UNDERSTANDING VERBAL IRONY: A CASE STUDY OF GIKUYU VERBAL UTTERANCES

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A PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF MASTERS OF ARTS DEGREE, DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGES: UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

OCTOBER 2014
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research project is my original work and has not been presented for examination in any university.

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This research project has been submitted for examination with our approval as the University Supervisors.

Signature……………………………………..   Date…………………
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Signature……………………………………..   Date…………………
Dr. Iribe Mwangi
DEDICATION

To my dear mother, Ann,
You have always propelled me to great heights.
Heights that I never knew existed.
You taught me the value of hardwork, prayer and determination.
With you I have emerged a victor in most of life’s battles.

To my husband and friend Godfrey.
You held me tight through the rough patch.
You made me regain my strength when I felt like giving up.
Thank you for your love and patience.

To our two beautiful children, Ted and Ashley.
You are reason I look forward to another day.
You are the inspiration behind my determination.
Because you are, I know there is a tomorrow.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First I would like to thank my God for his love, strength and sufficient grace that saw me through the two years of study.

My sincere gratitude and appreciation go to my two supervisors; Dr. Helga Schroeder and Dr. Iribe Mwangi for their unending support in the conception of the research problem, presentation and analysis of data and the general organisation of my argumentation.

To all the lecturers in the department of linguistics at the University of Nairobi especially to those through whose hands the 2012/2013 class was crafted; Dr. Jane Oduor, Dr. Helga Shroeder, Dr. Marete, Mr. Mungania, Dr. Buregeya, Dr Michira, Prof. Okoth Okombo and Prof. Lucia Omondi; thank you all for the academic nourishment.

And lastly, to all my classmates: Tom, Mayom, Purity, Papion, Jane Kinyua, Jane Kamau, Diana, Eunice, Esther, Joan, Peace and Irene, Your knowledge and company was great experience. Jane KAMAU and Irene, you knew my tears and my joys and you cried and laughed with me in equal measures… I will always treasure our friendship.
ABSTRACT
This study seeks to explain how irony is detected and understood in Gikuyu verbal utterances. Of concern in this study is to explain how a hearer successfully interprets the speakers intended meaning in an ironical verbal utterance. The Relevance Theory has been used to explain how this happens.

The researcher obtained data by listening to and watching videotapes by three Gĩkũyũ comedians namely: Kĩhenjũ, Gĩthingia and Machan’gi. Data was also obtained from reading three Gĩkũyũ narratives namely: Rũgano rwa Wacici, Rũgano rwa Wagaciairi and Ciana ciatigwo Iganjo, all as narrated by Kabebe and Kabera 1983.

Two post Gricean accounts of irony have been used to explain the irony in these utterances. These are the echoic and the pretence accounts. In an echoic account, the speaker does not express her own thoughts but echoes a thought that he/she attributes to someone else, and simultaneously expresses her mocking sceptical or contemptuous attitude to the thought. According to the pretence accounts, the speaker of an ironical utterance is not performing a genuine speech act but pretending to perform one, while expecting her audience to see through the pretence and recognise the sceptical, mocking or contemptuous attitude behind it.

The researcher groups data according to the source of echo. Four main sources of echoes were identified. These are: echoes of stereotypes, echoes of societal norms and values, echoes of societal expectations on an individual and echoes of the immediate context (what has been said earlier in context). Since different accounts of irony have different ways of bringing out the ironic effect in utterances, the researcher explores how each account treats the various utterances. Some irony is clearer when treated as a case of pretence while another comes out better when treated as a echoic. The echoic account is for example better suited for echoes of stereotypes, societal norms and values as well as echoes of societal expectations on an individual. The pretence account is best suited for echoes of what has been said earlier, in a given context.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Language
Gĩkũyũ is a term that can either refer to a language or a people. The Gĩkũyũ people are Bantu who live in Kenya mainly in the central province. The central province comprises of five counties: Kiambu, Muranga, Nyeri, Kirinyaga and Nyandarua.

Grammatically speaking, the language of the Gikuyu is Gĩ-gĩkũyũ. For simplicity, it is just called Kikuyu. Foreigners invariably employ the term Kikuyu when referring to the people or to the language. The Gĩkũyũ language belongs to the Bantu family of languages. Guthrie (1967:43) in his classification system places Gikuyu in zone E of group 50 and assigns it the language code 51. The language is spoken throughout Gĩkũyũ land with hardly any important variation. However, linguists like Wanjohi (2001:19) have detected some minor differences leading them to classify Gĩkũyũ into what they call five dialects:

- Kĩ-mathĩra- spoken in Mathĩra division in Nyeri County.
- Northern Gĩkũyũ- spoken in the rest of Nyeri County and in Mũrang’a County, north of Mathioya River.
- Southern Gĩkũyũ- Spoken in Mũrang’a county, south of Mathioya River and Kiambu County.
- Kindia- Spoken in Ndia division of Kirũnyaga County.
- Gĩchũgũ- Spoken in Gĩchũgũ division of Kirũnyaga County.

Mũtahi (1977:14) as quoted in Wangui (2010:1)classifies Gĩkũyũ into seven dialects which are: Kĩ-Embu which is spoken in Embu District, Kĩ- Mbeere which is spoken in Mbeere District and parts of Kirũnyaga District, Kĩ-Ndia which is spoken in Kirinyaga District, Kĩ-Mathĩra which is spoken in Nyeri District, Southern dialect spoken in Mũranga District and Northern dialect which is spoken in Kĩambu Districts. According to Wangũi (ibid), this classification was done before political boundaries had changed resulting in the creation of new districts. The geo-political boundaries have since changed. The central Mount Kenya language was divorced from Eastern Mount Kenya where Kĩ- Embu and Kĩ- Mbeere are spoken. The central Mt Kenya of Gĩkũyũ since
Mūtahi’s classification are: Gī-Gichūgū, Kī-Mathīra, Kī-Ndia, Gi-Kiambu and Kī-Mūranga.

Wachera (2008) as quoted in Wairima (2009) gives a classification that is based on linguistic variations (phonological, lexical, grammatical and semantic differences). He comes up with four dialects namely; Gi-Gichugu and Ki-ndia spoken in the East, Kī-mathira, spoken in the north, Kī-metumi spoken in central and Gī- kabete spoken in the south.

The language under investigation will be the Gikūyū language spoken in Nyeri, Mūranga and Kiambu counties (formally known as districts.) This is because the sources of data under investigation in this study are based on Gikūyū found in these areas. The counties are referred to as the original home of the Gikūyū people, having been created after Kenya’s independence in 1963. The narratives and comedies however are used and understood by all the Gikūyū wherever they may be.

1.2 Background to the Study
This study uses two accounts of irony, to explain how comprehension of the speaker meaning is reached in the ironic use of verbal utterances. These are the pretence and the echoic accounts.

Wilson (2006: 1724) explains that both the echoic and pretence accounts reject the basic claim of the classical and standard Gricean accounts that the hallmark of irony is to communicate the opposite of the literal meaning. Both offer a rationale for irony, and both treat ironical utterances as intended to draw attention to some discrepancy between the description of the world that the speaker is apparently putting forward and the way things actually are.

1.2.1 The pretence account to irony
According to the pretence accounts a speaker of an ironical utterance is not herself performing a speech act such as making an assertion or asking a question but pretending to perform a speech act in order to convey a mocking, sceptical or critical attitude to the speech act itself, or to anyone who would perform it or take it seriously. In other words, a speaker of an ironical utterance is not performing a genuine speech act, but merely
pretending to perform one, while expecting her audience to see through the pretence and recognize the sceptical, mocking or contemptuous attitude behind it.

Grice is credited with an early version of the pretence account. On one hand, he treats all figurative utterances as cases of saying or making as if to say. Making as if to say has obvious connections to pretence. On the other hand, while explaining the difference between the phrases “to speak ironically” and “to speak metaphorically.” Grice (1989:58) suggested that irony is a type of pretence: “To be ironical is, among other things, to pretend.” Clark and Gerrig (1984:122) as cited in Wilson (2009:198) took up Grice’s suggestion and elaborated in a variety of more recent pretence based accounts. Recanatini (2004:71) interprets Grice along these lines, and appears to endorse a similar version of the pretence account. He illustrates a situation where the speaker says that Paul is a really a fine friend in a situation which just the opposite is known to be the case.

Suppose the speaker says that Paul is a really a fine friend in a situation which just the opposite is known to be the case. The speaker does not really say or at least she does not assert, what she makes as if to say. The force of serious assertion is lacking….what the speaker does in the ironical case is merely to pretend to assert the content of her utterance. By pretending to say of Paul that he is a fine friend in a situation in which just the opposite is obviously true, the speaker manages to communicate that Paul is everything but a fine friend. She shows by her utterance how inappropriate it would be to ascribe to Paul the property of being a fine friend Wilson (2009:198).

Understanding irony, according to this version therefore involves the ability to recognize that the speaker is pretending to perform a speech act and simultaneously expressing a certain type (of mocking, skeptical, contemptuous) attitude to the speech act itself or to anyone who would perform it or take it seriously.

1.2.2 The echoic account

The echoic account was proposed by Sperber and Wilson in 1981 and elaborated in Sperber and Wilson (1995). It is the main alternative to the pretence accounts of irony.

According to this account, the point of irony is not to commit the speaker to the truth of the proposition expressed but to express a certain type of derisory or dissociative attitude
to a thought with similar content that she attributes to some source other than herself at the current time. In other words, the speaker in irony is not expressing her own thoughts, but echoing a thought she attributes to someone else, and expressing her mocking, skeptical or contemptuous attitude to that thought. Irony is more easily understood when the thought the speaker is echoing is made more salient by being overtly expressed in a previous utterance.

The main point of irony is that dissociate the speaker dissociate herself from an attributed thought or utterance which she wants to suggest is more or less obviously false, irrelevant or under-informative as suggested by Wilson (2006:1730).

An ironic utterance such as ‘he is a fine friend’ which on classical accounts would be taken to mean the opposite, i.e. that ‘he is not a fine friend’. It would be analyzed differently on an echoic account: When we make a friend, we have certain hopes, desires or expectations about how things will go.; we may think we have made a fine friend who will treat us well, be there when we need them, and so on. The utterance therefore echoes hopes or expectations of friendship which are widely shared.

Thus, to claim that verbal irony is a subtype of echoic use is to claim two things; first, that it is necessarily attributive and second, that it necessarily involves the expression of a mocking, skeptical or contemptuous attitude to the attributed thought. A successful case of verbal irony would therefore be the fact that some recognizable person has entertained or expressed a thought with similar content whose appropriateness or inadequacy would be worth remarking on.

1.3 Statement of the problem
This study attempts to explain how the hearer detects and arrives at the speaker’s intended meaning in Gikuyu ironical verbal utterances.

The two post Gricean accounts to irony propose that ironic verbal utterances should be treated as cases of either echoes or pretence. In the pretence accounts, the speaker pretends to perform a speech act and simultaneously expresses a certain type of attitude to the speech act itself or to anyone who would perform it. In the echoic account a speaker conveys a dissociative attitude to a thought with similar content that she
attributes to some source other than herself at the current time. The two accounts are very similar. They are both attributive and a certain type of dissociative attitude is expressed in both. Their only difference is the object of the attitude conveyed. The similarities in the two accounts have led to ranging debates in pragmatics. Wilson 2006:116 points out that while some are clearly cases of echoic allusion, others are more closely related to pretence while some involve both echoing and pretence. The current study wishes to carry out comparative analyses of the two accounts to establish which of the two accounts best explains a given case of irony in Gikuyu verbal utterances.

Previous research studies in Gikuyu language have focused on meaning constructions of other figures of speech such as metaphors, jokes, metonymy, idioms among others. I have so far not come across any research projects on irony interpretation in Gikuyu verbal utterances. The current study aims at investigating this topic.

Figures of speech are words or phrases used in different ways from their usual meaning in order to create a particular mental picture or effect. They therefore are implicit means of communication.

Implicit meaning is what is implied, indicated or hinted. The speaker tacitly conveys something that is not part of the encoded meaning in the sentence uttered. The hearer has to identify this interpretation. He has to construct a hypothesis about the speaker meaning by combining context, explicit content and implicit content. Interpreting implicit language is thus more demanding than explicit language.

Explicit meaning refers to what is stated, asserted or said. Though the context independent sentence meaning assigned by grammar is compatible with a wide range of possible interpretations, the hearer is able to choose among them therefore identifying the speaker’s meaning, the meaning she intends to convey on that particular occasion.

The comprehension process of figures of speech is more intense than that of literal communication. Salient meanings (which are explicit) are processed first before the intended meaning is derived. After accessing the explicit meanings, one has to combine it with context in order to correctly arrive at speaker meaning. Irony is one such device. If
speakers are not able to successfully bridge the gap between an ironic verbal utterance and the speaker’s intended meaning, then communication cannot be said to be successful.

In Relevance theory, irony is said built on echoic use. The speaker repeats what they have heard before but give it an emotive overtone. The hearer must therefore be able identify the ironic utterance as an echo, be able to trace the source of the echo which is implicitly communicated and recognize that the speaker’s attitude to the opinion echoed is one of rejection or disproval. A certain context must be at play in order for an utterance to be termed ironic.

1. 4 Objectives
The study is guided by the overall objective to find out how irony can be detected in verbal utterances. The specific objectives are:
   i. To investigate the echoes in Gĩkũyũ ironical verbal utterances.
   ii. To find out whether the dissociation, ridicule or mockery comes out better in pretence or the echoic accounts.
   iii. To find out whether the type of echo in an utterance determines the type of ironic account that appropriately describes it.
   iv. To investigate the context that shows dissociation ridicule and mockery of echoes.

1. 5 Hypotheses
   i. Gĩkũyũ ironical verbal utterances echo the stereotypes, societal norms and values, what people have said before in previous discourse and roles and expectations of the society on an individual.
   ii. The societal stereotypes, social norms and values are best accounted for by the echoic account while the pretence account best works for echoes of what has been said earlier in discourse as well as echoes of roles and societal expectations on an individual.
   iii. The kind of echo determines the applicability of the account.
   iv. The discrepancy between what is stated and context shows dissociation and mockery of echoes.
1.6 The rationale of the study

Figures of speech can be used in different contexts to yield different meanings. An ironic utterance requires that the hearer correctly interprets the speaker’s meaning for it to achieve relevance. The comprehension entails not just knowing the linguistic meaning of the utterance but also being in a position to trace the source of the echo and detect the dissociative attitude by the speaker at the time of the utterance.

Understanding of ironic utterances is a topic that cannot be ignored. In any given community, people utilize all the means of communication available to them, irony being one of them. Being an implicit means of communication, the hearer has the task of interpreting the utterance beyond its semantic meaning in order for it to achieve relevance. This study aims to shed light on the procedures that must be followed by the hearer in order to interpret the speaker meaning in ironic verbal utterances correctly.

1.7 Scope and Limitation

There are many verbal devices that say one thing and intend another and thus invite the reader to reconstruct unspoken meaning. Irony is one such device. This study will limit itself to interpretation of irony and not any other figures of speech such as metaphor, simile, metonymy, or synecdoche. Irony can also be verbal, situational or dramatic. The study focuses on verbal irony.

The study focuses on examining the understanding of irony in Gikuyu verbal utterances using the relevance theory. There are other theories which can be used to explain comprehension of irony. They include the class inclusion theory, blending theory and domain interaction theory. This study preferred the relevance theory over the other mentioned ones because of its unequaled ability to fill the gap between the sentence meaning and the speaker meaning.

Grice’s and classical rhetorical accounts have also not been put into perspective. In classical rhetoric, verbal irony is analyzed as an utterance with figurative meaning that departs from literal meaning. To Grice and the classical rhetorical theorists, irony occurs when speakers say the opposite of what they mean. The speaker says what is intentionally contradictory or contrary of the literal meaning. For instance, ‘you are a fine friend’ would mean, “you are not a fine a fine friend’.
1. 8 Theoretical framework
In order to understand irony in Gĩkũyũ verbal utterances, this study will employ the Relevance theoretical approach. This choice is motivated by its ability to explain how a listener recognizes the intended interpretation of an utterance. This project proposes that there is always a gap between the expressed meaning of an irony and an ironic verbal utterance meaning, and this can be explained using relevance theory. Relevance theory is able to explain how specific problems must be solved in order to reach the speaker’s meaning. The central aim of this pragmatic theory is to describe the factors other than knowledge of sentence meaning that affect the interpretation of utterances.

1. 8.1 Relevance Theory
Relevance theory was originally developed by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson. It is an account of human communication and cognition. It is an inferential theory of communication, which explains how communication takes place. A speaker intends to convey some information and produces a stimulus which enables the addressee to identify the information the speaker intended to convey. It aims to explain how the audience infers the communicator’s intended meaning. This study will consider the main assumptions of the theory, the definition of relevance and two principles of relevance; a cognitive principle, and a communicative principle.

1. 8.2 Theoretical Assumptions of Relevance Theory
Relevance theory works on the assumptions that:
Every utterance has a variety of linguistically possible interpretations, all compatible with decoded information. Not all these interpretations are equally accessible to the hearer. Hearers are equipped with a single general criterion for evaluating interpretations as they occur to them and accepting or rejecting them as hypothesis about a speakers meaning. This criterion is powerful enough to exclude all but the interpretation that satisfies the hearer’s first hypothesis. (Wilson 2007 as quoted in Schroeder 2007.)

1. 8.3 Relevance and cognition
Relevance according to Sperber & Wilson (1986: 251) is a potential property of an input. According to relevance theory, an input, such as an utterance raises expectation of relevance because the search for relevance is a basic feature in human cognition, which communicators may exploit. In relevance theoretic terms, any external stimulus or
internal representation which provides input in the cognitive process may be relevant to an individual at some point.

The notion of relevance is assessed in terms of cognitive effects and processing effort; the greater the positive cognitive effects achieved by processing an input, the greater the relevance of the input to the individual, the greater the processing effort expended, the lower the relevance of the input to an individual.

At every moment, the mind is confronted with much more information that it can possibly attend to. People only pick information that is relevant to them, as long as it yields positive cognitive effects and less processing effort is required in their processing. According to Sperber and Wilson (1995) ostensive–inferential communication exploits a general cognitive principle: that the mind tends to attend primarily to information which is relevant in a technical sense.

Relevance is described in terms of the ability to improve the individual’s overall representation of the world. The general goal of the human cognitive system is to improve individual’s knowledge of the world as effectively as possible and thus any information likely to contribute to this goal by: expanding or building on existing knowledge, correcting mistaken beliefs, providing confirmation of existing assumptions is attended to. In Sperber and Wilson’s (1995:92) terms, such information produces positive cognitive effects.

According to Schroeder (2007:6) there are three main types of cognitive effects. The first is the contextual strengthening whereby information is relevant to you if it interacts in a certain way with your existing assumptions about the world. New information achieves relevance when it strengthens or confirms existing assumption. The more assumptions it strengthens and the more it strengthens them, the more relevant it will be. When new and old assumptions contradict each other, the weaker of the two assumptions is abandoned. New information is relevant in any context in which it contradicts and leads to the elimination of an existing assumption – the more assumptions it eliminates and the stronger they were, the more relevant it will be. The last cognitive effect is the contextual implication in which new information is relevant in any context in which it has contextual effects and the greater its contextual effects the more relevant it will be.
According to the inferential theory of communication, communication takes place in the following terms: A speaker intends to produce some information and produces a stimulus which enables the addressee to identify the information by recognizing the speaker’s intention to convey it. This is referred to the ostensive-inferential – communication. An ostensive-inferential communication basic point is that the communicator intentionally provides evidence that he intends the audience to arrive at certain conclusions. It is not just a matter of intending to affect the thoughts of an audience; it is a matter of getting them to recognize that one has this intention. It thus involves an extra layer of intention, apart from the informative one. This is the communicative intention.

Verbal communication involves a code which conceptualizes the grammar of that language. What people utter is the evidence that the hearer should use to decode what is intended by the speaker. However, this utterance cannot be solely used to interpret the speaker’s meaning. Understanding an utterance involves more than merely knowing the meaning of the sentence uttered. Verbal communication then involves both coding and inference. In relevance theory, the relation between them is seen as follows: a verbal utterance is a stimulus which the addressee can use as evidence in inferring the speakers meaning. The information encoded in the stimulus is treated as part of the evidence which together with appropriate contextual information, warrants the inference of what the speaker wanted to communicate.

If every single piece of evidence gained from a stimulus can be potentially interpreted against a huge range of contextual assumptions, warranting a wide variety of inferences, even mutually exclusive ones, then how does the inferential theory explain how communicators succeed in understanding each other? The cognitive and the communicative principles of relevance theory shed light on the issue.

1. 8.4 The Cognitive Principle of Relevance
The cognitive principle of relevance states that human cognition tends to be geared towards the maximization of relevance. Inferential communication takes place against this background. As earlier explained, the communicator in the inferential model provides evidence of her intention to convey a certain meaning which is inferred by the audience on the basis of the evidence provided. An utterance for example is a linguistically coded piece of evidence. Its comprehension involves an element of decoding. Apart from the
linguistic meaning recovered by decoding there can be implied meaning which the hearer must infer from the evidence provided.

Apart from the ability of human cognition to maximize relevance, humans are endowed with the ability to metarepresent other people’s thoughts and intentions which allows them to make fairly accurate predictions about particular interpretations likely to be relevant to others and use the predictions for various purposes.

As human beings are equipped with the mechanism to attend to the most relevant interpretation of a stimulus every act of ostensive communication creates in the audience a presumption that it will be relevant enough to be worth the audience’s attention, thus the communicative principle of relevance was formulated.

1. 8.5 The Communicative Principle of Relevance

Every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance (Unger 2001:5). This is based on the observation that an ostensive stimulus is optimally relevant to an audience if:

a) It is relevant enough to be worth the audience’s processing effort.
b) It is the most relevant one compatible with the communicator’s ability and preference

The communicative principle of relevance and the definition of optimal relevance suggest a practical procedure for performing all the subtasks which the hearer must apply in order to construct a hypothesis about the speakers meaning. These subtasks are constructed into the relevance–theoretic comprehension procedures, which say: The hearer should take the linguistically encoded sentence meaning, follow a path of least effort in computing cognitive effects and consider interpretations (reference assignments, contextual assumptions, implications, etc) in order of accessibility and stop when his expectations of relevance are satisfied (Wilson and Sperber 2004:260).

A speaker who wants her utterance to be as easy as possible to understand should formulate it (within the limits of her abilities and preferences) so that the first interpretation to satisfy the hearer’s expectation of relevance is the one she intended to convey.
An utterance with two satisfactory competing interpretations would cause the hearer the unnecessary extra processing effort of choosing between them and the resulting interpretation would not satisfy condition b of the definition of optimal relevance, mentioned above.

Thus when a hearer, following a path of least effort arrives at an interpretation that satisfied his expectations of relevance in the absence of contrary evidence, this is the most plausible hypothesis about the speakers meaning.

1.9 Literature Review
This section has two parts. Part one is a review of previous studies related to relevance theory. Part two is a review of other pragmatic studies that have been carried out about the Gikuyu language.

1.9.1. Studies on Relevance Theory
Several studies, comments, reviews and criticism have been made or done on Sperber and Wilson’s relevance theory. Some are in agreement of what the theory proposes while others question its adequacy in explaining human cognition.

Wilson (2006) considers two post Gricean attempts to provide an explanatory account of verbal irony using relevance theory. The first treats irony as an echoic use of language in which the speaker tacitly dissociates herself from an attributed utterance or thought. The second treats irony as a type of pretence in which the speaker makes as if to perform a certain speech act, expecting the audience to see through the pretence and recognize the mocking or critical attitude behind it. The two approaches according to her have sometimes been seen as empirically or theoretically indistinguishable, and several hybrid accounts incorporating elements of both have been proposed. She argues that both accounts are distinguishable on both theoretical and empirical grounds and that while echoic use is essential to standard cases of verbal irony, pretence account is not.

The study is very similar to the current study because like it, the two post-Grecean accounts of irony are considered; the echoic and the pretence accounts to irony. According to Wilson (Ibid), the echoic use is essential to standard cases of verbal irony while pretence is not. This study treats the two as competing accounts to all types of
verbal irony. The study is important however because it gives an insight of how ironic verbal utterances can be analyzed using the two accounts.

Giora (1995) queries the viability of Sperber and Wilson’s claim that a single notion of relevance can explain human communication. According to Giora, relevance cannot be the only principle that governs human communication. Apart from being constrained by the search for relevance, speakers and hearers are also constrained by coherence considerations which constrain communication and which play a major role in discourse structuring and understanding. She also states that Sperber and Wilson’s relevance theory does not account for speakers intuitions as to coherence. On certain occasions it cannot distinguish coherence from incoherence. Giora’s observation is important to this study because it gives an indication that not all information that is coherent is necessarily relevant to an individual and vice versa. In the attempt to reach speaker meaning, the hearer is exposed to different types of meanings, both explicit and implicit, but not all are relevant to the individual.

Yus (1999) tends to agree with Giora (1995) when he says that since information can be communicated explicitly or implicit a number of possible threats can affect this communication. He addresses the interpretive problems that may arise when a hearer tries to select the intended explicit/ implicit interpretation of an utterance, which he says have basically have to do with a) deciding whether the intended interpretation is explicit or implicit, and b) deciding to what extent that interpretation is explicit or implicit. He looks at the interpretation within the relevance theory applying the cognitive model and its ad hoc terminology.

According Yus (Ibid:488), it is claimed that within RT, hearers start off their interpretation of a stimulus with an identification of its logical form, which is basically the linguistic raw material decoded by the auditory organs and checked for its grammatical appropriateness. This ‘zero context’ is then enriched with contextual information, essential for assignment, disambiguation etc. If the information provided by the proposition does not fit the principle of relevance, then the hearer will conclude that it does not match the speaker’s intended interpretation. The hearer will then look for extra contextual assumptions which will (or wont in the case of misunderstandings) lead to the
now new turned implicit-information which the speaker supposedly intended to communicate.

Yus’ study is important to this research study as it cautions the researcher that arriving at speaker meaning is not an automatic process and that the process of enriching the raw linguistic material can lead to a misunderstanding of speaker meaning. The various degrees of explicitness and degrees of implicitness can lead to the misunderstanding of the speaker’s intended meaning.

Njanga (2013) carried out a research on the comprehension of Kiembu idioms using relevance theory. The study looked at how the hearer arrives at the figurative meaning of the idioms. According to her, comprehension of idioms cannot rely on the compositional meaning of the idioms. More contextual material has to be used in order to understand idioms. There is also need for cultural references of some terms. Just like idioms, comprehension of proverbs requires that one overlooks the literal meaning of the proverb and embarks on the deeper meaning in order to understand it. This research project provides literature on how relevance theory can be used to explain comprehension of speaker meaning.

Aduda (2013) did an investigation on Dholuo neologisms using a relevance theoretical approach. The research focused on investigating the comprehension of Dholuo neologisms. The relationship between context and meaning of Dholuo neologisms was investigated. It was observed that meanings of Dholuo neologisms are determined by the context, for them to bear meaning during their interpretation. The role of ad hoc concepts of broadening in the interpretation was also analyzed. It was demonstrated that understanding of Dholuo neologisms involves expanding the linguistically specified denotation of the logical form so as to include a wide range of other related concepts. It was concluded that broadening as ad hoc concept of construction brings out meaning of Dholuo neologisms. The study is of importance to this study because it examines the role of context in speaker meaning interpretation. This helps add weight to the important role played by context, which the current study also wishes to investigate.

Mbatia (2012) studied the implicit meaning in cosmetics advertisements and its negative implications. The study sought to analyze the cosmetics advertisement with an aim to
verify whether the meaning in cosmetics advertisements is suggested or implied. This is yet another research that echoes the fact that speaker meaning is usually different from sentence meaning. It is of benefit for this study in that the whole concept of the gap that exists between the two meanings is reviewed.

1.9.2. Pragmatic Studies on Gikuyu Language

Njeri (2007) carried out a pragmatic analysis of Gikuyu lexical euphemism in HIV/AIDS discourse. The study made an exploration of the lexical euphemisms as substitutes to what is taboo in the Gikuyu speech community which includes the cultural inference. The main aim of the study was to establish whether HIV/AIDS is effectively and politely communicated given the rampant use of euphemisms. Results showed that euphemisms sometimes act as communication hindrances especially where the hearers belong to different social groups in terms of age, gender, or occupation. This study shades light on a factor that can hinder effective interpretation of speaker meaning. This research is of benefit for the current study in that like the current study, it addresses a factor that hinders proper interpretation of speaker meaning.

Njuguna (2010) examined how stereotypes are manifested through various elements of figurative language in Gikuyu. The study focuses on how a speaker expresses a particular stereotype by choosing one given expression and not any other. The hearer has the responsibility of interpreting the speaker’s intended meaning. The study uses the lexical pragmatic theory to explain how the speaker’s intended meaning is arrived at. This study is of benefit to the current study in that it similarly focuses on the procedures involved in arriving at speaker meaning though a different theoretical approach.

Wambui (2010) focuses on analyzing semantic shifts in Gikuyu lexemes. Her study aimed at establishing the causes of the shift in meaning in Gikuyu words. She adopted a lexical pragmatics approach in her investigation. She took into account the fact that semantic shift leads to ambiguity of lexical items and thus wanted to establish how the hearer arrives at the intended meaning. The benefit of her research for the current study is that the researcher can draw similarities of how the hearer arrives at the intended meaning in case of ambiguity as compared to how speaker meaning is arrived at when utterances are used ironically.
Wairima (2009) carried out a research on the explicit and implicit speech acts in Gikuyu. She wanted to investigate the following: the relationship between increased implicitness and levels of politeness, the role of felicity conditions in establishing speaker meaning and how mood influences the meaning and interpretation of speech acts in Gikuyu. The study is of benefit for the current study in that it studies elements other than sentence meaning that affect proper interpretation of speaker meaning.

1.10 Methodology
This section is a description of the data collection and the data analysis.

1.10.1 Data Collection
The researcher will do a random sampling of videos of Gikuyu comedians and Gikuyu narratives. The choice of narratives and comedy videos is motivated by the fact that the use of ironical verbal utterances happens frequently in day to day conversations and the two genres unreservedly employ conversations/dialogue.

The three comedians are Gĩthingithia (Kula happy), Kĩhenjũ and Machang‘i. The following two (2) videos by Machangi will be used: Mundurume ni mugambo and ii) Muciari ni muciari. From Gĩthingithia’s kula happy, the following three (3) videos will be used: i) Gachungwa ii) Mũka mũru. iii) Fuel. From Kĩhenjũ’s videos, the researcher will use two (2) videos namely: i) Mathekania ma Kĩhenjũ ii) Mzee Kĩhenjũ (wĩra nĩ wĩra).

The Gĩkũyũ narratives which will be used include i). Wagaciairĩ. ii) Ciana ciatigũtwo iganjo and iii) Rũgano rwa Wacici ,all as narrated by Kabebe in Kabira M. (1983:75, 81, 86). The reasearcher will read through the narratives and watch the videos of the three artists. In each case the researcher will examine utterances to extract those which express irony.

The researcher is a fluent speaker of Gĩkũyũ language and competently communicates in it. She is therefore able to detect when there is a discrepancy between verbal utterances in their linguistic meaning and the context in which they are used and can detect ironical expressions.
1.10.2 Data Analysis

After data generation and collection the researcher will classify the ironical verbal utterances according to the type of echo. The echoic and pretence accounts will be used to determine the nature of irony in the utterances. She will then show how a speaker dissociates herself from the echoes expressed by the speaker at the time of speaking.

1.11 Conclusion

The project aims at explaining how people understand irony in verbal utterances, a case study of Gĩkũyũ verbal utterances as used in Gĩkũyũ narratives and Gĩkũyũ comedy. The objectives of the study are to find out whether hearers are able to establish the source of echo in the Gĩkũyũ ironical verbal utterances and whether they can detect the dissociative attitude towards the echoes in the utterances. The research also wishes to establish which of the two accounts (between the echoic and the pretence is better explaining a given Gĩkũyũ ironic verbal utterance. Lastly, the researcher wants to examine the context that shows dissociation and mockery of echoes.

Two competing accounts of irony; the echoic account and the pretence account will be used to describe the nature of irony in the utterances. The researcher will use the relevance theoretical framework to explain how speaker meaning is achieved in ironic use of utterances.

The researcher will get data from the videos of 3 Gĩkũyũ comedians and 3 narratives of the Gĩkũyũ community. After collecting data, the researcher will classify it according to the source of echo in them. The irony in each data will be explained using the echoic and the pretence accounts. She will then show how the speaker dissociates herself from the echoes and finally examine the role of context in showing dissociation. The relevance theory comprehension procedures will be used to explain how the hearer arrives at the speaker meaning.

This study will add value to pragmatic debates on how speaker meaning is arrived at and also provide literature for future studies based on Gĩkũyũ language and Relevance theory in general.
CHAPTER TWO
FIGURES OF SPEECH

2.0 Introduction
This chapter sets out to discuss figures of speech. The chapter gives definitions and general information of figures of speech in section one. Section two is an outline and discussion of some of the figures of speech that are closely related to irony. Section three explains how comprehension of figurative language takes place in Relevance theory. Section four looks into the verbal irony specifically in terms of the different approaches to its understanding and finally, its interpretation in relevance theory.

2.1 General Information and Definition about Figures of Speech
Figures of speech are tools that change the ordinary language use to a non ordinary one. They help to draw a line between literal and non literal meaning.

Literal meaning refers to meaning that does not deviate from their defined meaning, the meaning that corresponds exactly to the meaning of individual words. One can for example say that John is cunning, or a mother can describe her child as dirty. The words cunning and dirty do not deviate from their literal meaning here.

Non literal meaning is when a phrase or a word means something other than the exact words in it. It implies a kind of creative and imaginative freedom of speech in which rules of logic can be transgressed or manipulated for effect. Non-literal meaning is achieved through the use of figures of speech. They reveal to us the apparently limitless plasticity of language itself and a possibility that language can do for us anything we want.

Figures of speech refer to the various rhetorical uses of language such as metaphor, metonymy hyperbole and chiasmus that depart from customary construction, order or significance.

Use of a figure of speech implies that the use of the word or phrase transcends its literal interpretation. It can be special repetition arrangement of the words in it or omission of words with their literal meaning or phrase with specialized meaning not based on the
literal meaning of the words in it as an idiom, metaphor, simile, hyperbole, 
personification or synecdoche.

In figurative language therefore, words are employed in such a way that they differ from 
their ordinary signification in common place speech and convey our meaning in a more 
vivid and impressive manner than when we use them in their everyday sense. Figures of 
speech make speech more effective, they beautify and emphasize it. Figurative language 
has the essence of style and beauty. The figures of speech often provide emphasis on 
freshness of expressive or clarity. However clarity may also suffer from their use, as any 
figure of speech introduces ambiguity between literal and figurative interpretation.

2.2. Classification of figures of speech

Figures of speech according to Sperber and Wilson (1995: 259) can be divided into two 
main categories: schemes and tropes.

Schemes change the ordinary or expected pattern of words. They include devices such as 
alliteration, assonance and onomatopoeia. Tropes change the general meaning of words. 
They encompass the figurative use of words. They have a way of adding emotional 
intensity to otherwise merely informative statements and conveying attitudes along with 
the information. They also say much in a brief compass, apart from giving imaginative 
pleasure of literary work to readers and bringing additional imagery into verse, making 
the abstract concrete and making literary works more sensuous.

This research is specially concerned with tropes. According to Perrine (1982: 92), tropes 
are ways of using words that may seem unusual but have a specific and desired effect. 
The normal words often break normal rules of grammar, but can be nevertheless 
understood. They are common in poetry and eloquent speech. Perrine gives seven types 
of tropes namely: metaphors, simile, personification, metonymy paradox, overstatement 
& understatement, irony and illusion. They are also the most often used in poetry.

There are many other figures of speech which give freshness to language and play upon 
words in such a way as to convey a meaning different from their ordinary significant in 
common every-day speech and writing. They include analogy, hyperbole, pun tautology, 
euphemism and assonance.
2.3. Understanding figurative language

Understanding figurative language involves a special process, which is not essentially identical to understanding literal language. The literal meaning has to be processed first before the intended or applied meaning. Salient meanings are processed first before the intended meaning is derived. Salience may be affected by context.

2.4 Figures of speech and Relevance Theory

Sperber and Wilson (1995:259) observe that tropes (example of metaphor, hyperbole, metonymy and synecdoche) are creative exploitations of a perfectly general dimension of language use.

In relevance theory, every utterance is an interpretation of a thought of a speaker’s intention. Sperber and Wilson (ibid) put it more clearly when they state that “in any genuine act of linguistic communication, an utterance is used to represent a thought of the speaker’s that it resembles in content.”

The interpretation of these utterances may be literal or non literal. The search for optimal relevance leads the speaker to adoption to different occasions, a more or less faithful interpretation of her thoughts. Tropes therefore require different interpretative abilities or procedures.

Apart from discussing a few of these tropes, this study will also discuss the figures of speech in relation to the procedures followed during their interpretation in relevance theory.

2.4.1. Metaphor

A metaphor compares two different unrelated things to explain something unfamiliar by highlighting similarities to something that is familiar. It is a comparison that shows how two things that are dissimilar in all aspects are in fact similar at some level.

A metaphor is therefore a figure of speech which is not supposed to be understood literally but the words of the phrase make a comparison. For example, if a mother says to a child: ‘You are a piglet.’ She wants to draw similarities between the child and a pig and to conclude that the child is dirty.
The figurative and metaphorical expression is identical to the literal meaning of the plain expression it replaces. That is, dirty replaces piglet. When used ironically, a clean child may as well mean dirty child. The ironical meaning is also identical to the literal meaning.

According to Sperber and Wilson (1986:231), by uttering a metaphor, the speaker intends to communicate a complex thought. Instead of conveying it literally, she chooses to communicate a more easily expressed assumption, which shares with the thought some logical and contextual implications.

In relevance theory, metaphor interpretation requires the activation of encyclopedic entries, and works on weak implicatures. If for example one says, ‘John is a fox.’ John is not literary a fox, but certain characteristics that are found in the encyclopedic entries of fox in the mind of the hearer are activated and transferred on John. The encyclopedic entries of a fox provide the following information:

- Fox – Animal
  - Mammal
  - Carnivorous,
  - Cunning,
  - Feeds on other animals,
  - Dangerous.

All of the entries above refer to a fox in general, but only a few can be chosen for John. The mind of the hearer selects only those characteristics which fit the context of the utterance. The hearer will understand John as dangerous, cunning. The other characteristics are not used for the understanding of the utterance. The understanding that John is dangerous and cunning are strong implicatures. What matters in a metaphor is not the truthful literalness of a proposition but its degree of faithfulness to the content of the thought.

Metaphoric expressions are also seen as echoic. After recognizing the echoic use of a metaphorical expression the hearer will be able to retrieve the ad hoc concept on the basis of resemblance of the concept used echoically. In metaphoric reference, the echoic
expression is meant to activate an ad hoc concept which shares some encyclopedic assumptions with the concept used echoically.

2.4.2 Idioms

An idiom is a phrase, expression or group of words whose implication is not clear when you go by the literal meaning of words, e.g. pull someone’s leg.

Langercker (1968:79) refers to an idiom as a kind of complex lexical item. It is a phrase whose meaning cannot be predicted from the meanings of the morphemes it computes.

Carter (1987:65), defines idioms as special combinations with restricted forms and meanings that cannot be deduced from the literal meanings of the words which make them up. According to him, an idiom is learned and used as a single unit. It should not be analyzed into its constituents. It is unchangeable and always carries a figurative meaning. It is seen as frozen patterns of language which allow little or no variation in form and often carry meanings which cannot be deduced from individual components.

Idioms are ideas, or expressions, forming an integral part of any language and they explain different situations using minimum phrases. Idiom interpretation is heavily dependent on context for one to figure out the hidden meaning. The literal meaning of words is somewhat different from what they suggest. They cannot be translated literal. Consider the idiom to let the cat out of the bag. This means to reveal something which is supposed to be a secret. Idioms make language colourful and richer. They convey subtle shades of meaning and intentions of words. They make use of fewer words and convey more and provide an accurate statement for the occasion they are being used for.

It is clear from the above definitions that the meanings of idioms does not depend on the dictionary meaning of individual words- used. Idioms are also cultural and context-based. The understanding of meanings as words used is therefore culture bound and cannot be predicted from the understanding of the dictionary meaning of individual words.

Relevance theory provides a comprehension procedure that leads one to arrive at the implied meaning of idioms. From a given idiom, the hearer goes through the encyclopedic entries of a word that are provided from the words used. To arrive at the implied meaning, the mind takes more processing effort to pick out the relevant word
from the available meanings, since the idiom has a different meaning from the literal meaning of the words. Together with context, the correct intended meaning can be arrived at.

2.4.3 Metonymy

A metonymy is a figure of speech where one word or phrase is used in place of another; a name of a particular thing is substituted with the name of a thing that is closely related to it.

According to Schroeder (2007) metonymy is the figure of speech that uses replacement. A thing or a person is replaces another person or thing. It is a figure of speech which is substituted for another on the basis of some material casual or conceptual relation. Nunberg (1978) defines metonymy is a case of deferred reference in which a speaker uses a description of a word and succeeds in referring to another. If one says we have always remained loyal to the crown, the crown stands for the government or the president.

In relevance theory, every utterance is an interpretation of a thought of the speakers. The interpretation may be literal or non-literal. In the case of metonymy, the propositional form of the utterance is a literal interpretation of the thought it purports to express. This thought however, is complex to the extent that it contains an echoic concept in this case the order of the customers.

Metonymy is a variety of echoic use. Echoic use of concepts characteristically occurs when a name for an individual or object is used for the first time; to represent a representation. The echoic use here serves to name objects which lie outside their normal extensions. Sperber & Wilson (1986:65) propose that the distinction between echoic and descriptive uses of concepts can explain the distinction between speaker’s reference and the semantic reference. The name/word used is not put forth as a truthful description of the referent, but as an appropriate way of identifying him in the given context.

The choice of metonymy is such as to facilitate the recovery of the intended referent. Metonymy contributes to explicatures of the utterance; its comprehension forms part of the general inferential work which complements decoding in order to yield the proposition expressed. Explain with the example of the crown.
Like Irony, metonymy is also used to express attitudes ranging from complete approvals to complete rejections. Consider,

My own blood can’t do that to me.

Blood here refers to the speakers kith or kin. Blood relations are supposed to provide lifetime companionship and support. In the proposition above, the speaker expresses her rejection to this assumption.

2.4.4. Irony
Irony is an effective and widespread literally tool that is often used freely in conversation and writing. Irony is used to stress on the opposite meaning of a word. Irony refers to the language one uses to express a thought that is the opposite of what those words really mean. There are 3 main types of irony. These are: verbal irony, situational irony and dramatic irony.

Situational Irony is when something happens that is the opposite of what you would expect – it involves an incongruity between what is expected or intended and what actually occurs. Dramatic Irony happens in a story or a movie, where the audience is aware of something that a character does not know. The audience knows more about present or future circumstances contrary to the character in the story.

This study is focused on verbal irony as a figure of speech. As such the following discussion is on verbal irony and the various approaches that are used to analyze it.

2.4.4.1 Verbal Irony
Verbal irony is often seen as where someone says or writes something where they are expressing a thought that is the opposite of the words they are using. verbal irony occurs when speakers say the opposite of what they mean. A man may say loudly to a manifestly unattractive woman, “You are more than beautiful!” In the current situation, this man is obviously lying and therefore being ironic.

The traditional view of verbal irony is that verbal irony is the opposite of what is meant or expressed. Even Aristotle said this. Aristotle, as explained by law Swearingeur (1991)
equated verbal irony with understatement and verbal dissembling - that is with saying or expressing a veiled or guarded version of what one means.

Barry Brument, (2010) has described irony as a kind of winking at each other... the game of meaning reversal is being played. According to Brument, Verbal ironies are mainly the intentional products of speakers. The speakers say what is intentionally contradictory to their actions and emotions.

Irony has also been defined as a trope or figure of speech in which the intended meaning of a statement differs from the meaning that the words appear to express. The verbal irony can occur at word level of the individual word or sentence, or it may pervade an entire text. For example, if a person says of a student,``He was so intelligent, that he failed all his tests.’ Or of a man who beats a wife,'Joshua is an honourable man’Or, After listening to a long prayer where the one praying goes on and on without end. ``Well, that was short and to the point, wasn’t it?

Here, the words ‘intelligent’, ‘honorable’, ‘short’ and ‘to the point’ do not look suitable in the context in which they have been used. According to the explanation and definitions given, irony requires an opposing meaning between what is said and what is intended. When one is being ironic, people count on the listener to turn the literal meaning of the expression to read as exactly the opposite of what the words mean. No wonder it is being described as a game of winking at each other (Brument ibid).

It is said that when irony works, it helps to cement social bonds and mutual understanding, because the speaker and the hearer both know how to turn the utterance and they know that the other knows they will turn the utterance.

Ironic similes convey the opposite of what the speakers intended to express. For instance, in the simile `soft like concrete’, concrete is known to be stiff, firm or hard. It cannot suitably be described as soft. The comparison is therefore an opposite of what the speaker intends to say.
2.5 Similarities between irony, metaphor, idioms and metonymy.

There are two similarities between irony, metaphor and metonymy. They all employ the echoic use and they all make use of encyclopaedic entries during their interpretation.

2.5.1 Echoic Use

A speaker aiming at optimal relevance may choose to use a concept echoically because it may first, provide access to greater range of contextual implications than its descriptive counterpart. Secondly, it may allow a speaker to express a variety of attitudes, ranging from complete approval to complete rejection, towards the descriptive content of the concept. As seen earlier, irony is not merely used to echo a given utterance. The echo must be accompanied by some ridicule or scorn and the speaker must dissociate themselves from what they are saying.

Just like metaphor and metonymy, irony is built on echoic use. The three can also be used to express varieties of attitudes ranging from complete approvals to complete rejection of attributed thoughts. The use of metaphors and metonymy also go beyond mere descriptions and provide wide range of other possibilities that may not be present in literal descriptions. In metonymy, the recognition of the echo is understood as a sort of ‘cue’ present in the speakers conceptual representative.

2.5.2 The use of encyclopedic entries

The use of encyclopedic entries is also common in metaphors, idioms and metonymy. In metaphors, the hearer has to choose the most appropriate to go by from the list in his encyclopedic entries, as guided by context.

As for metonymy the choice from the encyclopedic entries is such as to facilitate the recovery of the intended referent. Its comprehension forms part of the general inferential work which complements decoding in order to yield the proposition expressed. So the encyclopedic entry, gives access to an ad hoc concept, a stripped down version of the concept of the referent.

To get the speakers intended meaning the hearer uses the utterance as a starting point. The listener then rejects the linguistic interpretation since it cannot have been put forth by the
speaker as being optimally relevant to him. A new hypothesis, based on the predicate and depending on the nature of the referent- (person or object.) is formed.

Encyclopedic entries in idioms however present a different situation in their comprehension process. From a given idiom, the hearer goes through their encyclopedic entries of a word. To arrive at the implied meaning, the mind takes more processing effort to pick out the relevant word from the available meanings.. Together with the context, the correct intended meaning can be arrived at. Since there is no connection between the word and what the context presents, the hearer has to disregard old knowledge of words and building new ideas that are context based.

I would also argue that irony makes use of encyclopedic entries. It is worth noting that a single word in an utterance can make it ironical. The hearer will therefore first access and evaluate the various meanings provided in this encyclopedic entry of the word. Together with context, he or she will reject the proposition and opt for its opposite meaning.

2.6 Interpretational differences.
What makes the interpretation of the three tropes different is the amount of effort that the mind has to invest to find the interpretation. As seen in the discussion, some figures of speech require more processing effort than others. Metonymy which derives interpretation from explicatures is relatively easier to process than the rest. Since it contributes to explicatures of the utterance; the hearer, relying on context is able to easily access the implied meaning without much effort.

Of importance to note is that transparent idioms would equally use less effort to process than their opaque counterparts. This is because more often, there is usually a relationship between what is uttered and their use. The hearer thus simply combines the meaning of the words, cultural background and the context to reach at the speaker meaning. The situation is different in opaque idioms, since there is hardly any relationship between an idiom and its referents. More processing effort has to be used.

In my opinion, the interpretation of ironic verbal utterances takes the most processing effort as compared to the other three figures of speech. Fillippova and Astington (2008:127) seem to support this notion when they state:
The use of irony entails indirectly conveyed beliefs and attitude that constitutes the speakers intended or implied meaning. The listener must substitute the intended or implied meaning for the literal one expressed in the utterance.

Sperber and Wilson (1995) argue that irony invariably entails the implicit expression of an attitude (via paralinguistic and extra linguistic channels.) For irony to achieve relevance, the addressee must also be in a position to interpret the speaker’s attitude towards his or her utterance, and also establish his motivation for the meaning substitution, which is basically to dissociate from it.

Fillippova and Astington (2008:127) say that understanding of irony in children only takes place-after the early elementary years. At this age, they are able to understand the “nuanced usage of non literal language by recognizing the purpose of the speakers statement.”

They explain that in earlier stages of growth, children interpret intentionally false statements as sincere (at 6 years of age). At around 9 years of age, they begin to understand deliberate falsehoods and make mature interpretation of inconsistencies between ironic utterances and contextual facts, but they are not fully aware of the speaker’s belief and intentional use of such falsehoods. Findings of Demorest et al (1984) as referred to by Fillippova and Astington 2008:127 suggest that children as old as 13 years of age do not reliably distinguish between irony and deception.

From the above arguments, I would want to argue that irony understanding is a complex process that requires more processing effort in the rejection of the literal meaning of the utterance before detecting the speaker’s belief and intention. It is therefore more complicated in its interpretation than the other figures of speech.
2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has mainly focused on types of tropes and their interpretation in Relevance theory. The examples of figures of speech discussed above include metaphors, irony, metonymy and idioms.

The figures of speech do share interpretational similarities as well differences. The similarities include the echoic use, and also the use of encyclopedic entries. The echoic use allows a speaker to convey their attitudes ranging from complete approvals to complete rejections. In the case of irony, attitudes fall within the dissociative range. The other similarity is on the use of encyclopaedic entries. The hearer relies heavily on what is contained in the entries inorder decide on the speaker meaning.

The interpretation of the figures of speech differ in the amount of processing effort used in their interpretation. The interpretation of verbal irony requires a higher processing effort than the rest of the figures of speech.
CHAPTER THREE  
ECHOES IN GIKUYU IRONICAL VERBAL UTTERANCES  

3.1 Introduction  
This chapter sets to classify Gĩkũyũ ironical verbal utterances according to the source of echoes. Schroeder (2007) observes that sources of echoes can be what people have said before, norms and values of society, implicated thoughts, stereotypes, politics of the country and hopes and expectations of the society among others.

Data in this research study has been classified onto four categories: i) Data on echoes of stereotypes.ii)Data on echoes of social norms and values.iii) Data on echoes of what has been said before and iv)Data on echoes of roles and expectations of society on an individual.

Chapter three looks at data based on echoes of stereotypes as well as data based on echoes of societal norms and values. The two fall under Sections one and two respectively.

3.2 Section one: Echoes of stereotypes  
3.2.1 General Information about Stereotypes.  
Stereotypes are beliefs that people have about other people. They are the assumptions that have become part of a people’s belief. They are fixed ideas or images that many people have about a particular type of person or thing, but which is often not true in reality.

The content of stereotypes include imagination about appearance, likely or unlikely behaviour, medical and psychological conditions, mannerisms goals, motivations, desires, assigned roles and nearly everything else of psychological interest.
3.2.2 The Cognitive representation of stereotypes.

According to Wango (1998) as cited in Wangũi (2010:7), all stereotypes are generalizations. All human critical thinking skills rely upon the cognitive ability to generalize. Generalization helps us to interact with the world, objects, people and other things.

Stereotypes are a result of the cognitive aspects of prejudice. As such a stereotype about a certain social group is simply a common held generalization about how people in such a group appear, act or think. The human mind is great at detecting patterns and it would not form a given stereotype if there were not some raw material there.

Stereotypes are concepts in the mind. Concepts are mental categories that help us to classify objects events and ideas and each object, event or idea has a set of commonly relevant features. Concepts or mental representations rely on encyclopedic entries. The encyclopedic entry deals with personal influences and ideas about something. Human beings organize the encyclopedic entries of concepts besides other through stereotype. The encyclopedic entries vary across individuals and time. They are open-ended with new information being added to them all the time. There is no point at which an encyclopedic entry can be said to be complete (Sperber & Wilson 1986:86).

3.2.3 Sources of stereotypes

Stereotypes are a salient part of culture. It is exemplified through agents of socialization such as parents, peers teachers among others. Culture, at times assigns roles that give rise to certain behaviour. For example, women are assigned the role of nurturing, while men are given roles that demand more energetic approach. In the end, people may conclude that women are naturally more nurturing than men. This may not necessarily be the truth.

Njugunah (2010) also observes that stereotypes can also be a product of our experiences. Men for example are said to be physically stronger than women. In many instances, men outdo women in muscular activities. This may not always be the case but on average, this is usually the case. A stereotype that men are stronger physically therefore develops. Traits are used when stereotyping people. These are elements in people’s personalities or characteristics which distinguish them from others. Although a trait appears to be
obvious, one has to infer it from behaviour. More often than not, people think they know why people have the traits they have.

There are many aspects of life from which stereotyping can be done. These will form the basis of our classification. There can be stereotypes on sex, gender roles, race, tribe, love and relationships, financial status and on any other aspect of life. This research will dwell on stereotypes of wealth, sex and gender roles.

### 3.2.3.1 Echoes of stereotypes on wealth

The following is an example of a stereotype on wealth and how the echoic and pretence accounts are applied when seeking relevance.

In Macang’is video; ùtarì nì múigître, Njaramba narrtates to his friend Macang’ì the story of a very wealthy man, but who is currently sick. When Macang’ì learns about the wealthy man’s ailment he says:

(1)  *Atì akarwara? mùrimù ùtakihotaga itonga.*

You mean he is sick? a wealthy man is never taken ill…

A pretence account to this utterance suggests that the speaker is not performing an assertion but pretends to be making one, that rich people do not get ill. He does this in order to convey a contemptuous attitude to the speech act itself or to anyone who would perform it or take it seriously. The hearer is supposed to see through this pretence and know that that the speaker is only pretending to assert it and does not mean it. By pretending to say that a rich man cannot be taken ill in a situation in which the opposite is obviously true, the speaker is communicating that even wealthy people get sick. He shows how inappropriate it would be to think that money is a solution to everything.

On an echoic account, the speaker echoes a stereotype that is held in the community about wealthy men and money, that wealthy men can find a solution to everything through money. The speaker dissociates himself from this utterance and expresses his disapproval of it. He mocks the society for holding such a belief. As it is, it does not always apply and so it is simply unrealistic. The speaker wants to criticize or satirize society for entertaining such notions.
To correctly interpret this utterance in Relevance Theory, the hearer will have to assume that it is the most relevant utterance by the speaker, and then follow a path of least effort to arrive at an interpretation that will satisfy their expectation of relevance. When a speaker says that a wealthy man cannot be taken ill in a situation where the opposite has happened, the hearer will first access the encyclopedic entry of being wealthy which may refer to:

- Having a lot of money
- Having a lot of property
- Being able to solve all sorts of problems through money

When the hearer combines these entries with the context of a wealthy but sick man, the hearer will realize that the speaker is in rejection of this stereotype. Relevance is achieved when the hearer realizes that the speaker is actually expressing his/her attitude of rejection to the truth of their assertion, and a mockery to anyone who thinks that wealth is a solution to everything.

3.2.3.2 Echoes of stereotypes on love

The following is an echoic and pretence account on an ironic stereotype on love.

In Maca’ngi’s comedy titled ūtari nī Māgīre, a mother is advising her daughter against getting married to anybody that her father may bring along. She paints a picture of the father as being very materialistic. She advises her to aim for true love in her search for a fiancée. In a strange turn of events, she says `Nonyende ūhikio nī mūndū wīna ingotore nīgetha ona mūtūrire wītū ūcenjie.’ I would prefer that you marry a rich man so that our status (financial) may also improve.’ The girl, very annoyed, repeats her mother’s words.

2 atī ūngienda o hikio nī mūndū wīna ingotore? ucio nī ma nī wendo wa ma.
You say that your wish for me is that I marry a rich man? That is true love for sure.

A pretence account to this utterance would want the listener to recognize that the speaker is pretending to make an assertion... that marrying a rich man is indeed an act of true love. However, the force of a serious assertion is lacking and that is why she does not really say or assert what she ‘makes as if to say’. By pretending to say that marrying a rich man is driven by true love in a situation where it is not communicates that wealth driven love is not true.
An echoic account would indicate that the speaker echoes what the society has generalized about true love, that true love is unconditional. However the speaker dissociates herself from it. She expresses an attitude of rejection to this stereotype. In this context where she has to marry a rich man for some gain, then true love is unnatural because it is conditional! She expresses an attitude of contempt to her mother’s suggestion and ridicules herself and the society for thinking that true love is unconditional.

In relevance theory, the hearer, upon taking the utterance as most relevant as indicated by the speaker, will use a route in which she will use the least effort in its interpretation. Upon receiving the utterance, she will access her encyclopedic entry of the word unconditional. The following might be some of the entries she may have for the word.

- does not depend on something.
- results from free will.

Within the context of the mother advocating for a man because he is wealthy, the hearer will be able to see that the speaker is in rejection of the stereotype. She will achieve relevance when she recognizes the speaker’s attitude of cynicism towards the stereotype.

### 3.2.3.3 Echoes of stereotypes on men

In another of Mach’angí’s comedy titled Mũka Mũru (The cruel wife), a man who is battered by his wife seeks advice from a friend. He advises him to be more assertive and be ‘the man’ in the house by physically abusive to his wife. When he gets home he orders her around and does everything to display that he is now in charge. Finally he attempts to beat his wife. The wife attacks him ruthlessly. He falls down and Njaramba he who forms the audience in these episodes asks:

3 "Mũndũ ũgwathanaga arũndwo thĩ? ĩyo ni Njamba!’’
``The one who was issuing orders wrestled down? That is a great warrior!’’

Shocked by the turn of events, Njaramba is even more perplexed by what follows. A description is given of how the said man was beaten up by the wife. The wife gives him a head kick! Njaramba seeks to know,

4 "Afĩ rĩ, nĩ mũtũmia wagũthã mũndũrũme na hedi, Njamba nĩkũrũte hau!’’

34
``You mean it is the woman who hits her husband head-butt?
Let the warrior rescue himself now!''

In 3 and 4 above, a pretence account will want the hearer to see Njaramba as pretending to assert that the man in question is a warrior in deed. For him to make the assertion that he is a great warrior after a humiliating physical defeat by the wife, he expects us to recognize that the force of serious assertion lacks in the utterance and the man is not a great warrior at all. He finds him a coward. He conveys an attitude of rejection to this utterance.

An echoic account attributes these utterances to stereotypes on men. These stereotypes are that men are the heads of families and that they are physically stronger than women. In the Gĩkũyũ community, women are supposed to be subordinates to their husbands. They should submit to and obey orders issued by the men, since the man is the head of the family. At no time should a woman be seen to dominate her husband or engage him in a physical fight. Men who demand respect and submission from their wives are seen as `Njamba’ or heroes in the society.

Njaramba’s primary aim is not to provide information about this stereotype but to convey his own attitude or reaction to this stereotype. Here, the speaker dissociates himself from the proposition that the man behaved like a Njamba ‘a hero’. If he is being wrestled to the ground and being given a head kick by the wife, then the speaker conveys objection to the assertions in the stereotypes. She mocks the society for such generalizations and ridicules the man for his short lived courage.

When the hearer takes utterances (3) and (4) as the most appropriate stimuli used by the speaker to communicate his intention, he will assume it is worth her processing effort. The encyclopedic entry for the word `hero’ will come to mind that

- A hero is a winner in battle
- Not easily defeated
- Conquers all situations.

The hearer, armed with the encyclopedic entries will take the utterance together with context, and formulate contextual assumptions. If the man is a hero, then the wife should
not wrestle him to the ground. The wife should not also give him a head kick or beat him up for that matter. The hearer will reach a conclusion that since all these happen to the man, then he is not a hero. To achieve relevance, the hearer will have to see the dissociative attitude of the speaker from his utterances and the fact that he wants to mock the society for assuming that all men are heroes in their homes, because they are physically stronger than women.

3.2.3.4 Echoes of stereotypes on the nature of men

In the comedy ‘Mugunda’, Kíanangi, Macang’s friend has sold his piece of land without telling Macang’. Macang’ feels betrayed and says to him:

7. ``We wĩ mūthuri ungirūgama hari athuri aria angi uteithie nĩ ma.’’
   ``You are a man who can stand with other men and be of benefit to them indeed.’’

On a pretence account, Macang’ here pretends to perform a speech act of commending his friend for apparently being considerate to him in his sale of land. Making such an assertion in a situation where the opposite has actually taken place prompts us to see that the speaker is pretending to assert something. He expects us to recognize the pretence and see the mockery in what he ‘‘makes as if to say.’’ He finds Kíanangi to be everything else, but not a man who can stand together with other men and be of benefit to them, since he fails to alert them to consider buying his piece of land but rather opts to sell it to some strangers.

On an Echoic account, Macang’ echoes the stereotype on men, that men are wise and that they make wise decisions that benefit everyone. However, he dissociates himself from this thought and expresses his attitude of rejection to the thought.

To correctly interpret the speakers meaning, one has to first accept the speakers utterance as evidence that he wants to communicate his intention through it. Following the path of least effort the hearer will take the utterance as relevant. He will first access the encyclopedic entries of ‘‘wise’’ as:

- Being able to make sensible decisions,
- Can give good advice because of experience and knowledge that one has
- Able to act or behave sensibly, based on good judgment

When taken in context where the speaker feels betrayed by the friend’s action of not giving him priority when selling his piece of land, then it should be obvious to the hearer that the speaker does not find his friend wise. The utterance will achieve relevance when the hearer recognizes the speaker’s dissociation from the utterance or the echo, and discover the attitude of rejection being conveyed.

Another instance where stereotypes on the nature of men is echoed is in Mûndûrûme nî Mûgambo, a comedy by Macang’î. This is a story of a lady who though married, does everything to fend for her husband and their young child. She buys food, goats, washing detergents and basically everything in that home. She says:

8. ``kaĩ niî nî niî ndagûrirwoî’
``It is I whose bride price has been paid in deed.

The lady pretends to make a speech act of asserting that her husband had indeed paid her bride price. A husband is expected to take care of the wife whose bride price he pays, and not the other way round. This assertion, said in a situation where she complains about her husband’s inability to fend for them helps the hearer recognize that the lady feels everything else but not taken care of as a married wife. She feels like the man of the house instead. She conveys an attitude of rejection of the truthfulness of her assertion.

In the echoic account, the lady echoes the stereotype that men fend for their families. However, she dissociates herself from this stereotype. She conveys her attitude of disapproval and contempt of the assertion and demonstrates that she finds it ridiculous for anyone or herself to hold it as true.

To understand this utterance, one has to access the encyclopedic entry of the words wife versus husband.

Husband:
- The person who pays bride price
- Provides for the family
Wife:
The person whose bride price is paid
- Is taken care of by the husband
- Is cherished by the husband

In the context where the wife provides for everything in the home, then the hearer should be able to recognize that she feels more of the husband than the wife. As such she dissociates herself from the utterance or the echo, and simultaneously conveys her attitude towards this stereotype. She expresses cynicism towards it.

This same feeling is carried into her next utterance when she says,
``Na ați haha ndîna mûndu''
``And here I have a helper."

The lady pretends to assert that she has a helper. In a situation where the man fails to meet his `manly' duties, the lady expects us to see through the pretence and conclude that the man is not a helper. She conveys an attitude of skepticism to the proposition in this utterance.

An echoic account would reveal that she echoes the stereotype that men provide for their families. Her aim in the assertion is to distance / dissociate herself from its truth. She is being cynical to this stereotype.

In its interpretation, the hearer has to analyze the encyclopedic entries they have of a `helper' as used in a marriage set up.
- One with whom you share responsibilities with
- Assistant/aide
- Provider
- Comforter consistent either hyphen or bullets

When used in context, where the wife provides for everything in the home instead of being provided for, the hearer will realize that the person being described is everything but not a helper. The hearer thus is able to see the speaker’s dissociation from this
utterance and recognize the attitude of rejection being conveyed. That way the utterance will have achieved relevance.

3.2.3.5. Echoes of stereotypes on women

In Gĩthingithia’s comedy Mũka mũru, a story is told of a man who when seeks advice on how to handle his ‘errant’ wife. Upon reaching home, he issues a set of instructions on how the affairs of the home will be run from then on. He asks the wife, ‘Ni ukui nuu ukanjoha tai?’ ‘Do you know who will do my tie?’ The wife does not respond immediately but when she does when beating him up, she asks:

10. ‘Githĩ ndũkwendaga kũmenya nuũ ũgakwoha tai? Nĩ nũ ngakuoha tai. ũni ota uria ngwathĩkagĩra.’

‘Didn’t you just ask me who will do your tie? I will do your tie. Just like I always submit to you’.

On the pretence account, the wife should be seen to be pretending make a genuine statement / promise in saying that she will submit to her husband. In a situation where she beats him up immediately, the hearer should recognise that her question is not meant to elicit answers on who is supposed to carry out the task but rather to show cynicism towards the thought that her husband has, that she should do his tie.

An echoic explanation assumes that the woman echoes the stereotype that women should submit to their husbands. However, her aim here is to dissociate herself from the stereotype and convey her attitude towards the stereotype. She is rather cynical about the assertion in the stereotype and thus mocks the husband for entertaining such a thought.

In the interpretation of the utterance, the speaker will access the encyclopedic entries of the word ‘submit.’ This may include:

- Give in to demands
- Show respect to those in authority
- Be humble and polite

The context in which the word is used however tells the hearer that the woman is ready to do anything else but not to submit to her husband. She beats him up instead. The hearer
should be able to recognize the dissociation from the utterance and also feel the cynical attitude that the woman has towards the proposition.

In Macangi’s `Mündürüme nĩ Mūgambo’ a story is told of Kĩng’ori’s father, who is getting tired of his wife behaviour of gossiping. Kĩng’ori’s father comes home to find the wife not there, as usual. He complains about her love for gossip and swears to stop the vice. When she finally comes, she explains that she had been summoned to attend to a sick child in the neighbourhood. Kĩng’ori’s father scornfully retorts,

11.  `Rĩu watũkiri ndagĩtari’
    `So you are now a doctor?’

Though the man pretends to be performing the speech act of asking a question, he expects us to see though the pretence and recognize that in the situation where his wife is always away gossiping with other women, she can be anything else at this point but not a doctor. He expects to convey of whom his disapproving attitude towards the wife gossiping behaviour.

In an echoic approach, the man seems to echo the old age stereotype that women like to gossip. He wants to express his dissociative attitude towards the truth of the stereotype. He also shows contempt to the attributed stereotype and mocks the wife and the society that endorse such a stereotype at large for believing in it.

In relevance theory, the relevance of this utterance will be achieved when the hearer accesses their encyclopedic entry for the word doctor.

A person who treats the sick
    - A consultant
    - Can save lives
    - Very knowledgeable

In context, this wife does not fit in any of the descriptions above. This is a metaphorical reference but the speaker sees no relationship between the woman and a doctor and so he is being ironical. When the hearer recognizes the speaker’s dissociation from the
utterance, she is able to see the speaker’s attitude towards gossip. The speaker disapproves of it and mocks the society for according women this negative trait.

### 3.3 Echoes based on social norms and values.

A social norm is a pattern of behavior in a particular group, community, or culture, accepted as normal and to which an individual is expected to conform.

Norms can be classified into two major categories. These are the informal norms and formal norms: Informal norms are further classified into folkways and mores. Folkways are behaviors that are expected and deviating from them does not ensure punishment. Mores are a non-written informal social norm. Going against mores calls for a much harsher treatment than going against folkways. For instance, one can face exclusion of a religious type. Formal norms fall under 3 categories: rules, legal rules, and rules of practice.

Sociologists speak of at least three types of norms. This one is concerned with standards of behavior that are socially approved but not morally significant. For example, belching loudly at a dinner table is against American folkway. The second classification is of mores. Mores are norms of morality. Breaking mores offends most people of a culture. For example, attending church while nude is often considered as taboo. This means that culture absolutely forbids them. Another example is the practice of incest and homosexuality among the African cultures.

The third classification of norms is of laws. Laws are a formal body of the rules enacted by the state and backed by the power of the state. Most Mores are enacted into law. For example, as much as child abuse is a More, it has been enacted as a law whereby its practice attracts punishment from the legal arm of all governments.

Different communities have different cultural norms due to their distinct cultures and heritage. All human beings are born in a complex culture which strongly influences how they live and behave throughout their lives.
3.3.1 Cultural Values

A value refers to the intrinsic worth, the fair equivalent or goodness of something. According to Leakey (1971:1014), in the traditional Gĩkũyũ culture, people value the institutions of marriage, human life, morality, respect for people’s property and good leadership. The following is a brief discussion of each.

3.3.1.1 Marriage.

Marriage among the Agĩkũyũ is seen as a foundation on which families are built. A family constitutes the basic social group that operates must widely and most intensely in the activity of everyday life. All kinships ultimately derive their legitimacy from family. The rights and duties of the individual economic, religious and political life either exclusively or predominantly work through channels of kinship.

Marriage and protection for matrimony and parenthood are necessary steps in the process of acquiring social status. Marriage therefore, has the specific purpose of perpetuating ones lineage and in the process, bestowing social status on a man. Premarital sex is highly discouraged since it did not serve the purpose of matrimony and parenthood. Stiff – fines were meted out to people who committed adultery.

3.3.1.2. Human Life

Human life was highly valued among the Gĩkũyũ people. However, killing an enemy was permissible. No one allowed to take away another person’s life. There was no distinction made between murder and manslaughter. Both were considered as murder.

Murder was punished according to the principle of compensation. Although nothing can be done for a murdered man his group could be indemnified.

Leakey (1977:5-7) observes that the fine was the same for all deaths, whether intentional or accidental. For example, among the southern Agĩkũyũ, there was a standard fine of 100 goats and 5 sheep if a male was killed by a member another family. On the other hand the murder of women was compensated by payment of 4 – 5 cows and one bull or by the payment of 8 cattle (7 cows and one bull), depending on location. The family of the deceased was paid 30 goats and sheep if the deceased happened to be a married woman.
25 of these animals were paid to the family to which she was married and the remaining five were paid to her brother.

The examples cited above show that fines for taking away a person’s life were very heavy. This was done deliberately to make the fines so deterrent as to discourage crime. Life, once taken away cannot be replaced; the best alternative was therefore to prevent it from happening.

3.3.1.3 Morality
Among the Agikuyu people, moral values formed the bedrock of the education that was given to children as they grew up. The same was also impressed on people who were about to wed or who were going through one rite of passage to another.

Leaders were expected to be people of upright character. Generally, people were warned against promiscuity pre-marital sex, and adultery. All were treated as punishable offences. For example among the Southern Gikuyu, an adulterer was fined three stall-fed rams which he paid to the council of elders. The offender was also made to produce a small ram or he goat and he took Muuma (oath) that he would never again visit that woman, and that he would never commit adultery with any other women.

3.3.1.4. Value and Respect for other People’s Property
Children were traditionally socialized to respect other people’s property. They grew up distinguishing between legitimately acquired goods and stolen ones. Each family endeavored to ensure that their children respected neighbours properties. This was meant to inculcate in the minds of the young the virtue of honesty.

People were heavily punished when found stealing. Habitual thieves were not welcome among the Gikuyu. Punishments involved being crucified on an anthill, being thrown into a river to drown or being burnt alive.

3.3.1.5. Good Leadership
Leadership tends to influence if not dedicate all the activities and affairs of a culture. This is why leadership is considered a very important institution among the Gikuyu people.
Though there are no centralized systems of government, leaders had to possess certain qualities that were acceptable to the people as characteristics of leadership. They included, Seniority in age, Wealth and reputation as a warrior.

Old age was associated with wisdom. Wisdom is important because a leader has to settle disputes. Wealth bestowed prestige and influence on an individual. More importantly it enabled the individual to offer hospitality to his people give loans, and organize feasts for the community. Other qualities of leadership such as being kind, wise, merciful, and having full knowledge of all affairs within the community were also valued.

3.3.2 Conformation to Social Norms and Values
Social norms have a way of maintaining order or organizing groups. Although not considered to be formal laws within society, norms still work to promote a great deal of social control. The standards or rules of behaviour are culturally defined, commonly known and frequently invoked.

Members of a culture must conform to its norms for the culture to exist and function. Hence members must want to conform and obey rules. They first must internalize the social norms and values that dictate what is normal for the culture, and then they must socialize or teach norms and values to their children.

If internalization and socialization fail to produce conformity, some form of social control is eventually needed. Social control may take the form of ostracisms, fines, punishments and even imprisonments.

3.3.3 Echoes of norms, and values.
3.3.3.1 Echoes of value of human life
In the story of Wacici and her friends, her jealous friends decide to bury her alive in an attempt to eliminate her. The girl is however, rescued by her brother. When she finally meets her cruel friends she tells them,

``Nĩngatho nĩ ciiko ciyanu. Ucio nĩ urata wa ma.’’
``Thank you for your deeds. That is true friendship.’’
On the pretence account, Wacici pretends to perform the speech act of expressing gratitude by uttering the words ‘thank you.’ It is a norm for people to say thank you when nice things are done to them. The discrepancy between what is done and what is said helps us to recognize the pretence in the utterance and realize that it lacks the serious force of assertion. This said in a situation where the friends attempted to kill Wacici by burying her alive shows that Wacici is everything but grateful to the friends deeds. The reference to their friendship as true is another instance where Wacici is pretending to make an assertion. Their deed of burying her alive goes against the grain of friendship and so ‘true’ would be the last objective to use for such friendship.

On an echoic account; Wacici seems to echo the societal values and norms. The society has great value for human life. No one is allowed to take another person’s life. By thanking her friends for having attempted to murder her, she wants to dissociate herself from the fact that human life is valuable and should be respected. She conveys her attitude of rejection and cynicism towards this societal value and mocks herself, her friends and anybody who would hold this as true.

In order to get the speaker’s meaning in this utterance, one has to evaluate the use of the words “thank you” in a cultural set up. As a norm people say thank you to express gratitude when something good has been done to them.

In this context however, the girls have gone against the societal value for human life. They wanted to kill Wacici, an offence that is culturally unacceptable. The hearer should be able to see Wacici’s dissociation from her previous thoughts that human life is valuable, and recognize her attitude towards the proposition. Name mocks the society and herself for believing in true friendship.

A similar scenario is experienced in the narrative “ciatigiwo iganjo’, by Kabebe. Here, a man who is desperate to have more children so he seeks the services of several witch doctors who advise him to slay his two children in order to manage to have more. When he gets home, he summons them to where he is, ready to execute his plan but he has gets other thoughts. He questions his intelligence saying:
13. "ĩ kai ndohĩga atĩa… njũræg cĩana ciakwa?"
   "how wise can I get… kill my own children?"

A pretence account to this utterance wants the hearer to recognize that the speaker is pretending to assert that he is wise. The force behind the assertion however lacks genuineness. In the circumstance where the speaker wants to kill his own children, he finds himself everything but wise. He shows, by his utterance, how, inappropriate it would be to ascribe to him the property by being wise. A wise person cannot kill his children.

Adding an echoic element to this pretence account will require that the speaker and hearer know the cultural norms and value that the speaker echoes. Among the Agikuyu, human life is valued and to kill is to go against a cultural norm. The speaker here dissociates herself from the attributed norms and values and conveys an attitude of rejection of this value. He commits himself to the claim that he can kill his own children, but not to the assumption that this decision is wise.

To achieve relevance, the speaker must look into the cultural attitudes towards human life. Human life is highly valued. Anyone who commits murder is punished even by death. As such, it would be stupid to deliberately commit the crime of murdering another. In this context, the speaker is contemplating on killing his children and, and bearing the consequences in mind, he wants to reject the thought as being wise. He actually finds it stupid and that is why he orders the kids to go away and is unable to execute the order. The dissociation from the assertion that he is clever and his expression of contempt towards the thought which helps the hearer to achieve her expectation of relevance.

3.3.3.2. Echoes of value of morality

In the story of Gachungwa (orange fruit) by Githingithia, a man lies to his wife that he has to travel upcountry in order to go see his mother whose hand had been bitten by a donkey. In real sense, he wants to take his mistress (Gachungwa) out of town for the weekend.

Unfortunately for him, his mother visits them when Githinhithia is away. His plan is no longer a secret, but this is unknown mission to him. Upon getting home, he asks his wife
to prepare for him some warm water, in order to bathe and relieve himself of the tiring effects of the journey. He says, ‘ndirakiigwa nogete, ndirenda kwihura, tumai nogoke. ‘I am really tired; I just wish to take a shower’. The wife retorts,
14. "Mhh, nĩ mĩnoga ya thabari iyo. We wĩ mĩndũ wa bata mũno."

``Mmh, those are the tiring effects of the journey. You are a very responsible man."

The wife, clearly not convinced by her husband’s explanation pretends to be in agreement with him about why he is tired and refers to him as a very responsible man. She expects the hearer to see through her pretence in uttering the explanation in the affirmative and terming him responsible. She is least convinced about why the husband is tired. In a situation where she knows that he was out there with another woman yet lying about his whereabouts, she finds him irresponsible to his marriage and to the family as a whole. She wants to mock him for making such an utterance, and conveys her rejection to its truthfulness.

The wife, on an echoic account should be seen to echo the society values on morality. Being honest is a virtue that is instilled in a person throughout their life. Spouses are expected to be truthful and faithful. Marriage should be respected and promiscuous behaviour is discouraged. She wants to dissociate herself from this value and convey an attitude of rejection towards this assertion. She mocks herself cynicism and anybody else for believing in them.

In relevance theory, the speaker should first access the societal norms on marriage and the cultural roles assigned to men by culture. Spouses are supposed to be faithful to each other and promiscuity is discouraged. Going against these norms is seen as offensive and irresponsible.

In this context, the husband has clearly gone against the norms and terming him as responsible is simply inappropriate. The speaker wants to dissociate himself from the utterance and convey an attitude of disapproval towards it and to mock anyone who might utter it.

In the story ‘Mwana ni waũ,’ Machangi accuses his friend Kianangi of being an idler who wastes all his time at the shopping centre instead of attending to his home. In defense, Kianangi says that he amassed his wealth a long time ago and so he does need to work
However, when leaving, he steals Machangi’s piece of wood. Machangi discovers him in good time and says,

15. ‘‘kĩrehe múti wakwa, we gũtirĩ kĩndũ kiene ũhutagía.’’

‘‘Bring back my piece of wood, you do not take people’s things’’

On a pretence account, Machangi pretends to make the assertion that Kianangi never takes peoples property. This, uttered in the background where Kianangi wants to make away with Machangi’s property clearly demonstrates that Machangi is pretending and finds his friend to be everything else but one who respects other people, when it comes to their property.

On an echoic, Machangi may be seen to echo societal norms and values. According to the Agikũyũ community, children are socialized to respect other people’s property and the virtue of earning an honest living is instilled in them. Habitual thieves are not welcome in the community and people are heavily punished if found stealing. Machangi wants to dissociate himself from this norms and values and conveys an attitude of mockery to those people who conform to these norms.

In Relevance theory, the hearer will have to access the societal norms and values concerning respect for other people’s property. People are expected to handle other people’s property with respect. Stealing is discouraged and honesty is instilled as a virtue.

In this context, for Machangi to tell Kĩanagi that he does not take other peoples thing in a context where he catches him red handed when stealing from him, the speaker wants to show that Kĩanagi is everything but honest. The hearer must see that the speaker dissociates himself from the assertion that Kĩanagi is an honest person and mocks anyone who would entertain such an utterance.

3.3.3.3. Echoes of value for marriage

In Mũciari nĩ mũciari, a comedy by Machangi, Machangi ridicules his friend Kĩanangi who sells his half acre piece of land to go and buy a 5 acre piece of land. According to Machangi, this decision is uncalled for and a selfish one. It would be understandable if he were the one doing it, since he has a wife and children. He says:
\textit{``Wendie mūgūnda nuthu gūkū ūkagure īka ithano na ūri wiki. Nūreciria.''}

“You want to sell half an acre of land to go buy five acres yet you are all alone, That’s quite thoughtful of you.”

A pretence analysis of the utterance above would want the hearer to recognise that the speaker is pretending to assert that Kianangi is being thoughtful. In a situation where Kianangi intends to buy a big piece of land yet he is to occupy it all by himself, the speaker finds him not thoughtful and unwise. He expects the hearer to see through the pretence and recognise his attitude of rejection to this utterance.

In an echoic account, the speaker echoes the societal norms and value for marriage. It is a norm for men to marry when they get of age. Marriage is valued and seen as a channel for perpetuating ones lineage. It is also a way of bestowing social status in a man. The speaker wants to dissociate himself from this societal norms and values regarding marriage. He wants to convey an attitude of mockery to himself and to members of the society who hold dear these norms.

To understand this utterance, the speaker must access what the society deems as being thoughtful of a mature marriageable man

- A mature man should have a family of his own
- The man should get children and provide for them.

In the context where the said man has no family and yet he wants to invest in a five acre piece of land, it is inappropriate to refer to his intentions as being thoughtful. There seems to be a chronology in which events should follow. His starting with investing and not thinking about marriage is not being thoughtful. The hearer should be able to see the speaker’s dissociation from this societal expectations and his attitude of mockery to the society.

In the comedy mathekania ma ihenjo, by Kīhenjo, Kīhenjo blames the wife for bearing too many kids. He actually claims that he is not the father to some of the kids. He
describes their physical appearance which he uses as proof that he is not the father. Ndifa, for example is seven years old and wears shoe number seven.

17. `ũcio nĩ mwana kũraiha? Githĩ tiniĩ atũkĩtte?
``Isn’t that boy tall… just like me?

Kĩhenjo pretends to assert that the said child looks like him. In a situation where he complains about the child’s age and the size of shoe he wares, he suspects that he is not the father of the child. He therefore does not look like him at all. He expects the hearer to see through this pretence and recognize his rejection of the truth of the utterance.

The hearer echoes societal norms and values on faithfulness in marriage; parenthood and faithfulness. Women are expected to sire kids with their husbands only. Adultery is discouraged and children outside marriage are considered outcasts. The speaker dissociates from this aspects of marriage values and norms. He conveys an attitude of contempt towards them and ridicules himself for expecting the wife to remain faithful in the marriage.

To understand this utterance in relevance theory, the speaker must consider how people are believed to get their physical appearances. People take after their parents. In a context where Kĩhenjo complains that the boy does not have his legs but those of a Luo, then stating that the boy takes after him, the hearer is ironical. The hearer should be able to see that the boy least looks like Kĩhenjo. Kĩhenjo conveys an attitude of rejection to this utterance, and mocks himself for thinking he is the father of this child.

3.3.4 An evaluation of the pretence and echoic accounts

As noted earlier, culture refers to the total way of life of any society. It encompasses the learned behaviours, beliefs, attitudes, values, and ideals that are characteristics of a particular society or population. One way of ensuring conformity to social norms and values is through ridicule and mockery and being sarcastic. Irony is one way of ridiculing stupidity, vices or folly in the society.
The pretence account which is taken as a type of simulation involves exploitation of resemblances. Due to the pretence involved, the ironic effect achieved when the utterance is made is weak.

When irony involves attribution of a thought, a proposition or conceptual content or meaning, the force and effect of irony in the echoic utterance is stronger. The attributed becomes the object of the attitude that the speaker conveys. The utterances that echo this values and norms are best treated as cases of echoes rather than pretence. That way, the social function behind the utterance is felt, unlike in the case of pretence.

3.4 Summary

In this chapter, I categorized Gĩkũyũ ironical verbal utterances according to source of the echo. I came up with four main sources of echoes. The first two: stereotypes and societal norms and values have been discussed in this chapter.

Illustrations of each have been given and a pretence and echoic account used to analyse the irony in the utterances. Relevance comprehension procedures have finally been applied to explain how the hearer arrives at speaker meaning in the interpretation of these utterances.

The last part of this chapter is an evaluation of the pretence and echoic accounts to determine which best achieves ironical effects in echoes of stereotypes and societal norms and values. Societal norms and values are an integral part of culture and so the echoic account achieves more cognitive effects because there is less processing effort involved when they are referred to.
CHAPTER FOUR
ECHOES IN GIKUYU IRONICAL VERBAL UTTERANCES

4.0 Introduction
In chapter three, the researcher looked at two sources of echoes in Gikũyũ ironical verbal utterances. These are echoes of stereotypes and those of societal norms and values. In this chapter, the study will look into echoes of what people have said before and echoes of roles and expectations of society.

Section one deal with echoes which stem from the immediate context while section two looks into echoes of roles and expectations of society on an individual

4.1. Echoes based on the immediate context
Irony comprehension according to (Katz & Lee 1993) as quoted in Giora (1999: 241) is believed to rely heavily on context. The claim is that in a rich and supportive context, irony is comprehended more or less directly. Wilson (2009: 197) says that irony is easier to recognize when the echoic nature is made more salient. This happens when the thought the speaker is echoing is overtly expressed in a previous utterance.

4.1.1. Echoes based on immediate context
In Rũgano rwa wacici, an ogre promises to care for a woman who has recently given birth saying, ‘Nĩṅgũkũhiũhiũria’ ‘I will take care of you.’ However, whenever he prepares food, he makes as if to feed the lady and says, ‘Wagacıarĩ ndũke tũhiũhiio, warega ngarıía.’ ‘Woman, who has given birth, take this food. If you refuse then I eat it.’ As a result of lack of food, the woman grows thinner and thinner. When her husband comes home, she reports her ordeal in the hands of the ogre saying:

1.  `Irĩmũ  rǐrĩ  nũrĩahũũhũrie o biu. Nĩkũo hinyaũite ũguo.
   `This ogre has really taken care of me. That is why I am this thin.’

On a pretence account, we would say that the woman is pretending to make an assertion when she says that the ogre has really taken care of her. This uttered in a situation where the woman is very thin is an indication that the ogre never really fed her. The speaker expects us to see this pretence and recognize how dissociative she is from the utterance.
On an echoic account, the lady echoes what the ogre had said before but dissociates herself from it. The ogre had promised to care for the woman saying, 'nìngũkũhĩũhĩria'. ‘I will take care of you.’ The speaker echoes this promise with an aim of dissociating herself from it. She expresses her attitude by not endorsing it as true. She mocks herself and anyone else for having taken the ogre seriously.

In relevance theory, it is the context in which the utterance is used that makes it ironical. When the lady utters (1) the hearer is able reach the expression expressed without much effort. To care for a new mother means that:

- Food is provided in plenty.
- The woman should be strong and energetic

However, it does not satisfy the hearer’s expectation of relevance. The hearer has to enrich the utterance with other contextual information in order to reach the implied meaning, which the speaker intended to communicate. In this case, the promise by the ogre to care for the new mother, combined with the current state of the woman helps the hearer to see the lady’s attitude towards the attributed utterance. It is an attitude of rejection and skepticism. The speaker ridicules the audience and herself for believing in the attributed utterance. Upon establishing the attitude expressed by this IVU, the hearer’s expectation of relevance is achieved and therefore she/he can stop.

In the story, Ciana Ciatigwo iganjo, a lady whose children are missing in their journey threatens to go back and fetch them. The husband insists that the kids are part of the entourage saying: ‘Thĩ tũthĩ, kaĩ ndĩ mũkĩgu atia ngũririkana mbũrĩ na ng’ombe na ndũgũrwo nĩ ciana?’ ‘Keep moving, how stupid would I be to remember the goats and cows and forget about the children?’ On reaching their destination, the woman discovers that the husband was not actually telling her the truth. She tells him,

2. “Na kaĩ nĩ ma wĩ mũgĩĩ, ndũngũriganũro nĩ ciana’”
   “You truly are wise, you could not forget the kids.”

Her utterance is not meant to assert that her husband is intelligent. She echoes what the husband had uttered earlier, that he is very intelligent and cannot forsake his children.
Secondly according to Gĩkũyũ culture, parents take care of their young ones. The speaker thus seems to echo the two, but conveys her attitude towards the utterance and the societal norm. She does not find the man as intelligent and caring as he claims to be and so she dissociates herself from that thought. She is actually mocking him, herself and anyone else who would entertain such a thought.

A pretence account would mean that the woman pretends to be performing the speech act of endorsing her husband as a very intelligent and caring man. She pretends not to see the husband’s misdeed of subjecting the children to danger by leaving them behind. She expects the listener to also pretend to be unknowing. However, the current situation cannot warrant the wife to refer to the man as intelligent and caring. The speaker therefore hopes that people can see through the pretence and see that the husband is everything but intelligent and caring.

A successful relevance theory interpretation of the utterance above would mean that after establishing the linguistic meaning of the utterance, “Na kaĩ nĩma wĩ mũgĩ ḭ, ndũŋĩriganĩrwo nĩ ciana. ‘You truly are wise, you cannot forget the kids. A clever person is

- Wise,
- Intelligent
- Not gullible

The hearer does not achieve his expectation of relevance, because of the discrepancy of the uttered statement and the real world. He should therefore enrich it with other contextual information in order for it to achieve relevance.

The attributed utterance, in this case “, kaĩ ndĩ mũkĩgu atia, ngũririŋa kũhĩngũrũra mbũrĩ na ngombe na digĩrwo nĩ ciana.? ‘How stupid would I be to remember the goats and cows and forget the children?’ helps the hearer recognize that the speaker does not simply want to re-state an attributed utterance, but express her dissociative attitude towards it. She does not agree with the attributed proposition. The speaker’s intended meaning is to show that she disagrees with the notion that the man is intelligent or caring.
In Gĩthingithia’s comedy *Fuel*, the narrator tells the story about their journey to and from Njoro. The journey from Njoro is riddled with misfortunes. They get conned of fuel at a petrol station. Their car also stalls in the middle of nowhere. The two are rescued by a good Samaritan. The narrator, however repeats the singing a popular Gikuyu song that is indicative that the journey to and from Njoro was safe. He sings,

```
Tũrathire tũkenete, tũracoka tũkenete, rũgendo rwitu rwari rwega tũgĩthiĩ na tũgĩcoka.
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`We went while happy and came back while happy. Our journey was successful, to and fro.
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On a pretence account, the narrator pretends to assert that their journey was good to and fro. He also pretends to be unseeing of the terrible encounter that ruins their journey back. The situation on the ground however helps the audience to see this pretence, because the narrator is able to communicate that their journey back was nothing but a mess or hectic. He is mocking himself for having thought that a journey is always without bad happenings.

This case can also be analysed from the echoic account angle. When Gĩthingithia sings this song at first, he echoes the expectations and desire that their journey will be without bad happenings. When they get conned of fuel and their car subsequently stalls and he still sings the song, the last part of the song ‘tũgacoka tũkenete’ `came back while happy’ is not applicable. The narrator repeats the song, to show how dissociative he is from the contents of the song; that their journey would be without problems, to and fro. He ridicules and mocks himself for having entertained the thought in the first place. His intention is to tell us that he does not agree with what the song proposes.

Relevance theory explains that for the hearer to reach the speaker’s intended meaning, he on realising that the linguistic interpretation of the utterance does not satisfy their expectation of relevance must enrich it with other contextual information. In this case, the journey is not as problem free as was anticipated. A problem free journey would mean

- No traffic snarl ups
- No car break down
• No external attacks
• No ailments of passengers etc.

When Machagi sings this, song its linguistic raw interpretation does not satisfy the hearer’s expectations of relevance. The context in which it is sung however, does. The aim of the song is to show the listener Gĩthingithia’s dissociation from the attributed utterance. He had sung that the journey would be problem free. Here, he wants to show dissociation from this utterance. He expresses an attitude of rejection to it. This is his intended meaning.

After narrating his ordeal to his friend Njaramba, Njaramba says,

4  `Naũnţiŋraga ũriŋa wĩ Njũhörĩga’
  `but you always tell me how intelligent you are’

On the echoic account, Njaramba echoes what Gĩthingithia has always told him…that he is a clever man. The speaker clearly points to the listener that he is echoing what Gĩthingithia always tells him. However he gives it an emotive overtone and conveys his own attitude towards it. He wants to dissociate himself from the thought that Gĩthingithia is a bright man, judging from the way he was easily conned. He mocks Njaramba for entertaining the thought that he is clever and in a way ridicules his friend for the unfounded pride.

This can be a case of pretence if Njaramba simply referred to Gĩthingithia as ‘njuhīga.’ ‘The clever/intelligent one. If that were the case, the speaker would be pretending to be commending the friend for their intelligence. However, the activities that take place prior to this statement do not warrant the speaker to do so. He would therefore expect the hearer to see through the pretence and conclude that Gĩthingithia is everything but clever in the current situation.

A relevance theory interpretation of how the hearer reaches the speaker’s intended meaning would start by his interpretation of this utterance with an identification of the linguistic raw material decoded by the auditory organs and checked for its grammatical appropriateness. A njũhörĩga is a
• Clever person
• Cunning
• Sly

This description does not fit Githingithia in the current context. Since the explicit information does not fit in the principle of relevance, then the hearer will conclude that it does not match the speaker’s intended interpretation. He will therefore enrich it with contextual information for it to fit in the principle of relevance.

The hearer will thus look for extra contextual assumptions which will lead to the now turned implicit information which the speaker supposedly intended to communicate. The hearer will clearly see dissociation by the speaker from the utterance. He is rejecting the assertion that Githingithia is intelligent, and mocks Githingithia or anyone else who would view him so, at the time of speaking.

In Gachungwa. (Orange fruit: Gikuyu euphemism for Mistress), this is a narration about a man (Murigi) who wants to take his mistress (gachungwa) on a date, out of town. He makes up a story implying that his mother’s hand had been bitten by a donkey and so he has to travel upcountry to see her. Unfortunately for him, his mother turns up while he is away and so his mission is no longer a secret. Upon return, Murigi’s mother who was all along hiding in the kitchen shows up. In rage, she asks,

5. *(Scornfully): atĩ nindirarumirwo guoko nĩ ng’unda?*
   
   I hear my hand was bitten by a donkey?*

An echoic account will adequately explain this ironical verbal utterance. Murigi’s mother echoes what he had asserted earlier, that she had been bitten by a donkey. The mother’s intention is not to confirm from her son whether the assertion is true or not, but to convey her attitude towards it. She has a contemptuous attitude to that utterance. She dissociates herself from the attributed utterance which she wants to suggest is more or less obviously false. She is disgusted. She scorns the son for making such an utterance.
On the pretence account, the mother pretends to be asking a question. However, the listener should understand that she does not need an answer to it, but is questioning the credibility of the content of the utterance. She expects us to see through the pretence, and understand her feelings towards it. She wants to expose it as a lie.

For the reader to achieve relevance in this utterance, she has to first access the linguistic meaning interpretation first. Here, the question does not fully help the listener understand the speaker meaning. Contextual information that Mũrigĩ had lied that his mother’s hand had been bitten helps us to unravel the speaker meaning. She, in her question echoes Mũrigĩ’s utterance but in this case, dissociates herself from it. She wants to demonstrate that it is not true and that Mũrigĩ is a liar.

When the narrator is telling the listeners of how Mũrigĩ succeeded in fooling everyone, he refers to him as ‘Jamba ya ita.’ ‘The brave warrior.’ However, upon realizing that he had been discovered, Mũrigĩ faints. The narrator says, ‘rìrìa onire nyina- ri, akìregera, akìringa thì pa!’ ‘On seeing the mother, he became weak and lost consciousness. He hit the ground pa!’ Njaramba, the one the story is being narrated to asks:

6.  

_ Njamba ya ita īkìringa thì? _

The brave warrior fainted?

Njaramba echoes the narrators earlier reference to Mũrigĩ as ‘jamba ya ita’ ‘a brave warrior,’ but conveys his attitude to the thought. He wants to dissociate himself from the thought that Mũrigĩ is a brave warrior now that he faints on seeing the mother. The societal expectation is that a brave warrior should exhibit bravery at all times. Mũrigĩ does not. Njaramba shows dissociation from this thought and in the process portrays it as inappropriate in this case. He does not agree with the assertion that Mũrigĩ is a brave warrior.

A pretence account to this utterance would assume that Njaramba is pretending to be making a serious assertion in calling the man in the story a brave warrior. The on goings in the narration does not rhyme with this name tag and so the listener should be able to see through the pretence. Njaramba is able to tell us that this man is everything but brave.
In order to achieve the expectations of relevance, the hearer will first access the linguistic raw material; that Mūrīgī is a brave person. A brave person does not get scared easily. If this information is enriched with other contextual information, the hearer will notice that there is a mismatch between the expressed and the situation on the ground. To achieve their expectation of relevance, the hearer has to see the dissociative attitude by the speaker from the attributed thought. The speaker is expressing his rejection of the thought as being a truthful assertion.

4.2 Echoes of Roles and Societal Expectations

Social expectation is a term used to refer to the roles we have assumed or we are supposed to assume in adopting to our roles in society. There are a number of ways in which people socially construct the world around them. One of this is to construct social structures that give cues for how to behave. Status and roles are these structures.

A social role defines a set of behaviours that are expected of someone who holds a particular status. Status refers to a position or rank in a hierarchy of power relations in a social unit. People occupy statuses and play a role. For example, a wife (status) traditionally plays the role of `keeping house,' while a father(status) plays the role of being a breadwinner.

As people grow, they are taught and expected to act in a certain way. They keep getting positive or negative feedback from their surroundings including family and friends that nudge them to the various directions. Most of these expectations are based on social roles placed on people by their cultures or by gender roles.

4.2.1 Expectations Based on Gender

Gender refers to being male or female. It is a significant aspect of one’s personal identity and plays a large part in how we live our lives and make sense of who we are. Gender influences how one dresses, what activities people carry out in societies, how they are treated by others and how they come to see and think about themselves.

In the most African cultures, gender operates as a binary system. Behaviours and qualities are allocated or divided up according to whether they are considered masculine or
feminine. This means that men are not expected to act like a woman, nor women expected to act like a man.

### 4.2.2 Echoes of Expectations of Men

Every society has its own expectations and beliefs about what it means to be a man. However, men face common social pressures about how they should behave, feel and think. A man can feel under pressure to always appear:

- Strong and powerful physically and mentally
- Self reliant, able to sort out and deal with problems alone
- In control- not showing any vulnerabilities.
- Rational, logical
- Not express emotions
- Interested in and ready for sex (at all ages)

Ideal masculinity is widely associated with bravery, strength, independence and sexual activity. From an early age, boys are taught in tacit and explicit ways the ideals that their mothers, fathers, peers and society expect from them as men.

In Mũka Mũru, (a bad wife) a story by Gĩthingithia (kula happy), Jaramba wonders of a man who is physically assaulted by his wife.

8. “Ahũragwo tondu ni mwana?”
   “Is he beaten because he is a child?”

On a pretence account, Jaramba pretends to be asking a question about whether the man is a child. In real sense, in a case where this man is married and actually has children, he wants to dissociate himself from this thought and convey an attitude of contempt to it.

On an echoic account, Njaramba echoes the fact that men are expected to be strong and powerful physically. He however dissociates himself from this expectation and mocks the man the narrator and the audience for generalizing it as a valid expectation.
In order to arrive at the speaker’s intention, one has to first process the linguistic raw material. It will not satisfy the hearer’s expectation of relevance because the person in question is not actually a child. The hearer will enrich his linguistic raw material with this information to recognise that the speaker wants to dissociate himself from this assertion and expresses an attitude of contempt to it, and also mock himself and anyone else for having expected that all men are strong physically.

In the same story, the narrator explains that the woman had taken control of the running of everything in that homestead. To this Njaramba states,

9. ‘eeh, ūcio Mūtwe nīwarega gūkīrwo nī ngingo’
   ‘eeh that head has refused to be overtaken by the neck!’

In this case, Njaramba pretends to be unseeing or not to understand the predicament of the man in question when making the metaphoric reference above. The neck refers to the woman while the head refers to the man. In a situation where the wife is in charge and orders, beats and humiliates the man, the neck has obviously gone beyond the head. He expects us to see through this pretence and recognise the mockery in it.

On an echoic account, the speaker echoes the societal expectation that men are always in control- not showing any vulnerabilities. He however wants to dissociate from the echo because the man in question is not in control of his home. The wife assaults him physically. The speaker conveys an attitude of mockery to this thought and ridicules the members of society for holding such expectations.

To understand the speakers meaning, one has to first access the linguistic meaning which in this case will not help him achieve his expectation of relevance. On enriching the explication with other contextual information; that the head here is actually functioning under the neck, he will see the dissociative attitude of the speaker from the statement, and recognise the mockery in it and thus achieve relevance.
4.2.3 Echoes of expectations of Women

Traditionally, women are expected to be perfect housewives, to cook and to clean. The qualities of a 'perfect woman' in an African set up include:

- femininity, beauty,
- respectful
- nurturing, motherly
- housewife, dependent
- Caretaker and loving.

To be feminine means to have qualities and appearances as listed above.

In the story ‘Mündūrūme ni mūgambo’, the main character, Machangi complains after his wife forces him to do all the house chores. He cooks, washes, fetches firewood and water. At some point he says,

10. ‘Na ati ha na ndīna mūtūmia’
    `And here I have a wife.’

On a pretence account, Machangi pretends to assert that he indeed has a wife. On looking at the kind of chores he engages in, he wants the hearer to see through the pretence and recognise that Machangi is as good as without a wife. He is therefore expressing his dissociative attitude to this utterance and is mocking himself for thinking that he married a 'perfect woman.'

The utterance can as well be analysed from an echoic account. The speaker echoes one of the societal expectations for women; that women should be perfect housewives, to cook and to clean. Here, he wants to dissociate from this expectation and convey his rejection of it. He in turn ridicules himself for having assumed that a wife should do all the house chores.

To understand what the speaker intends to communicate, the hearer has to first access and reject the linguistic raw interpretation of the statement. The societal expectation for a woman is that she should do all the house chores and be the ideal wife. The hearer will not meet the expectation of relevance from the linguistic interpretation. When he enriches
the information with other contextual information; that the man is actually doing all the `womanly’ duties in the home, then he will be able to see the dissociation of the speaker from the utterance and recognise the contemptuous attitude towards it, thus achieving expectations of relevance.

In the same story, machangi laments for having married this woman saying

11 ‘Nũ ndahikie mũndũ waĩna bata na mũthuri’
‘I married a woman who really values a husband.’

On a pretence account, Machangi pretends to say that this woman knows the value of a husband. In a situation where she forces him to perform duties `meant for women,’ the hearer should recognise that the speaker dissociates himself from the utterance and conveys an attitude of rejection towards it.

On an echoic account the speaker echoes the societal expectation on the role of women in a home; that women are housekeepers while men play the role of a bread winner. A woman who values her husband should not subject him to `womanly ‘duties. The speaker dissociates himself from the meaning of the utterance which is largely related to this cultural and gender expectation.

The speaker meaning here is only arrived at when the hearer rejects the linguistic interpretation of the utterance. The speaker does not meet his expectation of relevance from it because there is a discrepancy between the utterance and the situation on the ground. The woman does not value her husband since she subjects him to duties meant for her. The hearer should therefore recognise the speaker’s motive in the utterance which is basically to convey dissociation from the truth of the utterance and also express contempt towards the assertion.

4.3 Evaluation of the pretence and echoic account

The irony in the utterances was explained through the pretence and echoic accounts. In echoes based on immediate context, the pretence accounts of irony brought out a better account of the ironic effect than in echoes of societal roles and expectation.
The claim is that in a rich and supportive context, irony is comprehended more or less directly. The speaker is able to see the pretence and arrive at speaker meaning more easily. In verbal utterances that echo societal roles and expectations, the echoic account brings out a more tangible explanation. It is hoped that both the hearer and the speaker share this expectations and therefore one can tell when an utterance is used ironically.

4.4 Summary
This chapter was a continuation of the analyses of sources of echoes in Gikuyu ironical verbal utterances. Chapter three dealt with echoes of stereotypes and societal norms. This chapter has looked into echoes of what is said in immediate context as well as echoes of social roles and expectations of society on an individual.

The echoic and pretence accounts were used to explain the ironic effect in each utterance. The echoes of what is said in immediate context were best explained using the pretence account. This is because of the salience of utterances in the hearer’s mind that makes it easy to access and process the information, thus use less processing effort.

The process of arriving at speaker meaning was explained for each case. Generally, the hearer has to reject the linguistic interpretation in the utterance since they do not meet their expectation of relevance in it. They had to enrich it with other information provided in the context in order to see the speakers dissociation from their utterance due to the discrepancy of what they say in relation to context.
CHAPTER FIVE
FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction
This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section is a report of the findings of
the study. Section two gives a summary of the chapter while section three gives
recommendations for future studies.

5.1 Findings.
The researcher used two competing post Gricean accounts of irony. These are the
pretence and the echoic accounts. Collected data was analysed using the two accounts
concurrently to find out how the hearer achieves relevance in ironic verbal utterances.

The cognitive effects achieved in the ironic use of utterances mostly combine with
c context to yield contextual implications. A contextual implication in regard to irony is
achieved if the hearer detects the dissociation of the speaker from the utterance.

The research study proposes that echoic accounts work on strengthening of existing
assumptions . This is because unlike the pretence accounts where the hearer has to rely on
simulations and assumptions, the echo in an echoic utterance is based on something more
tangible. In this case, the norm, value societal expectation or role. It is therefore easier to
make out the discrepancy between what is said and what is in context with the echoic
account than with the pretence account.

The researcher found out that each echo required different amounts of processing effort in
intended meaning interpretation. The echoes of what has been said earlier in an
immediate context required less effort to process due to the recency in use. The listener
does not struggle to see the discrepancy between word use and context because the
information is still fresh in their mind. Echoes of stereotypes, societal values and norms
as well as roles and expectations of society on an individual required more processing
effort since the listener has to search their encyclopaedic memory to get meanings of
terms and then point out the discrepancies in the context within which they are used.
The two accounts were also found to be logically complex since one has to look beyond
the explicit meaning in order for the verbal ironic statement to acquire relevance. The
search for speaker dissociative attitude in both accounts makes the processing effort more
but it is higher in the pretence account. This is because the hearer struggles before realizing that the speaker is pretending. With the echoic account, the speaker has something to refer back to and therefore less processing effort is used.

Lastly, the researcher also noted that there is a probability that the ironic use of verbal utterances can highly lead to a misunderstanding especially when the speaker and the listener do not come from the same community, or have not engaged in a conversation recently. This is as far as the echoic account is concerned since the speaker tends to echo what exists in the community or what had been said in an earlier discourse.

5.2 Summary.
The two accounts of irony are ideal for the interpretation and achievement of relevance in ironic verbal utterances. They are however differently suited to explain different cases of irony. The pretence account explains ironic verbal utterances from echoes of what has been said in an immediate context better than the echoic account. The echoic account on the other hand is better in bringing out the ironic effect in echoes of stereotypes, societal norms and values as well as societal expectations on an individual.

The amount of processing effort and the number of cognitive effects achieved in using either account determines its suitability. In the pretence accounts, one uses a lot of processing effort in interpreting the ironic utterance. In the echoic account, less processing effort is used yet a similar number of cognitive effects are achieved. Since the two accounts achieve similar amounts of cognitive effects, none is better placed than the other as far as explaining irony is concerned. The echoic account only seems better since there is less processing effort used during the interpretation of ironical verbal utterances.

5.3 Recommendations
This study mainly focused on the interpretation of ironical verbal utterances. The study did not delve into the role and place of tone in irony interpretation. Gikuyu is a tonal language and this implies that a varied tone in a given utterance would yield different attitudes. The researcher therefore recommends a research study that seeks to explain the relationship between tone and irony in Gikuyu verbal utterances.

Since the ironic use of verbal utterances can lead to misunderstandings between the speaker and the hearer, the researcher proposes that a research be conducted to find out
ways in which such misunderstandings can be minimized. This would guarantee effective communication as far as verbal irony is concerned.
REFERENCES


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