

ABSTRACT

The media is a useful tool that can aid in shaping public discourse and in influencing public attitude towards some beliefs and practices. As part of the print media, newspapers play an important role of disseminating information to the public. Though the media has often been regarded as a channel of fuelling tensions during electioneering, it can potentially be used to promote peace. Since peace has been compromised in Kenya periodically at election times and given the unprecedented Post-Election Violence of 2007/2008, there was need to create awareness on the need for peace. As part of the initiative to build peace, numerous peace messages were reported in the print media and broadcast in the electronic media prior to the 2013 General Elections in Kenya. It is therefore necessary to illustrate how the editors' linguistic choices enabled them to interpret the social and political context and convey the peace messages. This would enable the reader to appreciate the role of these strategies in demonstrating the need for peace in Kenya during elections thereby enhancing the acceptability and relevance of the messages. The study therefore sought to investigate the linguistic resources employed by the editors of the *Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers to package the peace messages in the editorials before, during and after the 2013 General Elections in Kenya. The specific objectives of the study were to: describe the lexical, pragmatic and grammatical choices used in the editorials to construct the peace messages, determine the linguistic strategies of portraying power relations in the peace messages and evaluate the ideologies constructed through language in the peace messages. The study used Fairclough's (1989) model of Critical Discourse Analysis which considers discourse as a form of social practice. The study adopted a descriptive research design and the study population consisted of ninety editorials that contained messages of peace purposively sampled from the editorials published from 1st November, 2012 to 31st March, 2013. From these, a sample size of twenty six editorials was analysed. The data was presented in form of prose as extracts from the editorials. Data was analysed qualitatively and findings presented in form of inferences. The findings showed that the editors presented the campaigns for peace by drawing from lexical, pragmatic and grammatical choices that extolled the virtue of peace and condemned violence. The power relations were mainly portrayed through modal verbs, directives, representatives, commissives and nominalization. The language used constructed ideologies of positive presentation of US and negative presentation of THEM, pro-peace versus anti-violence ideologies and ideologies on the benefits of peace. The study recommended that in times of uncertainty or conflict, the media should endeavour to promote peace by constructing ideologies that shape the public opinion towards the sustenance of peace. The findings of the study will make a contribution to linguists by helping them understand the role of language as a possible means of spreading peace and in turn demonstrate the powerful role language could play in future peace initiatives in the media in Kenya and the Eastern African region. The findings also offer an addition to existing scholarship in the area of Critical Discourse Analysis in the Kenyan editorial discourse.