When two Horses Become *Minji na Ndengũ* (Peas and Green Grams): A Cognitive Integration Analysis of Blended Idioms of Political Campaign in Kenyan Newspapers

George Ouma Ogal*, Moses Gatambuki Gathigia, Joseph Nyehita Maitaria

Department of Languages, Karatina University, Kenya, P.O. Box 8-10300, Kerugoya, Kenya

Corresponding Author: George Ouma Ogal, E-mail: ogalgeorge1@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Political campaigns are emotive activities that rely on language to attract the attention of the public. In fact, electioneering periods in Kenya are heavily laced with idiomatic expressions such that one would be required to use the interrelatedness between language and cognition to understand the utterances of a speaker. It is against this backdrop that the present study analyzes the cognitive processes of the idiom *minji na ndengũ* (peas and green grams) vis-à-vis the canonized form. The idiom *minji na ndengũ* (peas and green grams) drew a lot of attention during the Kenyan official electioneering period (May and October, 2017) and was extensively used in both the print and social media platforms. The study is anchored in three objectives: to categorize the idiom *minji na ndengũ* (peas and green grams) in terms of compositionality; to establish the vital relation between the blended idiom and the canonical form; and to interpret the blend using the Conceptual Integration Theory. The study employed the descriptive research design. The study purposively sampled the blended idiom *minji na ndengũ* (peas and green grams) which is a blended form of the idiom *two horse race*. Using content analysis, the study classifies and presents a diagrammatic conceptual interpretation of new knowledge based on metaphorical mappings to illustrate the emergent structure. A general finding of this study is that political campaigns create new meanings using deliberately blended idioms of war to improve figurative competencies. Further, one needs to immerse themselves in pragmatic inference in order to reveal the meaning of a blended idiomatic expression. The findings of this study imply that whenever the provisions of grammar prove deficient in unpacking certain messages, cognitive linguists, idiom theorists and researchers should apply the postulates of Cognitive Linguistics. The study concludes that blended idioms of political campaigns achieve creativity and novelty. Further, the comprehension of blended expressions requires the understanding of pragmatic inferences of the local context. The study recommends that for a better understanding of blended idiomatic expressions, one should consider the local contexts expressed in language.

INTRODUCTION

The creative use of language requires speakers of any language to apply semantic processes that appeal to the audience. In such instances, the speaker may break away from the fundamental branches of linguistics in order to create special meanings within the context of the speech. Lupyan and Clark (2015) indicate that when a speaker appeals to the audience through contextual information, a perceptual apparatus is required to understand the nexus between language and cognition. This is the essence of Cognitive Linguistics. Cognitive Linguistics helps the mind to retrieve mental processes and images necessary for interpretation of information. According to Coulson and Oakley (2005), there are certain linguistic expressions that require cognition for proper understanding. Cognitive Linguistics is, therefore, important in studying abstract imagery such as metaphor, analogy, metonymy and counterfactual reasoning which cannot be interpreted using formal branches of linguistics.

It is important to note that the nexus between the mind and socio-cultural setting falls within Cognitive Linguistics which is used to make sense of experiences in contexts where provisions of grammar may be inadequate. In an attempt to explain how people interpret contextual information, Evans (2012) observes that the mind engages in imaginative thought processes that produce well-ordered relationships. It is also noteworthy to mention that the interaction between the human brain and the environment yields novel expressions that require sensory experience and contextual backdrop for decoding. This means that the relationship between language and cognition is highly important in making contextual inferences in speech. Writing on the nature of idiomatic expressions in speech, Sauciuc (2009) argues that idioms have fixed forms and an attempt to modify them is motivated by intentional reasons. Such inten-

tional modifications and communication require cognition to decode.

From an etymological standpoint, the word "idiom" derives its meaning from the Greek word "idioma" which denotes a peculiar phraseology used to identify a speech community. This is the idea echoed by Džanić (2007) who adds that idiomatic expressions have universally accepted forms and meanings. Therefore, any attempt to restructure the canonical forms for special meaning results in a blend which requires conceptual analyses in order to establish the relationship between original meaning and the intentional one. In an investigation of creative use of language during political campaigns, Kreiss (2016) argues that politicians seize the moment by attracting the audience's attention through imaginative speech which requires perceptual tools for local understanding. In order to understand the world around us, the creative use of idiomatic expressions has to be interpreted using a cognitive framework. Džanić (2013) reveals that an attempt to use idiomatic expressions in a creative and imaginative way results in appealing communication that draws a large audience to one's speech.

Idioms, the subject of the present study, have been used for long to make communication more colourful and conjure interesting images in the listeners' or readers' minds. In a study investigating the role of idiomatic expressions in everyday speech, Kazemi, Araghi and Bahramy (2013) argue that the use of idioms achieves metaphoric reference which promotes creativity of language. It is important to point out that idiomatic expressions take listeners above literal meaning by preparing them to appreciate expressions that have been creatively crafted. Speakers who have mastered a particular language use idiomatic expressions to mark inclusion into that community. Although these are functions performed by the canonized idioms, Sauciuc (2009) advises that scholarly attention should be directed at the language phenomenon which gives writers and speakers the license to flout canonized idiomatic forms with the objective of creating special meaning. Sauciuc's (2009) opinion is buttressed by Cacciari and Tabossi (2014) who opine that figurative competencies in everyday language are achieved through the use of modified idiomatic expressions. Cacciari and Tabossi (2014) add that people resort to modified idiom use in order to create novel meanings through indirect references that ordinary language cannot express.

Modified idiomatic expressions are used by speakers in order to create a peculiar identity among their audience. Kreiss (2016) argues that the language used for political purposes is heavily punctuated with blended forms which seek to present multidimensional messages. In light of the present study, idiom blending forms a fertile area to probe as it operates within the domain of Cognitive Linguistics which evokes our conceptual system and domains of experience to make sense of the world around us. Nyairo and Ogude (2005) analyze the use of modified idioms in political campaigns in Kenya and observe that when politicians address their aides, supporters and reporters, they apply modified idiomatic expressions that can only be decoded by the natives. This argument resonates with the opinion of Cacciari and

Tabossi (2014) who contend that when canonized forms are modified for special purposes, listeners or readers need to interpret the utterances against geographical, political, social and economic backdrop. Similarly, Kok and Bublitz (2011) argue that the use of blended idiomatic expressions in political language does not only create varied semantic patterns but also leaves the audience entertained as they seek to unwrap the meaning against a cultural backdrop.

In a study investigating the use of idiomatic expressions in political speeches, Ain and Abdul-Aziz (2014) observe that politicians modify idiomatic expressions to liven up texts and prompt the audience to think beyond the speech. The expansion of the frame of reference is achieved when idiomatic expressions are used in speech to beautify language. It is necessary to emphasize that when speakers or writers resort to modified or blended idioms, there is a greater degree of sentence charm in the communication. This argument mirrors the opinion of Gurney (2014) who mentions that politicians may deliberately use metaphors and idiomatic expressions in a manner that flouts the canonical forms so that they create a dynamic visual appeal. Central to the use of idioms in political speech is the intention to create humor. Ponder and Haridakis (2015) state that entertainment through idioms allows the speakers to establish a strong bond with the audience. Every speaker or writer seeks to use language as a tool for establishing a unique personal brand. This makes the speakers use language in an impressive way that leaves a lasting appeal. It is against this background that the present study analyzes the cognitive processes of the idiom *minji na ndengũ* (peas and green grams) vis-à-vis the canonized form as used in the Kenyan socio-cultural milieu.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was guided by the Conceptual Integration Theory (CIT) which was proposed by Fauconnier and Turner (2002) and later developed by Coulson and Oakley (2005). This theory provides a model for thinking, creating and comprehending the world around us. According to Fauconnier and Turner (2002), the CIT is also referred to as the Blending Theory (BT) since it uses the mind to establish connections "between our understanding of language and the way we comprehend human thought and activity in general" (p.8). That is, the CIT investigates the human ability to produce, transfer and processes meaning in various communication contexts. The CIT constructs mental spaces used to unpack the meaning of both linguistic and non-linguistic phenomena (Coulson & Oakley, 2005). These mental spaces operate through integrated cognitive domains connected through the Conceptual Integration Networks (CIN).

The network of conceptual integration consists of four spaces: *two input spaces*, *the blended space* and *the emergent structure*. The interconnectedness of the mental spaces allows for the retrieval of information from the mind; hence, giving rise to novel meanings (Džanić, 2007). In trying to comprehend the meaning of a modified or blended expression, the CIT proposes three basic processes: *composition, completion* and *elaboration*. Elaboration of the meaning of a blended or modified expression requires tenets such as

When two Horses Become Minji na Ndengũ (Peas and Green Grams): A Cognitive Integration Analysis of Blended Idioms of Political Campaign in Kenyan Newspapers

23

blending networks, blending processes, optimality principles and vital relations. These tenets form a connective thread which provides an insight into our mind to provide local understanding (Coulson & Oakley, 2005). Evans (2012) argues that an understanding of the modified expressions using the CIT requires a link between the original and the modified or blended expression. This link is referred to as a vital relation. Džanić (2007) posits that there are fifteen (15) vital relations*: identity, change, space, time, uniqueness, cause-effect, representation, part-whole, analogy, similarity, dysanalogy, category, property, role* and *intentionality*. In a diagrammatic representation of the CIT, vital relations are indicated using solid lines that connect the input spaces. Dotted lines are used to indicate the connections between the inputs and the generic and blended spaces (Coulson & Oakley, 2005). The four spaces are as diagrammatically presented below by Fauconnier and Turner (2002):

The analysis of a blending occurrence goes through certain stages. First, the hypothetical blend is introduced. The second step involves description of the conceptual structure in the spaces. This is a crucial step because it involves the establishment of the mappings between the elements in the input spaces. According to Coulson and Oakley (2005), the next step involves description of the blended space based on the information that is derived from the two input spaces. It is at this point that the description of the structure which sustains reasoning emerges based on contextual accommodation in which one domain is applied to different domains (Omazic, 2008). After this description, there is completion which occurs when information in the long term memory is matched with the blend, a process which spreads activation of semantic networks. Lastly, Fauconnier and Turner (2002) explain that "elaboration involves preserving the links in the input spaces so that connections can pop out automatically to yield novel comprehension" (p. 44).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive research design. In a study exploring various methods in linguistics, Hashemi and Babaii (2013) argue that a descriptive research design involves observation and description of a research phenomenon without influencing it in any way. Guest (2013), too, argues that a descriptive research design collects and describes trends that emerge during analysis of data. According to Creswell (2007), a descriptive research design uses visual aids such as charts and graphs to summarize emerging patterns. The study purposively sampled the blended idiom *minji na ndengũ* (peas and green grams) which is a blended form of the idiom *two horse race*. The idiom was purposively sampled from the *Daily Nation* newspaper dated 11th June, 2017 due to a number of reasons. First, the idiom drew a lot of attention during the Kenyan electioneering period between May and October, 2017. During this period, *minji na ndengũ* (peas and green grams) was accepted as a catchphrase and extensively used in both the print and social media platforms. For instance, Kibisu (2017), reporting for *The Star* newspaper, observes that 'minji' ('peas') is a Gĩkũyũ slang or catchphrase that is currently equated with a light skinned woman

whose physical appeal is irresistible. To further illustrate the popularity of this blended phrase during the electioneering period, Chweya (2018) observes that the expression *minji* (peas) and *ndengũ* (green grams) is a fashionable coinage that is immensely used by people of all ages in political discourses. The popularity of this expression can be justified by the fact that at least 11,670 people, including the Kenyan President, acknowledged and expressed their views on the expression. The idiomatic expression became so popular in 2017 that Wa Kiambo (2017) devoted his effort to the composition of a song whose only theme is *minji* (peas).

This study also chose the blended idiom *minji na ndengũ* (peas and green grams) because of its referents. Whereas *minji* (peas) refers to Honorable Anne Waiguru, *ndengũ* (green grams) refers to Martha Karua. These are two prominent politicians who have left an indelible mark on the political landscape of Kirinyaga County and Kenya. Martha Karua is an experienced politician whose career dates to 1990 when she collaborated with a team of politicians to agitate for the reintroduction of multiparty democracy. In a study investigating the participation of female politicians in Kenya, Were (2017) mentions that Martha Karua is a rare politician whose participation in political parties, corridors of justice and constitutional affairs has made her an aggressive phenomenal woman. In fact, the manner in which she has diligently handled political matters has earned her the title 'iron lady'. This makes her a figure to reckon with. Anne Waiguru is the former Cabinet Secretary for Devolution and Planning. The 2017 gubernatorial seat in Kirinyaga was, therefore, a hotly contested election characterized by the face-off between two prominent ladies. The language of campaign used in this hotly contested election drew much attention from supporters and it was, therefore, necessary to investigate the meaning of such coinages using cognitive lenses.

Having sampled the blended idiom, the three researchers of this study employed a fourth person to form a team of four annotators. The fourth annotator, just like the researchers, had a background in Cognitive Linguistics. The four annotators discussed the idiom to establish the type of blend and compositionality of the idiom *minji na ndengũ* (peas and green grams) battle. According to Cameron (2003), the inter-coder reliability rate is only considered to be acceptable if it is 75% or more, this implied that three annotators out of four in this study had to come to an agreement. Thus, since there were four annotators, each annotator had to allocate 25% or 0.25 points for there to be a unanimous agreement on metaphoricity (see Table 1). Using the tenets of the Conceptual Integration Theory (CIT), the researchers then made a diagrammatic representation of the blended idiom *minji na ndengũ* (peas and green grams).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study found that the blended idiom *minji na ndengũ* (peas and green grams) is a normally decomposable expression because it is directly linked to the literal meaning. From a semantic standpoint, Penttilä (2010) observes that when investigating the meaning of blended idioms, it is important to explore how the phrases derive meaning from their

Table 1. Inter-Rate Reliability Measures of the Idiom *Minji na Ndengũ* (Peas and Green Grams)

Idiom	Blended Form	Type of Blend	Compositionality based on Opacity	Semantic-based compositionality	Reliability Measures				
					Coder 1	Coder 2	Coder 3	Coder 4	Total
Two horse race	*Minji na ndengũ* battle	Substitution	Transparent	Normally Decomposable	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	1.00

Table 2. Input Spaces Mapping for *Minji na Ndengũ* (Peas and Green Grams) Battle

Input Space 1: Horse	Mapping	Input Space2: *Minji* (Peas)	*Ndengũ* (Green Grams)
Animal	→	Plant	Plant
Social animal	→	Social meal	Social meal
Beautiful (fine sleek hair)	→	Has physical appeal	Dry, rough, no physical appeal
Swift to destination	→	Cooks fast	Stubborn
Hardy	→	Tender and succulent	Tough/hardy
Energetic and athletic	→	Short-lived energy	Long lasting energy
People oriented	→	Used by many	Less users
Variety of sports	→	Many edible forms	Limited forms
Controlled temper	→	Calm and controlled	Agitated/goes bad easily

constituent elements. This study also found out that the idiom *minji na ndengũ* (peas and green grams) is a transparent expression because there exists a connection between the constituents and the meaning. According to Kovács (2016), a transparent idiom involves the mapping of literal word meaning onto the idiom meaning. In other words, the words used in the idiomatic expressions are not metaphorical in nature. The relationship between the blended and canonical idiom is as tabulated below:

As earlier noted, the idiom *minji na ndengũ* (peas and green grams) was collected from the *Daily Nation* newspaper dated 11th June, 2017. It featured as a war idiom in the tussle between Martha Karũa and Anne Waigũrũ in the Kirinyaga Gubernatorial race. The idiom has substituted 'two horses' with *minji na ndengũ* (peas and green grams). The background of this instantiation is Central Kenya where *minji* (peas) and *ndengũ* (green grams) are two essential cereal crops used for making stew. Although a horse in the canonical idiom is an animal, the two plants *minji na ndengũ* (peas and green grams) have to derive their meaning based on contextual usage. The discussion schedule established that horses, peas and green grams are living things which use energy, die at some point, have cells, and all require nutrition. This idea is echoed by Soetan, Olaiya and Oyewole (2010) who mention that there are several features that are shared by plants and animals. Therefore, the discussion schedule established that the vital relation between *two horses* and *minji na ndengũ* is that of similarity.

Horses are social animals that interact freely to form a recognizably distinct community (Søndergaard, Jensen & Nicol, 2011). In the same manner, *minji* (peas) and *ndengũ* (green grams) are considered to be social meals that are used during occasions such as graduation ceremonies, weddings, parties, funerals and other related functions. In Central Kenya where the idiom is widely used, it is noted that many
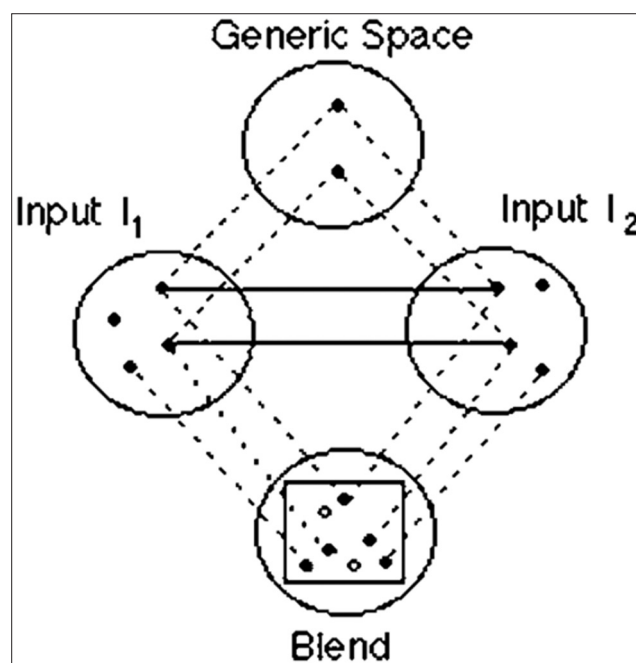

Figure 1. Input Spaces

people highly regard light meals which involve *minji* (peas) and *ndengũ* (green grams). Turning to horses, one striking feature that makes their beauty stand out is their fine sleek hair. By way of contrast, *minji* (peas) is appreciated by many consumers as a cereal with an attractive physical appeal owing to its succulent nature. A horse is one of the fastest animals used by riders to reach their destinations. *Minji* (peas) as a cereal cooks faster than *ndengũ* (green grams) which is oftentimes termed "stubborn" because however much one tries to cook it, some grains will always remain uncooked. *Ndengũ* (green grams) is considered by many to be a rather dry and rough cereal devoid of physical appeal.
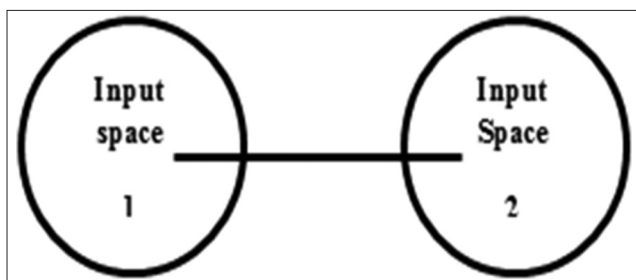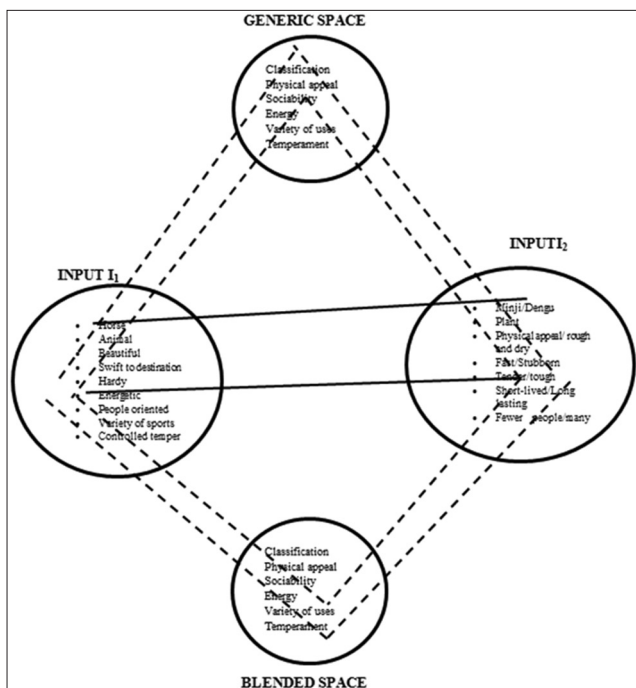
Figure 2. Vital Relations

Figure 3. Cross Space Mapping of the *Idiom Minji na Ndengũ* (Peas and Green Gram**s)**

Table 3. Generic-Blended Space Mapping for *Minji na Ndengũ* (Peas and Green Grams) Battle

Generic Space	Mapping	Blended Space
Classification	⟶	Classification
Physical appeal	⟶	Physical appeal
Sociability	⟶	Sociability
Energy	⟶	Energy
Variety of uses	⟶	Variety of uses
Temperament	⟶	Temperament

In a study investigating the adaptation of the horses, Heleski and Murtazashvili (2010) observe that horses are "hardy animals and do not often suffer long-term consequences from lack of shelter" (p. 282). *Minji* (peas) is a tender grain while *ndengũ* (green grams) is tougher to cook than peas. Horses use a lot of energy in running long races. It is apparent that *minji* (peas) provides short-lived energy while *ndengũ* (green grams) vitalizes individuals for a longer period of time. The study also noted that a horse is a people-oriented animal. Considering the experience of the two aspirants, it is

evident that *ndengũ* (green grams) has been being used for a longer period of time. *Ndengũ* (green grams), therefore, was noted to be of greater experience than *minji* (peas).

A horse performs various sporting activities such as racing, jumping, dressage and trailing (Heleski & Murtazashvili, 2010). Against this backdrop, *minji* (peas) is presented in several forms including garnishing in *mũkimo* (a Kikuyu staple food comprising green maize, mashed potatoes, green peas and pumpkin leaves). However, *ndengũ* (green grams) was noted to be limited in form since it is majorly used as stew and served with other meals.

Finally, a horse was observed to be a calm animal which exercises restraint. These give it a controlled temperament. *Ndengũ* (green grams) as a meal is often associated with "short temper" because it goes bad quickly (kũganda) while *minji* (peas) is a dependable meal that does not go bad easily. The mapping of the features of horses on peas and green grams yields Input space 1 (I_1) and Input Space 2 (I_2). The correspondences between the two input spaces help one understand one domain in terms of another domain. In this case, a horse is conceptualized in terms of *minji na ndengũ* (peas and green grams). According to Harrell (2007), vital relations allow one to conceptualize a domain in terms of source and target. In the case of *minji na ndengũ*, the horse is the target domain that is conceptualized in terms of the source domains (peas and green grams). A diagrammatic representation of the source and target domain is as represented in the figure below:

The information described above can be tabulated according to the mental spaces as shown below:

From the two input spaces, the analysis proceeds to the third space called the generic space. It is in this space where the information from the two input spaces is projected. According to Coulson and Oakley (2005), the generic space highlights what the source domain and target domains have in common. Horses and peas are classified as animals and plants respectively. Further, both plants and animals possess energy. In addition, plants and animals can be widely appreciated in terms of their physical appeal or beauty. The study also noted that sociability is another parameter that can be used to describe horses and peas. Finally, in the generic space, it was noted that variety is a distinguishing feature for horses and peas.

In the fourth space (blended space), the information projected from the generic space is matched with new meaning which is called the emergent structure. In this process, contextual accommodation and the three blending processes (composition, completion and elaboration) are considered in order to arrive at the meaning of the blended idiom. The meaning of *minji na ndengũ* (peas and green grams) battle, therefore, comes out as a tussle between *a tender, yummy, gorgeous, youthful and calm lady* versus *a rough, tough, fair weather and temperamental lady*. The generic-blended space mappings are as presented in the Table 3 below:

Emergent Structure *Minji na Ndengũ* (Peas and Green Grams) "refers to a contest between a *tender, yummy, gorgeous, youthful and calm lady* versus *a rough, tough, fair weather and temperamental lady*.

The three blending processes (composition, completion and elaboration) have been considered in the above idiom. For instance, through composition, the attributes of the two cereals *minji na ndengŭ* (peas and green grams) and horses have been projected. Completion has been used to introduce the frames of cereals (plants), horses (animals) and human beings in the context. The meaning of the idiom, therefore, comes out in the sense that the qualities of the cereals described in the spaces reflect the character traits of the two aspirants. This process is referred to as elaboration and it forms real world pictures in the brain. Figure 3 above shows the mapping of the blended idiom *minji na ndengŭ* (peas and green grams).

CONCLUSIONS

This study set out to provide a Cognitive Integration Analysis of the blended idiom *minji na ndengŭ* (peas and green grams) against the backdrop of election campaigns in Kenya. The study was guided by three objectives: to categorize the idiom *minji na ndengŭ* (peas and green grams) in terms of compositionality; to establish the vital relation between the blended idiom and the canonical form; and to interpret the blend using the Conceptual Integration Theory. The study has established that the idiom *minji na ndengŭ* (peas and green grams) is a normally decomposable expression because it is directly linked to the literal meaning. The vital relation of similarity has been used in the blending of the idiom *minji na ndengŭ* (peas and green grams). The Conceptual Integration Theory aided in the comprehension of the blended idiom by establishing mappings in the mental spaces. The meaning of the idiom which might have eluded the listeners during political campaigns was, therefore, revealed through this study. Second, the study argues that certain canonical forms of the idiom *minji na ndengŭ* (peas and green grams) form the frames of thought and assist in the structuring of mental spaces that lead to novel meanings or interpretations. It is important to observe that the analysis in this study has heavily relied on context of situation, pragmatic inferences, grammatical modification and the cognitive domains. This study, therefore, concludes that a general feature of human nature is to create new meanings using blending which leads to figurative competencies. In addition, the inadequacies of grammar rob a reader of the ability to appreciate blended information. The study, therefore, recommends that the meaning of modified idiomatic expressions should be explained using the postulates of Cognitive Linguistics.

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