



Research Article



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Section: *Interdisciplinary Studies*

Published in Nairobi, Kenya
by Royallite Global in the
*Journal of Linguistics and
Foreign Languages*

Volume 4, Issue 1, 2023

**Article Information**Submitted: **10th October 2022**Accepted: **25th February 2023**Published: **3rd March 2023**

Additional information is
available at the end of the
article

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**How to Cite:**

Chepkemai, N., Nganga, S., & Kandagor, M. (2023). Analysis of Conversational Maxims Flouted to Achieve Verbal Humour in Churchill Show Stand-up Comedy Performances. *Journal of Linguistics and Foreign Languages*, 4(1). Retrieved from <https://royalliteglobal.com/jlfl/article/view/1030>

Analysis of conversational maxims flouted to achieve verbal humour in Churchill Show stand-up comedy performances

Nancy Chepkemai^{1*}, Simon Nganga¹, Mosol Kandagor²

Department of Literature, Linguistics, Foreign Languages and Film Studies, Moi University, Kenya

²Department of Kiswahili and Other African Languages, Moi University, Kenya

Correspondence: nancysawe4@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-5275-6923>

Abstract

There is an increased proliferation of verbal humour in stand-up comedies in Kenya recently. The local television industry has also invested in verbal humour to enhance their viewership. The study, however, sought to investigate conversational maxims flouted in *Churchill Show* to create verbal humour. The study relied on the Gricean cooperative principle and the principles of Relevance theory to explain the maxims flouted by stand-up comedians. The study adopted a descriptive qualitative research. The primary data of study comprised purposively selected utterances from stand-up comedy performances from 2011 to 2019 in *Churchill Show*. In collecting the data, the researcher applied attentive observation. Being a qualitative study, data analysis commenced during data collection. Content analyses of spoken words in the TV tape were transcribed. Classification of the data into maxims flouted was first done and discussed. The findings showed that the selected stand-up comedians flouted all the four conversational maxims in their utterances to create humour. As the comedians flout the maxims, they employed strategies such as irony, satire, self-deprecation, stereotypes and hyperbole to enhance their humour creation. The study concluded that the relevance theoretical framework is appropriate in explaining the inferential process that the audience apply in humour interpretation in order to achieve optimal relevance. The study contributes knowledge in pragmatics, especially the Grice conversational maxims and implicatures.

Keywords: conversational maxims, flout, verbal humour, *Churchill Show*



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Public Interest Statement

There is an increased proliferation of verbal humour in stand-up comedies in Kenya recently. The local television industry has also invested in verbal humour to enhance their viewership. For this reason, *Churchill Show*, one of the verbal humour comedy events has captivated Kenyans in the last decade. Verbal humour is often created by flouting the Gricean conversational maxims. However, in Kenya, no study has currently examined the conversational maxims flouted by the comedians to create verbal humour in *Churchill Show*.

1.0 Introduction

Verbal humour certainly is spoken language used to evoke laughter in certain contexts. People are able to laugh at something interesting no matter how different they are in terms of sex, age, country, and culture among other aspects. Verbal humour is a cognitive experience involving an internal redefining of socio-cultural reality that results in a mirthful state of mind of which laughter is a possible external display (Morrison, 2012). Smiles, grins or even sudden exhalations can also indicate verbal humorous experience. An expected pattern is violated, or a difference is noted close enough to but remarkably different from the norm. It is this difference that provokes humour in the mind of the hearer. The hearer though must have an understanding of the normal patterns of reality before they can notice differences; hence, the perception of verbal humour is based on the mental capacity to note, understand and categorize incongruous changes.

Verbal humour can be used to enhance informal communication and relationships. Understanding verbal humour in the current situations is extremely necessary since it can be used to ease fatigue and stress. By using verbal humour, it is possible for a speaker to say the truth elegantly and softly, without hurting the hearer's feelings. The main goal of verbal humour is to amuse people and to provoke laughter. It has many social functions; however, mostly it is instrumental to lighten some situations, amuse people or evoke a good mood. The primary functions of verbal humour in conversations are the effects that the speaker may achieve directly by using humorous segments or texts in his or her discourse (Aarons, 2012).

Nevertheless, verbal humour is a very subjective concept, and what may be funny for some may be considered outrageous by others. Every society or culture has unique types of humour that are distinct. The judgment of whether a verbal humour is funny or not depends on many factors, including: age, culture, personal experience, level of education and geographical location (Attardo, 2017). Therefore, verbal humour is something that is not transferable from one country or one area to another. What a person from one area may find hilarious may not be amusing at all to someone else from another country or area. Whether or not someone gets a joke is determined by their interpretation, which is filtered by the cultural context.

Globally, America has one of the largest number of people involved in verbal humour. However, American verbal humour may not be easily amusing to people from other countries. American verbal humour is different from British one. They speak the same language, but the American and the British do not necessarily share the same values when it comes to humour (Goodman, 2021). The American sense of humour is generally more slapstick than that in Britain because there are cultural differences between the two nations. American humour is more obvious and straightforward while British verbal humour tends to be more subtle with a dark or sarcastic undertone. Wawrzyniuk (2021) says that the British people have used verbal humour to somehow protest against or refer to social or political attitudes. Politics and society are popular themes for amusement among British.

1.1 Creation of Verbal Humour

According to Martin (2007), verbal humour is created through maxim flouting of Cooperative Principle. Humour is a violation of principles of communication suggested by pragmatic principles, both textually and interpersonally. Moreover, to make a successful conversation, speakers should obey the four cooperative maxims. Grice (as cited in Crystal, 2003) avers that there are four maxims of Cooperative Principle. They are maxim of quality, maxim of quantity, maxim of relation, and maxim of manner. Violating politeness principles in a conversation could also create humorous utterances. Attardo (2017) holds that noticeably high percentage of humorous conversations is established with the violation of one or more of Grice's maxims of Cooperative Principle. That is, speakers may violate the maxims of Cooperative Principle on purpose in the process of conversation in order to arouse the hearers' laughter. The phenomenon of humour as the result of flouting of maxims can be found in television situation comedy that provides many humorous scenes. Situation comedy or tape is usually a narrative-based comedy series containing short, 25-30 minutes long episodes with regular characters and setting. Apart from situational comedy, stand-up comedy also provides humorous episodes through maxim flouting.

Humour arises also from some implicit shared knowledge about the denoted event whose content incorporates context from the immediate context. The relatively general meanings aligned with contextually driven reasoning in humour lead to a variety of disparate inferences where the speaker has already expressed their intention of saying something and it is only the hearer who has something to do with the inference. Humour results from an element of surprise or twists where the hearer is confronted with a sudden incongruous stimulus. The comedian first misdirects the audience to have them assume he or she is going to say one thing; then at the last possible moment says something else, thus shattering the image that the audience was initially led to believe was the intended.

Humour is often generated by employing many improper or uncommon language aspects. It is mostly achieved by breaking the standard rules of language. Humour can thus be analysed using some linguistic approaches, i.e. semantics, pragmatics and sociolinguistics. This research analyses humour using pragmatic approach. Pragmatics is one of some approaches of both spoken and written language description. This approach studies language in relation to the contextual background features. It studies the context, text and function (Cutting, 2002). In the area of pragmatics, linguists are interested in the way humour is communicated in everyday conversations and the functions of humorous communications, such as joke-telling, teasing and irony, in interpersonal interactions (Norrick, as cited in Martin, 2007). Humour is common in daily life and conversations. It can also be studied through mass media, such as newspaper, movie or tape. Situation comedy or tape is an example of how humour is used in conversations. *Churchill Show* is one of the television tapes that can portray how humour plays an important role in people's daily lives.

1.2 Maxim Flouting

Black (2006) says that there is a time when people do not employ the Cooperative Principles in doing their communication with their own purposes or reasons. If speakers give a non-cooperative response in their communication, they have two choices; whether to violate or to flout the maxims. Flouting is different from violating the maxims. According to Finch (2000), violating maxim involves some element of communication failure, whereas flouting is readily understood rather than real violation. Violating maxim is unintentionally done by the speakers whereas flouting maxim is done by the speakers on purpose to make the hearers understand the meaning behind the flouted maxims. In other words, maxim flouting happens when the speakers appear not to follow the maxims but expect the hearers to appreciate the meaning implied. All the four maxims of Cooperative Principle may also be flouted. Thus, there will be a reason behind the maxim flouting by the speaker of a conversation and the speaker himself or herself has already had a belief in their mind that the hearer will understand the implicature of his or her flouting.

Cutting (2002) has examined the flouting of the maxims of quantity, quality, relation and manner. Accordingly, a speaker who flouts the maxim of quality seems to give too or too much information. For example:

A: *Well, how do I look?*

B: *Your shoes are nice* (Cutting, 2002)

In this conversation, B does not say that the sweatshirt and jeans do not look nice, but he knows that A will understand that implication because A asks about his whole appearance and only gets told about part of it.

Speakers also flout maxim of quality in several ways. First, they may quite simply say something that obviously does not represent what they think. Second, they may exaggerate, as in the hyperbole “*I could eat a horse*”. Third, a speaker may use a metaphor, as in “*Don’t be such a wet blanket, we just want to have fun*”, to express his or her annoyance because another person is trying to reduce other people’s enjoyment.

The last two ways of flouting the maxim of quality are irony and banter. Irony means expressing an opposite statement and implies a negative. For instance a student comes down to breakfast one morning and says, “*If only you knew how much I love being woken up at 4 am by a fire alarm*”. Clearly, she is being ironic and expecting her friends to know that she means the exact opposite. Sarcasm is a form of irony that is not so friendly; in fact, it is usually intended to hurt. For example, “*This is a lovely undercooked egg you’ve given to me here, as usual. Yum!*” On the contrary, banter means expressing negative sentiments and implying a positive one, as in “*You’re nasty, mean, and stingy. How can you only give me a kiss?*” It is intended to express a flirtatious comment.

Speakers flout maxims of relation when they expect that the hearers will be able to imagine what the speakers do not say and to make the connection between the speakers’ utterance and the preceding ones. If a speaker flouts the maxim of relation, it means that he or she gives irrelevant information. Here is an example:

A: *So what do you think of Mark?*

B: *His flat mate’s a wonderful cook* (Cutting, 2002).

In this example, B does not say that she was not very impressed with Mark, but by not mentioning him in the reply and apparently saying something irrelevant, she implies it.

Lastly, the flouting of the maxim of manner occurs when a speaker gives ambiguous response. It means that there is more than one meaning in the conversation. Cutting (2002) says those who flout the maxim of manner, appearing to be obscure, are often trying to exclude a third party. This is exemplified below.

A: *Where are you off to?*

B: *I was thinking of going out to get some of that funny white stuff for somebody.*

A: *OK, but don’t be long, dinner’s nearly ready* (Cutting, 2002).

In the above example, B speaks in an ambiguous way, saying “*that funny white stuff*” and “*somebody*”, because he is avoiding saying “*ice cream*” and “*Michelle*”, so that his little daughter does not become excited and ask for the ice cream before her meal. Sometimes, writers also play with words to heighten the ambiguity, in order to make a point.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by Relevance theory (Sperber & Wilson, 2004) in examining the flouting of different conversational maxims by the stand-up comedians in *Churchill Show* to create humour. Relevance theory is based on human cognition and communication. It argues that the biologically rooted human trend seeks for the most relevant information hidden in the process of communication. Therefore, interpreting an utterance is a procedure of searching for the intended relevance, optimal relevance, which follows a path of least effort. Expectations of audience can be considered to be of maximal relevance, which may end up with twists that break the maximal relevance and motivate the search for optimal relevance. The audience interprets utterances assuming that a set of assumptions extensively communicated provides a good balance of cognitive effects in exchange for the effort that their processing demands and that this set of assumptions is the one that the humourist presumably intended to communicate.

The Relevance theory also stipulates that “an input becomes relevant to a person if it connects with background information already available to the audience by answering a question they had in mind, improving their knowledge on a certain topic, settling a doubt, confirming a suspicion or correcting a mistaken impression” (Sperber & Wilson, 2004). The theory advances the idea that context or background assumptions play a crucial role in the human communication process. Context is dynamic and a matter of choice and the selection of a particular context is determined by the search for relevance. What the recipient expects is the stimulus, which is a relevant one. Context is a psychological construct, a subset of the hearer’s assumptions about the world. It is not limited to information about the immediate physical environment or immediate preceding utterances: expectations about the future, scientific hypotheses or religious beliefs, anecdotal memories, general cultural assumptions, beliefs about mental state of the speaker may all play a role in interpretations (Sperber & Wilson, 2004).

Context is the cognitive environment, which is the encyclopaedic entries stored in the mind of the hearer. It helps the audience to make assumptions about the speaker’s intention in a conversation. Laughter means the hearer has selected the correct context to interpret the utterance. Humour appreciation requires a context-bound interaction between a particular cognitive environment and the skilled humourist who manages to predict relevance-seeking cognitive operation in the audience mind.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

The view that humour results from a twist in expectations is widely accepted within research. What has, however, not been dealt with extensively, especially in the context of stand-up comedy, is how this discrepancy in expectations can be explained. Against this background, the study examined maxim flouting by stand-up comedians in *Churchill Show*. The stand-up comedians in *Churchill Show* and world over are social critics; as such, they create their jokes from social issues that affect every human being. Therefore, the research examined the discourse topics that stand-up comedians in *Churchill Show* exploit in their maxim flouting to create humour. Most studies have used situational comedies to study maxim flouting in humour creation. Studies on humour in Kenya have not focused on maxim flouting. The study sought to bridge the academic gap on maxim flouting by Kenyan stand-up comedians. Based on the study, this paper analyses conversational maxims flouted to achieve verbal humour in *Churchill Show* stand-up comedy performances.

2.0 Materials and Methods

The study adopted a descriptive qualitative research design since it emphasized on the phenomenon of language use in its context by interpreting the data. It was conducted using *Churchill Show* as its object where selected performances of stand-up comedians were used. Therefore, the main data for the study were in the forms of utterances taken from *Churchill Show*. The boundaries of the utterance were determined by a change of speech subject. The primary source of data was a video tape entitled *Churchill Show*. The secondary source of data was the script of videotaped *Churchill Show* retrieved from the

internet. To achieve the required data, purposive sampling technique was used. The selection was limited to recent volumes of the *Churchill Show*. There were 23 selected comedies from various presentations from the year 2011 to 2019 because they were the most appropriate to represent the flouting of maxims of Cooperative Principle to create humour. The study used content analysis as the main instrument of data collection and presentation. In collecting the data, the research applied *simak* and *catat* (read and write) technique or attentive observation (Sudaryanto, 1993). This technique is aimed at recording relevant data that will answer the research questions. These techniques were appropriate since the research data were in form of utterances.

3.0 Results and Discussion

Humour creation in *Churchill Show* is based on the characters' utterances and their performances on stage. The sense of fun is found in some language phenomena created by the characters through their utterances.

3.1 Flouting of Quantity Maxim

The maxim of quantity requires the listener and speaker to make their contributions as informative as is required for the current purpose of the exchange and not to make contributions more informative than is required. A speaker flouts this maxim by saying more or less than required. According to Cutting (2002), there are two strategies to flout this maxim: giving too much or too little than the required information. Relevance theory stipulates that the flouting of the quantity maxim happens because the speaker wants to be understood. It is in their interest to make their utterance as easy to understand as possible and to provide evidence not just for the cognitive effects they aim to achieve in the hearer but also for further cognitive effects that, by holding their attention will help them achieve their goal.

In optimal relevance, it is reasonable for the hearer to follow a path of least effort because the speaker is expected to make their utterances as easy to understand as possible. This explains why in the example below the stand-up comedians from *Churchill Show* provide a lot of information in their jokes. They are trying to make their presentation as clear as possible to their audience who will in turn follow a part of least effort to arrive at the optimal relevance.

...my dad msee Nzioka Mbithi Kinego used to believe that for you to raise a child treat him like a servant. Babangu alikuwa anatake advantage of the bible saying that 'spare the rod spoil the child.' Alikuwa anatuamsha saa kumi na mbili mimi na Kimondiu, anaitua sitting room halafu anarudi bedroom, anachukua kiboko anaanza kutuchapa bure, akifikia Kimondiu anaanza kucomplain. Dad unatuchapia nini sasa, sisi tumedo. Mimi najua hamja do anything lakini najua nikitoka kwa hii nyumba niende mtado kitu (laughter) yenye nawapatia ni deposit, hii ni depo (laughter) akienda Kimondiu anachiajilia mtaani anapigana na watoto, anatumama wamama. Wamama wanamwambia, 'Kimondiu wewe, tutakuja kuambia babako, utachapwa.' Kimondiu anawaaambia, 'elewa mimi nisha chapwa, nisha chapwa labdha akuje atupatie saucer.' (Laughter). (My dad Mr. Nzioka Mbithi Kinego used to believe that for you to bring up your child well you should treat them like servants. He used to take advantage of the bible where it says, 'spare the rod spoil the child' he used to wake us up at six in the morning Kimondiu and I and takes us to the sitting room then he goes to the bedroom and gets a cane. He would then cane us and Kimondiu would ask, 'what have we done so that you cane us' dad would say, 'I know you have not done anything but I know once I leave this house you will misbehave so I am giving you a deposit, a depo... after he leaves the house, Kimondiu would go out and fights with children and insult women. The women would tell him that they will report him to his father who

will cane him and he would tell them that he had already been caned. May be a saucer (top up) will do.

In this piece, the comedian flouts the quantity maxim by giving too much information. He exaggerates the fact that he and his siblings are woken up at six in the morning to be caned for mistakes they will make during their father's absence. Kimondiu becomes unruly because he has already been caned and if he will be caned again, it will just be a top-up, nothing much. It seems the comedian's father has misinterpreted the saying *Spare the rod and spoil the child* so that he canes the children even when they have not erred.

According to the Relevance theory, the search for relevance leads the hearer to entertain the incongruous. Curcó (1995) opines that the principle of relevance leads the hearer to this kind of entertainment. In the above humour piece, the comedian begins by talking about children being treated like servants. This utterance, according to Relevance theory, leads the hearer to form an assumption on what will follow next; for example, we would expect the comedian's father to wake them up early so that they go to work in the farm. In the next utterance, however, there is a twist as the comedian suddenly says, "spare the rod and spoil the child." This changes the hearers' earlier assumption, requiring them to form a new expectation, namely the ridiculous and unnecessary early morning beatings.

The incongruity and thus laughter comes when the children are caned for mistakes their father imagines they will commit in the course of the day in his absence. The humour is emphasized by the father's description of these upfront beatings as deposit. Deposit is normally something we give before a service is rendered. As such, the use of the term in respect to the upfront beatings humorously contradicts the hearer's knowledge of how punishment is rendered. Later when Kimondiu is cautioned by the women, he simply says the father will only be giving him a saucer (top-up). The audience's understanding of the term saucer is in reference to free additional food given to a customer in a hotel after the first purchased serving. The use of the term therefore causes laughter since it implies the boy has been caned so many times that he no longer minds additional beating.

Sometimes comedians flouted the maxim of quantity by giving little information as shown in the following jokes about the Luo and Kikuyu people of Kenya:

- a. Ujaluo utakuua ('Luoness' will kill you).
- b. Lazima upende mahali unatoka (You have to appreciate your origin)
- c. People from Nyanza like prefixes. A prefix is a title that comes before the name: Dr Geoffrey Otieno, Engineer Obado, Lecturer Omondi (laughter).
- d. People from Central also like something called suffixes (laughter). A suffix is a title that comes after the name: Mwangi wa Equity (Mwangi of Equity [reference to Equity Bank]), Wanjiku wa Makaa (Wanjiku who runs a charcoal business) (laughter).

In the above example, the comedian flouts the maxim of quantity by giving the audience little information. He uses suffixes and prefixes to create humour. The comedian makes fun of how the Luo use prefixes on their names to show off. Though the information is insufficient, the knowledge that the audience have about the Luo community enables them to unravel the joke and laugh. The common stereotype is that the Luo are the 'most educated', and this is reflected in the prefixes that the comedian chooses. On the other hand, the suffixes belonging to the Kikuyu community refers to their enterprising nature. The suffixes are attached after their names to describe the kind of businesses they do. Therefore, in this comedic piece, the audience apply their knowledge of the Luo and Kikuyu to relate and be amused by the information. The incongruity in these jokes comes from the prefixes and suffixes. This, in Relevance theory, would mean that the presentation leads the audience through the ostensive inferential process to find maximal relevance and thus laugh. Curcó (1995) notes that

humorous interpretations depend on the interaction between the perception of the incongruous and the search for relevance. The incongruous in this joke is the use of suffixes and prefixes that create a twist in the audience expectation.

In the next example, the flouts the maxim of quantity by giving too much information. When you get into a *matatu*, there are three characters; character number 1; conductor; number 2; passenger; number 3; pastors. Yaani hawa mapastors mi huwapenda sana, mi huwamiss nikiingia kwa *matatu* na hawako. *Matatu* inaenda and all of a sudden pastor anaamka anaanza kupreach. 'Ndungu wapendwa ningependa kuwaambia kwamba hili ni wakati mwingine Mungu ametujalia. Wasafiri wenzangu, bwana asifiwe. Ningependa tuangalie neno la Solomoni. Solomoni alipokuwa akitembea... inaonekana neno leo haliwasaidii. Pia mimi nina kuwa muuzaji wa madawa na niko na akakadawa, ni kadawa la hibernation kama unasumbuana na landlord ukikunywa akakadawa unadisappear wiki moja, bwana asifiwe akiona ni kama hamtaki kununua dawa anachange ...basi inaonekana hamtaki dawa ninakuaga agent wa maploti hapa Syokimau ukitaka 40 by 4 niko nazo hapa. Niko na details zote.' Akishindwa kabisa ana give up. Pastor wa Mlolongo ni ma comedian: 'Ningependa kuanza na introduction. Kwa majina naitwa Dogi yaani Douglas. Leo ningependa tuangalie neno la mtume Jeroboam (laughter). Mtu aseme Jeroboam. Jeroboam alipokuwa akitembea katika mji wa Gethsemane, wachana kwanza na Jeroboam tuangalie Solomoni (laughter). Solomoni alipokuwa... wachana na Solomoni (laughter). Tuangalie Yuta (more laughter).' Akishindwa anafika mahali anasema, 'Tafadhali tusienjoane; mimi sijasomea theolojia. Nipatieni ile mnanipatia nikakule lunch (prolonged laughter). (When you get inside those *matatus*, there are three characters; character number 1, conductor, number 2 passenger, number 3 pastors. I love these pastors and I miss them, especially when I board a *matatu* and they are not there. The *matatu* is moving and all of a sudden, a pastor stands up and starts preaching: 'Brothers, I would like to tell you that this is an opportunity that God has given us my fellow passengers, praise the Lord. I would like us to look at Solomon. When Solomon was walking... looks like the word of God is not helping you today. I also sell herbal medicine and I have this medicine for hibernation. If your landlord is nagging you, this medicine will make you disappear for one week, praise the lord.' If he realizes you have no interest in the medicine, he will tell you that he is also an agent of plots in Syokimau and anyone who wants 40 by 4 he has the details. On realizing none is interested he gives up. But mlolongo pastors are comedians: 'I would like to introduce myself. My name is Dogi (Sheng for dog) meaning Douglas. Today, I would like us to look at the word of apostle Jeroboam, somebody say Jeroboam. When Jeroboam was walking in the town of Gethsamane... let's leave him... we look at Solomon. When Solomon was walking... we leave Solomon. We look at Judah.' Realizing he won't succeed he says 'Please let us not enjoy each other. I have not studied theology. Just give me what you can I go have lunch').

In the above presentation, the comedian flouts the maxim of quantity by giving a very long narrative of two kinds of pastors he once encountered in a *matatu* (public transport vehicle in Kenya). He is too detailed and, to maintain the attention of the audience, misrepresents some facts. For example, there are no disciples in the Bible called Jeroboam, Solomon or Judah. The comedian, however, does not lose the audience in the process of his narration because all along he is giving the audience ample time to process the humour in the usual way, that is, in Sperber and Wilson's (2004) terms, to derive

maximum contextual effect for the minimum processing effort. In flouting the quantity maxim, the comedian works on the assumption that the audience will (logically) detain their processing effort at the first valid interpretive hypotheses they arrive at, ignoring automatically the possible existence of other alternatives. The comedian has picked the right context because most of the passengers are aware of the biblical events. As such, when the said pastors misinterpret the Bible, laughter is achieved because of the ‘cognitive dissonance’ or incongruity that surprises the audience.

Long as it is, the joke has been woven in such a way that the audience realizes they have been led up the garden path by the comedian. According to psychological theories of humour, it is a mixture of surprise, appreciation of incongruity and satisfaction at having solved the problem presented by the comedian in a quick and efficient manner (having ‘got’ the joke) that accounts for the pleasurable effects that give rise to laughter (Cutting, 2002). In this comedic piece, therefore, the maximal relevance expectation of the audience conforms to their usual way of thinking because they have formed some assumption schemas through daily cognition in their encyclopaedic knowledge. It is no doubt that the fake pastors are a menace in Kenyan transport vehicles. Those who want to get money the easy way know that appealing to the spiritual realm will yield faster results. This is possible because Relevance theory pays excessive attention to the context that guides the interpretive process, in this case the broader socio-cultural context.

In the following joke, the comedian creates humour by using little information. Churches today are getting a little bit violent. Venye niliokoka nikaenda. The first thing was (imitates the pastor): ‘Somebody just look at your neighbour, look at your neighbour.’ Then it moved to: ‘Just look at your neighbour and give him a smile.’ Then it moved from there: ‘Somebody give your neighbour a high five.’ Then ikitoka hapo akasema: ‘Shake your neighbour.’ Ikatoka hapo akasema: ‘Slap your neighbour (laughter).’ By the year 2012, itakuwa: ‘Fight your neighbour.’ (Prolonged laughter).

In this presentation, the comedian uses little information as he narrates and exaggerates his experience of church becoming increasingly ‘violent’. The quantity maxim is flouted through provision of little information; the comedian jokes about the onset of animosity among neighbours. This animosity has been gradual and is triggered by negligible things. In the church, people take advantage of the pastors’ remarks to express their animosity.

According to Relevance theory, comedians convey humour messages by searching for optimal relevance in their utterances. In this case, the gap between the maximal relevance expectation on the side of the hearer and the optimal relevance on the side of the comedian is formed and it is this gap that creates humour. This is because two factors are embodied in relevance: cognitive effects (contextual effects) and processing effort. As Huang (2007) asserts, “the first factor is the outcome of an interaction between the newly impinging stimulus and a subset of the assumptions that are already established in a cognitive system, but the second factor is the effort a cognitive system must expend in order to yield a satisfactory interpretation of any incoming information processed.” The audience follows a path of least effort in accessing and testing different interpretations, which means they attempt to maximize context effects while minimizing processing effort. This joke on violence in church is humorous because of the assumptions already established in the cognitive system of the audience.

3.2 Flouting of Quality Maxim

This maxim is also called truthfulness maxim. It requires the speaker not to say what he/she believes to be false and for which the speaker lacks adequate evidence. Flouting of this maxim is realized by saying things are untrue. Many of the utterances are contradictory to the audience but according to the communicative principles of relevance, every utterance or every act of ostensive communication

communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance in verbal communication, which Sperber and Wilson (2004) view as an ostensive inferential process. Maximal relevance means that inference is made when the audience pays least effort as possible.

In most cases, the flouting of quality maxim creates irony, satire, hyperbole and metaphor. This forces the audience to engage in the process of inference to get to the implicature and thus unravel the intended meaning of the joke. In jokes that flout this maxim, the audience encounter a discrepancy between a description of the world that the speaker is apparently putting forward and the way things are. This means the processing of humorous instances requires more cognitive effort compared to non-humorous acts due to their contradictory nature. Yus (2008) argues that in the case of humour, participants are aware of the humorous intentions of the speaker (comedian) or in some cases are made aware of these intentions by certain humour markers. This awareness leads the hearer to indulge in a process of resolving the cognitive dissonance associated with humour in return for increased cognitive effects.

In the following presentation, the comedian creates humour by distorting known facts: Mi husema ukitaka mboch enda Ukambani wanakuwa wapo sana. Wanafanya kazi wakiimba lakini zile nyimbo wanaiimba zina make sense juu wanaimba venye maisha kwa nyumba iko. Imagine scenario wageni wanaingia kwa nyumba mboch anafanya kazi akiimba: ‘boss wangu ni matope, bibi yake muanyaji asi...usicheze (laughter). (I normally say that an Ukambani house girl is the best because they work as they sing. Their songs make a lot of sense in that they portray how they are treated in that home and their attitude towards her employers. Imagine a scenario where visitors are in the house and as usual the house girl breaks into her songs: ‘my boss is trash and his wife is adulterous *asi*’... don’t joke).

In the above example, the comedian flouts the quality maxim by giving the audience false information about Kamba house helps. Their being the best house helps is not proven; in fact, in Kenya, popular knowledge points that most people prefer house helps from western Kenya who are reputed as being most diligent at work. It is also not true that any mistreated house help can shame their bosses outright by singing about them, especially when visitors are around. The embarrassing song creates a twist in the joke making the audience see Kamba girls as the worst, not the best as earlier intimated by the comedian.

In this humour piece, there is incompatibility between the information provided through the contextual elements and what is explicated by the utterance. For humour to be created, the audience has to access some underlying contextual assumptions to recover the intended interpretation. This contextual selection is guided by the relevance principle. In other words, the audience, through relevance, concludes that the mismatch is not gratuitous but deliberate. Further, the utterance should not be understood as an assertion in the normal sense but a critical commentary or evaluation. Moreover, the utterance should not be taken at surface value but as conveying dissociative attitudes (Zhao, 2011). The dissociative attitude is the comedian seeming to caution the audience against employing Kamba house helps since they can embarrass the hosts when they feel poorly treated.

In the comedy piece below, the comedian creates humour by distorting cultural expectations. Something interesting about that girlfriend of mine is that, sio mimi nilimkatia ni yeye alinikatia. Serious... I was walking in town and then all of a sudden nikasikia... ‘kss, kss.’ Kuagalia nyuma ni dame. Dame akaniambia, ‘Sasa chipu, aki chipu unakuanga mfunny, unakuanga muhilarious imagine nakutaka.’ Then all of a sudden nikaingia box yake. (...Something interesting with my girlfriend is the fact that she approached me. I did not approach her...Serious. One day I was walking in town then I heard,

‘kss, kss.’ I looked back and it was a girl calling me. The girl then told me, ‘How are you chipu, chipu. You are funny and hilarious, imagine I love you and I want you. I accepted just like that.’)

In this presentation, the quality maxim is flouted. The comedian lies to his audience to make them laugh. The girl approaching a man is the twist in this joke. It is incongruous with the norm or known culture, especially in Africa. Curc6 (1995) notes that humorous interpretations depend on the interaction between the perception of the incongruous and the search for relevance. The hearer goes through a process where they feel that the communicative principle of relevance is violated because the speaker (comedian) communicates events and situations that are inconsistent or out of place with the context of the hearer.

The comedian in the next joke is giving outright lies and baseless allegations in a bid to make the audience laugh.

“...when you find your wife cheating, you will do three things: limana, bibi aende or you leave the house. My uncle alipata mwanaume mwenye ameenda gym akamwambia, ‘Eeh... pole...’ (Laughter). He came to me: ‘... eeh... Davy, kimbilia Kenya, usikimbilie ndoa...’ (Laughter) (When you find your wife cheating, you will do three things: fight with the man, send the wife away or just leave. One day my uncle found his wife cheating with a man who obviously worked out in the gym. He said to him, ‘Eeh... am sorry...’ After that, he came to me and said, ‘Eeh... Davy, run for Kenya don’t run into marriage.’)

In this comedy, quality maxim is flouted when the comedian makes unrealistic allegations: his uncle finds his wife cheating with another man and all he does is run away because he is intimidated by the man’s physique. From the audience encyclopaedic knowledge, the uncle obviously should fight or at least express his frustrations. He instead goes to the comedian and advises him not to rush into marriage.

The joke is a satire of extra-marital affairs whose consequences the audience know to be fatal. The ironic twist where the uncle backs off correlates to what the relevance theory calls second order meta representational abilities where the audience must be to comprehend the joke. Cundall (2007) avers that it has been widely accepted that humour recognition requires the perception of an incongruity. In this humour, the incongruity is the advice the uncle gives to the comedian not rush into any marriage. The pun comes out clearly where the comedian’s uncle wants the comedian to be an athlete and not a married man. This concurs with the fact that sometimes there is a shift in relevance, which would lead the hearer to entertain two contradictory propositional forms. Curco (1995) confirms that this is one way to induce the perception of the incongruous.

According to Relevance theory, context is a psychological construct, a subset of the hearer’s assumptions about the world. It is not limited to information about the immediate physical environment or immediate preceding utterances. The audience is not laughing at the comedian’s advice to run for his country and not marriage but by extension the cowardly nature of the comedian’s uncle. From the onset of the joke, the audience expected to be told of how violent the encounter turned only to get an incongruity of backing down and an advice.

In this next example, the comedian uses exaggeration to make whatever he says unrealistic and therefore humorous.

... It’s a lady’s birthday... here in Nairobi unamletea surprise or you buy a gift for your girlfriend. A guy in Nairobi ‘funga macho’ tara, tara, tara....surprise...: ‘Oh babe, oh my God umeninunulia Vitz for my birthday... thank you’. I bought Chebet a Mercedes

S Class thinking it was a perfect gift. Huku hatusemi tara, tara. Tunasema, 'Chebet, Chebet, Chebet, ptoo ndio hiyo!' Chebet's reaction surprised me...haa! Nini hii... wee mjinga sana. Hii kitu itanipeleka wapi penye miguu yangu haiwezi? Wee mjinga Sana, ungeninunulia sports shoes. (Laughter) (During a lady's birthday here in Nairobi, the lady appreciates whatever gift a guy brings her. A guy will buy a gift then tells the lady to close her eyes then says, 'tara, tara, tara! When the lady opens her eyes, she sees a Vitz and she appreciates. I bought a Mercedes S Class for Chebet as a gift for her birthday. Her reaction was... 'You are so stupid. Where will this thing take me where my legs can't? You are so stupid! You should have bought me sports shoes instead!' (Laughter).

This joke flouts the quality maxim; a girl refuses a very expensive car in preference for sports shoes. Obviously, this is a lie and the audience know. It is encyclopaedic knowledge that people from the Rift Valley in Kenya are athletic champions but they also buy and value expensive cars. Just because they can run does not mean they prefer sports shoes to cars. Nevertheless, the comedian alleges that Chebet prefers sports shoes to a Mercedes S class, which is incongruous and funny.

Kinuu (2013) describes incongruity as the situation in which a hearer listening to a speaker has the mind directed to a particular path of thought, which turns out to be a misleading path since the path intended by the speaker turns out to be different. In the minds of the audience, Chebet is expected to be surprised and excited at such a luxurious car present. However, the unexpected happens: she scoffs at it and prefers the comedian bought her sports shoes instead. The discrepancy between the state of affairs and the reality creates the punch line of the joke leading to laughter.

3.3 Flouting of Relation Maxim

This maxim requires that whatever we say is relevant to the main topic so that the two sides in conversation could deal on the same subject. The messages provided by the speaker should be relevant and related (Cutting, 2002). The hearer should be able to imagine what the utterance did not say and make the connection between the utterance and the preceding one. The hearer should assume that the next utterance would be related to the previous one. Flouting this maxim means that the utterance is irrelevant to the context for some reasons. It occurs when there is a change of topic and giving irrelevant information or when the speaker does not say anything explicitly related to the topic of conversation but invites the hearer to seek for an interpretation of possible relevance.

Below is an example from *Churchill Show* in which the comedian flouts this maxim by changing from one topic of conversation to the next even before the audience interprets the preceding one.

.... Mtu wa taa niwakishie taa kwa DJ (laughter). Wasichana....eeh... (Laughter). Mnaona... hebu DJ E tumiksie kitu hapo (a song is played). Sasa ona huyu anaitwa DJ E, lakini uso inakaa A. E ni failure hebu kwanza bado nimulikie: kipara inamulika 2019. Wasichana wachaneni na sura supu mmesikia community husbands: ndio hii. Hawa ni wale wanakupenda wiki mbili, wiki ya tatu wanachukua roho yako na kukanyagia mpaka ina kaa minced meat. Talking of community husbands, kuna hawa wasichana wanasoma news, nawapenda, ni warembo, lakini wanakuwa na temporary memory loss kadogo tu. After news kuna kuintroduce the guest. Tuseme the guest ni president, 'and our guest today you all know him. He is the fourth president of Kenya, son of the first president of Kenya, married to Margaret, and together, have three children.' Alafu anapindukia president na kusema, 'Karibu, introduce yourself.' Aseme nini! Shida inakuanga ni nini? Producers hamuandikiangi au nini? (Laughter). (The person in charge of lighting, please turn on the lights at the DJ. Ladies...please DJ mix

some song for us. Now look at this one; he is called DeeJay E, yet his face looks like A. E stands for failure. Wait, please more light. His baldness lights 2019. Ladies don't be taken in by good looks. Such men are called community husbands. They are those who love you for only two weeks and the third week, they break your heart to pieces. Talking of community husbands, there are these beautiful ladies who broadcast news. It's like they have temporary memory loss a bit. After news they normally have a guest. Let's say the guest is the president. They will say, 'Our guest today, you all know him; he is the fourth president of Kenya, son of the first president, married to Margaret and together they have three children.' Then she will turn to the president and say, 'Please introduce yourself.' What do you want him to say? What is the problem? Is it with the producers who don't direct them well or what?

In this joke, the comedian flouts the maxim of relation by being irrelevant. Her utterances are not related. The comedian moves from community husbands to talking about newscasters leaving the hearer to wonder if there is any relationship between her subsequent utterances. The second part of her humour begins with the phrase, 'talking of community husbands' then what follows is something totally different.

According to Relevance theory, the cognitive principle mirrors the biologically rooted human trend to seek for the most relevant information hidden in the process of communication. In the example above, the audience seeks for something relevant to make them laugh, despite the provision of irrelevant information. Interpreting an utterance is a procedure of searching for the intended relevance, optimal relevance, which follows the path of least effort. If the utterance is not as informative as required or seemingly irrelevant or untrue, a search for a more relevant interpretation worth being processed may be activated, despite the supplementary mental effort required. The reward for this extra effort in processing is the pleasant surprise and laughter. According to Forabasco (2008), there are many aspects involved in humour and how they interact in any discourse that leads to a humorous interpretation.

Another example of flouting of relation maxim is seen in the following joke where the comedian mixes up his presentation by dealing with unrelated topics.

Eldoret... (addresses a member in the audience). Watu wa Eldoret mkienda kanisa mniombee. Nikikula mchele yenu nikailamba nikatema kwa tumbo sishibii. Alafu methali zingine mna tuchanganya eti, 'uzee ni dhahabu' (Old is gold). Si wazee watakaa kiti ya uongozi kwa muda mrefu. Watatoka kwa kiti kweli... hawawezi. Kwetu kuna wahenga pia; methali yao inalenga vijana: 'ujana ni moshi.' Tutakosa kufuta bangi! (Laughter). (Eldoret... People of Eldoret when you go to church pray for me. When I eat your rice I don't get satisfied. Then there are some proverbs like 'old is gold.' Tell this to those in power and they will never relinquish power. Where I come from, our wise men say, 'youth is smoke'; with this will the youth fail to smoke bang? (Laughter).

This comedian first talks about Eldoret, asking the residents of this town to pray for him when they go to church, reason being when he eats their rice he does not get satisfied. Eldoret is known for maize, not rice farming. The request for prayer over rice becomes irrelevant. Then he abandons that topic and brings in something irrelevant. He ridicules wise sayings, but still manages to make the audience laugh. Perhaps in part his irrelevance makes the audience laugh. Laughter is elicited from the encyclopaedic knowledge of the comedian's background. He comes from the Luhya community from the western part of Kenya and this community is known to love *ugali* so much that rice, to them, is not considered food.

The wise sayings elicit laughter because of the shared knowledge that politicians world over do not readily relinquish power when they feel they are still 'young.' Those involved in drug abuse are mainly the youth; this is from the audience encyclopaedic knowledge and thus the laughter. Despite

jumbling up the presentation, the audience is able to perceive the incongruity. Curcó (1995) notes that humorous interpretations depend on the interaction between the perception of the incongruous and the search for relevance. The hearer goes through a process where they feel that the communicative principle of relevance is violated because the speaker communicates events and situations that are inconsistent or out of place with the context of the hearer. In spite of all the twists in the joke, the audience still finds it humorous because of the inferences from the shared background.

Sometimes the comedians flout the relation maxim by beginning their presentation with a phrase that makes the audience anticipate something related to the phrase only for the comedian to fail to do so. This is shown in the following joke:

... Movie ni nini... movie ni movie... Rambo 1, Rambo 2, Rambo 3 and last but not least Rambo ka Rambo. The most.... Sound track- tere, tere, ngoma, ngoma, ngori. Sound track ya wahindi ziko na echo (laughter): batal, batal, batal, twing, twing, twing (laughter). Ukipata movie ya wahindi usifuate; utapotea: 'patel dudu, dudu, patel am talking to you. Just wanted to say, good morning'. Ugandan movie is the best movie ya action but sound track ni ya cartoon. Tweng, tweng, wee, wee., jamaa akienda kupiga risasi ni tukulu (laughter). Nigerian movie utajua gun ni fake (laughter). 'Oga, I say talk now. Oga you just committed suicide, last chance am giving you and if you don't talk I'll shoot you with this gun' (laughter). Kenya, locally or local movie zinaanza kama action but mwizi ako pekee yake na polisi amejipoint na gun (prolonged laughter). (...What is a movie. A movie is a movie. Rambo 1, Rambo 2, Rambo 3 and last but not least Rambo *ka* Rambo. The most..... sound track tere, tere, tere, ngoma, ngoma, ngori. The Indian movie's sound track has echos: batal, batal, twing, twing. If you get their movie don't follow it. You will get lost, 'patel dudu, dudu, patel, I am talking to you. Just wanted to say, good morning'. Uganda has the best action movies but the sound track is that of cartoons. Tweng, tweng...wee, wee... When they shoot you hear tukulu... Nigerian movies you will know the gun is fake: 'Oga I say talk now; oga you just committed suicide. I am giving you the last chance and if you don't talk I will shoot you with this gun.' Kenyan movies, the locally or locals start as action movies but the robber is seen alone and the police seems to be pointing the gun at himself/herself.)

The maxim of relation is flouted in this comedy because at the end of the joke there is no movie at all. When the comedian begun with, 'what is a movie?', we expected him to define for us a movie but he ends up talking about sound tracks in movies from various countries. As such, sound track is not a movie; thus, it is an irrelevant response to the initial question. Attardo (1994) explains: "the speaker producing the text uses the violation of a maxim (relevance) to mislead the hearer into believing that normal reliable information is being provided, while in effect, the text, or utterance is rigged with the unexpected presence of the second script." In the example above, the set-up of the comedy was a movie but the punch lines are on sound effects of various movies from different countries acting as the second script. Curcó (1995) confirms that one way to induce the perception of the incongruous is a shift in relevance, which would lead the audience to entertain the two contradicting propositions. Though there is a twist in what the audience expected, the audience is able to laugh because of the context they share with the comedian.

3.4 Flouting of Manner Maxim

This maxim requires that the speaker does not give obscure and ambiguous information. The speaker should be clear and orderly and avoid being wordy. This maxim is flouted by stand-up comedians

in *Churchill Show* when most of them give disorderly information, for instance, when one talks of something then digresses half way and then comes back to later. This is shown in the following joke:

...2018 imeiisha. Resolution yangu ilikuwa 'lose weight' (laughter). This is three years in a row. Nimeamua niachane nayo kabisaa ...Mwili yangu ni kama relationship; sitawai ingilia (prolonged laughter). Lakini turudi kwa relationship, wanaume mnatudanganya... Sindio wasichana... Wanasema ni colour blind; lakini wanajua wasichana light skinned. ...Turudi kwa weight loss. Shida nisilose weight ni mkate. Kwanza sliced naona hizo slices mbili ni kama wananipigia makofi na kusema kuja. Najipata nimekula sana na ndio mimi huyu. (Laughter) (... 2018 is over and my resolution was to lose weight. This is three years in a row and I have decided to abandon it completely. My body is like relationships. I will never enter into any. But, let us go back to relationships: men you deceive us, is it not so ladies? They say they are colour blind, yet they like light skinned women... Let us go back to weight loss. The reason I have failed to lose weight is bread. I love bread especially sliced. The two pieces seem to be clapping for me and saying, "Come" and I find myself eating more and this is me.)

In this comedy, the comedian flouts the manner maxim by not being orderly. She moves from the topic of losing weight to that of relationships, and back again to losing weight. The comedian can easily mislead the audience. However, because they can recognize incongruities in the manner of presentation, they are able to enjoy the joke.

In Relevance theory, the search for relevance leads hearers to entertain the incongruous. Curcó (1995) maintains that the principle of relevance leads the hearer to this kind of entertainment. This claim leads people to interpret the humour no matter how disorderly the presentation. The theory avers that the comprehension of humour, like any other communication, depends on the context as well as the cognitive abilities of the hearer in spite of a maxim being flouted. This context and the background information that the audience possess determine the relevance of the message, which in turn determines if the hearer is able to arrive at the intended humorous interpretation of the text. In the above presentation, the contextual information on weight loss and relationships are perceived by the audience as related, since they are both difficult to achieve and maintain. This is what solves the incongruity resulting in laughter.

In some other instances, a stand-up comedians flout manner maxim by being ambiguous. This arises when the comedian's presentation includes information that gives room for various interpretations, as seen in the excerpt below.

... human beings have been created from various types of soil: loam, clay, and sand. Mafans wa Gor Mahia, hao hawakutengenezwa na mchanga; hao walikaviwa kutoka kwa mawe (loud laughter). Hao ndio mnasikianga ... siyo kwa ubaya. Mawe ni kitu ya muhimu sana tunasikianga 'Yesu ni mwamba'. Mawe ni kitu ya muhimu sana. Mafans wa Gor Mahia ndio mnasikianga stone age people (laughter). (...human beings have been created from various types of soil: loam, clay and sand. Gor Mahia fans were not created out of soil but they were carved out of stones. These are the people... no ill intention. Stones are very important. We talk of Jesus being a rock. Stones are very important. Gor Mahia fans are what you always hear being referred to as Stone Age people.)

In this comedy, ambiguity comes from the idea of creation. The popular creation story is that God made human beings out of soil. The reference to different types of soil could infer the varying characteristics of people. The comedian elaborates this further by making fun of the Gor Mahia (Kenya's football club) fans. Gor Mahia fans He pokes fun at the Gor Mahia fans' temperament. It has become common that whenever the team loses a match, the fans become rowdy and throw stones at their opponents. Hence, the reference to stones in the comedy piece has many implications. It could be making fun of the fans' violent and arrogant nature. By referring to them as stone age people, the comedian could be inferring that they are strong, deadly or simply backward since stone throwing and resorting to violence reflects lack of sensibilities associated with civilized people. The comedian lightens the tension by mentioning Jesus who is often referred to as the rock of ages. Yet, the manner in which he mentions Jesus tends to heighten the ambiguity in that the comedian seems to be encouraging stone throwing.

From the above piece, the comedian takes advantage of the fact that words or statements can have more than one meaning. This is in line with the view by Yus (2008) that the manipulation of the audience recovery of an explicature can be carried out in all different stages of the comprehension procedure according to Relevance theory. During the interpretation of the two or more words, the audience adjusts to achieve optimal relevance. Humour is brought out by alternative interpretations since two or more distinct interpretations of information are supplied with incongruous stimuli. The creation of humour in this joke also emanates from the encyclopaedic knowledge of the audience on the behaviour of Gor Mahia fans whenever they encounter a defeat.

In the following presentation, the comedian flouts the maxim of manner by being ambiguous and obscure:

...ukitaka kujua msichana ni mjaluo hasemangi hi. Anatoa Samsung phone (removes a phone from his pocket). Anasema hii (smiling) (laughter). (... If you want to know a girl is a Luo she will not tell you. Instead, she will remove her Samsung phone and shows it to you.)

It is not right to identify people in life by what they possess. The comedian does not give clear information on how Luo girls can be identified. This joke is obscure. Anyone can own a Samsung phone; the phone is not exclusively meant for the Luo community as to become their label of identification. Despite its obscurity, the audience is able to laugh at the above joke. This is explained by what Yus (2008) says, that some jokes will generate humorous effects by producing a clash between the explicit information, in this case the need to identify someone, and the information the audience will extract from the context of the joke, in this case owning a Samsung phone. The audience laughs at the incongruity of the removal of the phone and this scenario being the only way to identify a Luo girl. This laughter comes from the realization that they have been tricked and that the comedian is simply telling the audience that Luos are known for lavish lifestyles.

In the following joke, the comedian is ambiguous:

... ukienda kwa night club, kwanza uliza mrembo utakayepata jina lake. Akisema Nduku au Mwendu mwambie, 'acha nifike hapa kidogo halafu toweka kwa sababu akiwa ni bibi wa mtu tutakusoma kwa gazeti. (...when you go to a night club, first ask the lady you will find her name. If she says Nduku or Mwendu, excuse yourself and then disappear because if she is someone's wife, we will read about you in the newspapers).

The ambiguity in this joke comes from being read about in the newspapers. The information is not clear and has various interpretations. There are many possible reasons that the scenario he describes could

result in publication in the newspapers. One, dancing with a Kamba lady, two, having been beaten up or killed for dancing with another man's wife, three, having to leave the night club hurriedly, or, four, doing some heroic deed that landed your name in the papers. The audience, however, never saw this ambiguity because of the encyclopaedic knowledge on ethnic jokes. They know that Kamba men use witchcraft to deter or punish men who try to snatching their women.

This concurs with the view by Yus (2008) that audience beliefs retrieved from memory, or constructed on the spot during interpretation of an utterance, clash with the explicitly communicated information and the audience entertain two or more contradicting interpretations, one from the explicit interpretation and another from the assumptions in the context of interpretation, which evokes laughter. The audience get the joke, as the man would likely be bewitched for playing with a Kamba man's wife. In this case, humour is brought out by alternative interpretations since two distinct interpretations of information are supplied with incongruous stimuli.

Sometimes the comedians flout the manner maxim by failing to be brief. This is shown in the following joke:

“...kama mwanaume I fell in love, kadame anaitwa Shiko. Baba yangu akasikia rumours niko na dame. Baba akaiingia kwa nyumba, “Matanga ni kesho, matanga ni kesho, matanga ni kesho” (laughter). “Hatuwezi changanya masomo na mapenzi, ni mtu achague, Njoro uko na girlfriend?”

“Ndio baba.”

“Anaitwa nani?”

“Shiko.”

“Masomo ama mapenzi!”

“Baba, masomo”

“Wanjiku anaishi wapi?”

“Baba yake ni nani?”

“Ni chomelea.”

“Chomelea garai, masomo ama mapenzi.”

“Ako na kazi ingine?”

“Ni fundi wa mbao.”

“Masomo ama mapenzi.”

After sometime nikafall in love na another beautiful lady Veronicah. Rumours ikafikia baba yangu. “Mazishi ni kesho, mazishi ni kesho. Masomo ama mapenzi.” (Laughter)

“Baba ni masomo.”

“Veronicah ni nani?”

“Veronicah, baba yake ni lawyer na mama yake ni daktari.”

“Veronicah ndio anajenga hizi flats.”

“Baba yake ana three buses za kuenda Mombasa, trailers tatu za kuenda Zambia.”

“Love is blind... amka. (Prolonged laughter)

(... As a man I fell in love with a girl called Shiko. My father heard rumours that I had a girlfriend. He came to the house and said, “Tomorrow will be somebody's funeral, tomorrow will be somebody's funeral, tomorrow will be somebody's funeral. We cannot mix education with love affairs. One must choose. Njoro, do you have a girlfriend?”

“Yes, father.”

“What is her name?”

“Wanjiko”

“Where does she live? Education or love”

“Education.”

“Who is her father?”

“He mends old items like basins and *sufurias*.”

“Does he have another job?”

“Yes, father he is a carpenter.”

“Education or love!”

“Father, education.”

After sometime, I fell in love with a beautiful lady, Veronicah. Father heard about it again. He came home and said, “Burial is tomorrow. Education or love?” This time stepping on my head.

“Father, education.”

“Who is Veronicah?”

“Veronicah, her father is a lawyer and her mother is a doctor. Veronicah is the one building these flats. They have three buses going to Mombasa, three trailers going that go to Zambia.”

“Love is blind, you can wake up.” (Prolonged laughter).

The comedian gives so much information about his ordeal of falling in love before completing his studies. His failure to be brief flouts the maxim of manner. He uses a lot of repetition for emphasis and to make the audience get his narrative clearly. He emphasizes the passion his father had for education, although his passion is short-lived since the father gives up when he learns that the current girlfriend is rich. Incongruity is built when the father tells his son that love is blind upon learning that the new girl is rich. The encyclopaedic knowledge of the audience on the need to change one's social class creates laughter.

4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Maxim flouting is a common method by which stand-up comedians create humour in *Churchill show*. The comedians flout maxims of quantity, quality, relation and manner to create incongruities that generate humour and subsequently laughter among the audience. The study contributes knowledge in pragmatic studies, especially those related to Grice's conversational maxims and implicatures. The study also expands scholarly research on verbal humour. Further research can be conducted on functions of humour that are realized when maxims are flouted.

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