

**THE INTERPRETATION OF GIKUYU IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS: A  
COGNITIVE APPROACH**

**By**

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## DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been submitted for examination in any other university.

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JENNIFER WANJIKU MUNYU

This research project has been submitted for the examination with our approval as the university supervisors.

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## **DEDICATION**

To

My beloved husband, Isaac Macharia;

Thank you for believing in me and being a source of my inspiration. Your encouragement, support and words of wisdom will forever remain imprinted in my memory

My children, Patience Nyambura and Catherine Wanjiru;

Thank you for praying for me and encouraging me 'Mum, you can make it!'

My dear parents, Francis Munyu and Naomi Wanjiru;

Your prayers and support kept me going. May God satisfy you with long life.

Dad, your passion for education will impact many generations.

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## DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

**Cognitive:** A term connected with thinking or conscious mental processes.

**Construal:** An interpretation of the meaning of a concept. It is also explained as the act of deducing or figuring out by inference or interpretation the meaning of a concept.

**Conventional metaphor:** Commonly used metaphor in a community building the thinking structure of a certain culture.

**Domain:** A place specifically held by, say, a language, in a given field, for example, physical terms.

**Image:** Mental picture or idea of somebody or something.

**Mappings:** The relationship or correspondences between concepts, for instance, the physical and the abstract concept.

**Metaphor:** A word, or string of words used in an imaginative to show something or somebody has the same qualities as another.

**Novel metaphor:** Expressions that are used unconventionally outside of the conceptual mappings they are normally associated with (Deignan 2005:35) as well as in relation to other more conventional metaphor (Semino, 2005:229).

**Source domain:** The physical concept from which understanding of an abstract concept is based or drawn.

**Target domain:** The abstract concept which draws information from the physical or concrete concept for its interpretation or understanding.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

BT	Blending Theory
CL	Cognitive Linguistics
CMT	Conceptual Metaphor Theory
CS	Cognitive Semantics
MWU	Multi Word Units
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
OLAC	Open Language Archives Community

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## ABSTRACT

The study is an investigation of the interpretation of selected Gīkūyū idiomatic expressions. It examines the Gīkūyū idioms with a view to determining the contribution made by the individual words that constitute the idioms and their importance in their figurative interpretation. The study uses the Conceptual Metaphor Theory as a theoretical framework. Metaphors play a major role in the idiomatic interpretation. Lakoff & Johnson (1980:5) came up with the idea of Conceptual mapping whereby the bridging is done on the metaphor. The study has been divided into five chapters. Chapter one captures the general information of the study which is background to the language, statement of the problem, objectives, hypotheses, rationale of the study, scope and limitations, theoretical framework, literature review, research methodology and the significance of the study. Chapter two explores the general information on idioms, that is, definition, properties, characteristics and classification. In chapter three, classification of selected Gīkūyū idiomatic expressions is done on the basis of plausible domains. The metaphorical element in the Gīkūyū idioms is also discussed. Chapter four discusses the application of the theory on Gīkūyū idioms where mapping is done on the metaphor. Finally, chapter five gives a brief summary of the research findings and conclusions by relating the findings to the research objectives and hypotheses. Recommendations are also presented in the chapter.

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.1 Introduction

This study aims at an interpretation of selected Gīkūyū idiomatic expressions within the framework of cognitive semantics. According to Evans & Melanie (2006), ‘cognitive semantics is concerned with investigating the relationship between experiences, the conceptual system, and the semantic structure encoded by language’. He further says that it entails ‘knowledge representation (conceptual structure) and meaning construction (conceptualization)’ (p.363).

This chapter contains the background to the study which first looks at a brief historical background of the Gīkūyū language and secondly, at the topic of research. The statement of the problem, objectives, hypotheses, scope and limitations of the study are well stipulated. What other scholars and researchers have said about idiomatic expressions is included in the literature review. In the theoretical framework, cognitive semantics is discussed. The research methodology which includes the research design, data collection and analysis is formulated. Relevant references are also included.

### 1.2 Background to the Study

According to Mc Devitt (1993), fluency in a particular language is determined by the usage of idioms. He continues to argue that the question of compositionality is an important matter in idiom analysis and has consequences on how to account for them.

Hockett, (1958:172) asserts that in order to comprehend the meaning of an idiom, more context is required, that is, it is conventional.

The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition) 'defines an idiom as a group of words in a fixed order that have a particular meaning that is different from the meanings of each word understood on its own. For example, *to have bitten off more than you can chew* is an idiom that means you *have tried to do something which is too difficult for you.*' The term 'idiomatic' is an adjective that means containing or consisting of an idiom: *bite the bullet* is an idiomatic expression that means *to accept something unpleasant without complaining.*'

The Oxford Learner's Dictionary, also gives an explanation of an idiom as 'a group of words whose meaning is different from the meanings of the individual words.' For instance in the English example, '*let the cat out of the bag,*' figuratively means, "*to tell a secret by mistake*". The literal meaning is letting the cat (animal) move out of the bag. From this explanation, we can conclude that the actual meanings of idioms cannot be taken literally but depend on the image therein. For instance, '*kick the bucket*' does not mean hitting a container with one's leg but it means dying.

Katz (1973:358) claims that the syntactic parts of an idiom do not determine their meaning. Mc Caig (1983) argues that foreign learners gauge themselves to have had a command of the language by the proper use of idioms accurately and appropriately.

According to Dixon (1994), idioms play a pivotal role in every communication for instance in speaking and reading.

According to Keysar and Bly (1999), the way we comprehend an idiom is viewed as a backward justification thus making the idiom understandable. They further say that idioms are in fact parts of a conceptual system that is metaphorically fixed in a given language. Fillmore et al. (1988:1), distinguish between encoding and decoding idioms,

that is, those that can easily be understood for example, “*answer the door*” which means to go to the door to see who is there, and those that do not give any clue hence need a lot context for instance the English idiom, *kick the bucket* which means to die.

### **1.2.1 Background to the Gikuyu language**

Guthrie (1967:43) in his classification system places Gĩkũyũ in Zone E of Group 50 and assigns it the language code 51. Kikuyu (or Gĩkũyũ) belongs to the Bantu family, which forms part of the Niger Congo phylum of languages. Gikuyu language is spoken in the central region of Kenya which include; Kiambu County, Nyeri County, Murang’a County, Kirinyaga County and Nyandarua County. Gĩkũyũ is also spoken in diverse areas in the rest of the country, for example, Rift Valley, Nairobi and other towns where members of the Gĩkũyũ ethnic community have settled.

According to the 2009 census, the Kikuyu population was about 6,622,576 (comprising 16.9% of Kenya’s population), making it the largest ethnic group in Kenya. According to CIA world fact book as of 2014, ‘there were approximately 9,902,212 Gĩkũyũ people in Kenya, that is, 22% of Kenya’s population.’ They are followed by the Luhya who comprise (14%). Other speech communities include the Luo, Meru, Kalenjin, among others, other Africans and non Africans who constitute the country’s population.

According to Mutahi (1977) the Gĩkũyũ language has seven dialects, namely;

Ki-Embu spoken in Embu District.

Ki-Mbeere spoken in Mbeere and part of Kirinyaga District.

Gi-Gicugu spoken in Kirinyaga and Embu District.

Ki-Ndia spoken in Kirinyaga District.

Ki-Mathira spoken in Nyeri District.

The Northern dialect spoken in Nyeri and Murang'a District.

The Southern dialect spoken in Kiambu and Murang'a District.

The Districts are nowadays called counties, for instance, Murang'a County, Kiambu County, among others. The Southern dialect is also called Gi-Kabete while the Northern dialect is called Ki-Murang'a or Ki-Metumi.

According to OLAC resources in and about Gĩkũyũ, the Gĩkũyũ dialects are five namely:

Gi-Gicugu spoken in Northern Kirinyaga.

Ki-Mathira spoken in Karatina and the surrounding.

Ki-Ndia spoken in Southern Kirinyaga.

Northern dialect spoken in Northern Murang'a and Nyeri

Southern Gĩkũyũ spoken in Kiambu and Southern Murang'a.

The Southern Gĩkũyũ dialect was used suffice it to say that the researcher hails from Murang'a.

### **1.3. Statement of the Problem**

The role played by the individual words in the creation of idioms and the meaning therein is quite debatable. Non-compositional models, for example, claim that 'the meaning of idioms is arbitrary and always independent of its constituent part so that they are often learned by heart'[as unanalyzed chunks]' (Bobrow and Bell,1973).

Compositional models, however, posit a contrary view. They argue that the constituent word's meaning play a great role in figurative meaning of an idiom (Cacciari and Glucksberg, 1991).



This study delved into this debate by examining Gīkūyū idioms using the Conceptual Metaphor Theory by Lakoff & Johnson. We examined Gīkūyū idioms with a view to determining the contribution made by the individual words that constitute the idioms and their importance or otherwise in their (idioms) interpretation.

While Conceptual Metaphor Theory has been studied and examined in relation to a number of linguistic phenomena, by a considerable number of scholars, not much has been done on idioms. Lakoff & Johnson (1980:5) who came up with idea of conceptual metaphors describe conceptual mapping as a process where one idea is defined in terms of another concept; that X is Y. Lakoff & Johnson go on to argue that in the course of mapping, bridging is done on the metaphor from the source to the target. The study seeks to establish to what extent mappings can take place in the interpretation of Gīkūyū idioms.

The questions the study undertook to answer were:

1. Do metaphors have an important function in the formation and interpretation of idioms?
2. How does the semantic meaning of lexical items of idioms relate to the general meaning of the idiomatic expressions?
3. On what basis can Gīkūyū Idiomatic expressions be classified?

#### **1.4. Research Objectives**

The objectives that guided this study were:

1. To ascertain the metaphorical element of selected idiomatic expressions in Gīkūyū.

2. To establish the relationship between the semantic meaning of the lexical items in idioms and the general meaning of the idiomatic expressions.
3. To classify selected Gĩkũyũ idiomatic expressions according to their thematic domains, e.g. hard work, emotions.

### **1.5 Rationale of the Study**

Katz (1998:1) says that our understanding of 'figurative language is central to several important issues in cognitive science including the relationship of language and thought, how we process language, and how we comprehend abstract meaning.' This study on Gĩkũyũ idiomatic expressions may be of great significance to future scholars and academicians in Gĩkũyũ and other languages. It may also help new users of Kikuyu language to be able to decipher meaning of idiomatic expressions and may provide a basis for further research.

### **1.6 The Scope and Limitations of the Study**

The study dealt with selected idioms from Southern Gĩkũyũ dialect only using a cognitive approach. This study limited itself to discussing idioms only as found in Gĩkũyũ language. Collection of data was done from several sources: songs, T.V stations and focused group discussions. The bulk however was drawn from four songs by two Gikuyu artists namely; Kamaru Joseph and Muigai wa Njoroge. Cognitive approach is quite wide and this study limited itself to Conceptual Metaphor Theory to analyze its data.

## **1.7 Literature Review**

### **1.7.1 Review of Literature on Gĩkũyũ**

Leakey (1959) says that 'Gĩkũyũ could be one of the pre-historic languages among the Bantu languages and consequently, its grammar resembles most of other Bantu languages. He further says that this would mean that 'Kikuyu resembles the ancestor of the Bantu language (proto-Bantu) more than the other Bantu languages. This knowledge will be of great benefit to this study because it explores the rich culture and traditions of the Gĩkũyũ community.

Barlow (1960) deals with the outstanding aspects of grammar with reference to various syntactic categories showing various noun classes and adjectives in Kikuyu. Idioms use these syntactic categories thus the study will benefit greatly from the research.

Mutahi (1977) being a native speaker of Kikuyu ,in his PhD dissertation attempts to classify the dialects of Southern Mount Kenya on the basis of historical sound changes. His study will be of great importance because this study uses the Southern dialect, which Mutahi classifies.

Kenyatta's *Facing Mount Kenya* (1993) provides some background knowledge on the Gĩkũyũ people. This background added value to this study since it was the language of study.

Mbugua (2000) looks at a critical analysis of disaster motif in Gĩkũyũ oral narratives. He cites Kabira's MA thesis *The Oral Artist* (1980) which provides insights into the understanding of Gĩkũyũ. In her doctoral thesis of *Images of Women in Oral Narratives*(1993), Kabira, observes that in the African context, ordinary people are carriers and transformers of oral art. Idioms are figures of speech used in speech and

when people use them, they carry them from generation to generation and they also generate others. This study will therefore identify with Kabira's work.

Muchemi (2009) did a pragmatic study on implicit and explicit speech acts in Gĩkũyũ about interpersonal communication. The study looked at the speakers intended meaning which is the performative meaning of an utterance. This study relates well with Wairima's work since it explores idiomatic expressions, which are used in interpersonal communication.

Iribe (2011) in his article on The Gĩkũyũ Reference Phrase looks at the description of syntactic units commonly called by some linguists the [NP] Noun Phrase and [DP] Determiner Phrase. This study looks at idiomatic expressions, which are made up of syntactic units hence benefits a lot from the journal.

Gathogo (2013) evaluated the translation of neologisms in Gĩkũyũ radio broadcasts as they are translated by Gĩkũyũ radio presenters. He explored the coinage of Gikuyu words or phrases due to development in technology among other factors. The study relates to Gathogo's work because some idioms are as a result of development of social life. For instance, '*kuonana kĩmwĩrĩ*' (to see each other physically) which means 'sexual intercourse'

Magua (2014) studied on Gĩkũyũ verbal utterances where verbal irony is demonstrated. Idioms are verbal utterances and in some idioms verbal irony is portrayed. Verbal irony is where the speaker speaks opposite of what he means. Irony is meant to ridicule, warn and in some cases to create humor which is the case with idioms.

### **1.7.2 Review of Literature on idioms**

Langacker (1968:8), cited by Njanga (2014), argue that culture is important in the comprehension of idiomatic expressions hence a speaker is able to use them communicate to the hearers. The current study will benefit from this study as it attempts to classify idioms into plausible domains depending on the message they convey.

Gibbs (1990) argues that the concept in the speaker's mind help him/her to interpret idioms. He continues to point out that the metaphorical correspondence is done from a physical to an abstract concept. Gibb's work is of great assistance to this study since the research uses the same approach of metaphorical mapping.

Procter (1995:701) states that idioms are characterized expressions, which consist of two or more words in affixed 'order having a particular meaning different from the meanings of each word understood on its own.' This study looks at the interpretation of idioms whose literal meaning is different from the figurative meaning hence draws a lot from Procter's study.

Wright (1999) cited in Taylor (2002:1) says that idiomatic language is very common in in English. He continues to stress that all native speakers of English use idioms that make their language colorful.

From Wright's discussion, we can argue that Gĩkũyũ idioms add aesthetic value to language and some idioms derive their meanings from their constituent parts. Gĩkũyũ idioms are part of everyday language and hardly do natives realize while using them. This study therefore identifies with from Wright's discussion.

Armstrong (2006:56) reiterates that it is easy for a native speaker to use idioms appropriately. He further states that 'idioms are varied and that their uses are lightly related to the functions they fulfill in discourse.'(p.56). This study classifies selected Gĩkũyũ idioms into thematic concerns depending on the message they convey.

Njoroge (2007) did a study on a pragmatic analysis of Gĩkũyũ lexical euphemisms in HIV/AIDS Discourse. In her study, she explored the effectiveness of the euphemistic language used against a backdrop of cultural inhibition on explicit reference to human genitalia, sexual behavior, bodily functions and death. Some Gĩkũyũ idioms are euphemistic in nature, for example, instead of '*gũkua*', polite language is used '*kwambata*' or '*kũng'aũka*' meaning to die. This study relates to Njeri's work since some of the euphemisms are idioms.

Ngoge (2012) on Ekegusii idiomatic expressions noted that Ekegusii idiomatic expressions have distinctive features from other figures of speech for instance, similes, metaphors and proverbs. In this study idioms and other figures of speech are explored. Most idioms have a metaphorical element; others are simile based whereas others are related to proverbs.

Njanga (2013) did an analysis of the comprehension of Kiambu idioms using a relevance theoretic approach of speech. The study dealt with the classification of idioms and how a the figurative meaning of idioms is arrived at by the hearer. The current study draws a lot of input from Njanga's work since Kiambu is a dialect of Kikuyu according to Mutahi (1977). There are therefore many similarities in the two dialects.

Mboya (2014) looked at a semantic analysis of Dholuo metonymy using cognitive semantics. He set out to establish the interplay of socio-physical experiences and the mind using the tenets of cognitive semantics. This theory uses conceptual metaphor theory, which is found in cognitive linguistics. The current study uses the same theory hence draws some nuggets from Mboya's work.

## **1.8. Theoretical Framework**

### **1.8.1 Introduction to Cognitive Approach**

This study is a Cognitive Approach to Gikuyu idioms using the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (hereafter the CMT). The Cognitive Approach, and consequently the CMT, falls under Cognitive Semantics domain. One of the earliest proponents was Ronald Langacker (1991).

Lee (2001:1) says that meaning is very important as far as cognitive linguistics is concerned. He further elaborates on the claim that 'there is an interrelationship between thought, meaning, and linguistic structure by examining the major concepts of the theory, that is, the notions of construal, perspective, foregrounding, metaphor and frame.' He further says that the same phrase can be "construed" in different ways hence encoding different conceptualizations.' Consider the following example:

- a) Wambui bought a jembe for Karanja.
- b) Wambui bought Karanja a jembe.

The two constructions explain "the same situation" depending on perception.

Langacker (2002:2) reiterates that 'meaning is equated with conceptualization which is interpreted to encompass novel conceptions as well as fixed concepts; sensory,

kinesthetic, and emotive experience; recognition of the immediate context (social, physical, and linguistic).’

### **1.8.2 Conceptual Metaphor Theory**

According to Lakoff & Johnson (1980:3):

Conceptual structure is organized by cross-domain mappings or correspondences which are stored in long term memory...some of these mappings are due to pre-conceptual embodied experiences while others build on these experiences in order to form more complex conceptual structures, for example, *she really got a high mark in the test*. ‘High’ relates not literally to physical height but to a good mark...The most basic assumption in Cognitive Metaphor Theory is that there is a set of ordinary metaphoric concepts—conceptual metaphors—around which we conceptualize the world. The concepts explain that our ordinary conceptual system includes structure, what we perceive, how we get around in the world and how we relate to other people. Most of them are metaphorical, and their essence is understanding and experiencing partially one kind of thing or experience in terms of another.

Lakoff and Johnson further say that ‘metaphor is a fundamental property of everyday use.’

Mentioning Gibbs and O’Brian, Kovesces (2002:211) writes:

In order to provide evidence for the role of conceptual metaphor in the comprehension of idioms, Gibbs and O’Brian (1990:147) gave their participants idiom (e.g. hit the ceiling) and non-idiomatic expressions (e.g. hit



the wall) and wanted them to report the visual imagery that each phrase elicited. Gibbs and O'Brian concluded that the consistency of the idiom images is due to the 'constraining influence of conceptual metaphors' according to which the underlying nature of our thought process is metaphorical; this means that we use metaphor to make sense of our experience.

Lakoff & Johnson (1980) links a journey with love so that we can understand the metaphor. The semantic (literal) category of the concept is the form of source-to-target mappings provided by conceptual metaphor.

To add onto Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) argument, Kovecses (2010:27) says the following:

Source domains include the human body, animals, plants, buildings, machines, games and sports, heat and cold, light and darkness, movement and many others. Target domains can be put into categories such as psychological and mental states and events (emotion, morality), social groups and processes (economy, human relationships) personal experiences and events (time, life, death).

Figurative language is a mode of expression whereby you use words that belong to one [known] field (for example, elephants) (the source domain according to Kovecses, *ibid*). Liu & Zhang (2005:122) have expressed this by saying that 'it serves as a tool to combine logical thinking and language.'

Lakoff & Johnson (1980:146) declare that ‘metaphors are very important to humanity since figurative language helps people determine their reality; this is connected how we perceive things.’

### **1.8.3. Metaphor and domain**

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980:383):

Lots of our mental experiences are created with metaphor via a limited set of image schemas, for example the image schema of a container. Emotion, which is non-spatial, can be conceptualized as a container when say ‘empty words’ or ‘to be in love’. At its basic level, conceptual metaphor is the motivation for many idiomatic structures, For example, “to let off” and “steam”.

According to the analysis of Lakoff & Johnson (1980),

In the case of “to let off steam” the mapping from literal meaning of ‘anger’ is possible cognitively. Hot steam has the power to move the engines. By letting off the steam, ones anger is gradually cooling down .By activating one’s real world experience of steam and understanding the conceptual metaphor mechanism, he or she can predict the idiom’s meaning.

Research from CMT shows that the images grounded deeply in idioms can be activated by making learners understand the underlying conceptual metaphor and trace back to idioms’ origin. Vu (2006) showed that idioms, especially body part idioms are motivated rather than abstract.

According to Lakoff & Johnson (2003:3), how we relate to other people and how we define everyday realities is very important. Communication relies on the same conceptual system whereby figurative language, and in this case idioms, follows the same system. Figurative language is a mode of expression whereby you use words that belong to one [known] field (e.g. elephant) (the source domain according to Kovecses2005:70) to describe occurrences in another (unknown) field (e.g. obesity) (the target domain according to Kovecses ibid).

Elephant	obesity
Known	unknown
Source	target

Lakoff & Johnson (1980:146) declare that ‘metaphors are very important to humanity’. Since figurative language helps people determine their reality; this connected to how we conceive of things. Lakoff & Johnson (1980:252) calls ‘the tools of human mind’ as conceptual metaphors.

Lakoff & Johnson (1980:5) who came up with the idea of conceptual metaphors, define their ideas as a conceptual mapping, where one concept is defined “in terms of another “ concept; such that A is B. Lakoff & Johnson(ibid) maintain that ARGUMENT IS WAR, not in a literal, but in a figurative sense. We often talk about argument by using words that we conceptualize as belonging within the WAR domains, for example, if we do not agree with the opinions of somebody, Lakoff & Johnson say that we can. In the example, ‘attack a position’ we are talking about argument while using words that belong to the vocabulary of war. They further report that conceptual metaphors highlight certain

aspects of a concept while it hides other aspects that might be implied in that concept, for example, in the case of idioms with hidden meanings.

Lakoff and Johnson (2003:53) further note that metaphors are figurative expressions. They are therefore active in understanding our everyday experiences. We therefore use metaphors to group areas of these experiences.

Lakoff and Johnson (2003:44-45), say that the organization in the brain organize the conceptual domain. These include the source and target domains. For example in “love is a journey”, we link a journey to love so that we can understand the metaphor such that journey is the source and love is the target.’

#### **1.8.4. Mappings**

“Understanding one domain in terms of another involves a set of fixed correspondences (technically called mappings) between a source and a target domain. This set of mappings obtains between basic constituent elements of the target. To know a conceptual metaphor is to know the set of mappings that applies to a given source-target pairing. These mappings provide much of the meaning of the metaphorical linguistic expressions (or linguistic metaphors) that make a particular conceptual metaphor manifest” (Kovecses, 2010).

#### **1.8.5. Metaphor based idioms**

According to Kovecses (2010:27), ‘conceptual metaphors bring into correspondence two domains of knowledge. One is typically a well delineated, familiar, physical domain and the other a less well delineated, less familiar, abstract domain.’ Kovecses further says that

the physical domain is more concrete, perceivable and not abstract while the target domain is less easily apprehended and abstract. The following table illustrates this:

**Table 1.1 Illustrations of source and Target domains**

<b>Source Domain</b>	<b>Target Domain</b>
Well-delineated	Less-delineated
Familiar	Less-familiar
Physical domain	Abstract domain
More concrete	Less easily perceivable

Consider the following examples of Gikūyū idioms analyzed using the Conceptual metaphor theory:

*Kūringa mūkūyū*

To hit a fig tree

To be lucky or successful

This idiom talks about a world of getting things easily without struggling. It is based on a proverb, which explains that animals especially warthogs used to hit a fig tree and fruit could drop down on the ground for her kids to eat. This idiom is used to mean that one has acquired something without straining or struggling. Hitting a fig tree so that fruits can fall requires a lot of effort and determination but the beneficiaries get it easily. The source, which is the hitting of the fig tree, is mapped onto the target, which is success or luck. The tree is physical while luck or success is abstract. The mapping from source to target is as follows:

<b>Source</b>	<b>Target</b>
<b>Hitting the tree</b>	<b>Success</b>
Collecting the fruit	Acquiring things e.g. money, education
No struggle	No struggle
Gets fruit easily	Acquire things easily
Satisfaction	Satisfaction
Hard work done	Results of hard work

The characteristics of the source have been mapped onto the characteristics of the target.

Consider another example:

*Kūhūnga irūa*

To fetch nectar

To look for daily bread

A bee fetches nectar from all flowers everywhere to make honey just like the way a person looks for a job in different places to fend for his family. This idiom is used to advise people to work hard and have determination. Young men used to be advised by the elders that they be like bees so that they feed for their families.

The metaphor in this idiom is ‘nectar’, which represents the fruit of hard work. The idea of fetching nectar which is the source is mapped onto the working hard which is the target domain. This idiom is transparent and therefore gives a clue on the figurative interpretation.

<b>Source</b>	<b>Target</b>
<b>Nectar</b>	<b>Daily bread</b>
Hard work required	Determination and hard work needed
Bees are active	Hardworking people
Honey is sweet	Better life
Feeds all the bees	Feeds the whole family

### **1.9. Hypotheses**

The investigation proposes the following hypotheses:

1. Metaphors are important in the formation and interpretation of Gĩkũyũ idioms.
2. The semantic meaning in most Gĩkũyũ idioms is not related to their idiomatic interpretation, e.g. idioms related to emotions.
3. Gĩkũyũ idiomatic expressions can be classified according to their thematic domains.

### **1.10. Research Methodology**

#### **1.10.1. Data Collection**

Collection of data was done between March and May 2016. There was a variety of sources including songs, radio, T.V. programmes and focused group discussions. The researcher used songs by Joseph Kamaru and Muigai wa Njoroge. Joseph Kamaru is known for his mastery and prowess of Gĩkũyũ language, and shows great enthusiasm in the use of the language. Muigai wa Njoroge, whom Muchiri<sup>1</sup> quotes in her article, is a modern young singer whose mastery of Gĩkũyũ language is impressive and is able to use idiomatic expressions and proverbs comfortably. Two T.V stations namely; Inooro and Njata TV were used. Sometimes it was not easy to predict when an anchor or presenter

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would use idioms, so the research diversified to focused group discussions that consisted of an average of five people.

The researcher used the idioms collected to engage interviews using purposive sampling whereby four elders (two men and two women above fifty years) were used to ascertain the validity and entrenchment of the idioms in the language. The elders chosen are native speakers of Gĩkũyũ language having been born, brought up and settled in Kigumo District of Murang'a County. The elders were used because they are competent in Gĩkũyũ and have relatively minimal influence from other such languages, for example, English, Kiswahili and Sheng. They also acted as informants to verify the data collected.

### 1.10.2 Data analysis

Idioms were analyzed in tables based on their domains, for instance, idioms related to death, emotions, leadership and hard work among others. Conceptual Metaphor Theory was used to interpret the findings.

**Table 2.1 Examples of Gĩkũyũ idioms classified into thematic domains**

<b>IDIOM</b>	<b>LITERAL MEANING</b>	<b>FIGURATIVE MEANING</b>	<b>DOMAIN</b>
Gwĩtwo	To be called	To die	Death
Kũiyũra maaĩ nda	To fill the stomach with water	To get a shock	Emotions
Gũikia mĩtĩ	To throw trees	To vote	Leadership
Kumia mbirira	To defecate on the tomb	To do something out of ignorance	Ignorance



### **1.11. Conclusion**

This study looked at the interpretation of Gikūyū idioms using a cognitive approach. This study looked at the background of the study. The research problem, objectives and hypothesis which guided the study were stated. The Literature review, an important element in this chapter shed light on the study by highlighting what other scholars have said about the topic and language of study. The methodology, which included data collection and analysis, was stipulated. The significance of the study, scope and limitations were also be highlighted.

## CHAPTER TWO

### GENERAL INFORMATION ON IDIOMS

#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter has borrowed a lot from Njanga (2013) who analysed Kiambu idioms using the Relevance Theory. The pattern used is the same and some definitions are similar.

The meaning of idioms is very important and that is why a native speaker does not notice any ungrammaticality. Many idiomatic phrases come from home life, for example in Gikuyu, '*kuruta wira wa kirai*' (to do the work of a basin) which means 'unproductive work'. Another example is; '*guita ukionoria*' (to pour as you empty) which means 'to lose everything.'

#### 2.1 On the Definition of Idioms

Different scholars have defined idioms in differently. To begin with, Moon (1998:3) says that 'an idiom is an ambiguous term, used in conflicting ways.' while Bollinger (1975:134) refers to idioms as words with set meanings and that we add separate meanings. Mc Carthy and O'Dell (2004:6) seem to think in the same line in their definition.

According to the Oxford Dictionary of Current English, Vol.-IP. VII-IX, "An idiom is a combination of two or more words which function as a unit of meaning... idiomatic expressions are units of meaning, non-idiomatic expressions, conversely, are made up of meaningful parts", 1984). Langacker (1968:79) refers to an 'idiom as a kind of complex lexical item; a phrase whose meaning cannot be predicted from the meanings of the morpheme it computes.'

Carter (1987:65) says that idioms have special combinations and are restricted in form and meaning which cannot be deduced from the literal meanings of the words, which make them up meaning they are learned as a single unit.

From the definitions above, we deduce that:

- a) As socially accepted expressions, idioms have a fixed word order. According to Wood (1967), every language has certain phrases or constructions (idioms) which every native of that language does not find difficult to understand since they are a part of his daily speech.
- b) Due to the high degree of ‘non-compositionality’ (Moon 1998:4), it is difficult to guess the meaning of an idiom from the individual words that make it up. To expound on this, Alexander (1987:175) says that the “multi-word” units have to be learned, and interpreted as a whole.

Consider the following examples:

1. *Buy a pig in a poke*- commit oneself to an irrevocable course of action without knowing the relevant facts.
2. *Have three sheets of the mind* –to get drunk

A linguistically fascinating fact about idioms is that some of them can undergo the ordinary syntactic processes of the language. For instance, the English idiom ‘to let the cat out of the bag’ can appear in a sentence like ‘The cat has been well and truly let out of the bag.’, in which the idiom has been broken up and its parts scattered about the sentence and yet the idiomatic sense is still present.

Having seen what idioms are, focus shifts to their characterization as summarized below.

### **2.1.1 Syntactic peculiarities**

The syntactic uniqueness of idioms has to do with the arrangement of the words that make up the idiom to give it the meaning it bears. Writing on this, Njanga (2013:35) reiterates that ‘components in an idiom cannot be changed, added, varied or substituted.’ In the example; ‘*Kamau niaroinire mburi yene kuguru*’ (*Kamau broke someone else’s goat’s leg*) bears the idiomatic meaning that *Kamau impregnated someone’s daughter*. By altering the syntax to get its passive variant; ‘*Mburi yene niroinirwo kuguru ni Kamau.*’ (*Someone’s goat’s leg was broken by Kamau*), the idiomatic meaning is lost, so that now, we talk of a literal goat whose leg was broken by the subject. We can deduce that idiomatic expressions may be replaced by a related variant. For example in the Gikuyu idiom above, ‘goat’ cannot be replaced by, say, ‘cow’ or ‘hen’.

### **2.1.2 Ambiguity**

Ambiguity has to do with the fact that what an idiom seems to mean on the surface is not what it is usually meant to communicate. For instance, the Gikuyu idiom, ‘*Kuona na kanua*’, (to see with the mouth) has two meanings; ‘to see with the mouth’ (literal), and ‘to get shocked’ (idiomatic). The hearer or reader can rely on the context in which the idiom occurs to reduce the potential ambiguity.

## **2.2. Typical Properties of idioms**

According to William (1977:32) as cited in Njanga (2013:39-40), idioms portray the following characteristics :(The examples given are the researcher’s attempt to expound on each of the characteristics, and are not part of the citation.)

- a) Inflexibility: Idioms are restricted to the arrangement and choice of words, for instance, *'kuona na kanua'* (to see with the mouth) 'to be shocked' vs *'kuona na magego'* (to see with the teeth) distorts the idiomatic meaning. (There is no Gikuyu idiom like that).
- b) Figuration: Idioms have figurative sense. For instance, the Gikuyu idiom, *'kunyua kagera'* is figurative in that it means total loss or being unsuccessful as opposed to literally 'swallowing a small stone'.
- c) Proverbiality: This is where description of social activity is compared to a concrete activity, for example. *'Guikia miti'* (*Throw sticks*) is a Gikuyu idiom which proverbially describes the process of voting.
- d) Informality: This is where the description of idioms is related to the people's way of communicating to each other. For instance, in case of 'bad luck', the Agikuyu say; *'Niaratungire nyoni njuru'* (to meet with a bad bird). As people talk informally, they use idioms without even noticing that they are using them.
- e) Affect: This is where idioms have an emotional point of view towards what they describe. For instance, the Gikuyu idiom 'kuhenerio' (to be beckoned) has an emotional stance because it idiomatically means 'death'.
- f) Conventionality: This is where the meaning of idioms is deduced in terms of conventionality and not in isolation. Nunberg, Sag and Wasow (1994:492-493) say that '...on conventionality, their meaning or use cannot be predicted or at least entirely predicted on the basis of a knowledge of the

independent conventions that determine the use of their constituents when they appear in isolation from one another.’

- g) Figurativeness: Words are used metaphorically in idioms and this helps in the comprehension of the idioms. In the Gikuyu example ‘*kuuna mburi yene kuguru*’, (breaking someone else’s goat’s leg), which means impregnating someone’s daughter, ‘goat’ is used metaphorically.

### **2.3 Idioms and Other Figures of Speech**

Idioms employ the use of other figures of speech such as metaphors, similes, proverbs, among others. This is discussed in details below.

#### **2.3.1 Idioms and metaphors**

King (2000:216) as cited in Njanga (2013:46) ‘defines metaphors as describing something by using an analogy with something quite different. For example, ‘*the words are clear as crystal*’ is an idiom that expresses the similarity between the words and the crystal in the degree of clarity.’ In the Gikuyu idiom, ‘*kuuna mburi yene kuguru*’ (breaking someone else’s goat’s leg), which means impregnating a girl, the ‘goat’ is used metaphorically to represent the ‘girl’.

#### **2.3.2 Idioms and proverbs**

According to Kabira and Mutahi (1988:37) as cited in Njanga (2013:46) the Kikuyu use ‘**thimo**’ to mean proverbs. Kabira and Mutahi define a proverb as a metaphorical statement that summarizes a cultural context, event, a happening or an experience. They go on to say that proverbs are used to warn, advise, inform, clarify, among other uses.

Odaga (1984:68) as cited in Njanga (2013:46) defines proverbs as ‘wise sayings which must be interpreted before their meaning can fully be understood’. Mulatya (2013) uses the Advanced Learners Dictionary International Students Edition (7<sup>th</sup>Ed.)(2005:1169), definition of proverbs, writing that ‘a proverb is a well known phrase or sentence that gives advice or says something that is generally true’, for example, ‘*waste not want not*’ She further says that in appendix(R49) of the same dictionary, a proverb is a type of idiom.

According to Ghazala, (1995:142), ‘like idioms, proverbs are special, fixed, unchanged phrases which have special fixed, unchanged meanings’. He continues to say that because proverbs share cultural wisdom; this makes them different from idioms. Ghazala argues that it is easy to get the meaning of a proverb by looking at the first part of a proverb. In the Gikuyu example, ‘*ngemi ciumaga na mucii*’ (ululations come from home), ‘*ngemi ciumaga*’ is used instead of the whole proverb and is still understandable. Different language communities have similar proverbs. The proverb ‘hurry hurry has no blessings’ is equivalent to the Kiswahili proverb (methali) ‘*haraka haraka haina baraka*’. Another example is ‘patience pays’ is equivalent to the Kiswahili one ‘*subira huvuta heri*’. The Kikuyu proverb, (thimo) ‘*wega umaga na mūciĩ*’, is equivalent to the English proverb, ‘**charity begins at home**’.

Hartch & Brown (1995:202-203) say the following about the relationship between idioms and proverbs;

Idioms and proverbs are not always transparent, and their meanings are sometimes ambiguous. Both are part of figurative language that produces cultural information, and their use shows that the person is a part of that social group that uses them.

### **2.3.3 Idioms and fixed expressions**

A fixed expression is a standard way of expressing an idea or a concept and is ordinarily used in certain situations. They are fixed in patterning. Njanga (2013:63) attempted to compare fixed expressions and idioms. For example in Gikuyu, '*Ni ma*'(in fact), '*kwaria ma*'(to speak the truth), '*atiriri*'(A fixed word used to capture attention). Just like idioms, they are also culture specific.

### **2.3.4 Idioms and Phrasal verbs**

The meaning of the common types of idioms, that is, phrasal verbs is obtained from the prior knowledge since the idiomatic meanings cannot be deduced from the phrase itself.

Consider the following examples:

1. Mwangi and Njeri's marriage **broke off**. (**broke off** means to end abruptly)
2. I am sure that Githagara students will **bring out** the hatched plan of a strike.  
(**Bring out** means to reveal or to expose)

## **2.4 Classification of idioms**

### **2.4.1.1 Transparent idioms**

Njanga (2013:52) says that 'these idioms have a close meaning to that of the literal one. It is not difficult to understand and translate because their meanings can be easily informed



from the meaning of their constituents, both components have a direct meaning but the combination acquires a figurative sense.’ (Fernando 1996).

An example of a transparent idiom in Gĩkũyũ:

1. *Kwĩyoha mũthiori (to tie a belt)* means to prepare for difficult times. In the Gĩkũyũ culture, whenever one was hungry or going for a long journey, he could tie a belt around his/her waist. This idiom gives us a clue of what the interpretation of the idiom is. Another example of a transparent idiom is;

2. *Kuunĩra kanua ngũ*

To fetch firewood for the mouth

The idiom means that one should tame the tongue and avoid talking too much.

#### **2.4.1.2 Semi-transparent idioms**

According to Njanga (2013:38), ‘the semi-transparent idioms usually carry a metaphorical sense that could be known only through common use, that is, the use of its parts has a little role to play in understanding the entire meaning e.g. *break the ice* means to relieve the tension.’

An example of a semi transparent idiom in Gĩkũyũ:

3. *Kuona na kanua*

To see with the mouth

This idiom means to be surprised, amazed or even shocked. This idiom gives us a clue since the mouth is not meant to see but the eyes. Whenever one is shocked, he opens the mouth though the eyes are still open, hence, open eyes versus open mouth.

### 2.4.1.3 Semi-opaque idioms

‘This type refers to those idioms in which the figurative meaning is not joined to that of the constituent words of the idiom.’ She further argues that ‘the idiom carries a metaphorical sense that could not easily be known through common use, that is, the meaning of its parts has a little role to play in the understanding and deriving the metaphor and so of the entire meaning,’ (Njanga 2013:60).

The expression is separated into two parts; a part with a literal meaning and the other with a figurative sense. An example of a semi-opaque idiom in Gĩkũyũ:

4. *Kũrĩana matũ*

To eat each other’s ears

To have a conversation

In this idiom, one would have a problem in interpreting how ears are eaten, thus difficult to interpret. This idiom is used when people have a conversation and are consulting.

### 2.4.1.4 Opaque idioms

According to Njanga (2013:63), ‘this is the most difficult type of idioms because the meaning of the idiom is never that of the sum of the literal meanings of its parts.’ She continues to reiterate that ‘it would be impossible to infer the actual meaning of the idiom from the meaning of its components, because of the presence of items having cultural references. These culture- specific items have a great influence on the comprehensibility of idiomatic expressions’. For example, ‘*to burn one’s boat*’ figuratively means ‘**to make retreat impossible**’, *Kick the bucket* figuratively means ‘to die’.

A Gĩkũyũ example of an opaque idiom:

5. *Kũnyua kagera*

To drink a small stone

To be unsuccessful or to have a total loss

This idiom is told when somebody has been trying hard to attain something and then he loses. The relationship between drinking a small stone and being unsuccessful is hard to interpret making the idiom opaque.

## 2.5 Emerging idioms

Emerging idioms are idioms that have come up in the recent past. People use them but they have not been tested by time and we may not be sure whether these idioms will continue being used in future or not. It is worth noting that some Gĩkũyũ slangs used in songs are becoming so common yet they have a different meaning altogether. For example, '*Thiĩ ũkũũmaga*' (go as you dry) is a common saying which people are using in their conversations. Gatutura (2016) in his song talks about a prostitute, Irene, who has no preference; she takes the rich, the poor, the disabled, basically everyone. She has a particular liking for truck drivers and conductors. The meaning of this idiom is that, 'walk as you dry', obviously from the fluids left behind after servicing a client. The singer warns her that HIV/AIDS is real. Other emerging idioms include:

1. *Gũcanũrwo* (to be combed) - To be informed of something
2. *Kũrũgĩra* (to jump on) - To understand or comprehend
3. *Kũgũagũa* (to fall repeatedly) - To change
4. *Kũũma* (to dry) - To be smart
5. *Gũcina mwaki wa nyeki* (to burn grass fire) -Be smartly dressed
6. *Kũhũũrĩka* (to be beaten) - Being bored
7. *Gũte mbaũ*(to lose timber) - Lose focus/ go mad

In the example, *Kũgũagũa* (to fall repeatedly), people use it in everyday communication to mean that one cannot change. For example in a context:

*Mũthoni erirwo acenje mũbango wa kũinũka oiga ndangĩgũagũa.*

Muthoni was told to change the plan of going home but she said she could not change.

This means Muthoni cannot change her plan and therefore remains firm on her decision. To fall is to drop from a high position or to be defeated. In this case Muthoni cannot change her decision and therefore remains firm and assertive. This idiom cannot be understood by the old people because it is new and has not been used for a long time. The young generation is the one conversant with it and its meaning.

Consider another example in a sentence:

*Gũcinata mwaki wa nyeki*

To burn like grass fire

*Nyina wa mũhiki aracina ta mwaki wa nyeki*

The mother of the bride is very smart.

This is a simile based idiom which means that the bride's mother is so smartly dressed. Grass fire burns very fast and spreads to the surrounding areas. It is noticed by everyone around just like a very smart person who is easily noticed by those around him/her.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has dealt with the general information about idioms. It covers the definition of idioms as summed up by their characteristics, properties, classification, and relationship with other figures of speech, for instance, proverbs, phrasal verbs and fixed expressions. In the last section, emerging idioms in Gĩkũyũ are discussed and it is worth noting that these idioms are used by the young generation and most of them are not known to the old generation.

## CHAPTER THREE

### DESCRIPTION, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS OF GĪKŪYŪ IDIOMS

#### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the data to be analyzed in this study in terms of the domains of GĪkŭyŭ idioms. The idioms are categorized in terms of the domains they are related to.

In this chapter, the selected GĪkŭyŭ idioms for this study are discussed. The main focus is on the description of the interpretations of the GĪkŭyŭ idioms based on the subjects they address. The selected GĪkŭyŭ idioms are classified into domains or classes of what they relate to.

#### 3.1 Findings

The GĪkŭyŭ people use idioms in their day to day conversations and it is part of their communication. Procter (1995:701) says that idioms are characterized to expressions which consist of two or more words in ‘affixed order having a particular meaning different from the meanings of each word understood on its own.’

GĪkŭyŭ idioms (‘**ciugo cĭina ũtaũku mũhithe**’) are aspects of GĪkŭyŭ language. Mutisya (2002) as quoted in Mulatya (2013:64) reiterates that a proverb is an ornament to language. This research will borrow the same and say that GĪkŭyŭ idioms are decorative ornaments to the language and they add spice to it. The use of idioms in the community is a preserve of the elders in the GĪkŭyŭ community because the elders were pillars of wisdom.

### 3.2 Description of selected Gĩkũyũ idioms

This research studies Gĩkũyũ idioms drawn from Gĩkũyũ renowned musicians, Joseph Kamaru and Muigai wa Njoroge, Njata and Inooro TV, and focused group discussions.

#### 3.2.1. Idioms related to Emotional feelings e.g. shock, anger, mercy, love, happiness

##### 3. *Gũtuĩka nda*

To split the stomach

Meaning: To get shocked

This idiom was got from the first stanza in Muigai's song '*Mũtu*' to show how the singer got shocked due to the rise in price of maize meal. In this song Muigai is talking about the consequences of Kenya's 2007/2008 post election violence whereby a lot of maize was burnt leading to the hiking of maize flour in prices.

Consider the context below:

*Ndatiga ndahagĩra maaĩ ma ngima riiko*, I placed water on the cooker to make ugali,

*Ndaguthũkĩra mũtu gatukainĩ ka neimba*, and rushed to buy maize flour at the neighbor's shop,

*Ndamaka nandatuĩka nda ndona mũtu urĩa ũhaicĩte*, I extremely shocked when I saw how the price of flour had risen,

*Ndecokera nyũmba ndera ciana ihoe ikome nĩtũkarĩa rĩciũ*, I went back to the house and told the children to pray and sleep, we shall eat tomorrow.

This idiom is used when someone gets shocked due to a sudden calamity, occurrence or something not expected. Another idiom in Gĩkũyũ with the same meaning is '*kũiyũra maaĩ nda*' (to be full of water in one's stomach). See an example on sadness:

### 3. *Kūhenerio*

To be beckoned

Meaning: To die

This idiom, got from one of the focused group discussions, is used to mean that someone has died. It is a euphemism for death in that people imagine of two worlds separated by a valley where one is beckoned from the other side. The metaphor in this idiom is a valley that separates two ridges. A similar idiom that denotes death is ‘*gwĩtwo*’ (to be called), while other people use the idiom ‘*gwĩtĩka*’ (has answered the call). The usage of either idiom depends on the context, for instance,

*Kamau nĩetirwo kĩroko thutha wa ndwari ya kahinda kanini*

Kamau was called in the morning after a short illness.

*Njeri nĩetikire thutha wa kũrwara mũno*

Njeri answered the call after being critically ill.

The two examples depict death in different perspectives depending on the person describing it. This is common among the old people.

Consider another example;

### 5. *Kuona na kanua*

To see with the mouth

Meaning; Amazement

A mouth is not supposed to see but to speak and talk. When it is said that one is seeing with the mouth, it means that one is amazed and can no longer close the mouth hence, portraying extremely shock. A Kiswahili equivalent is ‘*kuona kwa mdomo*’. The example in a context;

*Rĩrĩa Mwarania na mũthuriwe macamanirie na mũthuri ũrĩa warĩwake, onire na kanua.*

When Mwarania and her husband met with her former husband, she got a shock of her life.

Another example on hatred:

6. *Kũingata ngui ĩrũite ma thaate*

Evacuating a dog that has eaten of thirty

Meaning; being despised

This idiom is got from Muigai's song '*Mũtu*'. The singer talks about how maize was hidden so that the price of the flour could go up. The singer says that president Moi had warned people about the same but people despised him and longed that he handed over power.

*Haha twacanũrirwo nĩ mũtukubu Moi; Here we were combed by president Moi*

*Na nĩguo mwamũingatireta ngui ĩrũite ma thate mũthĩ wa thigũũkũ;*

And the way you evacuated him like a dog that has eaten for thirty on Christmas

Traditionally cooking fat used to be sold in thirty shilling packets since that is what was affordable so if a dog ate that cooking fat, it could be beaten and sent off. This idiom is used to express hatred for some bad and immoral behavior in the society where one can even be excommunicated. Consider the next idiom got from Muigai's extract:

### **3.2.2. Idioms related to Leadership and praises**

7. *Gũikia mũĩĩ*

To throw trees

Meaning: To cast votes in order to vote in leaders



*Ngũigua ta ingĩrĩra ndaririkana, twagũikũrie mĩĩ ũgatũtetere*, I feel like crying when I remember, we threw you trees to talk on our behalf

*Na rĩu nĩ Kenya woha mũgoto, na ũkamĩendia kũ Kenya nĩ ya Ngai*; And now you tie Kenya with banana leaves, Kenya belongs to God where will you sell it?

In this context of Kamaru's song, the idiom is used to mean that the leaders were voted in so that they could steer development but the leader has betrayed his own country. The Kiswahili equivalent is '*kupiga kura*'. See another example:

8. *Kũhaica ngarawa*

To climb the ladder

Meaning: To be elevated

This idiom is used to show that one has been given a higher position of authority or in a place of work but has misused that position by amassing wealth at the expense of the welfare of the people who elected him/her.

*Mũrata ngwenda wĩyũrie na ngoro, mbaara ãngĩtũrĩka we tondũ ũrĩmbia*; Friend I want you to ask your heart, if this war would burst because you have money

*Nĩũkahaica ngarawana ithuĩ tũthire, ũrĩathaga mĩĩ kana nĩ nyamũ*; Will you climb the ladder while we get finished or will you rule trees or animals?

Kamaru used this idiom to warn leaders who look for votes but afterwards just mind their own welfare forgetting that they were elected to serve the masses. Consider another idiom used in the same context:

9. *Gwatha mĩĩ*

To rule trees

The idiom is used as a warning to leaders due to mismanagement of resources and poor governance. Kamaru warns that if at all the plight of the people is not looked after, then the leader may not be elected again. Poor governance may lead to people dying of diseases, famine, floods, and addictions and so on. An example of idiom on praises:

10. *Gũcaria ngemi*

Looking for ululations

This idiom is got from a song by Kamaru and it is used to refer to someone who is looking for praises and perfection. This idiom is based on another figure of speech, that is, a proverb ‘*Wakahare akuire agũcaria ngemi*’ (the pole cat died while seeking praises). It is told to people who tend to do things in order to be praised. A similar English proverb is, *pride comes before a fall*. This idiom is a warning to the people who are self centered and to encourage people to be humble.

### 3.2.3 Idioms related to Determination and hard work

11. *Gũkinya thigira na ikinya*

Step on the after-birth

Meaning: Be ready to do anything no matter what may come.

*Mwendia wa bũrũri atari na ithĩgĩ, thigira wake nginyĩte na ikinya;* The seller of the country without a flower his afterbirth I have stepped on it.

This idiom is got from a song by Kamaru and it is warning those who betray the country that they will be cursed and forgotten. The after birth is thrown away and buried because it is no longer useful after the birth of a baby. Kamaru reiterates that those who betray the

country will have their afterbirths stepped on, thus completely forgotten. Find another example of hard work:

12. *Kūrutanĩria mũigua na mahira*

To remove both the thorn and the pus at one go.

Meaning: To do things wholeheartedly

*Tondũ mũigua na mahira–i itionaga toro*; Because a thorn and pus do not get sleep

This idiom is got from Kamaru’s song “Cunga marima” when he is talking about a disease which needs to be eradicated from the community completely. The disease in this case could mean corruption, social evils or immorality. This idiom is told to encourage people to have a spirit of determination and commitment while doing something. See another example:

13. *Kwaga kũigania mũthuru*

Not to satisfy skirts

Meaning: Hard work is the key

*Mũthuru* were traditional Kikuyu skirts worn by women. This idiom is used to tell people that they should work hard and get as never enough much property as possible. This idiom was got from Kamaru’s song ‘Cunga Marima’ to mean that just like a hen’s feathers are never enough, one never gets satisfied with things or property. The Gĩkũyũ people used to work hard to acquire as much property as possible; hence, this encourages hard work and determination. Consider another one;

14. *Gwĩkĩracoro maaĩ*

To put water in a trumpet

Meaning: To energise

For a trumpet to produce the desired sound, you must put water. For a person to do his work effectively he must eat well or be paid well. This idiom is told to encourage people to work hard and avoid laziness. In a context, the teachers told the aspiring secretary of their union,

*‘Akorwo nũrenda tũgũikĩrie mĩĩ nonginya **wikĩre coro maai’***

‘If you want us to vote for you, give us something to drink.’

The teachers in this case were demanding something in return, and that is why they challenged their fellow colleague to show his determination.

See the following:

15. *Kũhũnga irũa*

To fetch nectar

Meaning: To look for daily bread

A bee fetches nectar which it uses to make honey but it does not eat the honey. This idiom is used to advise people to work hard without caring who will benefit from their good deeds. Young men used to be advised by the elders that they ought to be like bees so that they could work in order to feed their families. Early in the morning they used to tell each other *‘Ndathiĩ **kũhũnga irũa**’*(I am going to look for food for my family).

Another example:

16. *Kuuna iru*

To bend the knee

To rest from hard work

This idiom, got from one of the focused group discussions, is used when one wants to rest after a long journey or after hard work. A knee is an important part as far as the

functioning of the leg is concerned. Once it is broken, mobility of the leg is affected, thus, one has to rest. This idiom is mostly used by the elderly people. In a sentence;

*‘Nĩtwanoga mũno rekei **tuune iru**’*

‘We are so tired let us take a rest’

Once a knee is bent, it becomes immobile. This idiom is culturally based and it would be difficult for person who doesn’t come from that community to understand the meaning. Also, the young people from the community require more contexts in order to get the interpretation.

### **3.2.4 Idioms related to Pride and beauty**

#### *17. Kũrĩo nĩ hũũni*

To be eaten by satisfaction

Meaning: Pride

This idiom was got from Inooro TV on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 2016 at 8pm in a programme, Ng’anocia Karatina. The narrator gives a story of a man who was rich and could not help the siblings. This idiom is used to refer to someone who is proud because he/she has things, property or food. A Gĩkũyũ proverb similar to this idiom is *‘mũrĩo nĩ hũũni ndarumaga andũ ao’* (a satisfied person does not insult his people). This proverb talks about amassing wealth and then forgetting those who have helped you get it. A Kiswahili proverb “Mpanda ngazi hushuka” (Whoever climbs a ladder falls) is a good comparison. This idiom is told to warn people of wastefulness, extravagance and pride and it encourages charity and compassion.

#### *18. Kũhenia kĩero*

Glittering thigh

*Wona kīero kīahenia wihūgūre mwena ūngī wone mathiko*; When the thigh glitters, turn the other side and see a funeral

This idiom is got from Muigai's song, 'Kīgūtha' and is used to warn men and women to beware of the consequences of beauty. Girls and women are advised to take care of themselves lest they indulge in promiscuity because they are beautiful whereas men are advised to equally be careful and not to be attracted by what they see. Another idiom that talks of *kīero* is '*kūgīakīero gītune*' (red thigh) which implies bad luck. A person is said to have 'red thigh' if he/she has been widowed many times. It means bad luck.

19. *Gūcina ta mwaki wa nyeki*

To burn like grass fire

To be smartly dressed

This idiom, got from one of the focused group discussions, is used to congratulate somebody for being smartly dressed. The middle aged people especially women use this idiom towards one another.

### **3.2.5. Idioms related to Fortunes, Misfortunes and discouragement**

20. *Kūringa mūkūyū*

To hit a fig tree

Meaning: To be lucky

This idiom was got from Inooro TV on 16<sup>th</sup> of April 2016 when one woman won in a game known as 'kanyakanya' (typing). In this game, the many times one sent a message the more times they became eligible for the win. The woman won five million shillings and the TV anchor said the following:

*‘Thutha wa gũũthi gĩa kanyakanya, Mũthoni nĩweũraringire mũkũyũ na arahoota mirioni ithano’.*

After the ‘kanyakanya’ game, Muthoni emerged the winner of five million shillings.

This idiom is culturally based and the context behind this in Gikũyũ is that it is believed that warthogs love fig fruits so it could shake the tree and fruits could fall so that its young ones could eat. When it is said that one has hit a *Mũkũyũ* it means he/she has met with good luck and is successful. Another example:

21. *Gũtũnga nyoni njũru*

Meet with a bad bird

To be unsuccessful

*Ngai tondũ gũtirĩ mũndũ wendete gũtũnga nyoni njũru;* God, because none wants to meet a bad bird,

*Na njĩra nĩ nyingĩ iria irarehe mũrimũ ũyũ na to ya ũtharia;* And there are many causes of this bad disease not only through sexual transmission

This idiom is got from a song by Muigai and is used when one is faced by a misfortune which is termed as bad luck. See another example:

22. *Kũũrwo nĩ hinya*

Energy getting lost

Meaning: to lose heart

This is told when someone has lost hope and is discouraged e.g. when one does not get what was expected. Another idiom used when discouraged is ‘*gũkua ngoro*’ (to die of the heart) which is equivalent to the Kiswahili ‘*kufa moyo*’.

23. *Kwĩhĩta na mwana*

To swear with a child

To invite a misfortune

This idiom is commonly used among the elderly to warn people of swearing or taking oaths, that one should be careful during rituals that require swearing. And the case where a person failed to fulfill the sworn agreement, a calamity could befall the child used in swearing. A child is very valuable in the Gĩkũyũ community and therefore nobody was allowed to play around with him/her, for the generations were to be passed through him/her and wealth too. Consider another example:

24. *Kũringĩra iriũko iroge*

To cross through a bewitched place

To go through a misfortune

This idiom was used by Kamaru in the song, *Cunga marima*, to warn people that they need to take care lest misfortune befall them. Kamaru was warning the weak people especially women from fighting battles meant for men or strong people for that matter. This idiom is used mostly by the old people.

### 3.2.6. Idioms related to seriousness and intentions

25. *Kũhunyĩrĩra*

To leave some weeds during weeding is called *kũhunyĩrĩra*

Meaning: Doing things haphazardly

*Nĩ Kenya ĩrĩa iitũ ndahũragĩrwo, Kana nĩrĩa iitũ mwahunyĩrĩa*; Is it the Kenya I was beaten for, or is it ours you have not weeded for?



This idiom is used warn people when they do things haphazardly without giving it the seriousness it deserves. The Kikuyu community was known for farming and while weeding, the children were warned not to leave any weeds but were supposed to do thorough work.

26. *Kūroganyama harĩa ĩnoreire*

To bewitch the fat part of the meat

Meaning: To discourage

Muigai in the song, *Kĩgũtha*, says that a witch came at night and bewitched the fat part of the meat in the following context:

*Mũrogi okire ũtukũ akĩroga nyama harĩa yanoreire*; A witch came at night and bewitched the fat part of the meat.

In this idiom the singer implies that things get bad when they are good, in this case, the fat part of the meat is the prime time of life when one's dreams and visions can be realized but then one indulges in unbecoming behavior hence killing his/her destiny. This idiom is used to warn people of indulging in bad behavior like immorality since it can spoil one's future.

27. *Oha mũgoto*

Tie with a banana leaf

Meaning: Take things easily

*Na rĩu nĩ Kenya woha mũgoto, na ũkamĩendia kũ Kenya nĩ ya Ngai*; And now it is Kenya you tie with banana leaves, where will you sell it? Kenya belongs to God.

Kamaru uses this idiom to express patriotism for Kenya, that it is not easy to sell one's own country.

A banana leaf is quite light and if used to tie something, it breaks. This idiom is used to tell somebody to take things lightly lest one gets depressed. This idiom depends on a proverb which states, 'Wa mũingĩ ũkuagwo na mũgogo' (You carry what belongs to public with a banana string). When the load is too heavy, the string will break and the load will fall. This is told to warn people who tend to carry public issues with a lot of weight thus forgetting their own.

### 3.2.7. Idioms related to Diseases and self control

#### 28. *Gũikia gĩkuũ ndahi*

To throw a locust into death

*Mũrimu ũyũ ti ithaga wĩmenyerere ndũgaikie gĩkuũ ndahi;* This disease is not a flower take care don't throw a locust in death.

This idiom is used by Muigai in his song, Kigutha, to say that HIV is a dangerous disease and people should not test it because once a person gets infected, there is no reverse. This idiom is told to warn people who do not take life seriously. Traditionally young men could be told this idiom by elders as they prepared to go out for war.

#### 29. *Gũtonya mahĩndĩ-inĩ*

Entering inside the bones

This idiom is used to express something that has gone to extremes.

*Nĩ ma gũtirĩ ruo ta rwa mũrimũ ũyũ watonya mahĩndĩ-inĩ;* it is true there is no pain like the pain of this disease when it enters the bones. The disease mentioned by Muigai in this

case is HIV/AIDS referred to as ‘Kigutha’ (hard hitter) in the song. This idiom is used to tell people to take care of themselves lest they fall prey of circumstances.

30. *Kiritithia thuti kagĩo*

Rub lust on a small pan

This idiom is used to advise people to control their lustful desires e.g. sexual desires, food desires, wealth desires among others.

*Mũthuri ũngĩ akĩnjĩra mwanake kiritithia thuti kagĩo,*

*Mũrogi okire ũtukũ akĩroga nyama harĩa yanoreire*

This idiom is got from Muigai’s song, ‘Kigutha’ which is a warning to men to control their desires. In this song the singer is saying that an elder advised him to take care and not look at the outward appearance of a girl.

### 3.2.8. Idioms related to Information and ignorance

31. *Twacanũrirwo*

We were combed

Meaning: Being informed

This idiom that is used to mean one has gotten some exposure to information or news.

*Nĩtũũĩ atĩ mwahithiire mbembe atĩ mũtu ũhaice;* we know you hid maize so that the price of flour can rise

*Haha twacanũrirwo nĩ mũtukubu Moi;* we were enlightened by his Excellency Moi

In this case, Muigai referred to the former president of the republic of Kenya, his Excellency Moi, as the one who had enlightened people about maize but people never

heeded to what he said. This idiom is mostly used by the young generation to express knowledge about certain information.

32. *Kũmia mbĩĩra*

To defecate on the tomb

Meaning: To do something out of ignorance

This idiom, drawn from one of the focused group discussions, is told of people who do something out of ignorance. This is told of a stranger who defecates on the tomb due to ignorance of the sacredness of the tomb. A tomb was considered sacred because it was believed that spirits and ancestors lived there hence no one could touch it. In the Gĩkũyũ community, trespass was prohibited, getting involved in things or issues meant for grownups especially in the case of children, talking in the presence of elders, then would be told not to defecate on the tomb.

### **3.2.9. Idioms related to Readiness and opportunities**

33. *Kwĩyoha mũthiori*

To tie yourself with a belt

Meaning: To brace for difficult times ahead

This idiom was used on Njata TV in a programme '*Undũire wa Mũgĩkũyũ*' by Gitau wa Ng'ang'a on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> of April 2016. He was talking about how Gĩkũyũ people used to be told to prepare for difficult times ahead.

This idiom is used to tell people to brace themselves for difficult times ahead. For instance in times of calamity or famine, people could be told to tie a belt in preparation for what was ahead of them.

34. *Kũhĩana ma mbere*

To burn with the first

This idiom was used by Wa Kariũki and Wamanyara on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2016 at 8pm on Inooro TV. This idiom is used to tell people to learn to grab an opportunity wherever it arises. Whenever one is given something like property, food or even a piece of land, the Kikuyu community believes that they should first accept or seize that opportunity.

35. *Kũira ngoro*

Nausea

This idiom, used in one of the focused group discussions, is told of a poor person who lives from hand to mouth and doesn't choose what he gets, never loses hope. The idiom also means that one should not despise humble beginnings since things will get better in future. Traditionally, people used to share whatever small or little things they got, and nobody was supposed to despise however small. For example;

*Ciana iria ciakuĩrĩrwo nĩ aciari **citiiraga ngoro** ona ciaheo kĩndũ kĩnini.*

Those orphans never choose whatever small things they are given.

### **3.2.10. Idioms related to unity**

36. *Kũharagana ta mai ma therũ*

To scatter like stool of baboons

This idiom, drawn from one of the focused group discussions is used to portray lack of unity. It is mostly used by the elderly people, that is, the age of fifty five years and above. A baboon jumps from tree to tree and whenever it defecates, the stool scatters on the

ground. Whenever people lacked unity, they could be compared to the stool of baboons and be warned to always remain united. A proverb used in such a case is ‘*ka mūingĩ koyaga ndĩrĩ*’ (majority lift a mortar). A mortar is where substances were crushed with a pestle into very small pieces of powder. In a sentence:

*Ciana ingĩaga kūnyitana wega thutha wa aciari ao gũkua no maharagane ta mai ma therũ.*

If children are not united after being deceased by their parents, they can disintegrate.

Consider another one:

37. *Kūraria mwaki*

Keeping fire all night

Meaning: To be united

You need a heap of wood to keep fire alight. A single arrow is easily broken but a bundle is not. A similar proverb is ‘*rūtungu rīmwe rūtiraragia mwaki*’ (one piece of wood cannot keep fire alight). This idiom is used to warn people of disunity and encourage them that they need each other and no one can stand alone. Another similar proverb in Kiswahili is ‘*Kidole kimoja hakivunji chawa*’ (*kĩara kīmwe gĩtiũragaga ndaa*) (one finger does not kill a louse).

### 3.2.11. Idioms related to Cultural values, for example secrecy

38. *Kuonia mūdũ njegeke*

Show someone armpit

Meaning: To expose secrets

This idiom is common among the elderly in the community. It is used to mean that one has disclosed his/her secrets. An armpit is considered as one of the private parts which

should not be shown to just anyone. Culturally, there are some issues which belong only to the community and no outsider was supposed to know. For instance, matters of war, wealth and so on were private to the community. Within the community, there were issues that were not supposed to be disclosed to women and hence the proverb, *mũtumia ndonagio njegeke* (a woman is never shown armpit), simply because women are talkative and never keep secrets. This idiom was told to warn people that they need to keep secrets. Consider another example on secrecy:

39. *Kwĩranira mĩatũ*

Tell others of hives

Meaning: To expose secrets

This idiom, commonly used by elderly people, is told to warn people that they should not disclose their secrets. Hives were kept in secret places where only the owners knew. The honey harvesters were not supposed to say where the hives were lest the honey gets stolen at night. The young people in the Gĩkũyũ community may not comprehend this idiom because hives are very rare today. See another idiom commonly used by the elderly:

40. *Kuunĩra kanua ithĩgĩ*

Fetch for mouth a twig

Meaning: To avoid talking too much

This idiom means that one should talk less and listen more. This idiom was told to warn talkative people that they should avoid verbosity especially in the presence of elders. Respect was highly valued in the Gĩkũyũ community, thus, when one was an elderly person or even a wife with a husband, they were supposed to receive instructions and not

to argue. This enhanced unity and peace, hence, a smooth running of affairs and judgments. Consider another idiom with a similar meaning:

41. *Gūtīgīria njaũ*

To spare for the calf

This idiom is told to warn people of talking too much and telling people all their secrets. A calf feeds on milk and so when the cow is milked completely, the calf will die of hunger. This idiom advises that one should not give all he/she has but should have reservations.

### 3.2.12. Idioms on morality

Some idioms on morality talk about generosity which is a virtue and others on vices like greed. Consider the following idioms;

42. *Gūtuma mũndũ rĩgu*

Knit someone 'rĩgu'

*Rĩgu* is a Kikuyu word for packed food. When people were going on a journey, they were given something to carry on the way for use in case they got hungry. Even strangers used to be given something to eat on the way. This portrayed generosity, so when the idiom is used it means that one should be kind with words, instructions, material things and so on. Another similar idiom that talks about sharing:

43. *Kwenyũrana mboco yagwa thĩ*

To divide bean once it falls on the ground

This idiom is told to encourage people to have a spirit of sharing. The Gĩkũyũ community believed in oneness and unity and one could not eat alone, especially during famine one



could share with everybody, no wonder they used to stay in homesteads. Individualism was a rare thing and so whatever was available could be used by all in the community. However, there are other idioms which warn people of greediness and selfishness. Consider the following example:

44. *Gũikionĩ nda*

Be led by the stomach

Meaning: Greed

When one is told to be thrown by stomach it means the person is greedy, hence cannot share what he/she has. Such a person is compared to the greedy hyena that broke its legs due to indecisiveness when it tried to pursue both routes where the aroma emanated from. This idiom encourages sharing and warns people of selfishness. See another example:

45. *Kũmĩa kĩraro*

To defecate on the sleeping place

Being unappreciative

This idiom is common among the elders when they are warning the young people that they need to be appreciative and leave a place better than they found it. A sleeping place should be kept neat and clean and waste products, which emit foul smell, make the place inhabitable. See another example:

46. *Kũrĩa gĩthũri kĩiniĩ*

To eat when the chest is upside down

To be ungrateful

This idiom, got from a focused group discussion, is used by elders to warn young people, especially, of being unthankful. A chest is also used when one is blessing like in the following example:

47. *Gũtuĩra mata gĩthũri*

To spit on the chest

To bless

This idiom is found among the elderly people and is not common with the young. When an elder spits on his/her chest, it denotes blessings. This was a common practice among the Gĩkũyũ because they believed in both blessings and curses.

### **3.2.13 Idioms based on loss and impossibility**

48. *Gũkararia rĩũũ*

To argue with a river

To fight a losing battle

This idiom is common among the middle aged people and elderly but rare among the young people. It is used to advise people to accept the way things are and to encourage those going through calamities, for instance, death which is inevitable. A river normally has a course which it follows and cannot be reversed. Consider another example:

49. *Gũkama njogu*

To milk an elephant

Doing an impossibility

An elephant is a wild animal and it breastfeeds its young ones. It gets wild once it notices a human being nearby and therefore no human being can dare milk it. This idiom is mostly used by the elderly. See another example:

50. *Gūita ũkōnoria*

To pour as you put in another container

To lose what you have

This idiom is used when one has the likelihood of losing what he has when trying to pursue an alternative. Most parents use this idiom when they are advising their children to concentrate on their work, especially studies, profession and to avoid pursuing other unimportant issues at the moment. Another idiom that corresponds to this one and is based on a proverb is;

51. *Gūte kenda ũkinyĩrĩte ikūmi*

To lose nine as you pursue ten.

This idiom got from a focused group discussion together with the earlier discussed is used by middle aged people to advise their school going children and teenagers. Number nine is next to number ten, and this idiom is used to mean that one can lose nine things while pursuing the tenth one. Therefore, people should be satisfied with what they have.

### 3.3 Metaphorical element in idioms

Gĩkũyũ idioms do not behave the same in as far as the metaphorical element is concerned. In some idioms metaphors are conspicuous whereas in some it is not. In transparent idioms, metaphors are clear but in opaque idioms one has to be a member of the community in order to identify the metaphor. Consider the following example:

1. *Kūmĩambĩrĩra*

To defecate on the tomb

Ignorance

The metaphor in this idiom is **the tomb**. It is a sacred place where the dead live and nobody is supposed to step on it. This idiom which is of the morality domain is used to mean that one does something out of ignorance due to ignorance of the cultural values. In the Gĩkũyũ community, visitors could be regarded as defecating on the tomb because they did not know the rules of the homestead. Here is another example:

2. *Kwĩnyitia mũthiori*

To tie a belt tightly

Brace for difficult times

The **belt** is the metaphor in this idiom. A belt is tied when one is ready for a serious errand or activity, for example, hunting, going for a journey, when hungry, and going for war among others. This idiom is used to tell people to be ready for what is ahead of them. It belongs to the domain of readiness and opportunities. Find another example:

3. *Kũringa mũkũyũ*

To hit a fig tree

Success or luck

In this idiom, **the fig tree** is the metaphor that represents anything that provides good results without any struggle. When the fig tree is hit fruits drop on the ground and animals collect them without strain or struggle. Whenever somebody gets something without putting much effort, it is said that he has hit a fig tree. The domain of readiness and opportunities is portrayed in this idiom. Another idiom with a metaphorical element is:

4 *Kwīyenja igoti*

To shave yourself on the nape

To do an impossible thing

The **nape** is that part of the neck at the back near one's head. It is therefore impossible to shave your nape because of its location and also it is not visible to the owner. This metaphor corresponds with an impossible thing that one may attempt to do. This idiom, which belongs to the domain of loss and impossibility, is told of those people who tend to do things alone without involving others. Find another example:

5 *Gūkunga rūriĩ na cuka mwerũ*

To pass a plain in a white sheet

To hide from the obvious

A white sheet is something visible from a far distance so when somebody is hiding but has a white piece of cloth wrapped around, then he/she is hiding from the obvious. The metaphor in this case portrays exposure and something that outstands. The theme of cultural values is demonstrated in the figurative meaning of this idiom. See another example:

6. *Kuunĩra kanua ithĩgĩ*

To cover the mouth with a twig

To talk less

**Twig** is the metaphor in this idiom. A twig is used for fencing so that what is inside is not exposed to the outside world. Traditionally, twigs were used for protecting the homestead. They also fenced the animal sheds to prevent the livestock from destroying plants and wild animals from getting into the homestead. Similarly in this idiom,

guarding the mouth from talking too unnecessarily corresponds to the twig, this idiom portrays the domain of cultural values. Consider another example:

7. *Kūraria mwaki*

To keep fire all night

To keep warmth

In this metaphor, **fire** is used to correspond to warmth that comes as a result of togetherness. A lot of effort is needed to ensure that fire keeps lighting, the same case applies to unity where much effort is required to keep it, and thus the domain of unity is demonstrated. Consider the other examples found in the classification of idioms:

### **3.4 Classification of Idioms**

Vinogradov (2008:33) cited in Njanga (2013) classifies idioms according to semantic and syntactic features. This study will explore the semantic features which are; Transparent, Semi-transparent, Semi-Opaque and Opaque idioms. Below is a table showing the classification of idioms by Vinogradov. The rows represent the characteristics of idioms.

**Table 3. 1: Classification of idioms**

<b>Transparent idioms</b>	<b>Semi-transparent idioms</b>	<b>Semi-opaque idioms</b>	<b>Opaque idioms</b>
Close meaning to the literal one	Allow both a literal and an idiomatic meaning	Figurative meaning is not joined to that of the constituent words of the idiom	Most difficult to interpret
Not difficult to understand	Carry a metaphorical sense not known through common use and the words of the idiom	Meaning is unintelligible though not completely	No relationship between the meanings of the constituents of idioms
Meanings can be inferred from the meaning of constituents	Clue from words	Minimal clue from words	Minimal or no clue from constituent words
Clue from words		Requires cultural reference	Rely on cultural reference. Learnt like a phrase as new concept

In the interpretation of transparent, semi-transparent and semi-opaque idioms, we develop metaphors whereas opaque idioms are learnt as a concept and do not rely on this mechanism, (Njanga, 2013).

### **3.4.1. Transparent idioms**

Consider the following examples:

1. *Ithe erire mwarĩ acunge marima*

The father told the daughter to sieve the holes

Meaning: Take care so that you don't get into a bad situation

This idiom belongs to the domain of readiness and opportunities. It is told to warn people that they need to take care of themselves lest they fall and become victims of circumstances. According to the Gĩkũyũ community, holes were dug for burying dead people or animals, unwanted things and so on, and were viewed from a negative point of view. In the forest, there used to be holes dug by animals and mostly when young men went hunting they were expected to take care of themselves.

The words in this idiom give us a clue that we need to take care of eventualities and negative impacts, hence, *cunga marima*.

2. *Thaa nĩithiĩte mũno nĩũkũnjei mũgeka*

Time is much gone let us fold the carpet

Meaning: Coming to a conclusion

This idiom is in the domain of readiness and opportunities and is used to alert people to be time conscious. A carpet used to be sat on traditionally especially during meetings and deliberations. Folding the carpet meant that the meeting was over or had to be adjourned because of time. The words of this idiom give a clue on the figurative meaning because we can infer the meaning.

3. *Tiwega kwaũra mũndũ nguo kũri arata ake*

It is not good to remove somebody's clothes before his/her friends

Meaning: It is not good to expose somebody's weaknesses before his/her friends.



This idiom belongs to the domain of morality. Clothes are meant to cover nakedness and when somebody undresses his/her friend it becomes a disgrace. This idiom is used to tell people to respect each other's private affairs and lives. The Kikuyu people valued cohesiveness and unity and believed in keeping other people's matters confidential.

4. *Kĩmotho ena **kĩongo kĩritu** ndanyitaga mathomo.*

Kĩmotho has a heavy head doesn't get education.

Meaning: Someone who doesn't comprehend anything, a fool.

This idiom belongs to the domain of information and ignorance. 'Heavy' means hard to lift and not flexible. When one is told of having a heavy head, yet the head is meant to help in thinking, it means that he/she cannot comprehend a simple thing. This idiom is used to encourage young children to sharpen their wits and be alert in learning something. Traditionally, elders used to tell stories to their children around the fireplace so that they could help them have sharp memory and develop learning skills. Consider another example:

5. *Mũtaarani ũcio aratarire andũ **ararutanĩria mũigua na mahira.***

The counselor counseled people removed thorn and pus at a go.

Meaning: Doing something whole heartedly with a lot of dedication and commitment.

This idiom is clear and gives us a clue to the interpretation. It belongs to the domain of determination and hard work. The 'thorn' and the 'pus' is the metaphor which represents something unwanted and foreign in the body. When one is pricked by a thorn, pus forms around that place, such that removing it requires dedication. This idiom is told to encourage people to be dedicated in whatever one is doing.

6. *Mūnene wa kīama kīa matatu nīmoinanūre njūngw'a na mūtongoria wa būrūri.*

The leader of organization of matatu broke the stool with leader of country.

Meaning: To hold discussions and do some deliberations.

This idiom belongs to the domain of unity. '*Njūng'wa*' is a traditional stool sat on by Gīkūyū elders. Every homestead had this kind of a stool specifically for the leader, who was the father, grandfather and great grandfather. 'To break the stool' meant that they sit together and deliberate on issues affecting the community. This idiom gives a clue to the hearer because of the metaphorical element of the stool. The examples of Gīkūyū idioms discussed above portray a metaphorical element, thus, it is easy to get the idiomatic interpretation because the lexical items provide a clue. However, the next section provides examples of idioms that do not give any clue to their idiomatic interpretation; thus, one should be a member of the Gīkūyū community to comprehend the meaning. See the other examples:

### 3.4.2 Opaque idioms

According to Vinagadow (2008:33) 'the meaning of these idioms is totally different from the meaning of its parts.' It is impossible to infer the actual meaning of the idiom from the meanings of its constituents because of the presence of items having cultural context.'

Consider the following example:

1. *Gītonga kīu gīethire ngari yakō yanyua kagera;*

The rich man looked for his car it drank a small stone

Meaning: This is when one is unsuccessful especially when in search or need of something.

This idiom belongs to the domain of emotions. The idiom is opaque because there is no relationship between drinking a stone and being unsuccessful. This idiom is used to warn people to take care of their properties. In the Gĩkũyũ community, small stones used to be found along river banks which were places designed for special occasions like circumcision.

2. *Nderwo guka nĩ mĩrwaru ndatuĩka nda.*

I have been told grandfather is sick I split the stomach.

Meaning: Get shocked.

This idiom is told to express shock and amazement. It belongs to the emotional domain. When one is told such an idiom, he does not get any clue from the words towards the figurative interpretation. A stomach splitting and shock do not have any relationship. However the Gĩkũyũ people believed that the stomach reacted towards either sad or happy news hence, splitting or cutting of the stomach meant negative news.

3. *Thutha wa kũrwara mũno nĩaretirwo.*

After much sickness he was called.

Meaning: Died.

This idiom is a euphemism for death and it is hard for a person to relate the two, that is, 'being called' and 'dying'. In the Kikuyu community, ancestors were believed to be the cause of most deaths, hence, the idiom, *nĩaretirwo* (was called). If the medicine men tried to treat somebody but he succumbed, the idiom used was, *nĩaretĩkire* (agreed to the calling). This cultural reference is very vital for the interpretation of these opaque idioms. The idiom belongs to the emotional domain.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

This section dealt with an in depth analysis of selected Gīkūyū idioms. The selected Gīkūyū idioms are classified into various thematic domains namely: emotions, leadership and praises, hard work and determination, pride and beauty, misfortunes and discouragements, seriousness and intentions, readiness and opportunities, unity, cultural values and morality. Some of the domains do not have many idioms in their categories, for example, the domain of diseases and control, information and ignorance. Other domains have many idioms in their categories. These include: the domains of unity, morality, hard work and determination, and cultural values.

The metaphorical element of Gīkūyū idioms was explored and it was realized that most Gīkūyū idioms contain a metaphor, for instance, the transparent idioms, which contributed to the validity of the CMT in the next chapter, while others do not have a metaphorical element, for example, the opaque idioms, such as the ones in the emotion domain.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### APPLICATION OF THE THEORY

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter aims at applying the Conceptual Metaphor Theory in the interpretation of selected Gikūyū idioms. According to Lakoff & Johnson(1980:5) the idea of conceptual mapping is explained whereby ‘one idea or conceptual domain is defined in terms of another.’ According to this theory, ‘metaphors are not simply literally devices but something active in understanding the very basis of language. Metaphors mean saying one thing while intending another.’

#### 4.1 Metaphor Based Idioms

According to Kovecses & Szabo (2010:27), ‘Conceptual metaphors bring into correspondence two domains of knowledge. One is typically a well delineated, familiar, physical domain and the other a less well delineated, less familiar, abstract domain.’ They further say that ‘the source domain is more concrete, perceivable and not abstract while the target domain is less easily apprehended and abstract.’ The following table illustrates this:

**Table 3. 2Illustration of source and Target domains**

<b>Source Domain</b>	<b>Target Domain</b>
Well-delineated	Less-delineated
Familiar	Less-familiar
Physical domain	Abstract domain
More concrete	Less easily perceivable

## 4.2 Application of Conceptual metaphor Theory on Gĩkũyũ Idioms

Consider the following examples of idioms' analysis using CMT.

1. *Kuuna mbũri yene kũgũrũ*

Breaking somebody else's goat's leg

Impregnating a girl outside marriage

This idiom is comparing the broken leg of a goat and an unmarried girl's pregnancy. A broken leg immobilizes a goat physically such that it cannot move from place to place looking for food. It curtails the goat's freedom hence decisions have to be made for the animal. A pregnant girl outside marriage is disempowered socially such that she cannot make choices like choosing her suitors; she cannot go for dances and has no bargaining power. The value and worth of a girl in Kikuyu community was seen in form of goats during dowry negotiations. A girl who got pregnant outside marriage was regarded as a disgrace and was given the name 'gĩcokio' (someone returned) meaning she could only be married off to an elderly man.

<b>Source</b>	<b>Target</b>
<b>Broken leg</b>	<b>Pregnancy</b>
Immobilizes physically	Disempowers socially
Grounded	Unable to move from place to place
Reduces choices	Reduces choices
No freedom	No bargaining power

The characteristics of a broken goat's leg are mapped onto the characteristics of an unmarried pregnant girl. What is physical and concrete is the broken leg of a goat and how the goat behaves helps in the understanding of a pregnant girl outside marriage.

Consider another example:

2. *Kwĩyoha mũthiori*

To tie a belt

Bracing for difficult times ahead

This idiom is mapped onto the figurative interpretation that we need to brace ourselves for difficult times ahead. Normally, Gĩkũyũ people used to tie a belt so that they do not get hungry when travelling for long distances or when working. The belt is a symbol of perseverance, success and hard work. Traditionally, kikuyu warriors could tie belts around their waists while going to hunt or going for war; then they could insert swords on the sides. When one is told to tie a belt tightly, then it means readiness for what is ahead.

<b>Source</b>	<b>Target</b>
<b>Belt</b>	<b>Readiness</b>
Gives shape	Preparedness
Helps one to survive hunger	Ready to face difficulties
Signifies victory	Perseverance

See another example:

3. *Gũkinya thigira na ikinya*

Step on the after-birth

Destroy completely

The metaphor in this idiom is the afterbirth. In Gikūyū society, the afterbirth is the waste that comes out after a child is born. It should be buried and not stepped on but in this case where it is stepped on it means one is determined to do anything to forget that person and his inhabitants. This idiom has a source, the afterbirth, mapped on the target which is the determination to forget something.

<b>Source</b>	<b>Target</b>
<b>Afterbirth</b>	<b>something forgotten</b>
Waste	Not useful
Thrown away	Not valuable
Buried with soil	Forgotten

This idiom talks about those who betray others that they are bound to be destroyed and completely forgotten. Find another example:

4. *Kūnyua kagera*

To drink a small stone

Be unsuccessful in getting or looking for something, total loss.

The metaphor in this idiom is the small stone which is swallowed to mean that one is unsuccessful in getting or looking for something. The mapping in this idiom is done from the source which is a small stone to the figurative interpretation which is an unsuccessful thing. The small stone is hard, impossible to grind with the teeth and cannot be digested once swallowed. It is mapped on a difficult thing, hard and impossible thing.

<b>Source</b>	<b>Target</b>
<b>Small stone</b>	<b>Loss</b>
Hard	Painful
Cannot be swallowed	cannot be understood
Dangerous	Dangerous



See another example:

5. *Kūringa mūkūyū*

To hit a fig tree

To be lucky or successful

This idiom talks about a world of getting things easily without struggling. It is based on a proverb which explains that animals especially warthogs used to hit a fig tree and fruit could drop down on the ground for her kids to eat. This idiom is used to mean that one has acquired something without straining or struggling. Hitting a fig tree so that fruits can fall requires a lot of effort and determination but the beneficiaries get it easily.

**Source**

**Target**

**Hitting the tree**

**Success**

Collecting the fruit

Acquiring things e.g. money, education

No struggle

No struggle

Gets fruit easily

acquires things easily

Satisfaction

Satisfaction

Hard work done

Results of hard work

Consider another example:

6. *Kūhūnga irūa*

To fetch nectar

To look for daily bread

A bee fetches nectar which it uses to make honey but it does not eat the honey. This idiom is used to advise people to do well without caring who will benefit from their good deeds. Young men used to be advised by the elders that they ought to be like bees so that

they feed for their families. A bee fetches nectar from all flowers far and wide just like the way a person looks for a job in different places.

The metaphor in this idiom is ‘nectar’ which represents the fruit of hard work. The idea of fetching nectar which is the source is mapped onto the working hard which is the target domain. This idiom is transparent and therefore gives a clue on the figurative interpretation.

<b>Source</b>	<b>Target</b>
<b>Looking for nectar</b>	<b>working hard to get daily bread</b>
Moves from flower to flower	Moves from place to place
Active bees    Hard work	
Honey is sweet	Better life

See another example:

7. *Gwĩkĩra coro maaĩ*

To put trumpet water

To feed well

For a trumpet to produce the desired sound, one must put water. For a person to do his work effectively he must eat well or be paid well. This idiom is told to encourage people to work hard and avoid laziness so that their trumpets will be full of water. The putting of water in the trumpet is the metaphor and hence, the source which is mapped onto the target which is eating well. The characteristics of the trumpet are mapped onto the characteristics of the stomach. Trumpet needs to be filled just like a stomach. If water is

not put in the trumpet, the expected results will not be realized and the same case applies to a human being who has to fill his stomach with food to live.

<b>Source</b>	<b>Target</b>
<b>Trumpet</b>	<b>Stomach</b>
Has an opening where water is put	Food goes to it through the mouth
Produces good music and sound	Gives the body energy

Consider another example:

8. *Kūharagana ta mai matherū*  
 To scatter like stool of baboons  
 To be disunited

This idiom used to mean lack of unity. A baboon jumps from tree to tree and whenever it defecates, the stool scatters on the ground. Whenever people lacked unity, they could be compared to the stool of baboons and be warned to always remain united.

The stool of baboons which is the source spreads everywhere once it is released and it is hard to collect. When people are disunited, each goes on his/her own way and none listens to the other. The characteristics of the stool of baboons are mapped onto the disunited person which is the target.

<b>Source</b>	<b>Target</b>
<b>Stool of baboons</b>	<b>Disunity</b>
Spreads everywhere	Not together
Pollutes the environment	Makes the community fight
No cohesion	No cohesion
Not useful	Not productive

Here is another example:

9. *Kūraria mwaki*  
Keeping fire all night  
Unity

You need a heap of wood to keep fire alight. A single arrow is easily broken but a bundle is not. A similar proverb is ‘*rūtungu rīmwe rūtiraragia mwaki*’ (one piece of wood cannot keep fire alight). This idiom is used to warn people of disunity and encourage them that they need each other and no one can stand alone. Fire symbolizes unity and warmth. For fire to keep burning, pieces of wood must be put together and this is the case with people who are living together.

<b>Source</b>	<b>Target</b>
<b>Fire</b>	<b>Unity</b>
Produces heat	Warmth
Dangerous	Strong, cannot be defeated
Spreads	Supports each other
Firewood	People

Find another example:

10. *Kuonia mūdũ njegeke*  
To show a person armpit  
To disclose one’s secrets

This idiom has a source and a target. An armpit is a private part which is not supposed to be exposed to the public. Traditionally this was told to women because they were not supposed to know the inner issues of the society lest they let out the secrets. The exposing of the armpit is the source while the telling of the secrets is the target.

<b>Source</b>	<b>Target</b>
<b>Armpit</b>	<b>secret</b>
Private	should not be disclosed
Hidden	hidden
Within the body	within the individual

Not visible unless exposed at freewill. Not known unless disclosed at free will

The characteristics of an armpit help in the interpretation of the idiom. This metaphor in this idiom is something we can all identify with hence the interpretation becomes clearer.

Consider another example:

11. *Kuunĩra kanua ithĩgĩ*

To break the mouth with twigs

Taming the tongue

This idiom was told to warn people of verbosity and that they should learn to listen especially in the presence of elders. The source of this idiom is the twig which covers the mouth such that one is not able to talk more, while the target is taming the tongue and the value of exercising respect and good manners especially in communication. The twig protects the homestead from thieves and dangerous animals which may come to spoil plants destroy livestock. Traditionally, twigs could be used to fence the homestead such

that every homestead was enclosed. Therefore covering the mouth with a twig means that you cover from spoilers, trouble makers, oppressors, among others.

<b>Source</b>	<b>Target</b>
<b>Twig</b>	<b>Taming the tongue</b>
Protect against danger	Protect from careless talk
Guards from enemies	Guards from trouble
Covering from everybody	keeping secrets
See another example:	

12. *Kuhenerio*

- To be beckoned
- To die

In this idiom, it is imagined that there is a distance that one wishes should be closed, for instance, two ridges apart are separated by a big valley. The two ridges denote one before death and another one after death where one is beckoned to join the other one. This idiom borrows heavily from the Biblical aspect where it is believed that the angels beckon someone to join them in the world of the spiritual. The research devised this idiom as follows:

<b>Source</b>	<b>Target</b>
<b>Beckoning</b>	<b>Death</b>
Distance that should be closed	two worlds of life and death
Crossing the distance	crossing from life to death

This idiom is common to some members of the Gikūyū community especially the middle-aged whereas to the old, it is not common.

Find another example:

13. *Kuonana kanua*

To see with the mouth

To get shocked/amazement

This idiom talks about the mouth that opens wide in amazement or shock. In this case the opening of the mouth is likened to the opening of the eyes which in the real sense are the ones that are meant to see. When one is faced by a situation which is tough, the first reaction is to open one's mouth in amazement. The mouth has an opening just like the eyes do but its role is to eat and talk. The eyeball also resembles the tongue while the eyelids resemble the lips. The mapping in this case is on the functions of the eyes that are meant to see but in this case the mouth opens in amazement while the eyes are still open.

14. *Gūtūnga nyoni njūru*

To meet with a bad bird

Bad luck or misfortune

This idiom is used to portray a misfortune or bad luck. The bad bird in this case represents the misfortune. The Gikūyū culture believed in fortunes and misfortunes, for example, if a bird hooted from a nearby tree it meant someone must die, or if a person set out on a journey, and a bird or small animal passed by or in front, that person would

postpone the journey until a certain time he would be sure of safety. The mapping on the metaphor from the source, bad bird, on the target, misfortune as follows:

<b>Source</b>	<b>Target</b>
<b>Bad bird</b>	<b>Misfortune</b>
Bad omen	Bad luck
Destroys	Causes calamity
Causes horror	Causes sadness

The characteristics of the bird meant to bring calamity help us to interpret the idiom since we are able to map them on the target. Most African communities are able to identify with this idiom because superstition was common.

Another example of an idiom using CMT:

15. *Gũcaria ngemi*

To look for ululations

To be praised and regarded highly

This idiom is used to demonstrate how people seek to be appreciated by other people. Ngemi (ululations) is not physical or concrete, and therefore it can be difficult to map from source to target. This idiom does not have a source but it has a target, that is, appreciation.

16. *Kuoha mũgoto*

To tie with a banana string

Take things easily.



*Mūgoto* is a banana string is very delicate and light. As the banana grows, the strings peel off and the farmer removes them. These banana strings are used to tie light things like seedlings, or left to rot to make manure. When one is told to take life issues and tie them with a banana string, it means, taking thing easily or taking life easy so that it doesn't depress or oppress. People who do not forgive easily, or who do not release issues easily are told this idiom as a way of stress management. The mapping can be done as follows:

<b>Source</b>	<b>Target</b>
<b>Banana string</b>	<b>Forgiving heart</b>
Easily broken	Releases easily
Delicate	Delicate
Holds the banana	Controls the body
Not long lasting	Forgives many times
Peels off when not of use	Releases unimportant issues

The characteristics of a banana string are mapped onto the characteristics of a heart that forgives and releases issues easily. Let us see another example:

17. *Kūhenia kīero*

To glitter the thigh

Beauty

This idiom talks about beauty that when a thigh glitters, beware lest trouble takes toll. The characteristics of a smooth, plump body are mapped onto the beauty of a person, which has consequences if not taken with caution.

The mapping can be done as follows:

<b>Source</b>	<b>Target</b>
<b>Thigh</b>	<b>Beauty</b>
Appeals	attracts
Can cause trouble	can cause diseases

18. *Kūria marĩgu*  
 To eat *marĩgu*  
 Wasting time or idling

This idiom is told to discourage people of being idle or not working hard. ‘*Marĩgu*’ could be something eaten yet it doesn’t satisfy. It could also be something meaningless and that does not add value to a person. Mapping was done as follow:

<b>Source</b>	<b>Target</b>
<b>Mariigu</b>	<b>Idleness</b>
Unsatisfying	unfulfilling
Adds no value	Valueless
Yields nothing	No results

19. *Kũnja mũgeka*  
 Fold the carpet  
 Complete a matter or business

The idiom is used to demonstrate the conclusion or summary of a matter. A carpet is used for sitting on, keeping the house warm, decorating a house and protecting the floor of a

house. A carpet is usually the last thing spread on the house before somebody moves into the house. The carpet is the source domain while conclusion is the target domain.

<b>Source</b>	<b>Target</b>
<b>Carpet</b>	<b>Conclusion/summary</b>
Last thing spread on the floor	Last thing in a meeting
Decorates the house	Gives the important points discussed
Relief to those who use it	Relief from the day's work or discussion

20. *Gũkararia rũũĩ*  
 To argue with a river  
 To fight a losing battle

A river has a natural course which it follows. Trying to change the river course would be impossible. This idiom is told to remind people that God's case has no appeal (*Wa Ngai ndũri mũgarũri*). The Gĩkũyũ people had great regard for the supernatural being (Mwenenyaga or Ngai), and they believed that the way God created the world was good.

Consider the following mapping:

<b>Source</b>	<b>Target</b>
<b>River</b>	<b>Argument</b>
Follows a certain course	Follows a certain topic
Has tributaries	has proposers and opposers
Can cause destruction if it overflows	can cause trouble if debaters go overboard
Useful	Useful

The characteristics of a river are mapped onto the characteristics of an argument.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter explored the application of Conceptual Metaphor Theory on selected Gīkūyū idiomatic expressions. The chapter demonstrated that mapping is done on the metaphor, that is, from the physical and familiar domain to a more concrete domain which represents the abstract, less easily perceivable domain. The study realized that opaque idioms are hard to analyze and some of them do not have a source, hence, cannot be mapped unless one imagines and is a member of that community so as to perceive the context.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

The study aimed at the interpretation of Gĩkũyũ idiomatic expressions using CMT. Collection of data was done between the month of March and May 2016. The study used four songs (two from Joseph Kamaru and two from Muigai wa Njoroge), Njata TV, Inooro TV and focused group discussions. Four elders helped in the interpretation of the idioms. The study used the Southern Gĩkũyũ dialect spoken in Murang'a County and some parts of Kiambu County. The conceptual Metaphor theory was used to analyze the data. The objectives that guided the study were:

- i) To examine the metaphorical element of selected idiomatic expressions in Gĩkũyũ.
- ii) To establish the relationship between the semantic meaning of lexical items in an idiom and the general meaning of the idiomatic expressions.
- iii) To classify selected idiomatic expressions according to their thematic domains, e.g. emotions.

The research hypotheses were:

- i) Metaphors have an important function the formation and interpretation of Gĩkũyũ idioms.
- ii) The semantic meaning in most Gĩkũyũ idioms is not related to their idiomatic interpretation, e.g., idioms related to emotions.
- iii) Gĩkũyũ idiomatic expressions are classified according to their thematic domains.

The chapter also makes conclusions and recommendations for further research.

## 5.2 Conclusion

The research set out to fulfill the stated objectives and hypothesis.

Chapter two dealt with the general information about idioms.

Chapter three demonstrated that Gīkūyū idiomatic expressions can be classified according to plausible domains. These domains included emotional domain, Leadership, Beauty and praises, hard work and determination, among others. In this chapter, the metaphorical element in Gīkūyū idioms was portrayed and it was noted that it is hard to realize the metaphorical element in most emotional idioms.

In chapter four, the analysis was done on selected Gīkūyū idiomatic expressions and the following observations were made:

- That metaphors are needed in the interpretation of idioms
- That mapping is made on the metaphor from the source domain to the target domain
- That in most idioms in the emotional domain the source is implicit.

The first hypothesis stated that metaphors have an important function in the formation and interpretation of Gīkūyū idioms. The hypothesis was found to be true since mapping is done on the metaphor from a familiar concept to a non-familiar concept.

The second hypothesis stated that the semantic meaning in most Gīkūyū idioms is not related to their idiomatic interpretation, e.g., idioms related to emotions. This study found out that to a large extent, the semantic meaning in most Gikuyu idioms is not related to their idiomatic interpretation. This has been found to be true since most of the idioms related to emotional domains are opaque and do not give any clue to the idiomatic interpretation.

The third hypothesis stated that Gīkūyū idiomatic expressions are classified according to their thematic domains. The study found out that there is a relationship between the domains of an idiom and its degree of transparency. For instance, most of the idioms on the domain of emotions are not transparent and do not give a clue to the figurative meaning, while idioms on the domain of hard work and determination are transparent.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

The study was restricted to Gīkūyū idiomatic expressions using the Conceptual Metaphor Theory. This study recommends that, the study be done using other figures of speech e.g. metonymy, riddles and hyperbole among others using the same theory to establish the mappings. The study also recommends that the interpretation of idioms be done using another theory of Cognitive Semantics, preferably, The Blending Theory so that it can cater for the novel metaphors found in most new and emerging idioms. Also similar studies should be carried out in other languages to establish whether idioms can be mapped and whether they behave the same way as Gīkūyū idioms.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX ONE

#### JOSEPH KAMARU'S NI KENYA IRIA IITU

<p>1. Nĩ Kenya ĩrĩa iitũ ndahũragĩrwo, Kana nĩrĩa iitũmwahunyĩrĩa? Ndainainio ta thaara tetarĩ mwene Kuuma ũmũthũ Kenya ngũmĩne Ngai Ngũũria yahũrĩrwo ngengere nĩkĩ, Akorwo nĩ thĩrĩ nĩnjĩrwo ndĩhe; Tondu ũrĩa waarĩ ho nĩtwarĩhire na thakame nyingĩ Ngai arokumio.</p>	<p>Is it the Kenya I was beaten for or have you not weeded for properly? I shake like napier grass like it has no owner From today I shall give it to God I ask why it has been rung a bell If it is debt let me be told to pay because we paid the debt that was there With much blood, may God be praised</p>
<p>2. Ndũire njetereire mũnyumbũrĩre, Tharaita ĩno nĩrĩkũitarĩ mũtegi, Mwanjũria ndeto yanyua kagera , Narĩikwonwo nĩ aka ndĩrĩ yerica Ngũigua ta ĩngĩrĩa ndaririkana, twagũikiirie mĩtũgatũtetere Na rĩũ nĩKenya woha mũgoto, Na ũkamĩendia kũ? Kenya nĩ ya Ngai</p>	<p>I have been waiting you reveal to me Which weapon is this with no one to trap You ask me news I lost all I wish it were seen by women, cannot succeed I feel like crying when I remember We voted you in so that you can defend us And now you have tied Kenya with a banana string Where will you sell it? Kenya belongs to God</p>
<p>3. Mũrata kaĩtũtangĩringwo nĩ tha, nĩ ciana na athuri ona atumia Korwo waarĩ Nairobi hĩndĩ ya power,</p>	<p>My friend why can't you be merciful Because of children, men and women Had you been there during the time of power</p>

<p>No ūmenye ūthamaki nĩ wa Ngai  Ngonā ūthamakiūyū mūkinyĩte kũ?  Na gūtīrīŋgīthamaka ta Ngai  Mbia mūrī nacio na ithaka nene,  Wakahare akuireagĩcaria ngemi</p>	<p>You would know that leadership belongs to God  Where is leadership heading to?  No one can rule like God  Your money and big pieces of land  The hare died looking for praises</p>
<p>4. Mūrata ngwenda wīyūrie na ngoro,  mbaara ūngītūrīka we tondūūrī mbia  Nīūkahaica ngarawa na ithūī tūthire  ūrīathaga mītī kana nĩ nyamū  Atongoria kaĩ mwariganīrwo,  Nĩ kīrumi kīa Jomo ūrīa ūrīrima  Kenya ti mūrītu mūnyuīre njohi,  ūrīa ūmīkundīte nīegūtahīkio</p>	<p>My friend I want you to ask yourself  If the war would intensify because you have  money  Will you climb the ladder while we get finished  Will you rule trees or animals?  Leaders why have you forgotten  The late Jomo’s curse  Kenya is not a girl you drink beer over  And the one who has drunk should be made to  vomit</p>
<p>5. Nīgūo mwītīkie Kenya nĩ ya Ngai,  mata marī rūhī ndikuongerera  Mwendia wa būrūri atarī na ithīgī  thigira wake nginyĩte na ikinya  Ngai twakūhoya ūtūhūgūkīre,  tuīka mūthamakiūtuonie njīra  Tondū nguona Kenya terī na ihoe,  na inyuī makanitha mūhoe mūno</p>	<p>So that you can believe Kenya belongs to God  I won’t add saliva on the palm  The betrayer of the country without a flower  I have stepped on his after birth  God we pray that you may turn to us  Be our king and show us the way  Because I see as if Kenya has a wound  And to you churches, make fervent prayers</p>

APPENDIX TWO

JOSEPH KAMARU'S CUNGA MARIMA

<p>Cunga marima ukīgũa ndũkagũe naniĩ,  cunga marima,  Na ndũkanoige ndiakwĩreĩ,  cunga marima</p>	<p>Beware of holes so that we don't fall together  Beware of holes  and don't say I didn't tell you  Beware of holes</p>
<p>Ngũria ngwambĩrĩria ũrĩkũ-ĩ Kenya Gĩcirũ,  Tondũ nĩmũroigire atĩ cunga marima,  Mũikia ndoĩ mwehereri-ĩ cunga marima;  Kĩrĩnyaga kaĩ arĩ atĩa -ĩ maitũ Gĩcirũ,  Tondũ ciagwa itarĩ nyonge -ĩ na tigũkũra,  Na mĩratĩna ndĩtũire-ĩ cunga marĩma.</p>	<p>Where do I start, Kenya Gichiru  Because you said, beware of holes  The pusher doesn't move aside, beware of holes  What is it Kirinyaga, my mother Giciru  Because breasts have fallen - not due to age  Bamboos trees got extinct, beware of holes</p>
<p>Kamarũ ndigũtarũra-ĩ na ndigũkera,  irimũ cioyage itira -ĩ kunda na ũmerie,  Tondũ gĩthũa kĩrĩ o nja-ĩ cunga marima;  Mĩthuru ndĩganagio-ĩ njoya cia ngũkũ,  Cia mwera ti cio cia njamba-ĩ wĩmenyerereKũringĩra  iriũko iroge-ĩ cunga marima</p>	<p>Kamaru I won't tear, or approximate  The fools to lift trunks, sip and swallow  Because the anthill is outside, beware of holes  Skirts are never enough, hen's feathers  Of hens are not of cocks, beware  To cross a bewitched place, beware of holes</p>
<p>Huko nĩcietherwo itatĩ-ĩ, ikwa itanathira,  Ciarema ciĩkĩrwo maaĩ-ĩ mwendia bũrũri  Nĩahĩtwo nĩahĩtwo na rũa-ĩ atanaturũkia  Nake mũrĩo nĩ hũũni -Ĩ kanua  ndarumaga ndĩra ciao-ĩ warega kwĩrwo</p>	<p>Trap rodents, before yams get extinct  If not caught put water, the traitor  Must be hunted before he disappears  And a satisfied person, you mouth  does not insult his people, and refuse to be told</p>

Ndūkirega gūikia irima-īkūnja mūgeka.	Lest you cast into the hole, fold the carpet
Mūthongorima ūrī o thome-ī ti atīūrīhūgo, Wetherwo mūruti mūūgī-ī njamba īrī hinya, Ndiūī mwena wa kīgunyū-ī cunga marima;	A big hole at the gate, is not far To look for a strong clever person I don't know the worm's side, beware of holes
Na inyūī mwgūrīrwo nī awa-īna akīguraria, Na mūkoiga ngūre ngemi-ī,mwaka wa hiti, Na ndūhoyagwo riigī-ī cunga marima	You were bought my father and sacrificed You say I buy ululations- the hyena's year You are never borrowed anything, beware of holes
Ngūrīra ngūkirio nūū- ī baba Kīgotho, Na ciama itūire na mbakī-ī na biribiri, Kīndūkīoma no mūnyaka-ī Njirūīnūke; Njūkīrīa yarī ya hako-ī no īranyua irūa Mwatū ūtūire o mūgumo- ī wīmenyerere, Warega kuona nīūkūigua-ī cunga marima	Who will silence me, My father Kigotho Miracles are with tobacco and pepper There is luck, Njiru to go home Abee is taking pollen The hive is on the Mugumo beware If you don't see you will hear beware of holes
Mūrimūyūyū uumīte kū-ī na ti mūcarī, Wetherwo mūtemi mūūgi ūtanatherema Tondūmūigua na mahira-ī itionaga toro; Gūtīrī itarī kīmamo-ī , rīu nīngūinūka, njuge gwitū nī Kangema-ī mūihwa wa Nyerī Mūnyendi nīakangora kuo- ī na oke kahora	Where has this disease come from, not contagious We look for a clever cutter, before it spread Because a thorn and pus do not get sleep All have beds I should go home Our home is Kangema, my friend from Nyeri My lover me will meet me there, come slowly



### APPENDIX THREE

#### MUIGAI WA NJOROGE'S 'MUTU'

<p>Ndatiga ndahagĩra maaĩ ma ngima riiko,          Ndaguthũkĩra mũtu gatukainĩ ka neimba,          Ndamaka na ndatuĩka nda ndona mũtu ũrĩa          ũhaicĩte,          Ndecokera nyũmba ndera ciana ihoe ikome          nĩtũkarĩa rũciũ</p>	<p>I placed water on the cooker to make ugali          And rushed to my neighbor's shop to buy flour          I was extremely shocked when I saw how the price          of flour had risen          I went back to the house and told the children to          pray and go to sleep we shall eat tomorrow</p>
<p>Auui !unga! ici itingĩkirwo nacio nĩndegu          mĩtheko,Ciana ciitũ itingĩrarĩra arĩa angĩ          makĩrĩa, Nĩkĩo mũndũ aragũthwo agakua          mũkaigua ngumo,          Cia wamarirũ itanarirũka nĩgwĩkwo kaũndũ.</p>	<p>Oh!flour! We cannot keep quiet,it is serious Our          children cannot starve while others are eating          That is why you hear of one dying after being hit          Something must be done before things become          worse</p>
<p>Tũrambĩte kuoyanĩra mabanga muone ifĩ,          Mbembe ciitũ irathũkio na ingĩ iraciinwo,          Na inyuĩ mwahũna mũratwĩrorera          mũgĩtũnyenya onei tũrimũ,          Twarĩire mbeũ tũroria rĩu tũhande kĩ?</p>	<p>We started by fighting so that you can get seats          Our maize was destroyed and burnt          You look down on us when you are satisfied          calling us fools          What will we plant and we ate the seed?</p>
<p>Mũrongereire maguta tũramwĩrorera,          Tũrabutwo mawĩra na tũrerwo tũinũke ,          Ona woneki wa indo wĩ igũrũ,          thitima irarĩhio ta kĩongo kĩa mbaathi ,          No mwahutia mũtu mwahutia harĩa he ruo.</p>	<p>We watched you raise the price of oil          We were sacked from our jobs and told to go home          The availability of things is high          Electricity is as expensive as the head of a bus,          But when you touch flour you touch where it pains</p>
<p>Nĩ kũrĩa cienja cia marigu kana twĩke atĩa?          Na mwana nĩatanyĩtwo aroke kĩrathi,          Gĩthomo ona gĩa tũhũ mũndũ wĩ nda theri ta          kĩura angĩgĩthoma atĩa?          Nĩtũhaicĩrio indo ciothe tũgũithĩrio mũtu.</p>	<p>Do we eat banana stems or what do we do?          And a child is expected to go to class          How can a person who has an empty stomach like a          frog concentrate in class even if the education is          free?          Let the prices of other things go up except flour</p>

<p>Ī nīūrī weyūria kīrīa gītūmaga ngombo,  īciarīre kwa mūmīathi na īgakūrīra o kuo,  ī githī no kūhūnio nda o hamwe na ciana ciao  makaaga kūhūūta ,  Gītiganei na mūtu tūmūtungatīre</p>	<p>Have ever asked yourself why a slave  Gives birth at their master’s and ages there  Because they feed well together with their children  Leave flour alone so that we can serve</p>
<p>Nītūūī atī mwahithiire mbembe atī mūtu  ūhaice,  Haha twacanūrirwo nī mūtukubu Moi  Na nīguo mūthī mwamūingatire ta ngui īriite  ma thatemūthi wa thigūūkū,  Na agīthī nīoigire nītūkoiga kaba Moi.</p>	<p>We are aware you hid maize so that the price of  flour can go up  we were informed by his Excellency Moi  And the way you evacuated him like a dog that has  eaten for thirty  And on retirement he said we shall regret and  remember him</p>

APPENDIX FOUR

MUIGAI WA NJOROGE'S 'KIGUTHA'

<p>Ngũina ndī na tha nyingī ota mūhikiūkūrīra mūrūme, O ūrīa ūmūkuīrīre o rīrīa mahikania matanakūra Tondū marakara ma Ngai maikūrūkīte na ūūru mūingī Mwaga kūgarūrūka būrūriūyū gūkahonoka wang'uru Gīkī kīgūtha ngūria ī hihi nūūngīhota gūkīgita , No anga hihi ūrīa ūkwīhitha thakameinī ya Mwathani</p>	<p>I sing mercifully like a bride crying for her husband Who died after the wedding before they get old  Because God's wrath has come down  If you don't change this country will face consequences This hard hitter who can escape  May the one who hides in the blood of the Lord</p>
<p>Mūthuriūngī akīnjīra mwanake kiritithia thuti kagō, Mūrogi okire ūtukū akīroga nyama harīa yanoreire</p>	<p>Another man told me to control my lust  A witch came at night and bewitched the fat meat</p>
<p>Ūyūūini tūinaga nī ngūria ngīrīra ūū wona mwathira, Wona kīero kīahenia wīhūgūre mwena ūngī wone mathiko, Mūirītu wonio igego wīmenyerere ndūgathekio rīa mūico, Gīkuo gītiūī njamba thaka kana ngamini wīmenyerere</p>	<p>Whom will we sing for if you all die  When you see beauty turn the other side and see a funeral Take care of smiles young girllest it be the last smile Beware death has no beautiful warrior</p>
<p>Ngūria nī ciana cigana ūmūthīūyūitigītwo cia ndigwa, Nī andū aigana matunyītwo wendo wa mūtūrīre makeita,</p>	<p>How many orphans have been left  How many people have committed suicide because of being deprived of love</p>

<p>Nĩ ma gũtirĩ ruo ta rwa mũrimũũyũ watonya mahĩndĩ-inĩ, Na no ũkũigua andũ angĩ makiuga ĩno nĩ homa kana nĩ mũtino</p>	<p>And there is no disease like this once it penetrates to the bones Some people say it is flu or accident</p>
<p>Kwĩgita ti guoya andũ aitũ rekei tũgerie kwĩnyitianyitia Menyerera kũrĩa irio imwe ona ciaheha mũriũ hehania nacio, Tiga mũrũgarũgo aĩ wathiĩ gũcaria kũrĩa ihiũhĩire, Mũrimũũyũ ti ithaga wĩmenyerere ndũgaikie gĩkuũ ndahi</p>	<p>Let us take care our people  Take care and mind your own spouse no matter what Avoid moving from place to place  This disease is serious and not a flower do not test the waters</p>
<p>Ngai tondũ nĩ kwĩhia twĩhĩtĩe Mwathaniũgatũrakarĩra, Ndagũthaiha ririkana kwĩhokeka gwaku ona kwa Mũrũguo, Kĩhonia kĩa bũrũriũyũ gĩtingĩoneka mĩbira-ini, Kĩhonia kĩa bũrũriũyũ witũ kĩhithĩtwo gũoko-inĩ gwaku</p>	<p>We have sinned before God and He is angry  Remember your faithfulness and your son  Healing cannot be found in condoms  Healing of this country is hidden in your hand</p>
<p>Ngai tondũ gũtirĩ mũndũ wendete gũtũnga nyoni njũru, Na njĩra nĩ nyingĩiria irarehe mũrimũũyũ na to ya ũtharia, Ndagũthaiha humbĩra caitani wa kũnũhu ndakanyone, Nĩndĩrirĩirie kũrera ciana ciakwa na gũgũtungafĩra.</p>	<p>God, no one desires bad luck  And there are many causes of this disease apart from adultery Cover me so that the devil doesn't see me  I desire to bring up my children and to serve you</p>

**APPENDIX FIVE: SELECTED GIKUYU IDIOMS**

<b>Gikuyu idiom</b>	<b>Literal meaning</b>	<b>Figurative/idiomatic meaning</b>
Cunga marima	to beware of holes	Take care of any eventuality
Gūcaria ngemi	to look for ululations	To look for praises
Guikia gikuu ndahi	to throw locust into death	To dare
Gūikia mītī	to throw trees	To vote in leaders
Gūikio nī nda	being thrown by the stomach-ache	Being greedy
Gūita ūkīonoria	to pour as you empty	To lose everything
Gūkaama njogu	to milk an elephant	Doing an impossible thing
Gūkararia rūūī	to argue with a river	A losing argument
Gūkinya thigira na ikinya	to step on the after-birth	To destroy and forget something.
Gūkiritithia thuti kagō	to rub lust on the pan	Controlling one's sexual feelings or any other lustful feelings
Gūkunga rūriī na cuka mwerū	to pass a plain in a white sheet	Hiding from the obvious
Gūkūnja mbūri na rūūa	to fold the goat and the skin	To finish doing everything
Gūte ikinya	to lose step	To stray
Gūte nguo	to lose clothes	Can't hide anymore (of pregnancy)
Gūtigīria njaū	to spare for the calf	To keep secrets and not disclose everything
Gūtinia kīande	to cut a shoulder	Dowry negotiations, also known as 'ngurario'
Gūtua ciira	to cut a case	To give a judgment
Gūtuīka nda	to cut the stomach	To be shocked
Gūtuīra mata gīthūri	to spit on the chest	To bless

Gūtūnga nyoni njūru	to meet a bad bird	Bad luck
Gūtuuma mūdũ rĩgu	to knit someone something to eat	Provide
Gwĩkĩra coro maaĩ	to put water on a trumpet	Provide
Gwĩkĩrwo nduma	be put darkness	be discouraged
Gwĩtwo	to be called	To die
Kūgĩa na ihoe	to have a wound inside the body	To have a problem that is not recognized
Kūgĩa na kĩongo kĩritũ	to have a heavy head	Not to comprehend anything
Kūgũagũa	to fall repeatedly	to change
Kūhaica mūtĩ kuuma na igũrũ	to climb a tree from the top	To do an impossible task
Kūhaica ngarawa	to climb a ladder	To get a higher position
Kūharagana ta mai ma therũ	to scatter like stool of baboons	Disunity or disintegration
Kūhenerio	to be beckoned	To die
Kūhenia kĩero	to glitter a thigh	Beautiful
Kuhĩa na ma mbere	to burn with the first	Grab the first opportunity
Kūhoria mwaki	put out fire	Settle a dispute
Kūhuha coro na kũrĩa kwariĩ	to blow the trumpet from the wide side	Speak too much unnecessarily.
Kūhũnga irũa	to fetch nectar	To work hard as you look for daily bread
Kūhunyiĩra	not weeding properly	To do something carelessly
Kūhũrĩrwo ngengere	to be rung for a bell	To be informed of something or reminded
Kūimbia ndore	making a fart vibrant	To exaggerate, to make a mountain out of a molehill
Kūingata gui ũrĩite ma thate	evacuate a dog that has eaten of thirty	To be hated.
Kũira ngoro	nausea	Not to lose hope

Kūmīa kīraro	to defecate the sleeping place	Not appreciative of those around you.
Kūmīa mbīrīra	to defecate on the tomb	Doing something out of ignorance.
Kūmīra na kīgokora	to blow the nose with the elbow	Attempting the impossible
Kūmunya itooka	to uproot the boundary mark	To start a fight
Kunanīra njūngw'a	to break the stool together	To discuss / deliberate
Kūnja mūgeka	To fold the carpet	Complete the matter or business
Kūnyiita mbaru	to hold the ribs	To support
Kūnyua kagera	to drink a small stone	Total loss
Kuoha mūgoto	to tie a banana string	Not to take something seriously, take something easily
Kuona na kanua	to see with the mouth	Be shocked
Kuonia mūdū igego	to show someone a tooth	Appreciate someone
Kuonia mūdū kanyoni wa ng'ethe	to show someone a bird of Ng'ethe	To punish somebody
Kuonia mūdū njegeke	to show someone armpit	To disclose your secrets
Kūraria mwaki	keeping fire all night	Unity
Kūrega mītheko	to refuse laughter	A serious matter
Kūrīa gīthūri kīniī	to eat the chest upside down	Not appreciative
Kūrīa indo	eat things	Enjoy life
Kūrīa marīngu	to eat marīngu	Wasting time or idling
Kūrīa mīrīo	to eat vines	To be foolish
Kūringa Mūkūyū	to hit a fig tree	Good luck or success
Kūringīra iroge	to cross through a bewitched place	To go through misfortunes
Kūringwo nī tha	to be hit by mercy	To be moved by compassion
Kūrīo nī hūūni	to be eaten by satisfaction	Extravagant and proud

Kūroga nyama harīa ĩnoreire	curse fat meat	Do something unfortunate to somebody so as to discourage
Kūrokerwo nĩ nyoni njũru	to be met by a bad bird in the morning	To encounter a misfortune
Kūruta wīra wa kīraĩ	to do the work of a basin	To do unproductive work
Kūrutaniria mūigua na mahira	to remove the thorn and the pus together	To complete a task, doing something wholeheartedly.
Kūūma na mūnyaka	to dry with luck	Waiting for something unexpected
Kuuna iru	to break the knee	To rest
Kuunīra kanua ithĩg ĩ	to break the mouth with twigs	To keep secrets
Kuunīra kanua ngũ	to break mouth with wood	To tame the tongue
Kūūrwo nĩ hinya	losing energy	Getting discouraged
Kwenyūrana mboco yagwa thĩ	to share a bean once it falls to the ground	To share something
Kwīhīta na mwana	to swear with a child	To invite a misfortune
Kwīnyitia mūthiori	to tie a belt tightly	To persevere and brace for future
Kwīranīra mīatũ	to tell others of hives	To expose yourself
Kwīyenja igoti	to shave your nape	To do an impossible thing
Kwīyoha mūcibi	to tie a belt	To brace yourself for difficult times ahead
Nda theri	empty stomach	Hungry
Nĩ gĩathĩire njenga	it has ground 'njenga'	Failure to produce the desired outcomes.