

## Abstract

Kenya's elections have been marred with conflict since 1992, with Tarakwa being hit the most. However, in 2013, conflict was contained. While conflict management in 2013 was attributed to many factors, the role of language is tacit. The present study illuminated the relationship between language, conflict management and Kenya's 2013 presidential elections. The aim of the study was to analyze the lexico-pragmatic interpretation of conflict management in 2013 Kenyan presidential campaign speeches in Tarakwa, Uasin Gishu. The objectives of the study were to interpret lexical choices on conflict management in the 2013 Kenyan presidential campaign speeches; to establish the relevance of speech acts in the 2013 Kenyan presidential campaign speeches in conflict management; to examine the attitudes expressed towards the utterances of the 2013 Kenyan presidential campaign speeches in conflict management and to investigate the interpretation of specific stylistic effects of the 2013 Kenyan presidential campaign speeches in conflict management. The study employed relevance theory by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson (1995) and speech act theory by John Austin (1969). Cognitive and communicative principles and speech act categories respectively were employed. Analytical research design was employed. The study area was Tarakwa. The study population were 8 presidential candidates of 2013, 150 campaign speeches and 37,683 residents of Tarakwa. 4 presidential candidates namely Uhuru Kenyatta, Raila Odinga, Musalia Mudavadi and Martha Karua; 12 campaign speeches and Tarakwa were purposively sampled. Data was collected through online extraction of presidential campaign speeches and focus group discussion. A pilot study was conducted in Kapkures, Nakuru. For validity, the researcher ensured the research tools contained all information that would answer the research questions. Data was analyzed qualitatively and presented according to the themes of lexical choices, speech acts, attitudes and stylistic effects. The findings revealed that narrowing of the concepts peace and unity denoted desisting from incitement, accepting election results and encompassing inclusive politics. Broadening denoted love, development, family hood and forgiveness. Through speech acts, presidential candidates warned people to desist from conflict, sought forgiveness, declared to accept election results and promised to seek court redress. Utterances that condemned tribalism and incitement were endorsed with approving attitudes. Dissociative attitudes of criticism and skepticism indicated ulterior motives for conflict management. Stylistic effects portrayed conflict management through accepting election results, defeat and rejecting insolence among candidates. In conclusion, the lexical choices peace and unity

were basic in conflict management and presidential candidates needed to exhibit them. Speech acts influenced people to promote conflict management. Attitudes were discernible through candidates' varying commitments to conflict management. Stylistic effects portraying dissociation with conflict, emphasized accepting defeat as a conflict management initiative. The study recommended use of lexical choices that promote conflict management in elections, employment of speech acts that prioritize the country's peaceful existence during and after elections, shaping the attitudes of the electorates through downplaying incitement to violence and tribalism, and use of stylistic effects that discourage political altercations among presidential candidates. The study addresses the root causes of election-related conflict through language to achieve national integration.