

Abstract

Words have power to control human thoughts and behaviour. In a country like Kenya which has experienced election-related conflict since 1992, with the exception of 2013, various lexical choices, especially by the political class, have had varying implications to the electorate. The paper analyzed the lexico-pragmatic processes of interpreting the term peace employed in the 2013 presidential campaign speeches. The objective of the study was to establish the relevance of the concept peace employed in conflict management in the 2013 Kenyan presidential campaign speeches to the residents of Tarakwa in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. Four presidential campaign speeches of 2013 with the content of peace were purposively sampled and reviewed by focus group discussion participants. Using analytical research design, data was interpreted qualitatively within the precincts of Dan Sperber and Dierdre Wilson (1995) relevance theory. The results reveal that the concept peace was narrowed to denote the need to desist from violence during the 2013 elections. At the same time, the concept peace was broadened and equated to love, unity, individual development and freedom. Looked at this way, the participants had expectations that the 2013 elections would be peaceful. However, they also abandoned these expectations because peace also denoted campaigning for oneself, celebrating victory in advance and making peace dependent on a candidate's victory. Thus, the concept peace employed in the presidential campaign speeches in regard to conflict management was relevant in some ways and irrelevant in others.