

Abstract

Political campaigns employ war metaphors that bring forth the resemblance between the rigours of war and the struggle to occupy electoral offices. In this regard, the political candidates are soldiers, the constituents are the battle grounds, campaigns are war strategies and victory or loss in an election is victory or defeat in war. While most linguistic studies focus on use of war metaphors as strategies for winning elections, this paper examines how such metaphors have been employed in conflict management in election. The aim of the paper was therefore, to analyze war metaphors employed in conflict management in the 2013 Kenyan presidential campaign speeches. The objective of the paper was to establish if the war metaphors used in the 2013 Kenyan presidential campaign speeches to urge people to avert violence were relevant to the people of Tarakwa, Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. To achieve this, four presidential campaign speeches from sampled presidential campaign candidates namely Uhuru Kenyatta, Raila Odinga, Musalia Mudavadi and Martha Karua between 1st September, 2012 and 2nd March, 2013 were presented to four focus group discussions, conducted in Chagaiya, Kipkurere, Tarakwa and Languise within Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. The focus group discussion participants commented on the relevance of the war metaphors in conflict management. Data was analyzed within the precincts of relevance theory propounded by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson (1995). This paper established that presidential candidates employed conceptual metaphors which drew a resemblance relationship between war and elections such as CONSTITUENTS ARE BATTLE FRONTS, CHILDREN ARE SOLDIERS and CONCEDING DEFEAT IS TO ACCEPT ELECTION RESULTS to not only dissociate with violence, but to also urge the electorates to avert violence during elections. In addition, though these metaphors were relevant in conflict management, the electorate were skeptical on the motives of the presidential candidates' use of the metaphors. Despite these, the metaphors were important in shaping voters' understanding of conflict management through dissociation with war.