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1. Introduction

European football fandom is arguably one of the most recent additions to the repertoire of popular culture in Eldoret. It is a trend that has also been witnessed in many parts of Africa. In a sense, this could be seen in the wider context of advances in satellite media technology on the continent and the increasing influence of global sport television and the commercial aspects involved. Significantly these aspects have been at the core of some of the studies on this sociocultural phenomenon and in the developing discourse; the concept of European football fandom has emerged as a cultural concept worth academic investigation. These include Grant (2002), Taylor (2014), Omotosho (2012), Komakoma (2005), Olaoluwa & Adejayan (2010), Akindes (2010), Siundu (2010), Vokes (2010), Fletcher (2011), Onyebueke (2015), Adebayo et. al. (2017), and Waliaula (2015a, 2015b, 2017b, 2017a). The studies could be considered as representative of Africa since they cover the western, eastern and southern regions of the continent.

The studies do not necessarily develop a working definition of the concept 'European football fandom' but in different ways emp-

hasize the role of global sport television in the process of constructing communities of spectators. In this chapter, I use the term in reference to all the sociocultural practices that take place as contexts and consequences of television spectatorship of European football in Eldoret and my focal point is language. I use language in reference to the various ways in which the youth respond to, interpret and adapt their fandom experience to their immediate sociocultural context. But more important, I consider the football fandom experience as a template upon which to examine the social processes that inform the youth and their language use in Eldoret. My understanding of the youth category referred to in the study is a fairly wide category that includes males between the ages of 18 to 35 but in my actual fieldwork experience I encountered and worked with some much older individuals that were part of the social processes of football fandom. I restricted my research focus on males because, among other reasons, the social identification with European football in our part of the world has mainly involved men, as has been observed by, among others, Victor Onyebueke (2015: 8–9).

I have studied the language of fandom in the context of what I consider as 'related sociocultural appropriations'. Arguably, the most visible of these are related to the accommodation of sport media technology within local socioeconomic constraints, as has been explored by, among others, Adebayo et. al. (2017), Onyebueke (2015), Omotosho (2012), Vokes (2010) and Olaoluwa & Adejayan (2010). In different ways and with different points of emphasis, the studies are connected by their perspective on the improvisation of physical spaces for shared access to sport television, which in one sense is a continuation of the concept of the local video halls. This is a leisure culture that consisted in the adaptation of the cinema experience to the local socioeconomic conditions. Local entrepreneurs constructed film consumption spaces where audiences could be charged a small fee to enjoy a local cinema experience. Significantly, new trends of popular culture developed in the process as cinema spectatorship was appropriated in the immediate sociocultural context. In East Africa, this included the translation of the films to local languages and the development of a performance culture around spectatorship. In this sense, these local video halls transcended the standard cinema spectatorship experience. Figure 1 below shows spectators watching a European football match in typical social hall at the Road Block neighbourhood to the east of Eldoret town:

In a way, these halls could be understood

Fig. 1. An audience watching European football in a viewing hall at Road Block, Eldoret

in the same light as the standard spots bars, but this will be something of a misnomer because of the unique social contexts that they are produced in and which they also help to produce.

The discourse on these social spaces of football consumption has been varied. Whereas Vokes' study of the rural western Uganda experience locates these spaces within what he terms as a continuation of the traditional African communal sense of media consumption, Adebayor et al. (2017) see these spaces as disruptive of the traditional African social order, particularly in the sense that the spaces congregate different and at times conflicting social categories. Significantly, the study identifies the social challenges that emanate from the mixing of youth and the aged in the same spaces and establishes that important cultural values of respect and etiquettes that regulate the social relations between the two social categories, are strained in these spaces. In my view, this study makes two key assumptions that this chapter engages with.

Firstly, it seems to me that the study isolates the youth category as 'socially problematic' and significantly identifies their language of fandom as the most frequent source of conflict in social interaction. This chapter examines language as one of the elements that construct the unique social interaction order of football fandom. Secondly, the study makes the assumption that the 'youth' and 'aged' as categories of social identification remain rigidly distinct and 'untouched' in the fandom identification process. In this sense, it fails to recognise the fandom space as a site for potential transformation of social identities and how language is deployed in the process. I seek to show that the meanings of some words and phrases in fandom language are context-specific and in most cases part of the process of the adaptation of European football to the immediate sociocultural context. I also seek to show how this context-specific use of language is useful in exploring patterns of idiomatic extension from English to formal Kiswahili and even further 'translations and extensions'. Ultimately, I explore how the youth use language not just for fandom identification purposes but also to negotiate their social identities.

In this sense, this chapter invokes Onyebueke (2015) and Omotosho's (2012) studies that focus on the youth category of European football fandom in Nigeria; particularly significant is Onyebueke's concept of 'urban tribes'. He defines this to be a 'social product' of "how a spectator becomes habituated to the setting, fellow spectators, the television set, and consequently, become open to television-mediated interactions and associated rituals" (2015: 14). In this chapter, I adapt Onyebueke's concept of 'urban tribes' in the immediate social contexts of the Eldoret youths and their experience of European football fandom. My use of this concept is informed by two assumptions. Firstly, in Kenya, tribe is almost synonymous with, and most effectively identified by, a specific language. But the urban spaces such as Eldoret comprise of many such languages and the most popular *lingua franca* has been Kiswahili. Nevertheless, the youth in Kenya have further modified Kiswahili in their everyday social interaction and come up with an informal variety called Sheng, closely modelled on Kiswahili in terms of grammar but which as has been discussed by Githiora (2002) innovatively as including many other languages. Significantly though, the language of football fandom is not necessarily Sheng. I argue that the football fandom social context presents the youth with a set of resources with which to develop a distinct language associated with football.

This is partly an ethnographic study but also a reflection on personal experience as a member of this fandom community in Eldoret,

having been actively involved in this fandom community from 1999 to date. Sampling was informed by lived experience of over fifteen years in Eldoret. But I should add that most of my observation spans a long period of time. I have divided the fandom experience into the live and extended spectatorship. I select five representative fandom sessions, two live sessions at three extended sessions, all at three sites; an informal market downtown in Eldoret, Shauri Yako and Kipkarren slums. The two live sessions include the play-by-play and half-time interval sessions. The extended sessions include a round before a set of weekend matches and another after. I audio-recorded the social interaction and also took mental notes on significant nonverbal aspects. The analysis of these recorded experiences is in part a personal critical reflection and also relevant aspects of discourse theory, popular culture and cultural theory.

2. Pundits, fandom and social identification

In this section, I describe some patterns of social interaction in two fandom sessions, focusing on how language is used to construct social identities in the course of verbal exchange between fans of European football both in real time and extended spectatorship. Participants in one of the sessions are market vendors and their customers that engage in a fairly well-regulated discussion on English Premier League that takes about 40 minutes – this is part of a study (2018) that I did on the market vendors' ritualised talk of European football. Figure 2 shows the vendors talking about football in one of the stalls:

They talk about the results of the matches played the previous weekend and also make

Fig. 2.
Youth talking about European football in a market stall in Eldoret, downtown

predictions about those that will be played on the coming weekend. The other session is set in a viewing space behind a pub and captures the participants' experience from the half time interval to the end of the second half of an English Premier League match between Chelsea and Aston Villa. In both cases, I focus on how language is used not only to communicate but also to accomplish other sociocultural purposes. In this study, I argue that language is used to perform social myth and identification and as a consequence, the point of focus is not on the literal meanings of what is said but their sociocultural signification. I also focus on the aesthetic beauty of some of the expressions. Let us consider the following sequences from the market vendors' talk, drawn from the conversation.

> *Sijasema huyu kocha ni mbaya, lakini yeye ako na kasumba kuwa yeye ni kocha wa timu ndogo.*
>
> 'I have not said that this coach is poor, but he has this attitude that he is a coach of a small team.'
>
> *Na hawa Leicester City watayumba tu. Ngoja wapate majeraha. Hii ligi ni ngumu, yumba mechi mbili uone.*

'This Leicester City **will wobble**. Wait until they start getting injuries. This is a tough league, lose two matches and you will see.' (My emphasis)

Leicester itabaki top 4 ama itatoka? Kwanza watatoboa na Swansea kweli?

'Will Leicester remain in the top 4 or they will fall behind? Will they even beat Swansea?'

Leicester inashindwa game ambayo wenyewe wameanza kufunga, lakini anza kuwafunga! Kama Man U wangetangulia kufunga wangeona cha mtema kuni … Leicester itapiga haka katimu kuua (…) *Arsenal watalimwa* (…) *kameungua*.

'Leicester loses a match in which they have scored first, but just dare score first against them! If Manchester United could have scored first, they **could have been severely punished** (…) Leicester will thrash that small team (…) Arsenal will be beaten. The League is red hot.' (my emphasis)

This sequence is drawn from the speech of two participants that, over time, I have noted to be very dominant. They posture as experts on European football. Within the group, they are recognised as authorities on the English Premier League and are given more time to talk. From a conversation analysis perspective, they seem to operate outside the formal structure of turn-taking. Many times, they overlap other speakers without causing any observable sense of dissension in the group. Their privileged position is not because they have any formal training or exposure to European football beyond what they watch on television with other fans. In my observation, it has more to do with personal interest in the European football and effort to gather information from the mainstream media, social media, rumour and hearsay so that they project the 'pundit identity' that in this case helps them secure good social standing. More so, it is also because they seem to be fluent and eloquent in their language use. As a result, while everyone in the group is capable of speaking about European football, they are held as the most qualified to speak.

Conscious of this privileged position in social interaction, these 'speakers' take more time to mythologise some of the spectatorship experiences. They make connections within and across football matches and make inferences out of what could just be coincidental occurrences. For instance, there are two narratives in the sequence above quoted. First, that a 'small team', such as Leicester City, cannot sustain good results for long because when the few good players get injured, they begin to lose matches. Secondly, that Leicester City could not lose a match in which they conceded the first goal. These narratives are sometimes also shared in the mainstream global sport media, which in the contemporary age of new media is easily shared across many other social channels. In my long-term observation, it has been evident that only a handful of the fans have the capacity to use language to reconstruct spectatorship experiences in ways that appeal to other fans that share similar experiences but are not able to narrate them in captivating ways. Let us consider the following sequence from half-time interval conversation outside a viewing space in Kipkarren Slums. The football match in question was between Arsenal and Norwich City:

J: *Falcao ni jina, ameisha. Hata Fabregas, mpira unaenda ukimkataa, imebaki jina tu. Unaona vile*

Mikel anacheza? Mpira umewatoka. Miaka imesonga. Wamezeeka. Mpira unawalemea.

'Falcao is a name, he is finished. Even Fabregas, he is gradually going down, only his name remains. Do you see how Mikel plays? Their football is gone. They have aged. They are overwhelmed.'

T: *Chelsea huko St. James Park hawashindangi. Inakuwanga tu Cisse kila mwaka.*

'Chelsea never wins at St. James Park. It is always Cisse every year.'

J: *Msimu uliopita tulienda, tulienda, tukienda. Ile timu ilichukua kikombe ni ile iliongoza kwa muda mfupi kabisa. Ile timu iliongoza sana ilikua namba inne.*

'Last season we went and went and went. The team that won the trophy is the one that led for the shortest time. The team that led for the longest time finished 4th.'

We could pick out a number of narrative strategies here. In the first place, the narrator goes back to the past at two levels; he talks about a match that was played the previous weekend between Chelsea and Everton and also moves further back to the previous season. By focusing on the past, he foregrounds the role of reconstruction through memory. Secondly, he means to make the point that Chelsea lost because they played poorly but frames it in two 'apologist' plotlines; the aging of key players and the Chelsea jinx at St. James Park. Thirdly, he makes reference to what we could define as 'folk-wisdom'; that the team that looks likely to win the trophy at the end of the season is not necessarily the one that does. In this session were many other narratives by other fans, but this particular narrator was dominant. It seemed to me that he had an amazing ability to use language to blend aspects of what actually happened with his own opinion in ways that made it look very persuasive. Consider this sequence:

J: *Mourinho angechuja hawa watu aweke Willian. Hata huko Everton Willian ndiye alileta shida, alikuwa juu'*

'Mourinho should have dropped these people and played Willian. Actually at Everton, Willian is the one that was causing Everton problems. He was in good form.'

T: *Halafu wanaumisha Remmy bench sana. Diego Costa sio mtu wa kutegemewa. Mara anafanya vitu vingine vinafanya ukule red card.*

'And they keep Remmy on the substitutes bench for too long. Diego Costa is not dependable. Sometimes he does things on the pitch that makes him to be red-carded.'

J: *Mimi Ivanovich ndiye amenisinya, akipewa ball mpaka arudi. Hakuna moja anaweza panda.*

'I particularly detest Ivanovich. When the ball is passed to him he must pass it backwards. He never overlaps.'

One could draw a narrative pattern of cause and effect from the sequence. He starts by making value judgement, proceeds to give evidence – part of which is exaggerated and, arguably, falsified – and finally reiterates his opinion. His view is that the coach does not field competent and/or reliable players, and

this causes Chelsea to lose matches. He also blames one player, Diego Costa, for lacking discipline on the pitch and being vulnerable to red cards. But the truth is that this player never got red carded. As a Chelsea player, he merely had a reputation of being fiery and combative on the pitch. Nevertheless, in my observation, this narrator and others like him managed to gain and hold the attention of others.

3. Localised metaphor and the carnivalesque in fandom

So far, we have argued that there are some fans that gain social prestige from posturing as experts of European football and they signify this in how they talk about it. We have similarly argued that there are fans that attract and sustain the attention of other fans on the basis of their ability to narrate the reception experiences of televised European football. It is thus also arguable that what underlies the two patterns of fandom is that there is a preferred and/or popular way of talking about European football in this part of the world. It is a sort of discourse that connects the youth, through football, to local rhythms of their language and at the same time transcends them. Apparently, it all depends on the immediate social contexts of speaking. Formally, we explore how the fans tap on and also inflect the local idiom in fandom conversations that are located in the open social space. On another level, we also examine how the fandom experience becomes a medium in which the carnivalesque speech patterns are projected, particularly in socially bounded spaces.

Firstly, we consider the purely formal aspects of – Kiswahili – language and their aesthetic appeal in the earlier quoted sequence from the market vendors' conversation. I pick out the metaphor *kuyumba* and lexical phrase *wangeona cha mtema kuni* for closer analysis. *Kuyumba* is a verb drawn from the maritime semantic field and refers a rocking ship, as for instance in a storm. It is also used in lay conversations in reference to 'swaying' or being unsteady. But it is a word that is not frequently used in ordinary conversation. *Wangeona cha mtema kuni* is a Kiswahili lexical phrase whose accurate English translation I could not find. *Kutema kuni* translates to 'splitting firewood'. *Cha mtema kuni* translates to 'that which belongs to the one that splits firewood' and is a muted reference to an axe. In ordinary conversation, the lexical phrase is used as a warning of a 'violent and painful experience'. This mode of linguistic expression not only adds colour to football fandom but, in my view, also brings to life what would be otherwise remote conversations based on an activity that takes place far away from the local context of the speakers.

This process also involves what one could term as an idiomatic extension that starts from relatively 'faithful translation' of a received concept from the European football world to local language but which is then gradually made to flow in a wider stream or related idioms and culminates into a sort of renaming and/or rephrasing. It is a gradual relexification process of sorts in which Kiswahili words and phrases are made to carry meanings drawn from the world of football in a way that is at first connected to their normal meanings but that also extends to related concepts. Let us consider the following examples drawn from long term observation:

It is significant that, unlike common perceptions of mainstream Sheng, these new

Initial Kiswahili translation	**English word/ phrase**	**Extension 1**	**Extension 2**	**Extension 3**
funga bao 'close a goal'	'score a goal'	*kufunika* 'to seal, cover'	*kutia ndani* 'to put inside'	*kutoa ndani* 'remove from inside'
kupoteza mechi or *kupigwa* (direct translations)	'to lose a match/ get beaten'	*kulazwa* 'to be made to lie down' *kuumwa* 'to be bitten', an insertion of another form of physical assault.	*kuolewa* ' to be married', particularly a woman getting married to a man	*kutiwa* ' to be sexually penetrated'
kuwa chini 'being down'	'a player that performs poorly'	*kiwete* 'cripple', *hajiwezi* 'disabled'	*maembe* 'useless' (a metaphor; *maembe* 'mangoes'	*bonoko* 'fake' (Sheng; popularized by pop song *Bonoko*)
ako juu 'he is up'	'a good player/ player in good form'	*kiboko yao* 'the cane that beats them' (metaphor related to a Kenyan politician)	*baba yao* 'their father' (metaphor drawn from local politics; a popular Kenyan politician has used this as his moniker)	*moto wa kuotea mbali* 'hot fire that warms you from a distance' (metaphor)

Table 1. Idiomatic extensions of football terminology

words and phrases are neither randomly coined and/or lifted from local Kenyan languages nor as transitory and context specific as Sheng tends to be. One can see a logical process of extension and appropriation. Secondly, unlike Sheng, that tends to be associated with youthful defiance to authority through the use of a 'secret code', this language of football fandom is not necessarily coded to conceal meanings. It is a confluence of words, phrases and images rooted in formal Kiswahili reinforced by popular culture, local pop music, and politics.

Fig. 3. A mixed group of youth and adults watching European football in a pub at Shauri Yako slums in Eldoret

Sheng is also used but not in the sense that it manifests in its ordinary application. Indeed, in my long-term experience, I have observed that the Sheng words that are used in fandom language tend to acquire some relative stability in meaning and are also used widely, even among those not categorized as youth and in mainstream media, mainly in play-by-play radio commentary.

Nevertheless, I have also noted that the language of football fandom tends to be flexible and varies in relation to social context. For instance, the relatively stable stock vocabulary and phrases are deployed by spectators of a live match in a way that corresponds with their immediate context. Furthermore, sometimes different individuals in the same fandom will prefer to use language in certain ways. Let us consider the following sequence drawn from a conversation in the earlier mentioned session in a viewing room behind a pub shown in Figure 3:

> H: *Tunaomba Chelsea* ***ikaliwe ndani*** *kwa hii game …. Lakini tunaomba Chelsea ishinde kwa Champions League ili ikutane na Real Madrid …*
>
> 'We pray that Chelsea **is beaten** in this match … but we pray that Chelsea wins – its next match – in the Champions League so that it plays against Real Madrid – at the next level …'
>
> K: *Usipeleke aibu yako huko mbele … tunataka* ***watwangwe*** *leo.*
>
> 'Do not postpone your embarrassment … we want them to **be beaten** today.'
>
> H: *Drogba alisema Stanford Bridge ni kwao,* ***hata akifunga macho atafunga bao****.*

'Drogba said Stamford Bridge is home, **he can score a goal even if he is blindfolded.'**

D: *Hiyo ni kawaida ya player, lazima uongee. Hata ndondi kila mtu huwa anajidai vile anajua, lakini mkishaingia kwa ring,* ***unaguswa,*** *utazungushwa kuzungushwa siku hiyo.*

'That is normal for players, you have to talk. Even in boxing every boxer will brag about his prowess, but once you enter the ring, you will be **hit**, you will be taken round and round that day.' (my emphasis)

This is a sequence that involves three speakers. It is at the half time interval of the match and there is a sustained conversation that is a sort of informal review of the first half. I paid attention to the contours of imagery used. Speakers H and K have been drinking alcohol. They are in their mid-thirties and the oldest in this group. Speaker D is much younger, in his early twenties. Significantly, it is the older speakers that choose to use the carnivalesque language; *Chelsea ikaliwe ndani* here is a sexualised image that projects losing a football match to being sexually penetrated, since one of the local phrases for sexual penetration is *kukaa ndani* 'getting inside/being inside'. Losing a match has also been described here as *kutwangwa*, a word popularly used in reference to 'getting hit or thrashed' but whose literal meaning is related to the activity of using the African tradition hand mill also known as mortar and pestle to grind cereals such as sorghum and millet. It connotes the 'repeated hitting to crash and make finer'. In this context, the concept invokes battering, violence and pain, which are words not socially approved in daily conversations.

I consider it significant that it is the 'least youthful' members of the group that elect to use language echoing sexuality and violence, which ordinarily is associated with the 'typical youth' social category. Indeed, in the quoted section, and my wider experience with the fandom in Eldoret, it has been evident that in situations where the youth are converged to watch and talk about European football, there are finer dynamics of sociolinguistics at play. The younger fans tend to use polite and relatively formal language while the older ones tend to draw more deeply and more freely on the carnivalesque forms. It is very common to hear such statements as *tutawafanya* 'we will do you', *tutawazalisha* 'we will impregnate you' and *tutawafira* 'we will sodomise you'. I have understood this as mere 'borrowing' of concepts without invoking all its connotations; because homosexual orientation is in this part of the world socially unacceptable.

In this sense, it is arguable that the language of football fandom is also part of a wider process of identification and that it is subject to other sociocultural forces involved in the process. The youth express their views and feelings about European football in a language that is sensitive to other factors of social identification. For instance, the market vendors use what could be described as decent language arguably because their immediate social context is more of a heterogeneous and open space that accommodates everyone. They talk about football without engaging the carnivalesque because this talk is adapted to the larger socioeconomic experience at the market. In contrast, the youth in the viewing room behind the pub are in a physically and socioculturally bounded space. They relate to each other in a relatively confidential sense, at

this point in time temporary in seclusion from open society. It is a context that does not have those members of society in whose company the youth are socially expected to use polite language; in these parts of the world, older people, women and children. But within this apparently homogenous social category are further distinctions and negotiation of social identity that are evident in how the group carries out their verbal interaction. One could argue that this interaction is complex and involves finer negotiation of social identities that use language as a medium and which I explore in the next section.

4. Contesting masculinities and the combative language of football fandom

There is a language that has developed in the context of – mainly male – communal spectatorship of European football in Eldoret. Significantly, it is constituted in the face of, but not limited to, the football match events. In my long-term observation, I have noted that one of the popular social referents is masculinity. It seems to me that communal football fandom is sometimes appropriated by male youth that use language as a medium of talking about contesting and negotiating their perceptions of masculinity. I have selected one of such sessions to not only illustrate this argument but also reinforce our developing idea that the language of the youth in Eldoret is constructed in a set of complex context-specific social realities.

The specific social experience I describe is a communal spectatorship session of football match in a local viewing hall at Kipkarren, a low-income neighbourhood in Eldoret. The viewing space is ensconced between mini shopping stores on the left side of the main road from Eldoret to Kipkarren and just a few metres away from Kipkarren main bus stop as shown in Figure 4 below:

The kiosk is run by *Oria*, a pseudonym that relates to his Somali ethnicity. It is made of timber and covered by a low and flat roof.

Fig. 4. A popular makeshift viewing hall in Kipkarren slums, Eldoret

The interior is about 15 feet by 30 feet, and it is packed from wall to wall with wooden benches. The benches are cushioned, and the walls padded in flowery colours. There is a narrow aisle dividing the room into sections. Two large television screens are set at the front,

each positioned directly in front of a section. It is a simulation of a stadium. Normally, two matches are shown simultaneously, and participants choose where to sit depending on which match they want to watch. But in real practice, they tend to switch attention from one match to the other, and significantly too, away from the matches and to their own performance. On this date, only one match was on, between Totenham Hotspurs and Chelsea. The room was about half full. Everyone seemed to be glued to the TV sets in front and I sat in an available space at the back.

Inside it was typically dark and the only light in the room came from the TV screens in front. It was also very hot inside. The entrepreneur in this space walked to me from somewhere on the left side. He shook my hand and very politely addressed me thus,

> ***Rafiki**, songa mbele kidogo, hapa utasumbuliwa na watu wakiingia na kutoka.*
>
> '**My friend**, move to a seat near the front, here you are bound to be disturbed by fans walking in and out.' (my emphasis)
>
> It was my first time here and I was struck by his polite and respectful language. I obliged and moved, in the process also asked him how much it cost one to watch a match here, upon which he replied,
>
> *Hakuna haraka, tulia kwa kiti kwanza, utalipa baadaye*
>
> 'There is no hurry, settle in your seat first, you will pay later.'

Once he considered me served, he walked away. He moved randomly from one end to another in the room and apparently seemed to know who had paid and who had not. The audience reception experience was a distinctively heightened social encounter. It seemed to me that the television screen in front was not even the focal point of attention. It was a cacophonous session that consisted in competing voices. There were the voices of the play-by-play television commentators coming through the loudspeakers. And it seemed to me too that almost everyone was talking. Most significant, the language of social interaction here was defined by self-praise, insult, mockery, and was generally carnivalesque.

On this day, it was apparent that the 'master of ceremonies' was the entrepreneur himself. He moved around, sustaining a continuous engagement with the audience. Apparently, he knew his customers by their names and addressed his comments, curses, jibes and threats directly to individuals. He constantly engaged in verbal duels. At the 65th minute of the match, there was a power black-out. This is a normal occurrence in Eldoret. But some participants ferociously cursed and swore at the proprietor. The most repeated phrase was *rudisha pesa tuende* 'refund our money so that we leave'. His response was rough, *Malaya nyinyi. Kwani mimi ni Kenya power?* 'You prostitutes. Am I Kenya Power?'. But he left the room announcing, *acha nipigie hizo mbwa za Kenya Power, nitawapiga msomo,* 'let me call those dogs at Kenya Power. I will give them a tongue-lashing.'

A few minutes later, power was back, and he rushed in, triumphantly shouting, *Mnaona? Mnaona? Sicheki na hao watu.* 'You see, you see, I do not joke with those people.' Nobody could tell whether or not power had come back because he had called Kenya Power, or even if

he had made the call in the first place. But there was general laughter.

During that lapse of time when the satellite television system was loading, there was more lively banter. Someone shouted from behind: *Oria, chunga Chelsea wasifungwe bao kama stima haijarudi. Nitakukata hio makende yako ndogo.* 'Oria, make sure Chelsea does not concede a goal during the black-out, I will castrate you.' He responded, *kwanza zitaingia mbili. Wewe, Mourinho na wachezaji wote wa Chelsea ni washerati* – 'in fact, I hope they have conceded twice. You, Mourinho and all his players are dirty adulterers.' Someone in front shouted, *Oria, tunajua mambo yako na mabibi za watu, lakini bahati nzuri hauna nguvu, wanakula pesa yako tu*. 'Oria, we know your ways with other people's wives, luckily you are too weak, they just eat your money.'

It went on this way, with the audience engaged in a host of verbal duels, curses and swearing. Even when the comments and reactions were made on the ongoing match, the language used was characteristically violent and ribald. For is instance, dribbling and goal scoring were described in sexualised undertones. Most of the time, the audience seemed to be a lot more actively engaged in their own performance than they were with the ongoing football match.

This was not just an audience reception. It was an oral performance that mainly consisted in the display of verbal art revolving around jokes. Considering that joking is a dominant element of this performance, this experience could be seen as an engagement with the tensions and anxieties of masculinity. The play of gender identities in the context of football fandom has also been explored by Chiweshe (2015), albeit in a different context. Whereas his focus is on the stadium experience, he importantly points out that football fandom pans out in the phallocentric and masculine space that has been constructed around football as a sociocultural form (2015: 2011-2012).

5. Conclusion

This chapter has drawn on a long-term ethnographic study of televised European football spectatorship in Eldoret. Focus has been on how the youth use language in the process of performing fandom identification. The chapter has brought together the youth, football fandom and language into one analytical frame and in doing so I have made the assumption that the three are bound up and expressed in wider processes of social identification. I used evidence from selected data presented in the chapter and recollection of long term personal experience, both as ethnographer and member of the social group in question, to describe the said processes. It is important to note that a study of youth and language in an urban space such as Eldoret will bring Sheng to mind, and in particular evokes Chege Githiora's (2016) view that Sheng is as an urban youth vernacular in Kenya. However, preliminary findings of my study have shown that the language used in the context of football fandom is not limited to Sheng. It is a complex, socioculturally and geographically situated variety of language that involves but is not limited to the so-called Sheng as peer language.

I have described three patterns that I consider significant in the construction and use of this language and each of them involves but also goes beyond the youth in its constitution and use. Firstly, I have observed that in Eldoret, and in specific contexts of public

interaction, talking about European football in a competent and fluent manner is perceived as mark of social prestige. As a result, the youth use language to invest in public display of knowledge in and eloquence on European football. This normally takes place in everyday spaces of social interaction and the language used here is also the everyday lingua franca, Kiswahili. Such Kiswahili is not necessarily the pure variety, also known as *Kiswahili sanifu*. It accommodates codemixing, codeswitching and other informal structures. In this case, it is the capacity for effective communication that counts and this in turn is to mark social identity. In this case the youth do not use a 'subversive language' to mark their identity but just aim at signifying their place among peers through the use of language to communicate valued knowledge on European football.

The second pattern marks the youth as part of a wider process of relexification and metaphoric extension of language. I have shown how, gradually, what was initially 'formal translation' from English to what one could describe as formal Kiswahili is subjected to further 'translations'. I have argued that this language dynamism has been facilitated in the wider processes of the production of popular culture. It is thus possible to argue that, in this scenario, the youth participate in a cultural process in which language is subjected to and continually 'reworked'. But perhaps they are more visible in this process because they tend to be at the forefront in the social stream of life.

The third pattern locates the youth and their language use in the context of gender identification. I have argued that characteristically carnivalesque trend of social interaction that is evident in local video halls such as the one described in this study foregrounds the role of language in the process of negotiating identities. The youth use language to construct and perform mock contests of power among themselves. These contests are defined by the local experience of life and may not be directly applicable even to another neighbourhood of Eldoret. In this sense, one could argue for a critical perspective when talking about the youth and language use. In some contexts, what seems to the use of language to revolt against order and authority of the formal world of social experience is actually a transitory process of confronting, making fun of and ultimately reconciling with immediate social conditions of life.

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