peoples". This shows that posters written and presented in indigenous languages might have a meaningful influence on the voters and their decision of which political party to vote for. As Respondent #4 indicated, *"I would appreciate it to receive and consume political campaign messages and posters written in my mother tongue or indigenous language"*.

According to Cristobal (2022: 46) "it is, therefore, worth averring that every political campaign poster is language. Language plays an important role in the political election campaign posters used to promote parties and influence the audience's thoughts and opinions". Beard (2000: 101) said that "the argument entails using language for giving information about the main issues which concern the public. The linguistic content of the poster (textual elements/slogans) is skilfully designed to persuade people to promote one's candidacy". During political election campaigns, "political advertising takes the form of campaign speeches, broadcast advertising, walkabouts, online media messages, and campaign materials such as election posters, banners, flyers, and fishtails" (Fox & Menchik, 2011: 11). This indicates that respondents are proud of their languages and would appreciate receiving political messages through posters and texts in their indigenous language. As, Respondent #9 said that *"in this new dispensation and democratic society, receiving political campaign messages and posters in my indigenous language makes me feel proud and happy that at least the political organisations recognise and acknowledge my native language"*.

RECOMMENDATION

This study recommends that to preserve, develop, digitalise, and promote the use of these South African indigenous languages in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, political parties should strive to use posters that are written and presented in various South African indigenous languages on their social media accounts. The study further recommends that future inquiries could be conducted to explore other elements of political campaign posters such as the influence of the images and propaganda techniques employed by the posters.

CONCLUSION

This study sought to explore how the Fourth Industrial Revolution tools such as Twitter and Facebook are employed to publicise indigenous language posters for political election campaigns in developing countries like South Africa. The relationship between politics, language, strategic communication, and media has been in existence for years to safeguard the development and change in political campaigns in a democratic South Africa. In furthestmost instances, language is central to the dissemination of information and promotion of awareness on issues of national and international importance in most democratic and developing States. In this regard, political election campaign posters play a vital role to promote and mobilise the mass in South African societies. The campaigns are designed using linguistic features such as signs, symbols, and words that intend to convey essential messages and information to potential voters. To this end, this shows that the language of communication is vital during the political election campaigns of various political organisations to persuade potential voters of their perspectives, manifestos and policies, and the quality and integrity of their political leaders and organisations.

Furthermore, the study established that in this new dispensation of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, most political parties use social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook to disseminate their political election campaign messages or communication that intend to attract and persuade potential voters. It was further discovered that despite the call by various stakeholders to have all previously marginalised and disadvantaged languages used and promoted, South African indigenous languages are not fully used and promoted by political parties for political campaigns on their social media accounts. This calls for political organisations to rethink or reimagine the use of previously disadvantaged and marginalised South African languages as the best strategies to disseminate information, communicate with and persuade voters on various social media platforms. In a nutshell, the study found that online political campaign posters are still influential in the voters' decision which political party to vote for. Therefore, the use of these indigenous languages for political election campaigns on social media accounts could enhance the development and promotion of society.

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