

## A Stylistic Analysis of Campaign Posters Student Presidential Candidates Use at Two Tertiary Institutions in Tanzania

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### Abstract

This article analyses the stylistic features of campaign posters used by student presidential candidates at two Tanzanian tertiary institutions: The University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) and the National Institute of Transport (NIT). It seeks to determine graphetic, graphological, lexical, and syntactic features that student presidential candidates employ in their campaign posters. The study collected four posters, two posters from each of the UDSM and the NIT, all of which were analysed using Crystal and Davy's (1969) stylistic approach. The Grammar of Visual Design (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006) was used to interpret the meanings of the visuals. The two posters from UDSM were collected by passing them around the university and photographing them with a digital camera during the Students' Union election season. The two posters from the National Institute of Transport (NIT) were collected from the NIT Instagram page using Microsoft Snipping Tool. Findings indicate that the graphetic and graphological features in the posters are in four styles: text modifications (e.g., italicisation, capitalisation, etc.); the position, size, gaze, and smiling in the photos of the candidates; buildings, logos, and background sights in the posters; and the shades of colour in the whole posters and the use of ticks. Lexically, the words used are emotive to entice the electorate to vote for a certain candidate. Syntactically, short phrases and sentences are used to help voters remember them easily.

### Keywords:

Electoral campaign posters, Graphetic and Graphological features, Lexical features, Student politics, Stylistic features, Syntactic features, Tertiary institutions, Tanzania

<https://dx.doi.org/10.56279/ummaj.v12i2.8>

### Introduction

Since the emergence of political posters<sup>1</sup> in the eighteenth century, many countries have used them in the electoral advertising of parties and candidates in their mainstream politics ([Holtz-Bacha & Johansson 2017](#)). Generally, a campaign poster is any printed

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<sup>1</sup> Posters and billboards are used interchangeably in the current study.



material featuring attractive visual and/or textual elements, stylistically combined to bring a candidate to the attention of potential voters and persuade them to vote for the candidate. Normally, these posters are stuck on high surfaces like walls, noticeboards, billboards, and posts, so passers-by can easily see them as they go about their day-to-day activities. However, some posters are designed as handbills.

Political posters are a preferred medium because potential voters can easily access them on the streets, and their accessibility does not require much capital compared to other campaign media such as television, newspapers, radio, and leaflets. Moreover, political posters have the advantage of being unavoidable to political opponents. In contrast, some messages presented via other media, such as TV and radio, can be avoided by turning them off (Yanker 1970). Apart from their utilisation in different countries' mainstream political campaigns ([Holtz-Bacha & Johansson 2017](#)), political posters have been useful in student politics, mainly in tertiary institutions ([Chukwu & Nwulu 2018](#)). Tanzania's tertiary institutions are no exception. The question that remains unanswered is: what resources do students vying for various positions in students' governments in tertiary institutions use in their campaign posters, and how do they combine these resources to persuade the student electorate? The current study intends to fill this gap.

It is hypothesised that posters containing both visual and verbal features are more persuasive than those containing either singly. Mostly, these posters used by student-politicians emulate practices in the general politics of their countries. The current study subscribes to Crystal and Davy's (1969) linguistic stylistic approach to demonstrate how different features have been combined to produce an enticing message compelling enough to persuade students to vote for the candidate. The study analyses the political posters used by contestants aspiring to be president in the 2023/2024 student campaign at two tertiary institutions in Tanzania. The institutions are the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) and the National Institute of Transport (NIT). The study seeks to answer the following three questions:

- i. What graphetic and graphological features do student presidential candidates use in their election campaign posters to persuade their fellow students to vote for them?
- ii. What lexical features do student presidential candidates use in election campaign posters to entice their fellow students to vote for them?

- iii. How do the student presidential candidates structure verbal texts in their election campaign posters to seek votes among their fellow students?

The significance of the current study is threefold. First, it provides insights for future researchers interested in the stylistic analysis of posters and billboards used in areas such as politics, advertising, health education, religious rallies, and environmental studies, among others. Second, the results of the current study could provide political candidates with information on the possibly important elements to include in their posters and billboards as they plan to persuade their potential electorate. Third, it can benefit potential voters in interpreting canvassing posters, as they could consider salient features, such as graphic and graphological elements, lexical and syntactic elements, when choosing candidates to vote for. This is because differences across contestants' posters and billboards may offer clues to the electorate about which candidate is better to cast a vote for.

#### **Studies on Stylistics in Electoral Campaign Posters**

Few stylistic studies on political campaign posters have focused on students' politics. Most available studies have focused on stylistics in the mainstream politics of the countries. Thus, the current study endeavours to analyse stylistics in students' political campaign posters.

One of the studies available on campaign posters in the mainstream politics of some countries is Cristobal's (2022). The study found that political campaign posters of the 13 competing candidates for councillors in the Philippines contained the following stylistic features: Graphetic features – varied colours, images, letters, and punctuations and facial expressions; syntactic features – phrasal forms; lexical features – descriptive, emotive and metaphorical words and semantic features – clear meanings to a greater extent and connotative meanings, to a lesser extent. Sharndama and Mohammed (2013) found similar features in the 2011 political campaign posters in Yola Metropolis, Adamawa, Nigeria. However, a few features were peculiar to Sharndama and Mohammed's (2013) study. They include the use of candidates' photographs, slogans, and candidates' names in bold print, all of which aim to enhance ease of reading and attention-catching among the electorate. Thus, campaign posters contain various stylistic features. Hence, the current study is necessary to study student campaign posters in tertiary institutions in Tanzania.

One of the few studies conducted in Africa on stylistic analysis of students' political campaign posters is by Chukwu and Nwulu (2018) at the Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Nigeria. Like the studies by Cristobal (2022) and Sharndama and Mohammed (2013), the study found that the intended message on the posters was communicated via short phrases and capitalisation. However, Chukwu and Nwulu (2018) indicated more features, such as the use of catchy words, abbreviations, and the use of a combination of English symbols and symbols from other languages, such as the American Dollar (\$) and the Nigerian Naira symbol (₦). Whereas Chukwu and Nwulu's (2018) study focused more on lexical and phrasal graphology, the current study analyses both textual and visual graphological features. It also details the lexical and syntactic features of posters by student presidential candidates at UDSM and NIT.

As stylistics recognises multimodal communication through the use of graphic and graphological tools (Chukwu & Nwulu 2018), some studies analysing the use of multimodality in election campaign posters across different countries are worth reviewing. Al-Azzawi and Aziz's (2021) study, for example, found that the visual devices, such as the background of the posters, colours, orthography, body language, and facial expressions, employed on the posters, for the Democratic candidate, Joe Biden, and for the Republican Donald Trump, had a similar effect of persuading the audience to vote for a certain candidate. On the other hand, the language was characterised by ellipses, repetition, positive language, and short, carefully chosen and worded phrases for greater campaigning effectiveness.

Similarly, Sharhan et al. (2023) observed the use of visual and verbal tools in Iraq and Asia, Lirola (2016) in Ireland and Europe, and Jolayemi et al. (2021) in Nigeria, Africa. Sharhan et al. found that in 2018 Iraqi parliamentary electoral posters, political entities presented themselves to potential voters primarily through names, slogans, and logos, and to a lesser extent through images, graphology, colours, and layout. In Ireland, Lirola (2016) found that politicians were visually represented in political posters in a consistently positive way, with status and formal appearance that persuaded voters to vote for the party the candidates represented, because they trusted them as political leaders. Moreover, the posters employed positive language, repetition, and concise phrases in their slogans, which were very catchy and clearly designed to persuade the audience. In Ondo State, Nigeria, Jolayemi et al. (2021) reported that

billboards featured images, colours, and verbal anchors to convey meaning to potential voters.

Based on the studies reviewed thus far, political campaign posters and billboards worldwide are evidently incomplete until they include a range of visual and verbal features, stylistically manipulated to persuade the electorate to vote for a particular side. Student political campaign posters, especially those for presidential positions at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) and the National Institute of Transport (NIT), both based in the sprawling city of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, are no exception. However, there are generally few studies that have focused on the stylistic analysis of students' election campaign posters. These studies are even scarcer in the Tanzanian context. The current study seeks to address this lacuna.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study adopted Crystal and Davy's (1969) linguistic model of analysis and the Grammar of Visual Design (GVD) approach by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) as its theoretical frameworks. Crystal and Davy's (1969) linguistic model covers three levels for describing linguistic features of a text: graphetic and graphological, lexical, and syntactic.

As regards graphetic and graphological features, they are generally used to make the visualisation of the text more attractive. This attractiveness is achieved through writing styles, such as splitting a long text into very short chunks to the point that a word can make a line (Gregoriou 2009; Nashipeta 2019). They moreover comprise italicisation, capitalisation, font size, indentation, punctuation, the use of ellipses, the use of colours, shading, and so on. Also, the use of symbols, images, and facial expressions falls under these stylistic features.

Meanwhile, lexical features involve word selection to meet the language user's intention, based on the subject matter (Crystal & Davy 1969). However, according to Chi and Hao (2013), lexical features may entail lexical deviation, which involves the formation of neologisms to convey the intended information.

For syntactic features, the study examines how words are combined to form larger units, such as phrases, clauses, and sentences. In other words, the communicator decides the style of structuring or combining words to form

units relevant to the intended information. Some communicators choose to use a single word to represent the whole meaning that could have been presented in a sentence. Some communicators may use a two-word phrase and/or a very short clause. However, it is factual that even long or short sentences are used in communicating the intention of a stylist.

The GVD is a social semiotic approach for analysing visual communication. It focuses on three metafunctions in the analysis: representational, interactive, and compositional. Representational metafunction concerns participants and their roles in visuals. Interactive metafunction concerns the relationship established among participants and viewers. It is about the attitude viewers should take towards the participants they represent. Compositional metafunction covers "the way in which the representational and interactive elements are integrated" (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 176). It analyses information value, salience and framing. While information value is about the placement of elements in different zones of an image, for example, right and left, top and bottom, etc., salience is about elements that most attract the viewer's attention, determined by placement in the foreground or background, relative size, tone, colour contrasts, differences in sharpness, and repetition of elements (Machin 2007). Framing refers to whether the elements in an image are arranged together or separated. The absence of framing stresses group identity, whereas its presence signifies individuality and differentiation (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006). Framing can be achieved through actual frame lines, white space between elements, and discontinuities in colour and shape. The more the elements in an image are connected, the more likely they are to convey the same information (Belgrimet & Rabab'ah 2021).

## **Methods**

### **Methods of Data Collection**

A total of four election campaign posters for students' union elections used in the current paper were collected from two tertiary institutions based in the Dar es Salaam region, namely the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) and the National Institute of Transport (NIT). The institutions were purposely selected because they belong to two different tertiary institution tiers. The former is a university accredited by the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU), hence, it admits most of its students for bachelor's degree programmes and above. Few students are admitted to diploma and certificate programmes. The latter is a polytechnic institute accredited by the National Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training

(NACTVET) and admits most of its students to certificate and diploma programmes, with a few pursuing higher-level programmes. Thus, it was assumed that these different levels of students could be valuable for the type of posters formulated for political campaigning on campuses.

The four posters collected were for those candidates vying for presidential posts in the 2023/2024 Student Union Elections at their institutions. The two posters from the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) were collected by circulating the university and photographing them during the Students' Union election season. A digital camera was used to photograph the posters. On the other hand, the two posters from the National Institute of Transport (NIT) were collected from the NIT Instagram page using Microsoft Snipping Tool. This way, the Instagram page was visited, and the posters for students vying for the presidency were snipped using a laptop. All these data were later analysed using different stylistic approaches, including the Grammar of Visual Design (GVD). It is worth noting that the posters posted around the UDSM environment and on the NIT Instagram page were displayed primarily for students' election campaigns and other public, fair, and ethical uses, such as the academic stylistic analysis the current study attempts to perform. Thus, using the posters in the current study has not violated any research ethics.

Whereas DARUSO recognises candidates for the presidency and vice presidency to compete independently, SONIT requires candidates for the two posts to form a team and run together. Given that the current study's focus was on presidential candidates' posters, posters for vice-presidential candidates for DARUSO are excluded. However, SONIT had both presidential and vice-presidential candidates in the same posters. Hence, I could not get posters with only the presidential candidates from SONIT.

### **Methods of Data Analysis**

Drawing from Crystal and Davy (1969), the stylistic features of the campaign posters were analysed by describing, classifying and discussing three groups of features. The first group comprised graphetic and graphological features (i.e., all visual elements, such as italicisation, capitalisation, font size, indentation, paragraphing, spacing, punctuation, ellipsis, colour, shading, symbols, images, and facial expressions).

The Grammar of Visual Design (GVD) approach by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) was also used to uncover the meanings of these visual elements. The meanings were dealt with in terms of the three

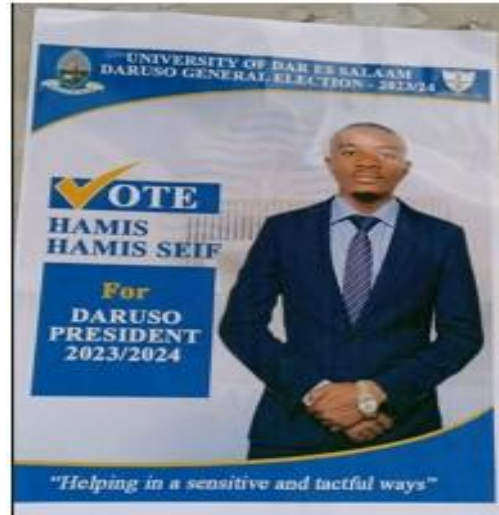
metafunctions: representational, interactive, and compositional. Representational meanings were reflected in everything identified as presented in the posters, for a purpose. These include the visual features mentioned earlier, namely graphetic and graphological features. Interactive metafunction comprises the relationships between the represented participants and the viewers. The participants of interest here are the presidential candidates, the viewers, and the meaning of gaze as seen therein. Compositional meaning analyses the information value (the placement of elements in different zones of an image, for example, right and left, top and bottom, etc., e.g., the presence of the presidential candidates at the centre of the image). Another element of composition meaning analysed is salience. It is about elements that most attract the viewer's (the electorate's) attention, determined by placement in the foreground or background (e.g., the placement of presidential candidates and some buildings), relative size (e.g., the size of texts and the other items in the posters), and colour contrasts (e.g., the use of a mixture of white and black/dark blue colours to attract attention of the electorate) (Machin 2007).

The second group of stylistic features comprised lexical features that relate to the choice of words in slogans and/or logos to achieve the intended communication (e.g., emotive vs factual words, metaphorical vs literal language). The last group was syntactic features, which concerned the way words are combined to form larger grammatical units, such as phrases, clauses, or sentences, as shown in a poster to convey the intended meaning.

## **Results**

This section starts by analysing the stylistic features in the campaign posters, specifically the images and slogans, according to Crystal and Davy's (1969) linguistic stylistic model of analysis. The stylistic features analysed are graphetic and graphological, lexical, and syntactic. Kress and van Leeuwen's Grammar of Visual Design (GVD) is used as a lens to interpret meanings of the graphetic and graphological features.

Given that some features cut across all posters, the posters are presented first, followed by the analysis and discussion. The first two posters are from the Dar es Salaam University Students' Organisation (DARUSO), and the second two are from the Students' Organisation of the National Institute of Transport (SONIT). However, as presented in the Methods of Data Collection section, the posters from DARUSO (UDSM) feature only student presidential candidates, while those from SONIT (DIT) feature both student presidential and vice-presidential candidates.



Poster 1: DARUSO Presidential Candidate      Poster 2: DARUSO Presidential Candidate



Poster 3: SONIT Presidential and VP      Poster 4: SONIT Presidential and VP Candidates

Figure 1: Four Posters Selected for Analysis

Source: Field Data (2023): Note – VP = Vice President(ial)

### **Graphetic and Graphological Features**

All four posters (Posters 1, 2, 3, and 4) feature texts designed to attract potential readers. For example, the phrase "VOTE FOR" appears in all posters. The phrase is the boldest of all writings, appears in three different colours in part or in full (white, gold, and blue) and is in capital letters. This prominence given to this phrase could be because "vote for" is the main message in these campaign posters. However, the phrase is given different features in different posters to attract attention. For instance, in Poster 1, each word of the phrase stands alone on a line, and the phrase is later followed by other words at the bottom right, which complete the sentence about who is being advertised.

In normal circumstances, one would have expected the two words of the phrase "vote for" in a single line with the name of the person being advertised. Also, in Poster 2, apart from the fact that the word "vote" has been made to occur without "for", maybe to make it shorter to read, using a tick to act like a "V" draws attention to voters as a way of asking them to tick the candidate's name while at the polls. Like Poster 1, Poster 3 uses the phrase "vote for" in two lines, below which are the names of the presidential and vice-presidential candidates and the titles they aspire to. It is noteworthy that the words 'vote through' and 'vice president' would make one sentence, but they are presented as a paragraph. The paragraph is more attention-grabbing to voters and may be more persuasive than if the words were in a single sentence.

Unlike other posters, Poster 4 contains "vote for," whose two words are on a single line, although they form a line whose continuation appears below, comprising the names and titles being vied for by the candidates. Moreover, the phrase is in capital letters, as are the words after it. Still, its font is larger and bolder, making it more noticeable than other texts and thus more authoritative in calling voters to vote for the candidates on the poster.

Moreover, most texts in all four posters (posters 1, 2, 3, and 4) use uppercase letters, though in different sizes. It can be argued that capitalisation is a deliberate prominence given to all these words to catch the attention of the readers or passers-by to stop and read the words, after which they can figure out their meanings. Also, some words are capitalised at the beginning, others are lowercase and italicised, and others are in double quotes. This is evident in the slogans in Posters 2 and 3: *"Helping in a*

*sensitive and tactful way*” and **“Effective Implementation,”** respectively. Also, some words capitalised at the beginning are in colours different from other texts/words (e.g., “For” in Poster 2). It is worth noting that capitalisation, italics, colours, and quotes make the texts salient (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006) and thus are all stylistically attention catchers (Crystal & Davy 1969; Gregoriou 2009; Nashipeta 2019).

Furthermore, the posters vary in colour shades. These colours are realisable through the photographs of the candidates and the letters of the words found on the posters. These shades of colour are attractive, making the posters catchy and easily visible from afar, where they are posted in various areas at the university (UDSM) or on the Instagram page (NIT). This way, the posters attract the attention of passersby who are potentially part of the electorate. For instance, across all posters, there is a mix of white and black/dark blue colours that attracts the reader’s eye. Thus, the voters may find it difficult to avoid reading the posters given their attractive appeal.

In addition, the candidates' photographs make direct eye contact with potential voters. Also, Posters 1 and 3 contain smiling faces from candidates for DARUSO and SONIT, respectively. The gaze and smiling faces may be associated with telling the potential voters, “welcome and vote for me confidently because I can perform better duties in the position I am vying for”. Thus, it can generally be argued that facial expressions and direct gaze in a political poster communicate an important message from the candidate to the electorate, most importantly, a request for votes. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), when a gaze is realised, the image is considered to be a demand image. Moreover, the placement of the candidates at the centre of the posters makes them the focal point of the campaign, likely to draw the electorate’s attention. This is what is referred to as information value in Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) GVD.

Moreover, there are images of other items whose presence could convey a message to voters. For instance, the presence of the institutions' logos in the student candidates’ posters could indicate the candidates’ loyalty to those institutions. The same applies to the presence of the names of the institutions on the posters written in uppercase letters, namely, UNIVERSITY OF DAR ES SALAAM and DAR ES SALAAM INSTITUTE OF TRANSPORT. Thus, seeing both the logos and names of the institutions in caps, the voters could be persuaded to understand that the institutions

recognise a candidate as having the qualities to become the president of the students' organisation.

Also, in the background of Poster 1 from the Dar es Salaam University Students' Organisation (DARUSO) and Poster 3 from the Students' Organisation of the National Institute of Transport (SONIT), buildings found at their institutions are seen. Perhaps the buildings are intended to show voters that these candidates love and care about the institutions and are, and will remain, loyal to the institutions that host their student organisations. In other words, the candidates indicate that they are contesting the positions because they love the institutions and their people, mostly their fellow students.

Furthermore, for DARUSO candidates' posters, there is even the DARUSO logo, whose placement on the right could signal that it is new and important information (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006). However, it is generally argued that when two logos are intended for the paper, the more important one should appear on the left, since readers tend to look first to the left when viewing the content. Thus, while the university, whose logo appears on the left, is considered more important, DARUSO, whose logo appears on the right, is also important. The DARUSO logo has UDSM's logo in between, which can be considered an additional point indicating that UDSM is more important than DARUSO, whose logo appears on the right.

Thus, all these facts could indicate that the candidates are ready to work for DARUSO, which was established under UDSM. But more importantly, with both logos present in their respective arrangements, the electorate is confident that the candidates are ready to work in accordance with the established rules and procedures of both the UDSM and DARUSO, especially in ensuring that students receive their rights. This way, the student electorate may gain trust and be more inclined to vote for such candidates. Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) *Grammar of Visual Design (GVD)* states that the background details, such as buildings and logos, contextualise the participants and the posters themselves. Thus, one can easily see UDSM and NIT through such details.

Also, in all posters, a tick is used before or next to a candidate's name. This would mean that the candidate is acceptable to all potential voters. Thus, whoever votes against such a candidate will basically be voting for the losing side and vice versa.

### **Lexical Features**

The words in the slogans are carefully and sensibly selected to entice the electorate to join a candidate's opinion. For instance, the three words in Poster 1, namely "**DREAM BELIEVE ACHIEVE**" as the slogan of the candidate in this poster, are emotive because they are likely to appeal to the emotions of the electorate, thereby persuading the electorate to vote for the candidate. This is because the candidate seems to promise the electorate that she has many dreams for DARUSO at the moment. Thus, she invites DARUSO members/the electorate to join her in imagining, believing, and planning to achieve those dreams. Under normal circumstances, a person who tells the electorate they have dreams for the position they are vying for is likely to attract many supporters and win the election.

In addition, Poster 2's slogan has three modifiers of the noun "way", namely *helping*, *sensitive*, and *tactful*. These modifiers are highly emotive and, as a result, likely to appeal to the electorate's emotions. Through these modifiers, the student electorate is likely to be emotionally appealed to and hence give the most votes to the candidate. The candidate who identifies as ready to help their fellow students with their problems is likely to receive support and be voted for by fellow students. Moreover, he is ready to be sensitive in such helping, in that he is ready to understand his fellow's feelings in such problems. In addition, he will not annoy or upset any fellow student in the helping scenarios while serving as president. Such a candidate is likely to be elected. These words seem to persuade the students because they will see that their problems are likely to be solved better by such a candidate.

Another word chosen that appears emotive is the adjective "effective" in the slogan "effective implementation" in Poster 3. The word appeals to the electorate to consider the way the candidate will implement everything effectively. Such consideration will be a useful tool for helping the members of the electorate decide who to vote for. Given that the posters are aimed at political campaigning, the candidate who assures the electorate that s/he will effectively implement what s/he promises is likely to get the most votes.

Moreover, the words in CHANGE FOR BETTER in Poster 4 are also emotive. This is because in politics, every contestant promises "change," so s/he is accepted. The electorate is urged to consider how improvement will enhance their university life as they decide who to vote for. In other words,

the candidate(s) implicitly recognise the current situation at SONIT, hence they expect to help SONIT and its members see a better situation.

### **Syntactic Features**

Syntactically, all slogans on the posters are in phrasal form. The phrasal forms convey the candidates' ideologies, missions, and philosophies concisely and precisely.

The slogans in the four posters are as follows.

Poster 1: **"DREAM BELIEVE ACHIEVE"**

Poster 2: *"Helping in a sensitive and tactful way."*

Poster 3: *"Effective Implementation"*

Poster 4: **CHANGE FOR BETTER**

Moreover, the posters contain an imperative sentence that starts with the verb "vote for..." and ends with a candidate's name in all four posters, for example, in Poster 4: Vote for Aristid J. Njuu-President; Steven B. Kilufi - Vice President. A similar sentence appears in all other posters, except that the names of the candidates change in reference to the particular candidate in each poster. This sentence is essentially a call to the electorate to vote for a candidate at the polling stations.

As already indicated, the slogans and the sentences on the four posters are short, concise, and precise. The nature of the slogans and the sentence can be attributed to three reasons. The first reason is that the posters are expected to be short to avoid using many words. Hence, a few catchy, striking words that convey the candidates' ideologies, along with a straightforward request for votes, should be included on the poster.

The second reason is about the target audience. Since these posters are posted in public spaces for passers-by to read quickly as they continue with their business, if the slogans and other inscriptions, such as sentences, are made longer, readers will read fewer words to continue with their busy schedules. The opposite of that is that the reader will need to stop for several minutes to read the posters, which means very few people will spend their precious time reading lengthy inscriptions. Notably, in the context of the current study, the students who are the electorate have busy study schedules, which may not allow them to linger and read longer poster texts. The third reason is the fact that short and precise texts can easily be remembered by the potential voters to whom the texts are intended.

## **Discussion**

The present study analysed the stylistic features used in campaign posters by student presidential candidates at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) and the National Institute of Transport (NIT) in the 2023-2024 student elections. It specifically sought to identify graphetic, graphological, and lexical features. Lastly, the study sought to identify the structure of the verbal texts used by student presidential candidates in their campaign posters.

Findings indicate that student presidential candidates at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) and the National Institute of Transport (NIT) in the 2023/2024 student elections used a combination of various graphetic and graphological, lexical, and syntactic features to attract potential voters. Overall, the graphetic and graphological features in the posters for student presidential candidates are in four main groups. The first group includes text-modification styles, such as chunking a phrase into multiple words that form independent lines, capitalisation, boldface, font differentiation, words in different colours, quotes, etc. The second group is styles in the candidates' photos, including positioning on the posters, photo size, and smiling and gaze. The third group concerns other available elements in the poster, such as buildings, logos, and background sights. The fourth group is on the shades of colours in the whole posters and the use of ticks.

Although texts could communicate a message to the electorate through ordinary writings, the use of various styles, such as using a two-word phrase to form more than one line whose status could be regarded as two sentences, capitalisation, boldface, large fonts, and words in different colours contributed a lot to making such texts attractive and hence attention-grabbing. This way, the potential student electorate could not avoid reading such texts, which helped them receive the intended message from the posters' creators. This is true regardless of whether they decided to vote for the creators of the posters. According to Crystal and Davy (1969), among other styles, the following styles in writing are used to achieve attractiveness: splitting a long text into very short chunks to the extent that a word can make a line (Gregoriou 2009; Nashipeta 2019), italicisation, capitalisation, the choice of font size, indentation, italicisation, quotes, the use of colours, and so on. In a similar vein, Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) *Reading Images: Grammar of Visual Design* argues that such styles are used to create salience. Similarly, Padilla and Padilla (2021) postulate that the

elements of salience, such as relative size and colour contrast, are used to attract the viewer's attention.

Nashipeta (2019) commented that the style of font differentiation, turning a few words into a simple sentence, is used in writing to give the specific text more power to persuade the audience regarding the topic being discussed. The topic under discussion in this context is persuading the student electorate to vote for their fellow student presidential candidate. Chuku and Nwulu (2018, p. 146), examining the use of language in students' political posters at the Federal University of Technology Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria, found similar instances of deviations and commented that they draw much attention of the reader to the message of the posters, which would not be the same if normal writing were utilised.

Furthermore, Agbede (2016) and Nashipeta (2019) argued that artistic modifications of texts are deliberately used to foreground texts and immediately capture the audience's attention. Similarly, in a study on manipulative language in campus politics, Herzuah (2019) found that a bold case in the student-advertiser's name is intended to make the name easier to capture from a distance.

Apart from the styles in text modifications, the size of the photos and their positioning in the poster, as well as smiling and gaze, form another group of graphetic and graphological features. The candidates' photos, placed at the centre and covering a large part of the posters, serve as the core information. This is most likely to capture the electorate's attention. This is what is referred to as information value in Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) GVD. In addition, the direct gaze and smiles of the candidates in their photos are equated with a visual you (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006), in which the participants directly address potential voters and request votes. This is akin to the finding by Al-Azzawi and Saleh (2021) that Donald Trump's facial expressions indicate that something dangerous would happen if the Americans did not vote for him. Also, in a study on *Graphic and Textual Elements of Selected Political Campaign Posters: A Stylistic Analysis*, Cristobal (2022) argued that the candidate's gaze toward viewers indicates positivity, as "they are optimistic in carrying out their responsibilities as leaders in the society." In a similar vein, Nashipeta's (2019) study indicates that the smiles on the faces of most people depicted on health billboards and posters functioned as a symbol of joy to attract the target audience to the messages. Similarly, Jolayemi et al. (2021), presenting a multimodal analysis of the

2012 Governorship Election Campaign Billboards in Ondo State, Nigeria, indicated that the candidates' friendly smiling expression functions as a kind of "visual invitation" to interact with them (the candidates). Muganda (2024) also found that the visual 'you' was used in a poster photograph to urge viewers to wear a mask to avoid contracting and/or spreading COVID-19.

Concerning the third group, which covers other elements in the poster, these include buildings, logos, and background sights. There are logos of the institutions where the student organisations, Dar es Salaam University Students' Organisation (DARUSO) and the Students' Organisation of the National Institute of Transport (SONIT) are accommodated, and names of the institutions on the posters in upper-case letters, namely UNIVERSITY OF DAR ES SALAAM and DAR ES SALAAM INSTITUTE OF TRANSPORT. Related to the logos are the buildings, trees, and sights of the two institutions' environments. Kress and van Leeuwen, in their GVD, posited that elements such as logos and buildings in posters, which are mostly found in the background, serve to contextualise the posters. Upon the presence of such elements, the poster is regarded to have high modality (the degree to which an image is real, credible, and authentic (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006). Cristobal (2022) linked the presence of elements such as logos and buildings to candidates' communication of loyalty to institutions and the creation of their identity, which is beneficial for candidates as it can attract more votes. Cristobal submitted that one of the posters in the Philippines had the Philippine flag as its background to show the candidate's deep loyalty to his country.

The fourth group combines shades of colour across the whole poster and uses ticks. Though not very closely related, they are combined because neither makes a large group on its own. In all posters, there is a mixture of white and black/green/dark blue colours that attract the reader's eyes. Hence, the voters unavoidably read the posters, which should be the poster makers' intention. Moreover, there is the use of a tick in all posters, either before or after a candidate's name. This is intended to tell all potential voters that not only is the candidate acceptable to them, but that during the election, a tick should go to the candidate, as shown in the picture. This corroborates Cristobal's (2022) finding that the use of smileys indicated that the candidate was acceptable to vote for and to serve the people. This finding is consistent with Cotoc and Mureşan's (2017) finding that a tick following a candidate's name in a political poster used in a Romanian

election suggested that the candidate met the necessary criteria for the intended position.

Generally, the lexical and syntactic features made the graphetic and graphological features clearer in one way or another. Without these verbal elements, some of these visual features would have been unclear, as they were when they were used without them. For instance, using the phrase "VOTE FOR" followed by the candidate's name and a presidential candidate's photo helped the electorate understand who was requesting their vote. The opposite could be true: suppose a poster had only the candidate's photo, just gazing at the electorate without a word, would this be clear? Maybe, yes, but not like when the two were used in complementary ways. This is similar to the postulation by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) that the meaning from visual semiotic modes is realised through text and its coherence within and outside the text (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006). Moreover, this finding corroborates Illonga and Mapunda's (2022) finding that semiotic modes may not be self-explanatory enough to inform the audiences of the intent of the structure or image without the written language.

When different types of lexical items accompany a photo of the candidate, it can be argued that the candidate in the photo is conveying these words to viewers. For instance, the three premodifiers in slogans such as "*helping, sensitive, and tactful way*" from the student presidential candidate in Poster 2 could appeal to potential voters' emotions, thereby enticing them to cast the most votes for the candidate. This finding is similar to Zhou's (2018) finding that using front modifiers is useful for influencing customers' psychology in advertisements and thus helping them accept the advertised product.

Similarly, the slogans' simple syntax means the candidates in the photos can communicate their requests and promises about the upcoming election to the potential student electorate shortly. The phrasal forms convey the candidates' ideologies, missions, and philosophies concisely and precisely. This corroborates Sharndama and Mohammed's (2013) submission that campaign slogans are mostly words or phrases that embody political ideology, philosophies, and campaign missions and motives.

The shortness of the slogans makes them more effective; they can also be read and grasped more quickly, as well as remembered easily by passers-by-cum-potential electorate. In a similar vein, Nashipeta (2019) found that

the verb phrase “own your health,” used in a billboard to emphasise that people who take ownership of their health are always looking healthy, is shortened to make it memorable and save readers’ time.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, as this stylistic analysis demonstrates, student politicians vying for the presidential post at two selected tertiary institutions in Tanzania used various stylistic features in their campaign posters. Graphically and graphologically, the posters are attractive through different shades of colour, font sizes, italics, capitalisation, and bold type. Moreover, photographs of the student presidential candidates are attractive and attention-grabbing to the potential student electorate. Lexically, various emotive words have been utilised in the posters to motivate and entice the electorate to support the candidates and vote for them. Syntactically, all slogans are composed of phrases to make it easy for the student electorate to read them quickly before continuing with their busy study schedules. However, the words that directly ask voters to cast their votes are in the imperative mood. Based on the analysis and findings, the visual elements are clearer when used complementarily with lexical and syntactic features.

Nevertheless, this study may have been limited by its reliance on the posters' possible influence rather than on the electorate's attitudes and perceptions toward them. This is because determining whether the stylistic features used in the posters were sufficient to persuade voters to cast enough votes for a candidate may require an interview with the (potential) voters. Thus, a separate study can be conducted to include interviews with potential voters about whether they saw the posters, how useful the posters were in deciding whom to vote for, and so forth.

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