

## **A RELEVANCE-THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF ASPECTS OF MCHONGOANO**

**Patrick C. KIHARA and Helga SCHRÖDER**

### **ABSTRACT**

This article investigates mchongoano, a Kenyan speech event very similar to what Americans call “playing the dozens”. Much as sociologists, folklorists, and anthropologists have studied playing the dozens fewer studies have been done on mchongoano from a pragmatic perspective. That is why this paper discusses a pragmatic interpretation of mchongoano using Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson 1995/2004). It will argue that the humorous effect of mchongoano is achieved after the hearer has recognized the intended insult of the joke that is created through the incongruity of events and situations. On the face of it, the incongruity of events and situations violates the principle of relevance, which stipulates that all communication has its own presumption of relevance. The paper will also demonstrate how three of Yus’ four types of jokes are found in the interpretation of mchongoano (2008: 142)