LANGUAGE CHOICE, PERFORMANCE AESTHETICS AND QUALITY IN SELECTED KENYAN FILMS

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DECLARATION

DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University. No part of this thesis may be reproduced without prior written permission of the author and/or Moi University.

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I dedicate this work to my family for their prayers and encouragement throughout this study.

ABSTRACT

The quality, authenticity and originality of film is not only realised through settings and events but also through genuine actor performance (characterization) in the representation of those events and experiences. This study analysed how choice of language in film affects actor performance especially in the portrayal of a realistic and authentic characterization, and how this impacts the overall quality in four films: *Toto Millionaire* by Simiyu Baraza, *Nairobi Half Life* by David Gitonga, *Saikati* by Ann Mungai and *The First Grader* by Justin Chadwick. These films are all produced in Kenya and speak to a history of film in Kenya consisting of different production styles and circumstances. The objectives of the study were; To outline and analyse how the narrative and filmic techniques adopted in the selected films reflect reality, hence their quality, To discuss how language use discourse in Kenya influences the dominance of the English language in film in Kenya, and to analyse the impact choice of language has on character performance and overall quality in each of the selected films. The study employed the realist film theory espoused by Andre Bazin, Stanley Cavel, Rudolph Arneheim and Siegfried Kraucer which states that film is a medium of actuality and anything it represents must be equal to reality to interrogate whether the language used in the selected films fits the characters' roles in the worlds represented in the films in the course of performance. The study was qualitative and consisted of an audio visual based analysis using the ethnography of communications model developed by Dell Hymes to determine how the language chosen in each of the films work with non-verbal communications appurtenances (NVC's) to affect realistic and authentic characterisation. It was found that appropriate choice of language is paramount for a genuine and honest rendition by actors in character roles that meet the realistic performance demanded by the film medium. The study concluded that the English language (idiom) preferred by Kenya filmmakers is not an appropriate choice as the linguistic medium for film in Kenya because it subverts film's realistic qualities by hindering effective characterization. A key recommendation of the study is that filmmakers, training institutions and film policy formulators need to consider appropriate choice of language as being part and parcel of genuine performance by film actors.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
DFS	Department of Film Services
FPD	Film Production Department
FPU	Film Production Unit
GP	Growth Point
KFC	Kenya Film Corporation
KIMC	Kenya Institute of Mass Communication
NVC	Non-Verbal Communicators
PPMCK	Permanent Presidential Music Commission of Kenya
TFD	Theatre for Development
VOK	Voice of Kenya
WSO	World Story Organization

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DEFINITION OF OPERATIONAL TERMS

In this study, the following terms were used as defined below;

Aesthetics: The interrogation of performance in film in relation to notions of what constitutes beauty, ugly and the sublime in the course of an actor's rendition of a character.

Appropriate language: This is the actual spoken language that is used within the environment of the film and which directly approximates the language spoken in the actual world**.**

Approximate: The ability of film's representation coming close to the actual object as it is perceived in existence.

Audience appeal: The quality of being attractive to an audience

Authentic: An experience or action being re-enacted but worthy of acceptance or belief as conforming to or based on undisputed origin and not a copy.

Originality: The quality of a film being special and interesting (novel, exotic or unusual) and not the same as any other film.

Performance: The re-enactment of character actions and experiences by a film actor.

Quality: The standard of a selected film measured against the other selected films and other films.

Realism: The ability for film to approximate the state of things as they actually exist, as opposed to an idealistic or notional idea of them.

Threshold: A point at which an act or experience being depicted becomes acceptable by film audiences as directly approximating that act or experience in the real world.

Verisimilitude: The believability of characters, objects, experiences and actions represented in film and how these closely approximate physical reality.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Background to the Study

1.1.1 Film in Kenya – An Overview

Film production in Kenya pre-dates the independence era (KFC, 2011). Having realized the potential of film as an ideological tool, the colonial government used it for propaganda purposes by engaging the services of the Information Services Department. Long before Kenya gained independence, companies such as East African Services, Africapix, Pearl & Dean and Film Corporation of Kenya had been established and were engaging in film production activities (ibid).

The Department of Film Services (DFS) (2011) documents that in the first decade of independence, film production activities of the ministry remained a major part of television programming. In 1967, with intent to spur cultural and national development, Kenya moved to establish public control over the importation and distribution of films via the establishment of the Kenya Film Corporation (KFC). At this early stage of independence, the government appeared to be fully committed, at face value, to the development of the film industry. However, the thrust of the mandate given to KFC at that time was that the corporation would find it difficult to support and nurture a home grown film industry since it was only expressly allowed to import foreign film content for distribution with no mention of facilitation of local film production.

Baraza (2010) observes that in 1972, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting took a major step, perhaps in recognition of the structural failures of KFC inherent in its mandate, to set up a film production house by establishing a separate 16mm documentary Film Production Unit (FPU) at the then Voice of Kenya (VOK). The FPU was expected to focus more on the development of the film sector by being mandated to produce developmental documentary productions on behalf of the government, regulate the film industry as well as help formulate film policy. This was followed in 1975 with

the establishment of the Kenya Newsreel to produce 35mm newsreels to replace the foreign ‘British Pictorial’ newsreel under the FPU unit. Further, the establishment of a Film School at the Kenya Institute of Mass Communication (KIMC) in 1976 to train professionals in media and film making enhanced the government's commitment to the development of media and film services in Kenya.

In 1982, the government consolidated the development that had been taking place over the period of the previous twenty years by establishing the Film Production Department (FPD), now Department of Film Services (DFS), with the responsibility of coordinating and developing all matters pertaining to film services including production of films that inform on government development policies and programmes as well as regulating the film sector (Baraza, 2010). Presently, records at the Department of Film Services (DFS) (2011) estimate that there are over 50 local and foreign private companies and organizations whose work relates to film/video production including the production of features, documentaries and commercials in the country. Some government ministries and institutions also have facilities for film production and dissemination. Such include Ministries of Agriculture and Health, The Permanent Presidential Music Commission of Kenya (PPMCK) and the Kenya Curriculum Development Institute.

To consolidate further the film industry as a vibrant sector able to go beyond the traditional perception of being a cultural product producer to an economic activity that adds substantially to job creation and consequent Gross Domestic Product (GDP) basket, the Kenya government in 2006 set up and operationalised the Kenya Film Commission (KFC). Chege (2014) lists, as being among the mandate of the commission:

> the promotion of the industry not only within the country but also to raise international awareness and interest from potential investors, to support the Kenyan film industry by providing facilities for screening and filming,

> organizing various workshops to educate local film-makers seeking to enter film production, establishing a database that will list film directors, producers, agents, local talent, … and service providers to raise the profile of the Kenyan film industry (http://www.kenyafilmcommission.com; http://www.artmatters.info).

Despite the foregoing developments, film production in Kenya continues to be dominated by foreign film firms using Kenya as a location to tell their own stories. Presently, foreign content inundate film theatres, local television broadcasters as well as videos watched in peoples' homes. According to the Kenya Film Commission (2011), productions from Hollywood were first shown to Kenyan audiences in the 1930s. They included films such as *Trader Horn, Stanley and Livingstone*. The 1950s had such memorable films shot in Kenya among them *Mogambo, The Snows of Kilimanjaro* and *King Solomon's Mines* and featured prominent Hollywood stars on wild adventures. It is further documented by the Kenya Film Commission (2011) that in 1981, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) produced *The Flame Trees of Thika,* a widely acclaimed television mini-series based on the life of Elspeth Huxley on her memoir as a white settler.

Out of Africa, produced in 1985 and featuring British stars, Meryl Streep and Robert Redford is a drama based on the life of a Danish citizen, Karen Blixen (played by Isaak Dinsen).The film's multiple launch in major film theatres around the world had the effect of focussing attention on Kenya thus raising the country's profile. KFC (2011), further documents that other prominent and successful films during this period were *Nowhere In Africa*, the German film that won the 2003 Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film (note –German language and therefore won as a German film entry), and *The Constant Gardener*(KFC, 2011). These films continued the same generic path of the adventure-action essentially telling European/Western stories. They showed Europeans experiencing interactions with Africans and failed to capture the nuanced local experiences.

Reception of films made locally by Kenyan film producers remains alarmingly low, both locally and internationally (KFC, 2011). This has stymied the number of local films being produced because the low economic returns discourage potential investors in the industry. Indeed, in a research by Edwards (2008) for World Story Organization (WSO), a non-governmental organization with interest in film storytelling, it was found that Kenyan films only play in exhibition shows such as Kenyafest, Zanzibar Film Fest, and Fespaco and then disappear from circulation. For instance, *Naliaka is Going* (2003),*Kibera Kid* (2006), *Saikati* (1992), *Kolormask* (1985), *The Rugged Priest* (2011), *Toto Millionaire* (2007), and *Mob Doc* (2008) were shown in these exhibition festivals but failed as commercial ventures among Kenyan and world audiences. These films are produced by local filmmakers even if some of them like *Saikati* secured funding from foreign non-governmental organizations, i.e. The Freidrich Ebert Foundation of Germany.

Chege (2014) further states that despite the Kenya government's conscious efforts to develop Kenyan cinema as an industry, the Kenya film is yet to find a way of telling stories effectively, creatively and with originality hence, the rejection of the film by audiences. This poor state of the Kenya film is also echoed by Godfrey Ojiambo, a Kenyan film actor, when he discusses his frustration about the lack of progress in Kenyan cinema:

> The industry is not rising as fast as we hoped it would. For a long time it was just about money, about how fast producers could make a buck. Corruption was a problem…People are starting to realize it's not just about money, it's about quality (*The Daily Nation*, 2007, par. 24).

Further, findings of a research on factors hampering the Kenya film industry growth by KFC (2011) lists some of the causes as high taxes, restrictive regulations, lack of support services, perception that local films are inferior, lack of finances, marketing and

distribution. Kahing'ah (2008) also confirms this poor state of the quality of the Kenya film as remaining at a static position by arguing that, to date, there is a dearth of major films produced by Kenyans that have made global impact, leave alone Kenyan audiences. At best, a major Kenyan production has a premier in cinemas around Nairobi (Kenya's capital city), and is awarded in a nondescript film festival before quietly fading into oblivion. Often, those invited would be dignitaries who attend the film's premier on the basis of special invitation and for none other than socio-economic and political reasons.

Edwards (2008) agrees with the foregoing observations and adds that there is need to craft a Kenya film aesthetic that tells Kenyan stories creatively by way of imbuing the films with the required threshold of creativity and originality. This, Edwards argues, will result in a film with a 'voice' that more authentically represents Kenya's reality, and thus be favourably received by audiences. Indeed, for Giannetti (2008), every nation has a characteristic way of looking at life, a set of values that is typical of a given culture and which should be reflected in their art. To Giannetti (2008) therefore, a film which is a realistic medium where object and its representation appear the same should not deviate from utilizing appropriate cultural tools whose central elements of communication includes language.

It is the argument in this study that film realism (authenticity), which is central to how a film works, is not only about settings and events but also about genuine actor performance in the representation of those events and experiences. Thus, through appropriate choice of language that in reality is the actual language of a film setting, a film aesthetic can be crafted by filmmakers in Kenya that meets the illusion of genuine and authentic representation of Kenyans' experiences. When actors' performance is seen as genuine and authentic then the film can truly be said to belong.

1.1.2 Language Choice and Performance in the Kenyan Film

Performance in film is an art in which an actor uses imagination, intelligence, psychology, memory, speech and vocal technique, facial expressions, body language, and an overall knowledge of the filmmaking process to realize, under the director's guidance, the realistic representation of the character created by the screenwriter. Thus, language is an integral part of performance in film and when voice texture fits the performer's physiognomy and gestures, a whole and very realistic persona emerges (Waite, 2010).

The issue of language choice and actor performance in the Kenya film remains problematic precisely because of the speech (language) discourse characteristic in most third world countries that went through the process of colonization and the consequent foregrounding of the colonizers languages as the gate pass to economic empowerment. An analysis of most Kenyan films makes one to come to the conclusion that the English language is preferred by most film makers as the linguistic expression in film contrary to actual language practice in the country where a majority use mother tongue and Kiswahili. Thus, in a way, this thesis examines whether one language system representing one knowledge system can be successfully supplanted onto another knowledge system and retain the same potency in meaning making.

In an acknowledgement that Kenya's film actors are yet to master the art of performance in screen acting, one of Kenya's most prominent and experienced actors, Oliver Litondo is quoted thus;

> Being original in an actor's portrayal of a character is key to success. It is not advisable to mimic how others would portray the character you are assigned. The actor has to give serious thought how to portray the assigned character from the actors' own perspective.....Acting for TV, for theatre and for film are all different. My work with big film industry has taught me that Kenya actors tend to over-act (www.Standardmedia.co.ke).

Indeed, both the Kenya Film Commission (2011) and Edwards (2008) aver that one of the factors contributing to the poor quality of the Kenya film is poor performance by actors. For instance, in the short student film *Hooked* by Hilary Mongera, the performance by the various characters in the film comes off as stiff and unnatural. This takes away authenticity from the film and therefore affects the film quality which is premised on film's ability to realistically represent action in which the characters are seen as ordinary human beings going about their daily chores. This is replicated in films such as *Malooned*, *Illegal Impulse*, *Let's Play Pretend* and *Mob Doc*. The tendency in most of these films is to attempt to pass off English as the native language of the speakers (actors).

It is thus the purpose of this study, using the film realist theory, to examine how the English language has impacted on actor performance, hence, the authenticity and quality of the film in Third World countries and specifically in Kenya through an analysis of how choice of language and performance work together to produce credible character representation in film. The thesis makes an assumption that when actors use a language that is not their first language in a way that the film attempts to pass off such a language as such, their ability to link language and experiences is greatly impaired. Hence, their performance too is negatively affected which impacts on the quality of film.

Experiences that are honestly represented become capable of attracting audience appeal. An original and authentic film, for which appropriate choice of language is a part of, should result in a commercially viable film industry that produces local content to fill the 40% content requirement by Kenya's broadcast law (Kenya Information and Communication Act, Cap 411A of the Laws of Kenya, 2009). It is in this light that this study seeks to contribute to the forging of an acceptable Kenya film aesthetic by analysing how choice of language as speech in the selected films affects performance and therefore the authenticity and quality of the films.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

This study analyses how choice of language in film affects actor performance especially in the portrayal of a realistic and authentic characterization, and how this impacts on the overall quality of film. Focusing on four selected Kenyan films namely; *Toto Millionaire* by Simiyu Baraza, *Nairobi Half Life* by David Gitonga, Ann Mungai's *Saikati* and Justin Chadwick's *The First Grader,* I argue and demonstrate that realistic and authentic characterization of film is not possible in situations where language choice is not appropriate.

1.3 Objectives

1. To outline and discuss the extent to which the filmic techniques in the selected films affects the films' quality.

2. To discuss the problem of language use in Kenya and how it has manifested in the Kenya film.

3. To analyse the impact choice of language has on actor performance within the environment of a film and consequent quality of the selected films.

1.4 Research Questions

1. To what extent do the filmic techniques in the selected films affect the films' quality?

2. How has language use discourse in Kenya contributed to the dominance of the English language in film in Kenya?

3. How does language choice affect the quality of actor performance within the environment of the film and therefore overall quality in the selected films?

1.5 Scope and Limitations

The main focus of the study is on problematic speech performance as affected by choice of language in the selected films. This study focuses on four Kenyan made films; *Toto Millionaire* (2007) by Simiyu Baraza, *Nairobi Half Life* (2012) by David Gitonga, *Saikati* (1992) by Ann Mungai and *The First Grader* (2010) by Justin Chadwick. When other films are referred to especially films from Hollywood, Bollywood and Nollywood, it will be just for comparison reasons.

This study will by no means be exhaustive on the issue of how appropriate choice of language can be used to forge a unique aesthetics of Kenya film. Other elements of filmmaking too such as type of film equipment, camera manipulation, editing, choice of raw stock and sound scoring can and do affect a film's quality.

1.6 Significance

Several studies, as sources cited in Chapter Three of this study will indicate, have been carried out on language use and aesthetics for literary purposes, but few have so far come up with findings on whether language as used by characters in Kenyan films plays a role in the quality of performance and authenticity of those films. This study will therefore go a long way in filling this gap by providing some facts towards the use of appropriate language including the casting of actors with mastery of appropriate language in film setting that works to forge a production that meets the threshold of authenticity.

1.7 Justification of the Study

There is need for local film producers to be conscious of what constitutes a film that audiences are able to identify with. One of the main indicators of authenticity of film is language which comes with its nuances of culture and social life of a people. The unique experiences, registers, dialects, standard and non-standard use of a given language brings out this. This is what creates the authenticity and aesthetic of any work of art more particularly film.

1.8 Literature Review

Scholarly studies on film in Kenya seem to have majorly concentrated on thematic issues as compared to stylistics. For instance, Diang'a (2005) examines how the issue of marriage and sexuality is represented by analyzing those issues in four selected Kenyan films: Sao Gamba's *Kolormask*(1986), *The Married Bachelor* (1997) by Ingolo wa Keya, Judy Kibinge's *Dangerous Affair* (2002) and *Behind Closed Doors* (2004) by Jane Munene. The author comes to the conclusion that what is depicted in these thematic areas by the films indeed correspond to the reality in the Kenyan society as pertains to the issues of sexuality and marriage.

One study that touches on film stylistics is by Kimani and Mugubi (2014) which examines the issue of dwindling number of movie goers in mainstream theatres against

the proliferation of estate video shows in Kenya. They argue that the proliferation of the estate video shows is as a result of the emergence of local commentators, whose face is a disc jockey (DJ) Afro. In the video shows these commentators use local languages that replace the films' original sounds to interpret the action in the films to their audiences. To them therefore the popularity of estate video shows is majorly due to the ability of these local commentators to interpret action and events in the movies in a language that audiences can identify with.

While Diang'a's study proceeds from the premise that there is nothing amiss in the quality of films analysed, whether the cultural tools used such as language conform to reality and whether the films have audience appeal, Kimani and Mugubi's study in a way seems to advance the idea that choice of language as a tool in production does matter especially in consideration of audience preferences. Even though Kimani and Mugubi's study looks at spoken translation by a commentator who is not part of the production process, their findings in a way indicate an audiences' preference when it comes to what language is spoken in film. Thus, this study builds on Kimani and Mugubi's study by analysing language choice in a film and how it affects actor performance and overall quality of film as a medium of actuality.

There are three distinct schools among critics of African literary art when it comes to language. Soyinka (1990), a proponent of one of this schools of thought, observes that since the African has learned and mastered the English language (foreign language depending on who was the coloniser) which dominate around the world, then the African is better of adopting the language in his/her literary works. The centre piece in this argument is that the English (foreign) language could be effectively deployed to represent the African world view.

On the other hand, are a group of authors who take a middle ground. p'Bitek (1986),being one of the faces that advance this line of thought, admits that it would be

foolhardy to disregard the influence of the English (foreign) language in one hand, as much as it would also be impossible to find some African expressions in those languages. So for them, a symbiosis of the two languages should do so that the literary piece could use the English (foreign) language and where there is no apt word in English, use the appropriate African word. It is in this meld that literary works by renown Nigerian author Chinua Achebe is appreciated.

At the other extreme has been another group of scholars led by Thiong'o (1994). To them, a language of a people carries with it the whole of the people's way of life. Language, they say, represents the people's worldview, their beliefs, fears, aspirations. Writing of African literature should therefore never be substituted by a foreign language because to do so is to destroy the very essence of those people. Thiong'o has taken the lead in this himself by taking to publishing a number of his works in mother tongue such as *Caitaani Mũtharaba-Inĩ* (The Devil on The Cross), *Ngaahika Ndeenda (*I Will Marry When I Want), and *Mũrogi wa Kagogo* (Wizard of the Crow).

It is worthy to note that as these debates have raged what is not in doubt is that in any literary work that involves characters, those characters always converse in a language that is native to the settings. In effect, what we read is the authors' translations of those conversations. Thus, these debates can be reduced to whether to translate or not at the point of capturing the experience in which Ngugi argues strongly against. In a way therefore, Ngugi's argument that writing in the native language captures the nuanced characteristics of the settings and context is fortified by the thrust of this study that appropriate choice of language for characters in film, being a medium of reality, allows for a realistic performance because actors are able to project genuine and hence a nuanced display of the characters they play.

Language is one of the elements of sound that works to fix the meaning in a film narrative. Appropriate choice of language ensures that an honest performance by actors

in the process of re-enacting characterization in a film is achieved. Waite (2010, p. 169) argues that:

> With sound (language), for the first time in history, a movie star could be recognized as a 'whole,' which included not only motion and sound, but inflection of voice, timbre, verbal 'ticks,' and speech patterns. Groucho's voice evokes both the image of Groucho and the type of character he played - indefatigably charming con men, charlatans, and womanizers.

According to Waite (2010), language in film not only ensures character believability and therefore film's authenticity but also a genuine performance. Waite (2010) further argues that though we might think of film as an essentially visual experience as postulated by film theorists, we really cannot afford to underestimate the importance of film sound. Even the term 'film viewing' does not take into account the role of sound. While it is true that the filmgoer is regarded as a voyeur, surreptitiously spying on the actions of the on-screen characters, as postulated by Waite (2010), what should not be overlooked is that viewers are also auditors. In actual sense, the filmgoer listens to conversations, which though addressed, are in reality, meant to deliver important information to the unseen listener – the viewer.

Waite (2010) further argues that the language of dialogue in film authenticates the speaker as an individual or a real person rather than the imaginary creation of a story teller or the camera. Language is also important as it is the vehicle that tells the story and expresses feelings and motivations of characters. With film performance, the demarcation between the character and the actor is expected to be very little or non-existent. An actor is thus expected to marry voice texture and his/her physiognomy and gestures towards presenting a whole and very realistic persona. When this is achieved, the audience sees not an actor working at his craft, but another human being struggling with life. Indeed, effective screen performance lies not in a range of arcane techniques

but in their absence. When an actor is relaxed, honest to his or her emotions, and free of misconceptions, he or she is no longer acting but *being*, a far more powerful condition (Waite, 2010). Hence, with appropriate language, a language that names the actor's social environment, film actors can reveal more nuance and ambivalence, even contradiction, through saying what they think and feel as well as showing it.

There is no doubt that language qualifies characters' individuality in the larger community and as belonging to a specific community through dialect, accent and language competence which actors display in the process of characterization in film. Language provides a linkage between the characters and their cultural backgrounds. Kim (2003) observes that without language, culture cannot be completely acquired nor can it be effectively expressed and transmitted. Commenting on the relation between language and culture, Kim (2003, p. 137) observes that:

> Language and culture are so interconnected that it is difficult to define the parameters of language and culture, and whether language impacts culture or vice-versa. However, it is generally agreed among scholars that culture is a broader umbrella concept, and that language is a part of culture (Trueba & Zou, 1994). In the early years of socialization, both linguistic and cultural symbolic systems that an individual is raised in will play an instrumental role in socializing the individual, and in shaping his perceptions and his persona.

These are important nuances to display when a film actor plays a character role to imbue the role with authenticity.

Kim (2003) further conceptualizes language as a 'system of communication comprising codes and symbols which is used by humans to store, retrieve, organize, structure and communicate knowledge and experience' (p. 137). Language thus becomes the primary instrument in the expression, transmission, and adaptation of culture. Language is used to maintain one's own culture and to acquire a new culture and new knowledge. Culture

has many definitions. Kim (ibid) defines culture as a ‘set of beliefs, values, norms, customs, traditions, rituals, and a way of life that differentiates one group from another’. For Tylor (1965), culture is a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. Banks (1988, p. 261) defines culture as ‘a cluster of attributes such as values, beliefs, behaviour patterns and symbols unique to a particular human group’. Goodenough believes that culture ‘is made up of the concepts, beliefs, and principles of action and organization’ (1976, p.5). It is therefore obvious that the addition of speech to film not only adds more communicating power but also enables far more nuanced realistic manipulation of the medium, thus increasing film’s aesthetic appeal (Ellis, 1979) which is premised on its verisimilitude ability to imitate reality: reality being a conditioning of culture. Thus, film is about individuals, groups, communities, cultures, genders interacting. If a film’s representation does not reach this threshold, the characters in the film become anonymous and are devoid of any value and therefore render the film valueless.

Proferes (2005) postulates that actors use language and other communicative appurtenances to achieve a faithful characterization, hence performance in film. These include the character’s attitude, personalities, and emotional states. Proferes (ibid) further states that language has variants such as text, subtext, grammar, slang, accent, dialect and style. Thus, he argues, the language of dialogue can reveal many things about character’s identity. Language can be used to infer one’s religion, nationality, culture, gender, age, socio-economic class, level of education, and profession. Furthermore, the nationality of a character can be shown through accent for instance whether American, British, South African, Tanzanian, Nigerian, Russian or Chinese. It can also be shown through the words used, For example, while Americans use the term ‘sidewalk’, the British prefer ‘pavement’ and the Australians ‘footpath’. Kenyans use the word *Ugali* while Tanzanian’s say *Sima* to refer to maizemeal. It therefore follows

that whether you speak with a French, Italian, Luo, Luhya, Kikuyu or Kiswahili accent, when you speak a second language, your pronunciation should reveal that the second language is a learned one and not your native language. Your grammar may be a little different and people will think that you are speaking ‘bad language’ but they will accept it because they know it is as a result of grammar from another language being adopted into the person's speech.

It is argued that screen acting is not a dream; it is a reality (Vogler, 2007).Thus, the illusion of a natural, lack of effort is essential to visual story telling. Effective screen acting consists of a close relationship between the language of dialogue and the concept of subtext and other co-occurring human communicative appurtenances among them NVC elements such as gestures, body posture and eye play. According to Vogler (2008), a film actor must be able to hit one or more marks, stay within the key lights, keep a proper eye line, and maintain continuity between takes, all the while committed to the character throughout a full day on set. It is this ability of film to precisely imitate that is at the centre of film aesthetics where viewers perceive no difference between reality and illusion. Thus, the job of an actor in a feature film is to deliver a physical and emotional interpretation of a screenwriter's work, in line with a director's vision, while maintaining long-term physical and emotional continuity that conforms to reality.

Vogler (2007) defines a feature film actor as one of the characters portrayed in a marquee attraction motion picture. By *feature* it is implied of a film that is or will be widely distributed, nationally or internationally, to play in movie theatres. Vogler (2007) lists four things that make feature film acting most difficult: they are long, generally shot single camera, they are shot '4-wall', which means all four walls of a set can or will appear and the environment in which the audience sees the final product is very controlled and unforgiving. The average film shoot for a major motion picture takes 60 days. Each day a film crew captures enough material to equate to about 60 to 90 seconds of *screen* time. This means that out of a 12-hour (usually longer) day they cover a

minute's worth of material. The level of precise physical and emotional continuity required by the actor is extraordinary and it has to remain consistent. Scenes will be shot over and over again in rehearsal, blocking rehearsal, camera rehearsal, during photography and all the associated resets and 'coverage' that that entails.

Add to the fact that most scenes are shot out of sequence and many locations will require multiple emotional and physical states that will need to blend seamlessly with footage that could be shot a month later. For instance, man eating in a cafe sees his wife with another man in a cafe across the street. Angered, he charges out without paying, blasts past the waiter who tries to restrain him. He emerges out onto the street and tries to cross, but the traffic is heavy. Infuriated, he ducks and dodges his way across, actually getting knocked by a car hard enough to fall on the bonnet. After brief words with the driver, he scrambles to the other side of the street, peers in the window of the cafe, but his wife has left. He goes into the cafe and asks the waiter her whereabouts, but the waiter doesn't know. Vogler (2005) says that in the real world of film production, such a sequence could be filmed on three different days, during three different weeks at three different locations and the viewer would never be the wiser. The actor, meanwhile, has to match his/her emotional and physical state perfectly, for each segment, after he/she may have filmed hundreds of other scenes in between.

Now then, just think about the number of 'set-ups' in the aforementioned scene when you only have one camera. Just to properly get all the necessary footage, the man at the table seeing his wife across the street would entail a full shot, a medium shot, a close-up, an extreme close-up, close-ups on the man's hands, on tableware that he's playing with, his feet shuffling, playing with his tie, anything the director felt would best convey the man's 'condition'. And that just covers him sitting there. That doesn't count the shots around the room that he may or may not be in, of other diners that he might see, food passing by, waiters serving people and so on. Each time the camera moves is another

set-up, which can vary greatly in time, but the actor has to look the same on every single one.

The reason for shooting '4-walls' and the extensive coverage is due to the need to *immerse* an audience into a *visceral experience* (Elis 1979; Vogler, 2005).To put it simply, when you watch a good motion picture, you become *part* of what's on the screen. In contrast, when you watch television, you watch something *happen* on the screen and here the camera takes a position that is always in front of the object. The conditions under which the motion picture audience sees the film helps add to that immersion. It's dark, the screen is huge, the sound is loud and the outside world is shut off almost completely. Even film viewing through television broadcast in the house is programmed at ‘waterfall’ period, beyond dinner time where house occupants will be least destructed by other chores in recognition of this property of film. Anything that happens on screen that makes the audience aware that they are an audience is not tolerated in professional film production. Thus, the camera in a movie is not restrained; it moves 360 degrees, around objects and in and out of every nick and crook in the set up.

For an actor to perform realistically under these circumstances, he/she will need to use a language which they have acquired through social interaction and have consequently gained mastery and deeper knowledge of in terms of conceptual use. Such a language allows them to easily recall the concepts and experiences in real life that they then re-enact for the purpose of presenting an honest and authentic characterization and performance. Indeed Chomsky (1965) has argued that when a person acquires language, they imbibe the concepts which they can then effortlessly and meaningfully fit on to experiences unlike when one learns a language that involves only the structural part. Consequently, Chomsky concludes one never really masters a second language through learning.

Further, dialogue in film is used to gradually grow and evolve strong characters. Such strong characterization has the immediate effect of telling a great and captivating story. Good and effective dialogue makes heavy use of the concept of subtext. Subtext in dialogue is the kind of dialogue that hooks us as we watch the movie. According to Lipton (1976), subtext is content underneath the spoken dialogue that could suggest conflict, anger, competition, pride, showing off, or other implicit ideas and emotions. It is the unspoken thoughts and motives of characters - what they really think and believe. It reveals what a character thinks but does not say. Subtext brings with it the world of the inside. Things get implied rather than said explicitly. Subtext is actually the meaning behind the words - the emotions embodied by the speech. Similar to what happens in real life, a character in film is rarely expected to say what they really mean. Instead, the meaning should be creatively weaved into the text and actions of the character.

Consequently, because of characteristics of subtext, in interactions language use is ultimately metaphorical (Bakhtin, 1975). Thus appropriate choice of language of dialogue in film allows characters to deploy the subtext concept because such language enables them recall appropriate experiences (concepts) which they re-enact in their performances. The language enables actors perform with a more natural poise, utilise and display other performance appurtenances such as facial expression, body posture, hand movement and eye play among others, the sum total of which is a display of deeper knowledge gained from the social process of acquiring language. Thus, with subtext, actors are able to render the required amount of tension, difficulty and difference necessary for effective communication to occur in the process of playing out character roles in film.

Language imbues a character with what Barsam (2007) calls native personality in the process of performing. Consequently, Barsam (2007) suggests, screenwriters would need to consider not only what a fictional character might say in a given situation, but also how the character might naturally say it. Barsam (2007) goes on to argue that while

some film actors, especially those who had made their careers in the theatre, most notably British actors like Alec Guinness and Lawrence Olivier, excelled in the art of masquerade, the real game in Hollywood was product differentiation, or the ability of an actor to establish a distinctive place in the firmament of stars. This is why an actor may seem to be 'playing himself' in film after film. Indeed this then calls on script writers to be always cognisant of what settings they place their characters in and hence give them appropriate dialogue and language under the circumstances.

Bazin (1960) argues that cinema is real not because of the way it looks but because it was recorded mechanically and that what makes it real is the origin of the reproduction. The representation of reality in cinema stems from the existence of the object reproduced in time and space; unlike let us say in painting or sculpture, where the object represented involves the skill and the mind of an artist confronting the object. A conclusion from Bazin's (1960) argument is that everything before the camera and, lest it be forgotten, the microphone, must be real or believable – acquire the status of truth, both the picture (what we see) and the audio (what we hear). Thus it should follow that if a character is black, the actor that plays that character must also be so, and when the character speaks it should be in language that is in consonance with the character's cultural identity context, situation and environment. For instance, an old black rural woman in Kenya in the 1910s should not only be seen as black, her blackness should emanate from deep inside her and the environment as well as her speech must fall in line with her situation and spatial context.

Therefore to interpret Bazin's (1960) argument further, character and performance authenticity is destroyed in this instance if the film depicts a white woman painted black and when she talks, say in English, does so in a way that suggests English is her mother tongue even when nothing happens in the film to suggest the character at one time has interacted with the English language. Indeed, no black character ever gets played by a white person on the screen and vice-versa but this is the aesthetic consideration always

overlooked in film dialogue by the third cinema, the Kenya film included. It seems that western influence long discovered that whereas you cannot supplant skin colour and other physical manifestations on characters; you can with language and get away with it. Film's characteristics have easily exposed this façade. In other words to Bazin and other realist film theorists, content overrides form in film.

Bazin's assertion above gains more credence when looked at against Ellis' (1979) observation that including dialogue to Hollywood cinema in the 1930s meant that non-English speaking actors could not survive working in the Hollywood film industry. Foreign film actors who had not mastered English sailed back to Europe (Ellis, 1979). Hence, at this very early stage of film sound, evidence became overwhelming that there could be no really satisfactory means of presenting film dialogue to audiences who did not understand the language of dialogue in the film. Further, Ellis (1979) posits that dialogue had the effect of making film reveal more reality. This study argues that it is not only the understanding of a language that inclines an audience to watch a film but that the right choice of language allows the character to appear natural and honest in their roles allowing for the exertion of greater authenticity; authenticity being the prime aesthetic requirement of film.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

1.9.1 Realist Film Theory

The study employs realist film theory as espoused by Andre Baizin, Rudolph Arnheim, Siegfried Kraucer and Stanley Cavell to interrogate the relationship between language, performance and authenticity in film. Film Realism is a most contested term in the history of cinema. However, this does not in any way suggest that the concept of Realism in film can be overlooked in any discussion on film aesthetics. Realism has been an extremely useful concept in asking questions about the nature of cinematographic images, the relation of film to reality, the credibility of images, and the role cinema plays in the organization and understanding of the world

(http://www.filmreference.com/encyclopedia/Independent-Film-Road-Movies/Realism-Theories-Of-Realism.html).

In film history, realism has designated two distinct modes of filmmaking and two approaches to the cinematographic image. In the first instance, cinematic realism refers to the verisimilitude of a film to the believability of its characters and events. The second instance of cinematic realism takes as its starting point the camera's mechanical reproduction of reality. For Rudolph Arnheim writing in the 1930's, film offers the possibility of 'the mechanical imitation of nature in which original and copy become indistinguishable in the eyes of the audience (MacCabe, 1976). Bazin (1945) solidifies this concept a decade later, where for him, what filmmakers as different as De Sica, Rossellin, Bresson, Orson Welles and Renoir had in common was a desire to put cinema at the service of what he called a fundamental faith in reality. Bazin argues that the credibility of a film does not come from its verisimilitude but from the identity between the photographic image and its object. In *The Ontological Realism of the Photographic Image* (1945), Bazin describes a brief history of art, in which he identifies cinema as the fulfilment of the human craving for realistic representation. Thus, Realism for Bazin is the essence of cinema, its ontology, and a rhetoric whose keys are simplicity, purity, and transparency (http://www.filmreference.com/encyclopedia/Independent-Film-Road-Movies/Realism-Theories-Of-Realism.html).

In 1960, two years after Bazin's death, Kracauer continued and radicalized Bazin's project in his book *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*. Like Arnheim and Bazin before him, Kracauer (1960) argues that of all the arts, film is uniquely qualified to record physical reality. Kracauer concedes that many films combine realist with formalist practices, but he concludes the films that make us 'experience aspects of physical reality' are the most valid aesthetically.

Philosopher Stanley Cavell also has argued for the ontological realism of cinema. For Cavell as well as for Bazin and Kracauer, the basis of the film medium is photography. A photograph, and by extension film, always implies the presence of the rest of the world (Cavell, 1979). In essence therefore, to Cavell film ‘displaces’ people and objects from the world onto the screen. This is not only proof, for Cavell, of film's ontological realism; it is also the beginning of our reconciliation with the world. Movies permit us to view the world unseen, at a distance, and this sets in motion the intellectual process that will bring us back to the world and will reaffirm our participation in it. More than any other film critic or theorist, Cavell insists that film's fundamental realism makes it an art of contemplation, an intellectual and spiritual exercise meant to restore our relation to the world.

Thus, Realism as a classic theory of the moving image (Cinema) sees the camera as an impartial instrument which grasps, or rather is impregnated by the world in its concrete reality. Anything that happens in film that calls attention to the presence of the camera destroys the illusion of reality and thus affects the film’s aesthetic quality. Consequently, although it is a neglected part of study perhaps because it is assumed or taken for granted that a German film will use German language, an American film American English, a British film English, a Mexican film Latin and so on, appropriate choice of language too plays a role in the ability of film to depict reality more than any other art form. Indeed, language choice assumes more importance in third world countries of which Kenya is included because of the problematic discourse on language use where attempts continue to foreground the colonisers’ languages over the natives’ which has permeated onto the third world film. This study seeks to analyse the four selected films to determine how choice of language of dialogue in those films has played a role in the film’s authentic depiction of reality, hence their quality.

1.10 Methodology

This study has employed the ethnography of communications model analysis developed by Dell Hymes. Ethnography of communication is the study of the place of language in culture and society. Ethnography refers to knowledge available to members of a speech community which is used more or less consciously, to categorize persons, places and activities. Formal analysis in the ethnography of communication focuses on super-sentential elements: speech situations, the forms of speech events, the interrelations of speaker, addressee, audience, topic, channel and setting, and the ways in which the speakers draw upon the resources of their language to perform certain functions. This study is audio visual based. The study particularly looks at four films: *Saikati* by Ann Mungai, *Toto Millionaire* by Simiyu Baraza, *Nairobi Half Life* by David Gitonga and Justin Chadwick's *The First Grader*. The first two films are chosen on the basis they represent the old and the new type of films produced in Kenya in terms of format. While *Saikati* produced in 1992 and is celluloid, *Toto Millionaire* is a 2010 production shot on digital video format. These two formats have progressed from one to the other owing to technological progress which has had profound effect on the workings of the whole film medium in terms of production cost, techniques and aesthetics. On the other hand, *Nairobi Half Life* is important to this study as it, arguably, remains the most well received film by Kenyan audiences. Unlike the first two films which use English as their idiom of spoken language, this film presents what can be called the language journey where there is attempt to use language idiom appropriate to every new space in the world of the film. On the other hand, *The First Grader*, though shot in Kenya in 2010 is representative of European films that use Kenya as a backdrop upon which they tell largely European stories. The apparent superior formal elements deployed in the film is analysed to determine whether form alone can imbue a film with the required threshold of authenticity.

CHAPTER TWO

FILMIC TECHNIQUES AND QUALITY IN THE SELECTED FILMS

2.1 Introduction

This chapter critically analyses how filmic techniques in the selected films have worked to contribute to their quality. It begins by discussing what should and actually constitute the quality of the Kenya film through a discussion of the polemical issues that surround the naming of national films. The Chapter goes on to define and demarcate the manifestation of the various strands of the Kenya film today. And finally the chapter analyses the filmic techniques of each of the four films with a view to determining whether there are any similarities or differences running through them given the different contexts of their production as well as their quality. *Saikati*, produced in 1992, was shot on celluloid format while *Toto Millionaire* (2010) and *Nairobi Half Life* (2012) were shot on video format. Issues of film aesthetics have played out concerning film raw stock where it is argued that digital and analogue video format is cheaper compared to celluloid and so it should translate into a better film for third world countries because it is cheaper for film producers. *The First Grader* (2012), though shot in Kenya in 2010, is representative of European films that use Kenya as a backdrop upon which they tell largely European stories.

2.2 The Problem of naming National Cinemas

There is a need to establish what the Kenyan film is. Is it film made about the Kenyan experience? Is it film made by Kenyans of a particular race? Is it film made in indigenous languages?' What about a non-African who makes a film about Kenya: does such work qualify as Kenyan film? One could easily transpose these questions to what Thiong'o (1994) poses about the language of African literature. Thiong'o (1994) in trying to answer more or less the same questions concludes that an African literary work should be able to carry the weight of the African experience, reflect African culture and thus more importantly, it should not be separated from the language that

transmits it. Similarly, it is the thrust of this thesis to observe that for a film to qualify as Kenyan, it should present with certain basic tenets including appropriate cultural tools such as languages that are firmly rooted in the Kenyan idiom, carry the cultural experiences of the people and also be appreciated by Kenyan and international audiences. A film that captures all these foregoing sensibilities, this thesis posits, retains the potential of being elevated to the status of Kenyan national film.

However, argument is still rife concerning the parameters that determine how films acquire the status of belonging to nation states with the idea of the nation state itself being problematic. A *nation*, according to Wambugu (2014), consists of a group that is united by common beliefs, language, culture or history, and that inhabits a particular territory. Essentially it can be defined as a socio-spiritual entity; that soft, romantic aspect of a country's political system. It is best represented as a 'feeling'. To be part of a nation is to emotionally accept to be part of a social structure in a community (Wambugu, 2014). Thus, a national film should strive to be an authentic and realistic record of all these but most importantly be able to excite national feelings in the audience when the audience is able to identify with the nuanced representations in the film. On the other hand a *state* refers to a legal/political entity that comprises a permanent population, a defined territory, a government and the capacity to enter into relations with other states (Wambugu, 2014). Thus, a state exists on the basis of coercion whereas a nation is bound together based on deeply shared experiences.

Ezra and Rowden (2006) write that the association of film with nation-states can be said to have existed only since the late silent or early sound era. Two or so decades after the birth of cinema, films were not explicitly identified with a particular nation-state; and production companies were international, operating around the world. It is Ellis (1979) who ties the concept of national film to the coming of sound in 1930. Before that, Ellis (1979) observes, because film was silent, it could be shot anywhere in any part of the world with a collection of actors from different nationalities and cultures but acquire a

local slant during the film's screening through the exhibitors narration who did so using the local language of the audience. Indeed, even now, viewing of foreign films in Kenya's local video showing rooms and halls is usually accompanied by a narration in local lingua franca in the way of appropriating meaning in the films to local idioms (Kimani & Mugubi, 2014). But with the coming of sound, actors who could not master local languages could not fit in the enhanced realistic mould of film representation and so it became difficult for such actors to operate in foreign countries. For instance a Briton, a Swedish or Russian could no longer be represented as American because of their accents. In short, Ellis (1979) argues that through linguistic means, the coming of sound in the late 1920s and early 1930s, cemented the process of national identification in cinema based on spoken language.

National sentiment about film, Ezra and Rowden (2006) further writes, has also been deliberately accentuated for economic reasons by governments and often by a country's filmmakers to protect their domestic market. In the USA, the film industry while faced with stiff competition from USA's European subsidiaries especially from France in the 1930s and 1940s, caused the enactment of protectionist laws such as those imposing very exorbitant import taxes that made it difficult for films from other countries to exhibit there. The US government also set up fund baskets that would specifically be accessed by local film makers to the disadvantage of foreigners. On the other hand, economic reasons in Europe also led to the nationalization of the film industry in reaction to Hollywood hegemony following the unprecedented and uninterrupted growth of Hollywood film at the expense of a fighting Europe in the World War 1 (Abel, 1999). To do this, Europe introduced protectionist measures including state subsidies for their production companies.

In Kenya after a series of failed policies to increase local production of films, the government in 2009 enacted a law, The Kenya Information and Communications Act, Cap 411A with the provision that henceforth the Minister in charge of the media sector

retains the power to determine levels of local content on national television broadcasters in the country. Indeed the minister through such a circular has directed that such local content should not fall below 40% of all audio-visual products circulating in the country whether for broadcast, cinema theatres or home viewing. However, it is contestable that national sentiment about film could be successfully coerced through actions outside film aesthetics.

According to Hjort and Mackenzie (2000), national cinemas are also continually changing, as the nation-states change, and with the importance of the nation-state itself as both a geopolitical force and a conceptual entity, nationality becomes a blurred notion. With two World Wars, the demise of dynastic and colonial empires, agitation for self-rule by communities who feel marginalized (a case of South Sudan breaking off from Sudan because of irreconcilable race, cultural and religious differences) and the end of the Cold War, the history of the world tells of the emergence and dissolution of nation-states (Ellis, 1979).During this period, German was divided between West and East and then reunified again, the Soviet Union disintegrated into smaller countries and so on. Africa was partitioned and shared among colonial conquerors who demarcated borders not based on existing homogeneity and shared values of communities but their interest to divide and rule the colonized African subjects to reap maximum economic gains. Indeed the geopolitical situation as it exists in Africa today speaks to these realities where different societies which were forced together through the partition process are still in the process of forging common values albeit through serious contestations. In Kenya the Cushitic communities consisting of the Somali, the Bantu consisting of among others the kikuyu and Luhya and the Nilotics consisting of the Kalenjin and Luo found themselves lamped together in one geopolitical unit. These varied communities are yet to find common causes that unite them into a single nation - political and even violent confrontations are rife (RoK, 2008). Consequently, the forging of a film aesthetic that speaks to these varied communities remains a challenge

as evidenced by the low number of local film productions being undertaken in the country.

Another aspect that is generally agreed to define and identify cinema as belonging to a nation state is where cinema was and is used by states to reassert autonomy from colonialism. This is rampant in third world countries which have and continue to grapple with the effects of colonisation. Indeed, Ezra and Rowden (2006) observe that the 1960s and 1970s saw cinema embraced by many nation-states as a potential tool in the struggle to reassert national autonomy in the wake of decolonization. This began in Latin America and soon spread to Asia and Africa where activists and governments saw cinema as a space for anti-colonial struggles (Williams, 2002). In particular, Guglar (2003) observes, Lusophone African states such as Mozambique and Angola adopted a form of 'guerrilla' film-making that attempted to merge Marxist theories with film practice, resulting in a politically committed cinema. Indeed, many African film-makers, including the Francophone directors, Ousmane Sembène from Senegal and Souleymane Cissé from Mali, trained in the USSR; where they learned cinematic techniques from Soviet directors (ibid). In a similar vein, today, many African film-makers and funding bodies view cinema as an important expression of post-colonial democratic principles. However, in Kenya, most films, unlike the literature of Ngugi and Meja Mwangi among others, have avoided to expressly make comment on the colonial dispensation. This could partly be attributed to the fact that funding films which is an expensive venture has mostly been through European sources who do not associate with the problems of colonialism.

Settings and storylines also determine whether a film can be associated with a nation-state. But setting is not synonymous with location for shooting, especially when other locations are made to stand in for settings depicted on screen for financial reasons (lower production costs or tax breaks), or when sets or special effects are used to conjure up a place (a consequence of film form). According to Ezra (2007), scenes of

Africa had been familiar to viewers the world over since the beginning of the 20th century, but it was only in 1955 that what is considered to be the first sub-Saharan African film was produced. Sembène's *La Noire de* (1965) is considered to be one of the first feature-length film made in sub-Saharan Africa. However, though this film depicts sub-Saharan settings, it was largely filmed in France with constructed African settings. As this and other films demonstrate, a film's national identity can also be reducible to its setting.

A majority of films made in many of the third world countries rely heavily on financing from other countries, especially Europe (Ezra, 2007). In Kenya films such as *Mogambo*, *Out of Africa*, *To Walk with the Lions*, *The First Grader* and *Saikati* are films that fall in this category. This always presents a challenge when it comes to determining the nationality of these films. Whereas the settings of these films are in Kenya, the foreign financiers always seek guarantees that the themes in the films speak not to local sensibilities but the financiers'. For instance, though the film *Nowhere in Africa* was largely filmed in Kenya; it won an Oscar Academy Award as Best Foreign Language Film (German) in 2003 as a German film and not Kenyan.

There has emerged a trend, recently, especially among smaller nation in coming together either to pool funds, as in multinational co-productions, or to pool creative resources, as is the case with *La femme Nikita* series where collaboration between European and American money and talent has been assembled as a strategy to finance and reach a wider market for the film (Arnold, 2006). But as demonstrated in the *La femme Nikita* series' aesthetics, whenever American aesthetics meet other countries' aesthetics, the American one prevails. The series is American through and through.

The identification of a national cinema can also be complicated by sub-national affiliations. According to Ezra (2007), indigenous filmmakers in postcolonial or Diaspora contexts - such as Maori film-makers in New Zealand, Native American film-

makers in the US, the Ibo and Hausa filmmakers in Nigeria - sometimes prefer not to be associated with their nominal nation-states because they have oppositional political stances, and/or because they identify more strongly with their regional or tribal affiliation or sometimes simply for the pragmatic reason that they have been more successful in obtaining financing from regional or other sub-national funding bodies. Yoruba and Hausa language cinema, for example, have achieved independent status within the larger body of Nigerian cinema, largely because of their linguistic difference from the rest of Nigerian film (http://www.fespaco.bf/, 2009).

However, in the absence of clear principles of political commitment or propaganda, national identity is an elusive category when applied to cinema. For example, according to Ezra (2007), many of the most prominent art-house films closely identified with a national cinema have been made by foreign nationals, usually by émigré directors and other personnel. According to Guglar (2003), many landmark African films of the 1950s and 1960s were made by Africans living abroad, because Africans were barred from making films by the colonialists. *The Rise and Fall of Idi Amin* though referred to as a Kenyan film was authored by a Kenyan of Asian origin, Sharad Patel, and depicts events in the neighbouring Uganda during the reign of Idi Amin who was regarded as a buffoon and a dictator.

Although audience preference too can help identify a national film, this is also not as straight forward. In a presentation during *Festival Panafricain du Cinéma et de la Television de Ouagadoogou*, 2009 (http://www.fespaco.bf/, 2009), it was stated that viewers in West Africa prefer Kung-fu films and Bollywood musicals to homegrown fare, and European viewers watch more American films than films produced in their own countries. Similarly audiences in Kenya have preference for West African film. Indeed films from Nigeria, Hollywood, Latin America and Bollywood inundate local television outlets as well sales in digital video disc (DVD) and compact disc format. The latter are readily available on Kenya streets. The fact that the Hollywood film,

Bollywood and Nigerwood film have transcended their borders is indeed testimony that national films do not only appeal to local audiences but also to the international one. When a Kenyan audience watches a Nigerian movie, they do not stop recognizing it as being Nigerian but are indeed appreciative of how Nigerian experiences are honestly and genuinely depicted in the films. It is in the same vein that people from other nation states, for example, have come to admire Brazilian football or even identify with Kenyan conquering middle and long distance runners.

Can we then continue to speak of films and their association to nation states especially in this era of globalization? Ezra (2007) argues that a national cinema is a relational, conceptual category, constructed in response to the domination of American cinema, which is often conceived as the only truly globalized or 'region-free' cinema. However, Ezra (2007) further argues that Hollywood/World Cinema dichotomy is tested by the fact that virtually all cinemas today are deeply hybridized. The widespread adoption of foreign film genres and narrative strategies complicates attempts to associate national cinemas with indigenous traditions or characteristics. For example, according to *Festival PanAfricain du Cinéma et de la Television de Ouagadoogou*, 2009 (http://www.fespaco.bf/, 2009), Nigerian films often incorporate Bollywood-inspired tales of good versus evil, but they also employ indigenous folkloric motifs and frames of reference. These same traditional elements could be said to bypass the national altogether, as the nation-state structure was imposed on Africa in the colonial era. Nor does hybridization imply a two-way relation between Hollywood and 'the rest', but rather a multi-directional exchange, with different patterns and currents predominating at various times and in various places around the globe. These exchanges are often uneven, but they are uneven in different ways at different times (Vitali & Willemen, 2006).

But a few filmmakers deliberately set out to make a national film. As noted by Ezra (2007), films often acquire these identities retrospectively, university courses, at film

festivals and in books all of which still rely heavily on the idea of national cinema as an organizing principle. Yet this principle not only has an important function, it also has significant political, economic and affective value, which indicates that, despite the problems with attempts to attribute national identities to otherwise heterogeneous bodies of films, the concept of national cinema is not in danger of disappearing anytime soon.

Indeed, the whole import of the discussion in this section supports this argument, that a film that deploys a language that appropriately represents the settings depicted in the film stands a better chance of reaching commercial success among audiences because it enhances the film's realistic qualities, a central element in film aesthetics. Such a film, because of its success among local and international audiences, becomes capable of eliciting strong national sentiment hence acquiring the status of national film. Thus, through language a film is readily recognised as belonging to this or that nation-state.

2.3 Strands of the Kenyan Film

Today, the films produced in Kenya fall in three broad categories, namely, the Riverwood film, the western or European film that uses Kenya as a backdrop of their stories, and the main stream film that is scripted and produced by indigenous Kenya film directors.

According to World Story Organization (2008), the Riverwood film is modelled along Nigeria's Nollywood. Both are beneficiaries of the digital revolution in filmmaking over the last decade as they both use low-cost digital filmmaking and editing format to tell local stories. The entire industry, confined to the length of River Road in Nairobi City, consists of musicians, comedians, filmmakers, actors, video editors, camera operators and distribution merchants. What is particularly attractive about the Riverwood phenomenon is its rough-and-ready approach to filmmaking: combining low-cost digital cameras and film editing software on personal computers, with small budgets and fast turn-around times. Films are made on location using local people speaking local

languages. These films also share a common characteristic of on-the-spot sets and a resourceful and cheap approach. They are shot in two or three days and edited in a week. However, because of a severe lack of resources, trained technical and acting personnel, these films can hardly be characterised as conventional. They are of poor quality in terms of how they exploit the technical elements. Thus, while these films use indigenous languages and fall in the comedy genre, they fall far short on the technical aspects of film making. However, the fact that these films are able to make a profit for producers speaks volumes on the importance of language choice and use in film which seems to suggest that between form and content, content is more important for film authenticity.

The Western/European film produced in Kenya is notable in the way it uses the formal elements of film (film language – camerawork, editing, lighting, sound, music among others). This type of film is represented by such films as *White Mischief* and *The First Grader*. These films tell stories that are relevant primarily to western audiences. Such productions are undertaken on a huge budget regime that allows directors to utilise better equipment, trained technical personnel as well as professional actors. For instance, Baraza (2007) writes that the film *Ghost and Darkness* cost 55,000 dollars, a budget that would fund more than ten indigenous films. However, because they are foreign funded, these films' themes speak to foreign sensibilities rather than the local ones. Often a Kenyan watching such a film will be offended by the distorted representation the films give local experiences.

On the other hand is the mainstream Kenyan film which comprises films produced by indigenous but trained – whether through apprenticeship or formal means – technical staff. However these categories of films also suffer the same inadequacies that afflict the Riverwood films. They are also inadequately funded and so are unable to use the film language effectively. Even when the personnel involved have formal training, this has not translated into better quality film owing to the same reason of severe inadequacy in

their funding. Another characteristic of these films is that, unlike the Riverwood film which seems to make a profit for the producers, they have failed totally to make returns for their producers. However, this need not mean that an aesthetic cannot be forged by Kenya film makers that speak to the sensibility of Kenyan audiences. Indeed despite the same technical and financial problems afflicting the Nigerian (Nollywood) film, that country's film industry's economic activities have grown to levels that they now rival its oil sector. The argument in this thesis is that Riverwood films seem to make money for the producers because they primarily use local languages and therefore are authentic as compared to the so called mainstream film which uses English language and attempts to pass off the language as indigenous.

According to Pramaggiore and Wallis' (2006) categorization the Kenya film in general terms places it among the third cinema. Third cinema is associated with third world countries of which Kenya is one. Edwards (2008, p. 5) observes that "this cinema is in opposition to the first cinema (commercial and industrial Hollywood) and second cinema (the international, author-driven art cinema)". Similarly, Pramaggiore and Wallis (2006, p.467) assert that "Third World films tend to be preoccupied with issues such as neo-colonialism, underdevelopment, the oppression of women, and especially poverty". They go further to outline characteristics of Third Cinema as involving location shooting, nonprofessional actors and documentary techniques. Balseiro (2002) also characterizes these unique qualities of emergent African Cinema.

Gugler (2003) agrees with these observations and adds that these characteristics correspond to a film whose cost has to be kept low because of lack of resources. He says:

> African films, even when subsidized, have to be produced on extremely low budgets because of their limited markets – the budgets of fourteen African films come, together, to less than half the $40 million budget of *Out Of Africa*…. The

> pool of experienced actors is slowly increasing, but there is little money to pay them (Gugler, 2003, p. 8).

Thus Gugler's findings suggest a linkage between film's aesthetics and resources including human skills and finance. Implicit in this is that film aesthetics is a product of both culture (reality) and form (film equipment manipulation). Easthope (1993) further contends that as form and structure film is an invention of the West and is a product of the capitalist ideology. Forging of form and structure in the film production process requires huge capital investments. The West has had the resources while Africa, Kenya included, continues to grapple with abject poverty.

Consequently, the above characteristics prescribe a simple and straightforward deployment of the elements that constitute film in the third world. These elements are all aspects of filmmaking that rely less on manipulation of the formal and structural elements of film by adopting a filmmaking strategy that uses less resources by emphasizing content. In this strategy, more emphasis is placed on culture, real locations, type casting as opposed to use of professional actors, eye level static camera position (less camera movement saves on shooting time and need for specialized equipment to move and manipulate the camera), the long shot, long take, and so on. As a result, Balseiro (2002) and Pramaggiore and Wallis' (2006) all seem to suggest that Africa and third world film presents a homogeneous aesthetic based on these enumerated elements.

However, Berndtson (1969) asserts that African communities, just like the Western communities, are different, have different conceptions of the powers of the super-human world to which they owe their existence, different ethical and moral values, different social institutions and forms of government. In short, they have different ideas of reality and therefore of necessity should present with different film aesthetics. To Berndtson (1969), it follows that a peoples' symbols, which film is part of, must be culturally invested with the contents of their referents.

This study takes the view that Kenyan film should be made by (Kenyan) people in Kenya with appropriate indigenous tools, especially language, for a large majority of Kenyan viewership as well as establishing the film with its unique identity; 'the Kenyan-ness' of the films should not only be about the geographical setting of stories but also about their cultural elements and social reality and a verbal language that appropriately names this social reality. Indeed, the thrust of this study is to determine how choice of language contributes to authenticating film as representing reality.

The next sections discuss some of the above elements in the selected films for this study.

2.4 *Saikati* by Ann Mungai

Saikati, produced in 1992, is shot on celluloid format and generally represents an old and conventional type of film. There is criticism that apportions higher status to films shot on celluloid compared to other formats like analogue video tape and recently on the digital format. According to Ellis (1979), the celluloid format has advantage in longevity and clear audio-visual properties that appeal to audiences. On the other hand third world countries have embraced the digital format because of its low cost implications. Indeed the Nigerian film industry is driven by the digital film format.

Saikati is a one hour, thirty four minutes-long film that features Saikati (Lynette MukamiKinoti), the name that also is the title of the film. Monica (Susan Wanjiku) who is Saikati's mother, Alex Williamson as Richard Harrison (boyfriend to Saikati) and Hugh Manning as Hemish Brown (boyfriend to Mukami's cousin). The film is scripted and directed by Ann Mungai who has pioneered women involvement in film making in Kenya.

The story of *Saikati* is that of a young Maasai woman who lives within a traditional village in one of Kenya's national parks. The Maasai is a community found in Kenya and Tanzania on the border between the two countries. The area they inhabit is also

populated by wild animals notably the big five; the lion, elephant, leopard, buffalo and the Cheetah. The Maasai are famous for largely remaining untouched by western cultural influence and also for co-existing with wild animals. In Maasai parlance, a village is called Manyatta and houses members of an extended family. The family units live in mud-walled, oval shaped structures strewn around the Manyatta in an arrangement that reflects flow of authority and power. A Manyatta, which is fenced off by wooden posts fortified with dry thorny branches, would consist of several of these oval shaped structures. It is this setting that provides the tension between the clash of cultures that (should) motivate the events in the film.

The film's thematic concerns centre on girl child education and empowerment. It is about the difference between 'modernity' and tradition where cultural practices that are deemed not to be in tandem with contemporary Western life are to be discarded. The film attempts to advance the European view that the way of life of the African is primitive and that there is need for liberation of certain aspects of African culture especially with regard to gender roles. Thematic concerns in the film on a broader level are also contextually rooted around the fixation of art in Kenya on post-colonial period immediately after Kenya's independence where art forms tended either to sanitize self-rule or criticize the same. Literary works, for example from writers such as Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, David Mailu and Meja Mwangi were highly critical of the state of things after Kenya's independence. On the other hand because of resource scarcity and the fact that film is heavily dependent on huge financial undertakings for its production unlike books writing, few Africans had the requisite resources to produce films. Most films produced around this time therefore always had an element of western capital input. Films were made through Western influence where Kenya provided the backdrop of their settler or European stories often of adventure genre. It is in this milieu that *Saikati* was produced and therefore celebrated. In a way and in terms of funding as well as the film's thematic orientation, *Saikati* can certainly be said to be European in the sense that the film's

production budget is co-funded by the Freidrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation, a German development non-governmental organization focused on media practice capacity enhancement in developing countries.

In *Saikati*, Saikati's community has planned her future as wife to the son of the village chief, but Saikati yearns for education and independence. She runs away to Nairobi to her cousin Monica and hopes to find honest employment. But she is disillusioned to find that for a girl deserting her village, the only way of survival in the city seems to be with a white man. She decides to return to her home and face the reality of her situation. In the end *Saikati* never really gives a choice to Saikati to choose between western culture and traditional culture. It is all a choice between western cultures. Saikati on finding that she may not be cultured well enough in her sojourn in the city to fit in among the white man does not go back to the Manyatta to join and live her peoples culture but goes back to school to be schooled in more western thought in a western institution – the school!

Saikati has a simple, linear plotline. There are no flashbacks or flash forwards, no parallel action and neither is there characterisation that suggests complexity. When the film starts, it bares all the imprints of a documentary style film; one of the elements defining African film (Pragmoire & Wallis, 2006). It shows expanse of land, animals and traditional Maasai villages not in any orderly manner. The shots are random and they do not show any continuity. The real location settings in the film that manifests from the outset does not only conform to the documentary style but also is an indication of resource scarcity that afflicts most film directors in Kenya and indeed the third world as observed by Pragmoire and Wallis (2006) and Balserio (2002). There are shots of people in the Manyatta, of women, men and children just staring. They are obviously not part of the action, or meant to motivate the action of the film in any way as one can clearly see. Even Saikati's uncle who is to give her away in marriage looks directly at the camera, conscious of it. This clearly works against the films authenticity. It should be noted that one of the main characteristics of the movie camera is that it observes

unobtrusively, without announcing its presence. It is one of the single most important attribute (Bazin, 1960) that makes the camera an instrument that records reality. Indeed it is what makes film film. In *Saikati*, that characters on the set are caught by the camera staring at it works to destroy the authenticity of the film despite the apparent authenticity of the location, a kind of paradox.

According to Monaco (1977), location filming as is the case with *Saikati* presents special problems because often film directors struggle to control events and action especially of extras. A film director would therefore, require resources or do certain things to extract goodwill of the host. Unfortunately, for third world film directors it appears they never really marshal the resources to completely secure the location. This means that in terms of resources, film directors are damned if they use real locations and they are still damned if they have to build settings. Whichever way, it takes money which they do not have. Indeed, the need to pay off the owners of the location with goodies, as a strategy to deal with problems of real location shooting, is also evident in *Saikati* when, Monica, Saikati's cousin in the city visits. She is carrying sweets to distribute to children something that is more driven by the director having to be nice to hosts than cultural phenomena. This strategy is what also seems to motivate the dance sequence which does not exactly advance the film's actions.

When we first see Saikati in a medium long shot (MLS), she moves and enters a house, apparently her mother's house. At this point it is important that Saikati is properly attired as a rural Maasai girl. In other words it is important that her costume and other appurtenances she wears fortify her as a rural girl. Costume and props refer to the clothing and ornamental aspects of characters in the enactment of characterization in a film. These will include the clothing worn by artists and what the actors wear as decorations such as bangles, rings and necklaces. The objectives of costume are to enhance the actors' role so that these roles are well defined in terms of age, status, personality and profession. Costumes will help fix the theme of the performance by

accentuating mood such as sadness in tragedies and laughter in comedies. Costuming also does create aesthetic beauty for performers, making them seem appropriately fearful, ugly, beautiful, and executive and so on. Another aspect of costume in film is to provide avenues of transitions in time and action and even space, so that an act of costume change by a character may imply passage of time to another day, month and space or situation. Costumes also help sustain the style so that the production concept is maintained, distinguish rich and the poor and finally, and importantly so, costumes will help locate the dominant cultural identity of the performance. In other words costume attains an almost infinite role in the fixing of meaning in a performance in film.

This is not the case for Saikati in *Saikati*. Important aspects of her costume, décor and hand props are overlooked at this early stage of establishing her identity as a character. For instance, her feet, though bare, are so clean; they obviously have just stepped out of shoes. One can also clearly see that she is not accustomed to walking barefoot from the way she nimbly steps on the ground. Again she puts on a tie, yet she does not put on shoes and this appears comical. Then also Saikati, her mother and the young girl who is ever present whenever we see Saikati and whose presence is not defined in any way wear a head clothe instead of the short hair and decorations won by other females in the film something that sets them apart from the cultural settings. Moreover as Saikati enters the house, children, who in the way they follow and stare at her, give an indication that she is a stranger and not part of the community. She is something new, not one of them. As she emerges from the house she actually stops to pause for the camera, her head moving from side to side, surveying obviously the unfamiliar surroundings. This should not be the case and works further to peel away authenticity of her as a character which affects the overall film quality and the illusion of reality that is characteristic of the feature film.

The lack of cultural conformity by Saikati continues to play out during the dance sequence. One can clearly see that the dance routine has no purpose except as a

performance for Saikati. This manifests not only from the way the camera stays with her but more from the attention she gets from other dancers. It is like they are celebrating her, although for what it is difficult to tell. One does not also get to discern whether the dance and singing is a practice session or not. However, even if it is a strategy by the film director to foreground the main actor, then this seemingly does not work. Among the Maasai, a patriarchal society, a girl ranks very low in the cultural pecking order and it is a point of contestation that other dancers should give Saikati, a mere girl, such prominence, even singling her out and leading her to the front of the other dancers. Neither does Saikati help matters when she shows very clearly that she may not be, for some reason, engaged in the dance as her facial expression and body's demeanour show. She does not blend. She waits to be cued by the rest of the performers before she also joins in on the jump, but in a very disconnected way and is not as sublime as the rest of the performers. This leaves the viewer with doubt as to whether she really is one with the community.

The camera position in the film is maintained at eye level. This is the level where humans perceive reality. In other words there is no camera manipulation, through positioning, framing, angling, movement and even use of lens manipulation to provide the necessary tension and difference to motivate the actions in the film. Indeed it is the camera operation that grounds film as a form, amenable to manipulation together with editing and sound scoring to achieve desired meanings being transmitted. This obvious lack of the technical leverage of film works to the detriment of *Saikati* as a realistic representation and thus destroys the film's authenticity.

The sound track for *Saikati* can be described as bare. According to Lipton (1976), sound can define and articulate space, it can describe what is seen in the picture, it can serve as decoration, it can enhance and establish continuity, it can intensify action, movement, mood and meaning, it can comment what is seen on the screen, it can reinforce what is seen when used parallel to the picture and it can also serve as counterpoint. Lipton

(1976) further observes that whereas sound works in much the same way as, let us say, colour in film; it is not an integral part of the picture as colour is. It can emerge from the space or action described in the visuals, for instances when we hear and see a person talking or a dog barking, when trees rustle, waves break and trains roll. In this cases sound is said to be internal and synchronous. Sounds that describe the visuals, comment on them, clarify their meaning, or are intimately related to the action, such as sound bridges and sound dissolves are considered asynchronous. These sounds are also categorised as narration, general sound, music and sound effects. The sound track in *Saikati* only makes use of three types of sounds, namely dialogue and music.

Music, according to Lipton (1976), functions in film to provide continuity, as a filler, provide unity or coherence to a story, play against the action, stress the psychological subtext or emotions, go beyond the action, reflect emotion, speed up or slow down scenes and as neutral background filler. But music in *Saikati* is meant only to function as background filler and not committed to advance the action in the narrative. The melody consists of a xylophone with an African tune that monotonously plays in the background in the rural settings, when the film begins and when Saikati comes back from the city. During the town sequences there is mood music in the background, easy going melody in the streets and romantic melody when Saikati, her cousin and the boyfriends go out in the evening to dine. Thus, other than being deployed as filler in the background *Saikati* has not used music and other sound effects to provide the necessary tensions, reliefs, crises and so on. The role of music is very minimal in *Saikati*.

Editing as a function, just like all other elements in film, is meant to provide continuity, match consecutive action, bridge time and space, heighten interest, provide conflict, increase tension, heighten suspense, make comparison and depict contrast. Monaco (1969) avers that a film story is a jumble of odd shots until it is cut, polished and mounted. The many facets of the movie are not apparent until the final cut. What is left must be packaged into a continuous narrative; to present the screen story in a manner

that captures and retains audience interest and attention. In keeping with the characteristics that critics ascribe to third world films including the Kenyan film, *Saikati* does not manifest any of the enumerated editing techniques except for purposes of continuity. And even then this continuity is often not achieved seamlessly. There appears to be jump-cuts and line of action problems.

Thus, while *Saikati* does fit the general definition given to third world films by film critics, it fails in the faithful representation of experiences, actions and events surrounding the Maasai culture, hence its poor reception by audiences. Overall it fails as a genuine and honest representative of events and experiences that it seeks to depict. This thesis argues that through appropriate choice of language the film would have resulted in a more authentic representation.

2.5 *Toto Millionaire* by Simiyu Baraza

Toto Millionaire (2010) features the perils that befall a nuclear family due to the breakdown of the family and clan institution in contemporary Kenya. The theme in the film is concerned with the breakdown of community socialism. It also explores the idea of fate where those who are looked down upon finally triumph despite enormous obstacles being put in their way. In the olden African society, a child and woman belonged to the society, the clan and community. A problem such as illness among one of the family members was therefore a problem to be solved by the whole community. *Toto Millionaire* focuses on a boy who has to take care of his ailing mother, the only parent. After the boy unsuccessfully tries to get help from neighbours and relatives to assist in the medication and feeding of his mother and himself at their rural village, he runs off to the city where fate, despite the cruelty of society, propels him to win a 3 million shillings lottery.

It is set in contemporary Kenya where thematic fixation with the post-colonial issues have since given way to everyday problems of disease and poverty. Poverty is rampant,

family units are no longer compact and the money economy means that those without money are condemned to suffer excruciating poverty. The story line heavily borrows from the award winning film, *Slumdog Millionaire* directed by Danny Boyle. *Slumdog Millionaire* won eight Academy Awards in 2008 including Best Picture, Best Director and Best Adapted Screenplay. *Toto Millionaire* does not only tackle contemporary issues but also falls in a generation of films that are shot on digital video formats. A number of benefits have accrued to filmmakers especially in third world countries from this new film format that is substantially less expensive to produce. However the issue of the digital format constituting film is still very much a contested one. Although *Toto Millionaire*, as with most films produced in Kenya, has been shown within film exhibitions in Africa and Europe, it was generally received very poorly by audiences and has been a failure as a commercial venture.

In *Toto Millionaire*, the main character is Toto Bahati (Mungai Mbaya) from whose name the title of the film is conjured. Others are Naomi Kamau who plays the role of mother and Ainea Ojiambo and Joseph Kinuthia who play the roles of corrupt City council workers. Raymond Ofula plays the role of preacher while Philip Luswata plays the role of the manager in charge of the office that runs the raffle. The film is one hour, ten minutes and thirty two seconds.

The film also adopts a simple linear plotline just like *Saikati*. It also features the all-important journey from the rural to the city where characters hope to find solutions to their problems. When Toto fails to get help from relatives and villagers to take care of his ailing mother, out of desperation he sneaks and secretly boards a vehicle and ends up in the city with the aim of finding a job. He meets two corrupt city council askaris who in the guise of helping him detail him to sale hard drugs unknown to him because he thinks he is selling groundnuts. At the same time the two askaris are engaged in collecting bottletops with the hope that they will pick the one bearing the winning number in a raffle campaign exercise. As fate would have it, they unknowingly throw

away a bunch of bottletops which among them has the one with the jackpot number. Toto picks them up as play things. He later discovers that one of the bottletops bears the winning number after he is chased away by the two city askaris. Meanwhile, the two askaris realize that the bottletop bearing the winning number could have been picked by Toto and they begin to frantically search for him in earnest. In his running and attempt to collect the jackpot he meets a taxi man and a preacher who both unsuccessfully try to prise away the jackpot bottletop from him. The taxi man actually snatches a bottletop from Toto but discovers he was tricked when he presents it to the raffle offices and he is told it does not bear the winning number combination. Finally Toto ends up at the raffle offices where the manager once again tries but again fails to cheat him out of the bottletop. Toto is paid the money and finally makes his way back home. Meanwhile Toto's mother comes to the city to search for him. She does not find him and so goes back to the village where she finally links up with Toto who has collected on the jackpot money. When the two city askaris come to the village with the aim of recovering the money from Toto and his mother, they are chased away. The story has a happy ending.

Just like in *Saikati*, *Toto Millionaire* fails to deploy the various parts and processes of filmmaking to advance the story. The film starts with a series of low angle, medium long shots (MLS) interchanged at intervals with eye and high angle shots of the main actor as he runs to the mother's house. Although this beginning is different from the one in *Saikati*, these are still simple camera positions that are easily achievable using a ladder and a baby tripod or even a normal standard tripod. In any case the rest of the film utilizes the usual eye level camera position. This lack of complicated camera angles and movements, just like in *Saikati*, constitutes another characteristic of the African film aesthetic postulated by Pramaggiore and Wallis (2006), Balseiro (2002) and others. Although these shots are given justification by critics of African film aesthetics because they do not subvert reality and therefore do not call attention to themselves, it is worth to note that their continued use has long become redundant and therefore rendered them

very low in communication value. The continued use of these same types of shots indicates inertia in the Kenyan film. To be able to create and retain interest, new ways of using the elements that constitute film need to be created. New camera positions, movement, lighting among other formal elements have to be crafted. In the case of *Toto Millionaire*, the camera positions and angles are redundant and therefore bear very little informational value. These are the same shots that were used in *Saikati* and are the same cocktail of shots that are used in most if not all of Kenyan films. Hence, as a stylistic device, the camera angles and positions in *Toto Millionaire* fail just like in *Saikati* to advance the film as anaesthetic success. In fact other than the low and high angle shots at the start of the film, this film in terms of shots variety – camera movement and positioning – is in every way like *Saikati*.

The lighting is only done for making objects in the shots to be seen and not to motivate the advancement of any meaning. For instance, in the sequence at the start of the film involving a conversation between Toto and the mother, lighting could have been used to accentuate the dire straits that mother and son find themselves in. Contrast lighting during this sequence could advance the purpose of this sequence by providing the necessary tension. Similarly music is only used to fill up space – as background filler and not to motivate events in the narrative, just like in *Saikati*.

Actor performance that leads to believability is a central plank in film aesthetics. *Toto Millionaire* features characters whose performance is wanting. For instance when the main actor, Bahati reaches the house we can see the boy's mother on the bed. She is raised on her elbow as if she already knows the son is coming. It is like the mother is already cued to expect the son. Remember that the mother is supposed to be sick but here she is, in her supposed state she should find it painful to move, she is already raised and ready to talk. Indeed the mother appears to talk even before the son enters the house. Now sick people often will talk through silences because of the pain of the effort of having to try. In other words in such situations the mother should use more of her

body to explain her situation than use words – they are unnecessary. This could also easily be a directorial flaw because good characterization is meant to and often works to smoothen over deficiencies by the film director.

Furthermore, the sequence at the market scene where Toto attempts to borrow money from his mother's friends including an uncle he finds buying a newspaper is overdramatized. In real life which the camera purports to depict, people are not given to voicing their thoughts in so loud a manner as the market women and Toto's uncle do. This cultural phenomenon is most poignant during funerals where even one's sworn enemy would be hard at it pouring out praise to the departed enemy. More importantly in real life interactions, communication proceeds on a much more metaphorical basis than is direct like is the case in the sequence.

The technical aspects of sound recording are also a problem. For instance, one can clearly see and hear that the sound that should be coming from the radio in the set instead appears to come from outside the shot. There is therefore no connection between the radio we see in the shot and the sound that should come from it. What this indicates to the viewer is that there was an outside hand trying to mediate the action in the film and works immediately to peel away authenticity from the film.

Another unbelievable scene is the offices of the lottery and the conduct of the two employees there. It should be expected that such an office is well organized and those employed there even if crooked express some seriousness in their approach to office behaviour. In other words, the office culture should be covertly serious. This should be so because the money and lottery being run by the organization suggests a well-heeled and top end entity. Furthermore an office that seems to control colossal sums of money cannot be manned by only two employees as this appearance is not given justification by any event in the film. These employees seem to break decorum with impunity. For instance, the manger seems to be all over the receptionist, making sexual overtures at

least under the circumstances. It seems this behaviour is motivated by the need for the film director to account for the empty space rather than advance the narrative though romance. Again this is among the vagaries that afflict third world filmmakers when they attempt to make films from real settings. Real settings require resources for them to be propped up and populated appropriately. For *Toto Millionaire*, the director seems to have had access to a real office block but because he did not have control of events there, chose to film on a weekend, at night or at a time when there were no employees. However, in this case, the director did not have resources to populate the office with characters to play the role of staff in a busy office. This obviously creates problems of the sequence's authenticity.

The thread bareiness of this sequence is in direct opposition although for the same reasons of lack of resources to the scene in *Saikati* in the manyatta at the start of the film. The challenge in *Saikati* is that the director chooses to film with the occupants of the Manyatta who stare into the camera, while in *Toto Millionaire* the director not wanting interference from non-actors who are occupants of the office decides to film on the location on a day when the staff is away, hence having the office not appropriately populated. In both the end result is the same, the scenes both do not pass the threshold of the illusion of authenticity and reality that a film should produce.

Just like in *Saikati*, the pro-filmic elements deployed in *Toto Millionaire* fail to tell a compelling and memorable film story. Again in this film authenticity could greatly be enhanced through appropriate choice of filmic language, both technical and cultural such as language.

2.6 *Nairobi Half Life* by David Gitonga

Nairobi Half Life is a 2012 Kenyan drama film directed by David Gitonga. The film was selected as the Kenya's entry for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 85th

Academy Awards. Although it did not make the final shortlist, it was the first time Kenya has submitted a film in this category.

The film features a young man, Mwas (Joseph Wairimu) who still lives with his parents in their rural home in Kenya. He makes a living by selling western action films. He dramatically acts and portrays most of the action figures in his films in order to entice his customers. He is an aspiring actor and when he comes across a group of actors from Nairobi performing in his town, he asks one of them to help him jump start his acting career. But in return he is asked to give Ksh1000 in order for him to be cast in one of the plays. He can only afford Ksh500 and is told to take the other Ksh500 with him to the National Theatre in Nairobi. He is very excited and after receiving some money from his mother he embarks on his journey to Nairobi with a brief stopover at his village's marketplace to bid his friends goodbye. He meets his cousin (a gang leader) who gives him an expensive radio system and some money to take to Khanji electronic shop in downtown Nairobi.

After making his way to Nairobi, he quickly learns that there is more to Nairobi than just opportunities and glamour. On the first day, Mwas loses everything he has to Nairobi thugs and is left stranded and confused especially because he knows no one. He gets arrested and even spends a day in jail. In a twist of events, he meets a Nairobi crook named Oti (Olwenya Maina) in the police cells who becomes a close friend and takes him into his criminal gang. The gang itself specializes in snatch and grab thievery with vehicle parts being their main targets. During this time, Mwas auditions and successfully lands a part in a local play set up by Phoenix Players. He finds himself struggling and juggling the two separate worlds. Mwas finally meets his cousin again who ends up forcing him to steal a car in order to clear his debt. He thinks this is a good idea and convinces the gang to move up from stealing car parts to stealing whole cars in order to earn more. During this time he falls in love with Oti's onscreen love, Amina,

coming to see her at the lodgings where she receives customers. He even takes her out to the film shows.

This film has the same storyline like *Toto Millionaire* and *Saikati*. It is also a journey that takes the main character from the rural area, escaping from the vagaries of poverty in the village to the city in the belief that the city will offer some relief. Indeed, even the story line in *Saikati* takes the same trajectory where Saikati in *Saikati* and Toto in *Toto Millionaire* leave their homes to go to the city to find relief there. While in both *Saikati* and *Toto Millionaire*, the protagonists come back to the village, the end in *Nairobi Half Life* provides a new space in the city for Mwas to exploit his acting talent, away from gangsterism after he escapes death narrowly when all his colleagues are shot dead.

However, although *Nairobi Half Life* manifests a linear storyline, it presents a plotline that is more complex compared to *Toto Millionaire* and S*aikati*. The complexity is provided through the main character who presents a multiplicity of character traits, a kind of split personality. Mwas, the main character, becomes a gangster on one hand, mixing it up with the city's underground gangs and also an ambitiously aspiring theatre actor who cuts the figure of a straight member of society and is interested in highlighting societal problems. Another complexity is provided through the use of theatre forms in the film. Just after the first scene where Mwas is introduced, the scene that follows involves a theatrical performance. It is used to advance two ideas in the film. The first and direct one is that it provides the route through which Mwas finds his way to the city to advance his ambition of becoming an actor, and the second one which is more covert is to comment on the poor state of leadership which requires being overhauled. The genre of this theatre is Theatre for Development (TFD) which advocates change in the status quo in leadership structures as well as exhorting the people to demand for services from the leaders. In the conventional theatre form that Mwas takes part in in the city, a number of other issues are also explored, including, same sex issues as well as issues of inequality. The same sex issue is broached in a

conversation between Mwas and his theatre partner when they go out for a drink after an evening's rehearsal. This theatrical form even weaves itself into being part of the film itself. This happens when crowds at the open air theatrical performance uniformly responds by shouting back in unison to Mwas' questions after he is challenged by a young boy to demonstrate the action in the films he hawks. Usually such an interaction lends itself to a theatrical performance rather than a realistic one which film depicts.

Nairobi Half Life starts with an over the shoulder close up (CU) shot of Mwas as he begins one of his performances to potential customers. The performance is a synopsis of the DVD films for which he uses to promote sales. The camera then pulls back to a medium long shot (LS) to show the customers attentively listening. Other elements too such as music, choice of language and the arrangement of characters, objects and shot framing in this opening sequence all work together to provide the necessary tension to give the film a very powerful beginning. This start also goes against the convention of film language which prescribes that a film sequence should start with a long shot (LS) before it ends on a close up (CU). This subversion works to create instant interest in the film. In this sequence the way elements are arranged in the frame, in a triangular way, especially the characters, where some are seated and some standing, yet again with another one walking into shot in a way that gives the new comer prominence creates sufficient tension and potential of a conflict that sustains interest.

The spatial arrangement of elements in a shot is also used to devastating effect at Mwas' home at night as he tries to borrow money from his brother and parents to enable him travel to the city. The second shot in this sequence is especially poignant. It is a medium long shot (MLS) and in it, Mwas is standing, leaning in the doorway with bright light coming from inside the house behind him. On his left is his brother, seated with a kerosene lamp hang above his head. This accentuates the dire situation Mwas finds himself in especially with his burning desire to raise funds to enable him go to the city to embark on his acting career. This shot enhances our understanding of the realities; the

tensions and crises that obtain in an ordinary homestead in the villages. Indeed these tensions continue to manifest when in the same sequence Mwas' father comes home drunk and causes mayhem, making everybody, including neighbours who had come to raise money for Mwas' fare to the city to scamper.

However even if the pro-filmic elements are used to greater extend to tell the *Nairobi Half Lif*e story than in both *Saikat i*and *Toto Millionaire*, the authenticity and attendant commercial success of this film is supplied through the choice of language at each new instance of scene, location and settings as the film progresses that seems to imbue the film with originality. When we first encounter Mwas in the first shot he speaks mother tongue and it is the single most important element that arouses interest in the viewer. This firmly grounds the settings of this scene as being in the village where indigenous language dominates. The demonstration he enacts during the live theatre performance by a theatre troupe carefully fits the character progression he undergoes in the story. Mother tongue is used again when Mwas is challenged by a boy in the crowd where he goes to join crowds to attend a public show of theatre performance. When he takes up the challenge, he does so first in indigenous language then switches to reciting the dialogue in the movies which is in English albeit with mother tongue influence. This is qualified in the comment by the performers he approaches to ask for assistance to join up in being an actor and also in the city at the theatre company offices where he goes to ask for an audition when he's pronunciation is laughed at. In the city where Mwas arrives with the hope of pursuing an acting career, he and the gang he joins speak in the lingua franca, a type of Swahili that borrows from other dialects appropriately named *sheng*. When Mwas goes for rehearsal, his English pronunciation undergoes a marked improvement.

The success of Nairobi Half Life especially among audiences is testimony that appropriate choice of language goes a long way in authenticating a film, thus raising its aestheticity.

2.7 *The First Grader* by Justin Chadwick

The First Grader was shot in Kenya's Rift Valley in 2006, telling a Kenyan story with a strong European connection through colonialism. It is therefore not difficult to start concluding that this film falls in the category of European films using Africa and more specifically Kenya settings for their European story. The narrative of Maruge that re-enacts a true life story of a Mau Mau survivor with the same name that is weaved around Kenya's independence struggle has all the ingredients to fall within the earlier settler story with exotic undertones. The film is also a kind of apology story meant to make the European feel magnanimous and come to terms with atrocities committed by the colonialists at independent time. It is therefore against this background that an analysis of this film should be grounded. The film is not about the free primary education phenomena announced by the incoming Kenya government in 2003 but about the British coming to terms with the atrocities that were committed by them towards Africans during the struggle for Kenya's independence. Through Maruge being able to get an education they see their own atonement in the events that are depicted in the film.

The film's director is Justin Chadwick, a British national and its crew and most of the significant actors are foreign. Its financing is also foreign, specifically the UK Film Council through the British Broadcasting Cooperation (BBC). Thus, *The First Grader* does not suffer the financial problems afflicting third world film productions in its production processes. In the film, Maruge (Oliver Litondo), an 84 year-old villager, hears that the government of Kenya is offering free primary education and decides he wants to educate himself. He goes to the local primary school where he meets Jane (Naomie Harris), the school's headteacher, and expresses his desire to learn. Her colleague Alfred (Alfred Munyua), who takes an immediate dislike of him, in an effort to get rid of him, tells him all pupils need two exercise books and a pencil. Maruge does not give up. He returns the following day with a letter from the "Office of the President" that he wants to read and understand. Due to Maruge's persistence and after advice from

her husband Charles (Tony Kgoroge), Jane finally lets Maruge into the school even after complain from the area schools inspector Mr.Kipruto (Vusi Kunene). In class, Maruge's memories of his time in Kenya in 1953, when he fought with the Mau Mau against the British, haunts him when Alfred scolds him for not keeping his pencil sharp. Made to sharpen it, he breaks down as he recalls (through flash back) a time when the British tortured him – using a sharp pencil brutally thrust into his ear. Maruge apologizes to Jane and later educates his fellow pupils, patiently explaining about the fight for land that he and other Mau Mau members /fighters undertook and teaching them the meaning of the word 'freedom'.

This film stands out in the way it has exploited the various elements involved in the production of the narrative. The film starts with a Kikuyu lullaby that runs over the opening credits. This is cross faded with the first visual, a tree branch level zoom in shot, from a medium shot (MS) to close up (CU), of the upper branches of a thorn tree. This shot is also cross faded with a low angle shot, from ground level showing the branches of tall trees swaying to the blow of winds, then immediately to a close-up (CU) of a thorny branch. All visuals here as is most shots in the film have strong backlight. As the visuals change the sound track here also transits through fade in from the lullaby to the synchronous sound of the tree branches as they sway to the winds. The soundtrack is enhanced as the branches sway to the rhythms of the winds giving an impression of the winds being ferocious. From the outset this opening sequence is designed to imbue maximum tension. The shots consistently break the conventional rules of reality. For instance, in reality rarely do we watch a tree branch from eye level and have backlight disturbing our view every time we look. Further we associate thorns with piercing and resultant pain and so the close-up of thorns also enhances tension in viewers. This tension creating strategies are deliberate by the film director in this film and indeed foreground the fact that this film from the onset progresses on the basis of form and structure over reality.

The *First Grader* story line is complex in the sense that whereas the settings of the story are here and now, half if not most of it consists of events in Kenya's colonial period. To transition back to the colonial period, the film uses flash back which is achieved through defocussing the camera when it is on Maruge from whose point of view events during that period are interrogated. The first flashback occurs just after the film starts and we are introduced to Maruge. This sequence starts with a close-up of Maruge's hands, which is also the first shot in the main body of the film. This shot breaks the conventional film language. In a new setting what usually should be the first shot is an Establishing Shot (ES), a Long Shot (LS) or a Wide Angle Shot (WAS), so that the viewer gets a general idea of the environment. To start with a close-up (CU) is to subvert the convention whose result is giving the sequence the necessary tension for dramatic effect. The camera lens is then defocused, again as a tension building strategy, not on the first shot in this sequence but after several shots later to introduce us to events happening around Maruge when he is a younger man.

Camera positioning has been used extensively in *The First Grader*. In most cases the camera takes a position behind barriers. This always makes the viewer strain to make sense of meaning in the shot. It is like events happen in constrained circumstances. For instance, the first conversation between Jane and Maruge takes place with the camera taking a position behind the net wire to show the opposite speaker. This conversation begins with a tracking long shot, left to right, of children running through a forest of acacia trees. It cuts to another tracking long shot, same direction with camera behind a fence as the children continue to run to school. At the school gate, the camera changes to an overhead position as pupils and parents struggle through the narrow opening in the gate, giving a very dynamic depiction of events from a bird's eye view position.

The frame in the film always places the subject on one extreme end, mostly on the side where there should be space for the subject to manoeuvre. For instance, in a conversation sequence between teacher Alfred, Maruge and teacher Jane, at one point

the tension between Maruge and Alfred is enhanced by placing teacher Alfred on the extreme right of the frame and Maruge talks back in a close-up with his face almost going out of frame on the extreme left. Shot composition is also a technique that is extensively exploited in the film. In the sixth minute of the film, there is a Medium Long Shot (MLS) of Maruge as he walks by the local market after he is turned away from school. In the shot, Maruge walks past very fast. In the foreground is a part of the tarmac road, on the right a building with people seated under the veranda shouting at him, on the left an acacia tree and in the background is a distant hill that seems to loom over everything else in the shot. This shot cuts to a Medium Shot (MS) of the men at the market as they continue to chide Maruge. It is the shot after that also calls attention to itself in the way it is composed. The shot is split into two; on the left side a class session with teacher Jane which we see from an open window and on the right of the shot is open ground with houses in the background. The open space and enclosure in the same shot is full of tension owing to the vast difference that show activity on one side and emptiness on the other. Indeed it is this tension that keeps an audience glued on to a film screen.

Editing is at the centre of film's story telling abilities. Perhaps the superior editing technique in *The First Grader* that stands out is in the way the editing combines individual film elements to build and dissipate tension. For instance, during the second flashback scene, the editor chooses a tracking Medium Long Shot (MLS) of a burning hut and then cuts to a medium shot of a group with machetes attacking a hut, then a medium shot of Maruge as a young man with a white security man behind him as it cuts to a series of shots showing people being pulled out of huts and being gathered at an open ground before they are executed, among them Maruge's wife and children. As this sequence progresses, some shots are slowed down deliberately to accentuate the action, other shots follow in rapid succession to build tension. Then the sound scoring on this sequence is carefully fitted on the shot movement and succession that has the effect of

making an audiences' heartbeat vary rapidly. All these work to sustain interest in the viewer.

The choice of location is a point of contention in this film. For a Kenyan audience, the location for this film is somewhere in rural Kajiado, a Maasai inhabited county next to Nairobi County. Maruge is Kikuyu while the people at the market speak kikuyu. In the entire film, Maruge never utters a single word in Kikuyu instead he seems to struggle to speak in Swahili but appears more competent in English. At the school the pupils conduct their singing games in Maa but when the new head teacher comes to report, the parents sing in Luhya. However, the story through interactions between Kirwa and Jane depicts a conflict between the Kikuyu and the Nandi sub-tribe of the Kalenjin group. This disconnect from reality peels away authenticity from the film and it becomes most poignant when the audience is Kenyan.

In reality Maruge's events indeed take place in Eldoret, a town in the Rift valley whose native inhabitants are the Nandi and who have had numerous armed conflicts with the migrant Kikuyu tribe. Thus, the way reality is depicted in this film demonstrates little understanding by the director of the nuanced interactions and geographical placement pattern of different communities in Kenya. A European audience may not notice this nuanced shortcomings as they enjoy the exotic feel of the film depicting distanced and unfamiliar events. The least of their concerns would therefore be an enhanced sublime depiction of experience in terms of performance that relates to reality. Indeed the central argument in this thesis is that proper choice of language that properly names the knowledge systems of the people being depicted and performed within appropriate setting goes a long way in enhancing film's reality and hence, aesthetic appeal.

2.8 Conclusion

Film is both form and virtual reality. As form, film requires resources, which Africa and third world countries, Kenya included, do not have. This is demonstrated in *Saikati*,

Toto Millionaire, and *Nairobi Half Life* which all present very poor use of film's formal elements such as camera and sound manipulation. However, despite *Nairobi Half Life* presenting these same shortfalls, its reception has and continues to be high among Kenyan and international audiences. The difference between this film and the other two is in language choices. In *Saikati* and *Toto Millionaire*, English seems to be foregrounded as the indigenous language of the people while in *Nairobi Half Life* is presented some sought of language journey where language changes to reflect the actual reality in every scene, location and sequence. On the other hand an analysis of narrative style in *The First Grader* lends credence to the argument that the manipulation of the formal elements alone as is manifest in this film does not imbue a film with the necessary threshold of reality or actuality as demanded by the film medium. This thesis argues that through use of appropriate choice of spoken language, a film aesthetic is able to emerge that satisfies the illusion of reality.

CHAPTER THREE

THE LANGUAGE PROBLEM AND RESULTANT DOMINANCE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN FILM IN KENYA

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the problematics of language use in Kenya and how these have led to the English language being used as the language of choice of film in Kenya contrary to actual language use by ordinary Kenyans. It begins by discussing the different modes of knowing language and the competency one displays in each mode. A section that looks at a study by researchers on the psychosocial process of language performance that ties language to action and thought, consequently linking appropriate choice of language to effective performance follows before a final section that discusses the problematic language history in Kenya and how this seems to have transposed itself onto the Kenyan film.

3.2 Language and Knowledge

As provided for in the Kenya constitution (2010), English is the main language in Kenya, at least from the point of policy and the provisions of the constitution. However, this is heavily contested by what obtains in actual process of language use in the everyday life of the people where most people use their indigenous language. In view of various language acquisition theories, this immediately raises the question whether a language symbolizing one knowledge system can successfully be supplanted onto another knowledge system and retain the same potency in meaningful interactions. A number of scholars have since made their contributions concerning this topic by analyzing language through various theoretical standpoints. Chomsky(1965, 1968, 1977) and Hymes (1972, 1982) have documented findings in their researches that provide useful understanding of how languages are acquired and how they are gainfully deployed in the process by which humans make sense of the world around them and thus make interactions possible. Indeed, it is the process of making sense that is named

by language and which the film camera and microphone strive to capture in their concrete form.

While Chomsky's conception of language is from a structural perspective where language structures are analyzed away from language practice, Hyme's approach takes as its starting point that an analysis of language and how it generates meaning cannot be separated from the context (culture) in which it is deployed, thus coming up with the Ethnography of Speaking (ES) model. The ethnographic study of language use aims at describing the knowledge participants in verbal interaction need and display in order to communicate successfully with one another. *Communicative competence* is the term Hymes (1972) uses for this kind of complex expertise, which includes but goes beyond Chomsky's (1965) *competence* (Hymes 1982).

According to Chomsky (1968), a normal child acquires knowledge of sentences, not only as grammatical, but also as conceptually appropriate. He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, and in what manner. In short, a child becomes able to accomplish a repertoire of speech acts, to take part in speech events, and to evaluate their accomplishment by others. This competence, however, is integral with attitudes, values, and motivations concerning language, and the interrelation of language with other codes of communicative conduct (Hymes, 1972). In Ethnography of Speaking and sociolinguistics, the discussion of communicative competence versus linguistic (or grammatical) competence usually centres on two issues: namely the need to accompany grammatical description with conditions of appropriateness and the complementarities of the grammatical (or linguistic) code with other aspects of co-occurring rule-governed behaviour, Non-Verbal Communicators (NVC) such as gestures and eye-gaze (Hymes, 1982).

In fact, a crucial difference between Chomsky's notion of *competence* and Hymes's notion is that the former relies on the assumption that knowledge can be studied separately from performance, meant as the implementation of that knowledge in language use, whereas for Hymes, participation, performance, and inter-subjective knowledge are all essential features of the ability to 'know a language'. Furthermore, Chomsky presents the hypothesis of autonomous grammar as a prerequisite to maintaining 'order' in the object of study. This requires the researcher to have the ability to construct hypotheses about linguistic forms without having to make reference to non-linguistic factors such as beliefs and attitudes. Thus, a large part of the work done by Chomsky and his students is based on their ability to find or imagine appropriate contexts for the uttering of certain utterance-types.

Despite the theoretical assumption of the innateness of certain aspects of grammar as pure cognitive or biological endowment, the actual definition of such aspects rests on the possibility of matching sentences with possible worlds, which are, in turn, constructed on the basis of the experience linguists have of the world in which they live. Criticism of this methodology by Ethnography of Speaking model and other approaches is not a rejection of abstraction or idealization, but rather a fundamental scepticism about the uncritical use of what phenomenological sociology calls 'pre-understanding' of the world (Bleicher, 1982). In the case of linguistic research, it is the pre-understanding of the relationship between linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour that is usually ignored by formal grammarians.

Most people in Kenya acquire their mother tongue from infancy through experiential socialisation. As one grows up and starts to venture out of the confines of the house and village, one is then likely to be socialized into the Kiswahili language. However, to learn English, one has to go through the school process. Hence, in Chomsky's and especially Hyme's conception, it would be impossible that communication in this language ever attains full potential. Similarly, when film makers choose dialogue that is

not the actual social language of the settings and cast actors who are far removed from the space represented in the film, the actors often are unable to project an honest characterization owing to their limited knowledge of the English language, where they have learned the structural and not the performative aspects of the language.

3.3 Thought, Physical Action, and Language

This section discusses the psychophysical processes through which communication behaviour arises by looking at recent research on the relationship between thought, physical action and language. When it comes to film, this relationship also takes note of the difference between written and spoken language. This is because the difference between the two is partly at the heart of the challenge that actors face. This is even more profound today for Africa considering that writing is largely a European phenomenon where European languages were imposed on Africans yet most communication among them occurs through indigenous languages. This imposition is so pervasive that whereas most Africans will speak their mother tongue very fluently, they can hardly write the same.

Films originate from a script, which is comprised mostly of dialogue (sound), visual description and plotting. However, how one says the dialogue is vitally important, since the ‘how’ is what mostly communicates in film. In a novel, the author can describe the unspoken thoughts, feelings and motivations of a character. The author even makes it clear that what is written is a translation from the original language of the characters in the novel by mentioning the language a character speaks in. In other words the author does not have to write in the native language of the characters but the reader will read the novel as though it is in the characters language. The film script-writer, however, is restricted largely to the words that a character says, and it is up to the actor to contextualize those words by deciding on motivations that drive the words, to create facial expressions and physical behaviour that make the speech sound life-like through the use of vocal tone, varied emphases, accent, tempo and cadence of speech. But things

are even more complicated for the African film script writers, who are likely to script in the colonisers' language because this is what they have been conditioned in when they first interacted with the written text. As a result a film director would have to retranslate the script into the actual language of the character. However, this has not been happening in the case of Kenya hence, the purpose of this study which argues that only the actual language of the settings and actors who are fluent in that language are capable of giving a performance that meets the threshold of realism required in film.

Film acting involves a psychophysical process that combines thought, imagination, and expression as the actor seeks to embody the fictional content of the script. McNeill (2000), a cognitive linguist, has carried out research in which he argues for the place of non-verbal communication as being an equal if not bigger partner in conveying meaning in human communications. He states that 'utterances possess two sides, only one of which is speech; the other is imagery, actional and visuo-spatial. To exclude the gesture side, as has been traditional, is tantamount to ignoring half of the message out of the brain.'(Mcneill, 2000, p.37)

Earlier, Mcneill (1992) probes the difference between the ways our brains process written and spoken language and concludes that gestures are an integral part of language as much as are words, phrases and sentences and therefore part of one system. Hence, an understanding of the difference between the ways that language and gesture operate underscores the importance of physicality and image in the actor's process. Despite this recognition of language and gesture as parts of the same system, Mcneill proposes a view of their functions that makes them complementary to one another, and identifies crucial differences between them by stating that 'language has the effect of *segmenting* and *linearizing* meaning. What might be an instantaneous thought is divided up and strung out through time…the total effect is to present what had been a single instantaneous picture in the form of a string of segments' (Macneill, 1992, p.40). In written language, this effect is unmediated by any physical action, but when language is

spoken, meaning can be complemented or modified by gesture. Thus, ‘gestures are different in every way because they are themselves multidimensional and present meaning complexes without undergoing segmentation or linearization’ (McNeill, 1992, p. 19).

McNeill (1992) uses the term ‘hierarchical’ in analysing speech and gesture and contends that speech relies on ‘bottom-up’ processing where the meanings of the words are combined to create the meaning of the sentence. In understanding a sentence we start with the lower level words, hence ‘bottom-up’, whereas in gestures, we start with the overall concept portrayed by the gesture. It is this concept which gives rise to the meaning of the individual parts, hence ‘top-down’. Thus, in McNeill’s conception a gesture would be a symbol, global in that the whole is not composed out of separately meaningful parts. Rather, the parts gain meaning because of the meaning of the whole. To illustrate this, McNeill provides the example of a person representing a running cartoon character by moving his hand through space whilst wiggling his fingers: ‘the hand is not a hand but a character, the movement is not a hand in motion but the character in motion, the space is not the physical space of the narrator but a narrative space, the wiggling fingers are not fingers but running feet. The gesture is thus a symbol, but the symbol is of a fundamentally different type from the symbols of speech’ (MacNeill, 1992, p.42).

A further, and significant, difference between language and gesture is that gestures have no standards of form. These are the linguistic rules that utterances must follow, or be rejected as ungrammatical. Gestures have no such rules and therefore reflect the idiosyncrasies of the speaker and his/her community: ‘Precisely because gestures are not obliged to meet standards of form, they are free to present just those aspects of meaning that are relevant and salient to the speaker and leave out those aspects that language may require but are not relevant to the situation’ (Macneill, 1992, p.41).

McNeill (2005) develops an analysis of the relationship between gesture and speech, arguing for a new conception of language by viewing it as an imagery-language dialectic, in which gestures provide imagery. He posits that gestures are key ingredients in an 'imagery-language dialectic' that fuels both speech and thought. Thus, gestures become an integral component of language in this conception, not merely an accompaniment to, or ornament of, speech but synchronous and co-expressive with it. The gestures are shown to be active participants in both speaking and thinking and both participate in formulating meaning, with their opposition creating instability that gets resolved in expression. The instability of the confrontation of opposites (imagery and language) in the process of thinking for speaking seeks resolution in utterance that can be expressed either as gesture or speech, or both. Through close observation of the synchrony of speech forms and gestures, a suggestion that they are co-expressive of the same underlying thought unit is given credence.

Macneill (2005) names the smallest element of this relationship between language and gesture as the Growth Point (GP), a snapshot of an utterance at its beginning psychological stage. This analysis has exciting implications for actors, since it includes immensely valuable information about the relationship of thought to expression - the core of meaning in a performance. A key feature of McNeill's analysis is the differentiation of 'background' and 'focus' - visual metaphors that distinguish contextual information from information that is 'newsworthy'. McNeill describes a process whereby we construct meaning as we speak: The speaker shapes the background in a certain way, in order to make possible the intended significant contrast within it. Background and contrast are both necessary and are constructed together. A new 'meaning' is a fresh differentiation from a constructed background. Thus, meaning has this dual character of being both a focal point and an implied background, and both are necessary (http://mcneilllab.uchicago.edu/writing/growth_points.html).

The GP can be thought of ‘as an image that is being categorized linguistically’ - an image with a foot in the door of language. The combination is called a growth point since it is meant to be the initial form of a thinking-for-speaking unit out of which a dynamic process of organization emerges. A further feature of the GP is that it addresses the concept that there is a specific starting point for a thought. Although an idea unit continues out of the preceding context and has ramifications in later speech, it does not exist at all times, and comes into being at some specific moment; the formation of a growth point is this moment made visible in the onset of the gesture (Mcneill, 2005). The suggestion is that in everyday speech, when speakers are mentally focused on the content of their communication, a new idea is marked by the preparation phase of a gesture. Consequently, when an actor identifies a new idea in a passage of dialogue, he or she knows that this is the appropriate moment for a gesture, and in choosing to use one, helps to clarify meaning for an audience. In this model, meaning progresses in a stream of contrasts between context and GPs. Thus, information communicated by a GP forms context for the next new idea.

Another significant feature of McNeill’s model is the concept of the catchment. This is ‘a kind of thread of consistent dynamic visua-spatial imagery running through the discourse segment that provides a gesture - based window into discourse cohesion’ (p. 47). It is recognized when two or more gestures in a sequence of discourse display recurring features, such as shape and movement.

McNeill’s analysis agrees with a widely used categorization in social psychology of types of gestures. British psychologist Beattie (2003) explains these in *Visible Thought - The New Psychology of Body Language.* Beattie takes care to distinguish between gestures and ‘emblems’, which are physical signs that are consciously sent and consciously received. Easily reproducible, these are signs such as the ‘thumbs up’ that have become codified in the cultures in which they are used. In contrast, the vast majority of gestures are unconsciously generated, produced alongside words (rather

than substituting for them), and almost impossible to inhibit. This last feature probably explains the fact that most people, when confronted with a discrepancy in meaning between verbal and nonverbal communication, will trust the nonverbal.

Spontaneously occurring gestures that accompany speech can be divided into two main categories; iconic and metaphoric. The iconic gesture is one ‘whose particular form displays a close relationship to the meaning of the accompanying speech’ (Beattie,2003, p. 48). These are generally pictorial representations that show the speaker’s mental image and point of view. Beattie cites an example from McNeill’s *Hand and Mind*(2000) where a speaker describes a cartoon figure bending back a tree, saying ‘he bent it way back’ and accompanying this by the physical action of grasping and pulling back. Sometimes, iconic gestures add information to what is said. In the example quoted above, the gesture shows that the tree was attached to the ground - information not explicitly mentioned in the verbal portion of the utterance.

An important feature of the gesture analysis described by Beattie is that of timing. Gestures generally have three phases; the preparation, where the arms move from their resting position, the ‘stroke’ where the main action occurs, and the retraction, where the arms return to their resting position. In spontaneous gestures, the preparatory phase normally precedes the noun or verb most closely associated with the gesture, so that this can be synchronous with the stroke. Contrived gesturing often looks ‘wrong’ because the timing is off. These indicate how an individual groups meanings, or separates them. Again, an understanding of this naturally occurring phenomenon gives the actor a useful tool in consciously choosing gestures that help audience members understand the implicit meaning of a piece of dialogue by showing them the linkages between different ideas. The concept of the catchment also helps us to identify lack of differentiation in a performance; if we see repetitive gestures when the content varies in ideas, it suggests that the actor has not successfully established this variety at an ideational level.

These findings have important implications for actors. They identify one of the crucial components involved in transferring written scripts into embodied behaviour. Bad acting often arises because the actor hasn't made the mental leap from the linear nature of written language into the gestural imagery of spoken language. This study seeks to add to this knowledge by arguing that for gestures to rhyme with language, such language must be native to the speaker (actor). If the language used by the actor is a second language then the film must be plotted in such a way that it makes this explicit. This way, even if the gestures and language seem not to rhyme, the audience will expect it because they know it is only a learned language to the speaker (actor).

Given that about 90% of spoken utterances in daily life are accompanied by gesture, acting whose gesture and language do not rhyme will appear stiff and unexpressive. In film, this is often referred to as a lack of 'investment', meaning that the actor does not seem to be fully engaged in the character's thought processes. Common responses from instructors and directors include exhortations to 'feel it more', or to transpose biographical experience to the fictional circumstances, or to discover analogous situations that might prompt imaginative identification. But it is necessary that film directors, especially Africans, are made acutely aware of not only the close relationship between thought, language and gesture but also that choice of appropriate language for the actor and settings have the effect of making an actor give a performance that achieves the threshold of being genuine, authentic and realistic - a primary aesthetic requirement of the film medium.

3.4 Language and Film in Kenya

Kenya is inherently multilingual both at the societal and individual levels. An average person speaks at least three languages, namely, vernacular, Kiswahili and English. This stems in part from the different ethno linguistic groups that are found in the country and their daily need to communicate with different people in different contexts. Indeed, Africa is one of the regions in the world with extensive linguistic diversity. Of the

world's estimated 6,000 plus languages, Africa has more than 2,000 languages which represents about a third of the world's languages (Heller, 2006). However, Djité (2008), Kiarie (2004) and Nettle and Romaine (2001) observe that not much empirical research has been done and this has created more gaps in ascertaining some facts about the linguistic situation in Africa.

Although most African education systems focus on the use of international languages, only between 10 and 15 per cent of the population in most African countries are estimated to be fluent in these languages (Muaka, 2010). Nevertheless, these languages, besides their strong weight in governance, dominate the educational systems, with the result that there is a serious communication gap between the formal education system and its social environment (http://www.africafocus.org/docs10/educ1007.php). Indeed it is this social environment that film's source as a medium of reality is derived.

In the Kenya Constitution (2010), it is stated that the national language of the republic is Kiswahili while the official languages are given as both Kiswahili and English. It is also stated in Chapter 7, Article 3(c) of the constitution that the country should promote and protect the diversity of languages of the people of Kenya as well as promote and develop use of indigenous languages, Kenyan sign language, Braille and other communication formats and technologies accessible to persons with disabilities. On interpreting these provisions, one is left with the conclusion that indigenous languages are headed to the archives. Even though indigenous languages are mentioned, the constitution does not go on to expressly provide for the spaces that would make such languages thrive like it does for English where it is specifically mentioned that this will be the language of instruction in the education sector. Foregrounding English by defining space for it to operate and making it the only conduit through which knowledge is acquired and therefore employment, obviously gifts advantage to the English language over indigenous languages. Yet according to Muaka (2010), these are erroneous provisions that are not cognizant of the role indigenous languages play as the

people's initial identity markers and as major tools for businesses in the everyday activities of the people that allow ordinary people to carry out transactions in the informal settings.

Muaka (2010) further observes that indigenous languages also serve important roles in religious and community development. At the same time, at the local level, indigenous languages facilitate administrative work which is carried out by local leaders such as the village headman, the sub-chief and chief. Indeed Muaka (2010) concludes that without Kenya's indigenous languages, no meaningful interactions can take place among a majority of them. Since settings are ethnic in nature and the camera purports to record the settings as it is, appropriate choice of language then becomes paramount to imbue a setting with the required threshold of reality.

Nabea (2009) observes that while barely a quarter of the Kenyan population can adequately use English, it remains the official medium of dialogue in offices and during official transactions and the medium of instruction in the education system, unlike Kiswahili, the co-official language. However, while the leadership appears comfortable with this linguistic situation and would wish to have the status quo maintained, the linguistic situation among lay Kenyans demonstrates that not all is well on the ground (Nabea, 2009).

Ogechi and Ogechi (2002) contend that the problem of languages in Kenya cannot be addressed without taking a historical perspective. The language situation in Kenya has its basis in the colonial language policy following the scramble for Africa by European powers, which took place towards the end of the 19th Century. In the ensuing partition, Kenya became part of the British East Africa Protectorate. Among the issues the British considered to facilitate their rule in Kenya was language. With respect to the colonial language policy, two epochs are worthy scrutiny: Pre-Second World War and post-Second World War. In the first epoch, there were several players involved in the

formulation of language policy. According to Nabea (2009), Christian missionaries, colonial administrators and the British settlers for varying reasons refused to teach English to Africans. While the missionaries were motivated not to do so because they thought the gospel would best be spread in vernacular, the colonial administrators were only anxious to control the teaching of the language in order to obtain low cadre employees in their administration while the settlers feared the Europeanization of Africans through the English language lest they became too educated to accept the role of wage labourers. Thus, many European settlers regarded the teaching of the English language to 'natives' as a means of providing a potentially subversive force (Nabea, 2009). Social distance between master and subject had to be maintained partly through linguistic means. Mazrui and Mazrui (1996) and Brutt-Griffler (2002) however argue that denial to teach Africans the English language, on the contrary, provided a stimulus for Africans to study it. The colonized people had already realised that the English language was a sure ticket to white collar employment and wealth, such that to deny them a chance to learn it was tantamount to condemning them to perpetual menial jobs. The Kikuyu of Kenya in a move to contest this arrangement started independent schools to learn English in the 1920s (Whiteley, 1974).

The second epoch was after the Second World War where there was a shift in the British colonial language policy which appeared to hurt local languages. According to Whiteley (1974), when self-rule was imminent in Kenya following the freedom struggle, the British colonialists mounted a campaign to create some Westernized elite in the country. They believed that such an elite group would protect their interests in independent Kenya. In 1950-1951, Whiteley (1974) observes, the Education Department Reports pointed out that it was inappropriate to teach three languages at the primary school. These reports included Beecher's 1949 and the Drogheda Commission of 1952. The documents recommended that English be introduced in the lower primary

to be taught alongside the mother tongue, and called for the dropping of Kiswahili in the curriculum, except in areas where it was the vernacular.

Kiswahili's elimination from the curriculum was partly aimed at curtailing its growth and spread, on which Kenyans' freedom struggle was coalescing (Chimerah, 1998; Mazrui & Mazrui, 1998). Further boost for English, at the expense of local languages occurred when the Prator- HutasoitCommission endorsed that English be the only language of instruction in all school grades, heralding the New Primary Approach, better known as the English Medium Approach (Chimerah, 1998). To implement the new curriculum, teachers were to be trained in English, while their mother tongues were viewed as a premium in teaching the lower primary schools.

Going by the colonial language policy in Kenya after the Second World War, suffice it to state that English was supported at the expense of local languages. However, it has been observed that this support was not motivated by the interest to make Kenyans learn the language, but more in the interest of preventing Kenyan nationalism which was solidifying around African languages, especially Kiswahili (Chimerah, 1998). The move also bequeathed Kenya an iniquitous linguistic legacy after independence, taking into account that English continued to play the divisive role of the haves (English users) and have-nots (non-English users). Now, over fifty years after Kenya's independence, English is yet to be rid of its elitist and exclusionist status.

On surface, the teaching of English in the Kenya education system was an advantage in the sense that the medium was already a world language that facilitated communication with the outside world. However, its teaching to the Kenyan pupils was also at a cost. Thiong'o (1978) demonstrates that the colonial linguistic conquest of African scholars has impacted negatively on them. He argues that they start deriding their local languages leading to alienation. By citing cases in schools and universities where Kenyan languages were associated with negative qualities of backwardness,

underdevelopment, humiliation and punishment, Ngugi (1978) states that school leavers have been graduating with a hatred for their people, their culture and languages. On this cultural alienation, Thiong'o comments thus:

> We have already seen what any colonial system does: impose its tongue on the subject races, and then downgrade the vernacular tongues of the people. By so doing, they make the acquisition of their tongue a status symbol; anyone who learns it begins to despise the peasant majority and their 'barbaric' tongues. By acquiring the thought-processes and the values of his adopted tongue, he becomes alienated from the values of his mother tongue, or from the language of the masses (1978, p.16).

Onyango (2003) also states that the sociolinguistic situation in Kenya today is triglossic and in the following order: English is top of the rank as the official language; Kiswahili is in the middle of the rank as the co-official language, while at the base are the local languages or mother tongues. He further states that most of the Kenyan indigenous languages have no written material, have never been standardised and have no orthography. They also have a limited number of speakers, and are less used in the media or in literature writing. These rankings illustrate that the recognition of local languages in Kenya is wanting. Thus, the languages that are mainly used by the majority of the population are disadvantaged over the English language.

However, according to Chomsky (1968), there is a great difference between first language acquisition and second language learning. Not only are the ways of learning different but the processes within the brain also differ from each other. Chomsky (1968) asserts that first language acquisition is mostly passive. We listen to the people around us, their speech melody, their sounds, their words and their sentence structures. Before we can even read or write a single word in our first language, we already use an impressive vocabulary and many important grammar structures. Some people never

learn how to read or write but still speak their first language fluently (ibid). Second language learning, on the other hand, is an active process. We need to learn vocabulary and grammar in order to achieve our goal. Most people will need an instructor, either a teacher at school or the instructions of a course book or audio course. If we ever want to achieve fluency or near fluency in a second language, it requires years of studying and likely a long stay in another country that uses that language (Chomsky, 1968). Many people will never reach anywhere near fluency with any second language.

As such, the difference between first language acquisition and second language learning is so great that it can be the difference between language genius and language struggles. Film, being a medium that is premised on reality, exposes this struggle when actors in the course of performing character roles appear stiff and unnatural while using a foreign language but attempt to pass it off as their native language. This study therefore examines whether indeed second and third language acquisitions used as native languages in film takes away reality and therefore authenticity in film bearing in mind that authenticity is what defines beauty in film. .

Thus the language problem in Kenya and indeed in most colonised countries has had consequences in that two classes of citizens are immediately created, the class of the advantaged, and therefore *included*, and the class of the disadvantaged, and therefore, *excluded.* The included are a major stumbling block in the use of African languages in a wider range of domains (Onyango, 2003). It is safe to therefore conclude that since most Kenyan films use English language (idiom) as dialogue, Kenyan film makers have chosen and indeed see themselves as being part of the included, consequently perpetuating the class divide in the Kenyan society and completely ignoring reality. It is important to note that film is a medium of reality and its starting point on how it works is always the representation of reality where object and its representation tend to be related iconically. Spoken language too, being an element of film language, needs to be realistic in order for a realistic representation to occur. This thesis argues that it is this

ignorance of appreciating film's realistic properties by Kenyan filmmakers to choose appropriate language as dialogue in films that has played a part in the rejection of the films by audiences because the films do not meet the authentic threshold.

In the selected films for this study, three of the films, *Saikati*, *The First Grader* and *Toto Millionaire*, foreground English language as their linguistic expression while *Nairobi Half Life* deploys a different language every time the location, circumstances and situation changes. For instance, *Nairobi Half Life* deploys a native language when characters are in the village, a version of Swahili known as sheng when characters are depicted during interaction on the streets of Nairobi and the English language when characters are staging a theatrical performance. A theatrical performance in defined space as happens in the film is a western phenomenon and the use of English in that performance is therefore expected. By analysing how character performance in these selected films is affected by the spoken language used in every setting in each of the films, this study aims to reposition the place of appropriate choice of language as being part of the elements that make film a medium of actuality.

3.5 Conclusion

It can be concluded from the above analysis that English language has cleverly been couched as the language of the elite and therefore also the language of the haves. The education system, the job market as well as the laws on language use in Kenya have been structured to support this state of affairs. However, as also demonstrated, the actual language use is heavily contested by what obtains in the everyday use of language by Kenyans where people use either their mother tongue or the Kiswahili language as the lingua franca. Kenyan film makers need to remove themselves from this elitist positioning and recognise that film realism abhors use of a language other than the actual language of the people depicted in the world of the film.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE EFFECT OF CHOICE OF LANGUAGE ON PERFORMANCE AND QUALITY OF THE SELECTED KENYAN FILMS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of a critical analysis of language and performance in the selected films and how these work together to affect the film's quality. It looks at how choice of language aids in the enactment of character that meets the threshold of being genuine, authentic and realistic, reality and authenticity being at the centre of films quality. Through a critical analysis, it interrogates in a sample of scenes in the selected films how actor performance in the scenes is affected by the spoken language used by the actor in two ways; one, whether the language spoken corresponds to the actual language used in the real world and two, whether the language chosen fits the character's physiognomy in bringing out the a genuine rendition.

4.2 Choice of Language and Performance in*Saikati*

As analysed in the previous chapter, *Saikati* simply does not display the necessary formal and realistic aesthetic qualities capable of appealing to local and international audiences. And as film's appeal is premised on its verisimilitude characteristics (Monaco, 1977), it follows therefore that *Saikati* lacks proper likeness to the events and experiences it purports to represent. It is the thrust of the argument of this thesis that this lack of appeal is driven partly by the inappropriate choice of the spoken language of film.

The first meaningful dialogue in *Saikati* occurs between Monica, Saikati's mother and her uncle. It is a conversation concerning Saikati's marriage arrangements. The setting of this sequence is deeply rural, in one of the most famously untouched communities by western and other cultures, the Maasai. The participants are a mother (Monica) and a brother in-law. The theme is marriage, an arranged marriage to take place between Saikati to the chief's son.

The language of dialogue used is Kiswahili which appears to be represented as the indigenous (actual) language of the settings. However, it must be noted that the Maasai speak a language called *Maa*. Kiswahili is not therefore the indigenous language in such settings. A justification would then have to be offered as to why they would need to switch to the Kiswahili language. One reason for the use of Kiswahili or any other second language in these settings would be that the speakers are not of the same tribe and have to find a language spoken and understood by all conversants. Another reason people switch to another language would be for emphasis and also to create or reaffirm distance (social), difference or separation. Because none of this justification is offered in this particular opening sequence Kiswahili then out rightly fails the reality test and thus immediately works to subvert the film's realistic qualities, being originality and authenticity, a prime film aesthetic element.

Another aspect of originality that language confers on a film is the film's cultural idiom. Language is at the centre of culture and identity. Indeed it is through language that Hollywood identifies films as belonging to this or that nation-state when awarding Oscars. Film being highly ethnographic, language plays a major role in giving the unique identity to the film's world. When people go to watch a film, what they actually want to discover is what the film offers in terms of the participants being genuinely different from them. Since the language in this opening conversation sequence is obviously not the actual language spoken in those settings, *Saikati* remains stripped off its authenticity.

Similarly wrong choice of language has the effect of hampering the actor from reaching deep in their thought systems to understand and transmit their selves effectively in their performance. This is what obtains in this particular sequence. Monica deliberately leads the brother in-law in their conversation, a relationship that is culturally untenable within the Maasai community where man is master. The perception among the Maasai and indeed in most African communities, especially at the period *Saikati* was produced, is

that women are to be subservient to men and only speak when they are spoken to. Monica begins by uttering the Swahili word *Sasa*, translated as *Now* but meaning 'how is it with you now' in English. This utterance, in this instance, is meant to bring forth response by leading the opposite speaker and works to apportion dominance to Monica. Furthermore, Monica's demeanour as she utters this word does not project her status as properly woman in the community because it also plays to perpetuate her dominance. Again this choice of word is amenable to colloquial use and not acceptable for use against a respectable adult. It is possible that if this conversation was carried out in the indigenous language, an honest relationship and representation would naturally emerge where the conversants would strike a pose that is convincing in the context. If the same word or even an equivalent utterance in mother tongue was used, a demeanour through tone, body language, facial expression commensurate with the required norm would naturally emerge.

But it is important to take note that words are often constants as they emerge from the script so it is usually left to the actor to use other communicative elements such as facial expression, posture, tone and gesture to give more appropriate and communicative power to their utterances. This the actor supplies when they are well grounded in the language that names the knowledge system depicted in the setting. In the case of this sequence, it fails because actors use Swahili and not the actual Maa language. As such, they appear as if they are boxes programmed to produce speech since their conversation is devoid of any other meaningful accompanying communications cues available to a speaker such as facial expression, gestures, eye behaviour and so on. Thus, the performance appears mechanical as the actors do not appropriately bring out the characters they play.

Another complication on authenticity of performance is brought about through the connection between language, knowledge and the process of capturing the action by the camera. In film, the process of shooting involves the use of only one camera. Continuity

therefore has to be a very well thought out aspect in the shoot because the actor is required to repeat the same action or conversation as many times as the camera changes position or there is a halt to the action by one of the players on set. An actor therefore relies on their deep understanding of the knowledge system to re-enact the action, posture and speech to provide smooth continuity every time the camera changes position so that the viewer does not realise that what they see as continuous was actually shot in bits. Without this knowledge that is supplied through a close relationship between language and the knowledge system that it names, the actor's characterisation appears mechanical because they are unable to adequately recall actions and experiences thus causing inconsistency in continuity. Consequently, all acting in *Saikati* tends to be mechanical and unnatural where the actors can be equated to boxes programmed to utter words without feelings.

But it is the conversation that takes place between Saikati and her mother that works more to the detriment of authenticity of the film. When her mother calls, Saikati seems to respond so quickly and immediately arrives with a stool, an act that gives the impression she was cued and was doing nothing else but wait for the mother's call. When the mother speaks, we can see Saikati actually listening as if waiting to pounce with a respond. Her face is deadpan. In fact at this point one already knows what the reply is going to be because she clearly displays it on her countenance. In other words her response is too obvious as it is definitely anticipated or cued. In actual communication, a lot of meaningful and gainful conversation happens at the subtext level where meanings are not directly apparent. Also, Saikati should be seen more contemplative, assessing her situation under the circumstances before she speaks. That it is not the case in this sequences removes the film as being genuinely representative of reality.

The other conversation takes place between Saikati and her visiting cousin Monica at the river-side where Monica finds Saikati as she fetches water. This setting is still rural

but the context is one where Saikati, a rural girl is meeting Monica, her cousin, who stays in the city. The dialogue between them is problematic in the sense that they switch to English without any justification. There is not even an indication of negotiation about which language they should use under the circumstances. Whereas it is understandable that Monica could speak English with competent diction, it is totally out of place to hear Saikati's articulation sound even more competent than her cousin's. One naturally would expect that her English should be heavily tinged with mother tongue encumbrances. It is also a context where her cousin is coming back to her roots where it is natural that people converse in mother tongue or rural sheng for that matter. It is not difficult to reach this conclusion because nothing happens in the narrative at this point in time to suggest that Monica's sojourn in the city has had any adverse effect on her cultural roots. Moreover, it is culturally good manners that whenever one goes back home, one should always try to confirm their cultural conformity and the express manifest of this should be to use their mother tongue.

But what confounds and is totally unrealistic in the sequence is that both Monica and Saikati switch to English as if it is a natural thing to do. Even if the conversation were to proceed in the English language, it would be expected that Saikati's fluency and enunciation would be impeded. Instead her diction indicates a very well schooled girl, beyond rural competencies in English, a third language acquired by people from her community. Whereas it could be acceptable in the audience's mind in the case of Saikati's cousin because of her exposure from the city, it just does not work for Saikati. Moreover, this conversation also proceeds in loud tones as if the communicators have a problem of listening to themselves as well as others. This is a consequence when the characters uttering the words do not relate experience to the words being uttered.

Ultimately the display of English language competency by Saikati in the second part of the film featuring the two white men supplies the ultimate paradox in the film. In this part that actually starts with Saikati meeting with her cousin at the riverside, one is

made to realise that indeed Saikati was never part of the Maasai community. At the riverside and without any justification, Monica speaks to Saikati in English who competently replies in the same. This is surprising to a viewer as it goes against the narrative that Saikati is deeply rural. Her English accent seems to match with one expected from a middle class family in Kenya schooling in one of the top secondary schools. At their first meeting with Harrison and his friend for dinner, Saikati asks for ugali from the waiter. Ugali is a common dish among Kenyans especially the commoners. But because Saikati is never really in character she fails to bring out the kind of interaction that would be believable in the circumstances. She forces her body language and attitude to appear to be in tandem with a person not comfortable with an ugali meal. The natural attitude should be to show more relief on realising that amongst the strange company and environment there is ugali she can identify with. This is a contradiction serves to continue to undermine the role she plays. Thus, this second part of *Saikati* presents a paradox of sorts in the way Saikati evolves. Instead of her growing from being a rural Maasai girl, we see a Saikati who comes into being as rightly belonging to that social group rather than one who should struggle unsuccessfully to fit in, a cause that should result into the effect of her going back to the rural home.

4.3 Choice of Language and Performance in *Toto Millionaire*

Again *Toto Millionaire* suffers the same fate as *Saikati* in terms of authenticity because it does not meet the aesthetic threshold of reality. What is the contribution of language choice to the quality of this film? The first conversation in this film takes place in a house between Toto and his mother. The house is situated in a rural village somewhere outside Nairobi City. Toto comes running into the house and just as he enters, the mother speaks. Dialogue proceeds in English. The exchange runs like this, “ahhhh son, go to mama Maina and ask her to give you a hundred shillings for the medicine.” No sooner does she finish than Toto replies, “Mama Maina says she has no more to give us.” The exchange continues without any pauses. Pauses in conversations are meant to

convey a sense of contemplation among speakers, showing that even if speakers are in the present their speech is subject to other forces of experience and nature working on them. The lack of this therefore brings out the actors as mechanical and only meant to recite the words in the script.

At the identity level, the audience is unable to locate the identities of the participants in terms of the community they come from. This is because the actors use English as if it is their first language but the settings being rural Kenya and the participants being obviously part of that community, one would expect that the language they use is one of the indigenous languages spoken in Kenya. Indeed because they use English, the actors become anonymous and the words they utter cannot be associated with them in any way. They can as well be boxes programmed to make those utterances. Thus, without qualifying the identity of the participants through language, a sufficient difference is not established. Often an interest to watch is created because the characters depicted manifest a distinct difference and therefore appear exotic to an audience. Obviously, they are not English, for there are no Englishmen in rural Kenya and there is no demonstration at all that the characters have been in a situation where they have learned the English language. This difference has to be qualified by ensuring the cultural circumstances of the character are expressly established. That Toto and his mother use a foreign tongue therefore takes away the opportunity to establish credible difference and characterization by denying the audience a proper context to interpret the experiences being transmitted.

Furthermore, the circumstances of this conversation are that the mother is sick, so to find her effortlessly resting her head on her hand and more so readily speaks robustly is unbelievable and flies in the face of reality. An audience only comes to know that she is sick from the words she utters not from the demeanour she projects. Indeed this disconnect, between character and actor is supplied by choice of English as the language of dialogue which does not assist her draw from local knowledge system to reproduce

the required emotional and physical condition to match the characterization. Thus, mother as well as son seem only concerned with delivering the words and nothing else. In the struggle to deliver their lines in a foreign language, they are unable to deploy appropriate non-verbal communication cues to sufficiently supply meaning. This lack of communication choices also shows in the way mother seeks to account for what should be non-verbal communication by pulling and repeating her words. This could easily have been cured by use of the native language of the community of the village being depicted, and consequently would imply type casting to get an actor who can speak the language naturally.

The sequence at the market, where the market women chase away Toto affects authenticity because again the market women use English when reality dictates otherwise. As a consequence the women miss out on the opportunity to express themselves through sub-text (metaphorically). Use of subtext is a much powerful communication strategy that is more natural. Indeed all effective communication is through this means – by showing disdain without showing it literally. For instance words “kwendauko (Swahili), kwani your mother thinks I make money for her…….” are considered extremely uncouth and therefore manner less utterances in an African setting. This is worse, especially when directed at a minor and no realistic depiction of this sequence will allow such.

In the city, Toto meets two corrupt council City askaris. English is foregrounded in all their conversation. The problem also here is that it is not likely that such council askaris could have had sufficient mastering of language to make them adequately choose and converse in English as if it was their first language. This again makes their acting appear mechanical and lacking in originality.

At one point as Toto continues to evade the two corrupt City askaris, he approaches a taxi man. The taxi man is seen talking to somebody and their conversation is in

Kiswahili. He turns to talk to Toto in English. This is extremely confounding. Kiswahili is the lingua franca among the people on the streets. There is absolutely no justification why the taxi man and Toto should code switch to English and not continue in Kiswahili, the preferred language on Kenyan streets. Especially that Toto looks very much Kenyan having just arrived from the rural set-up and still a child for that matter. If for instance, the taxi man turned and was confronted by Toto who is Caucasian, then it would be understandable if he goes through a moment of deciding which language he should use to address Toto and would most likely therefore use English. Thus, the conversation between Toto and the taxi man remains unnatural under the circumstances. This conversation refuses to reach the threshold of realism and a viewer is likely to conclude as such even before one begins to analyze actor performance to determine whether it works with language choice to give a realistic and genuine re-enactment of a film character.

At the lottery offices we get to encounter how choice of language can be confusing and work against realism in film. When the sequence starts, we get to see somebody walking to the front desk. We gather that that is the manager. However as he approaches the receptionist, one notices that it is in a very casual manner, the manager's shirt buttons are undone. This is not what would be expected in an office setting, especially one that has the reputation to run a lottery running in millions. Furthermore, the receptionist turns and addresses him by his first name as her hand casually touches him. No doubt, the director intended that this should be a casual encounter between people who are in a relationship that goes beyond just being office colleagues and so when the receptionist and manager speak in English it is not entirely believable. In casual talk in Kenya, most conversations will likely switch to Kiswahili or sheng, a mixture of English and Kiswahili but even when Toto walks in, the receptionist and the manager can clearly see that he is young and when they address him in English it has the effect of being off the mark. They should be able to discern given Toto's age he obviously could not have

mastered English. Therefore in this sequence even without proceeding to analyse language and performance, language choice already fails the reality threshold.

4.4 The Journey of Language in *Nairobi Half Life*

That *Nairobi Half Life* has been successful both in Kenya and abroad speaks volumes about its quality and consequently, its authenticity. The film's first sequence opens with a conversation at a village shopping centre. This conversation occurs in the local language, Kikuyu. This indeed works to give full cultural identity to the participants in this sequence and also fortifies the notion of the location being in the rural area. As a result, the participants appear natural and authentic. Even when Mwas infuses English words in his speech to demonstrate action in the DVD movies he hawks as a sales strategy, this only works to enhance reality of the context. For instance, it is well understood that in Kenya we mostly consume western and oriental films which come to us in the English language. And so there is nothing amiss. In the same vain there is nothing wrong when Mwas carries out further demonstration in English albeit broken to a larger audience in a road show performance after being challenged by a boy among the crowd attending the road show.

But Mwas does not just shift from mother tongue to English. In a clear indication of how language is problematic in Kenya and that English has problems being spoken, when Mwas approaches two members of the road show performance, they laugh at his English pronunciation. The pronunciation is heavily influenced by mother tongue. This demonstrates that English is a contested language and that it is clearly not the people's first language. In addition, before Mwas meets the two theatre men, they converse in Sheng a language that has its grounding in Kiswahili but borrows from English and indigenous languages. Indeed this brings home the idea that language use in Kenya is multilingual and the language code switches as the context changes and demands. It also describes the reality of the multi-tribal nature of interactions in Kenya. It is known that cities are multi-ethnic and have to find a common language that they adopt to suit their

communication and socialisation needs; hence, the emergence and use of Sheng in Kenyan towns.

A gem of conversation occurs in the sequence at Mwas' home when his father comes home in the evening in a drunken stupor and finds Mwas, his brother and mother entertaining neighbours. Mwas and his brother are engaged in a heated conversation where Mwas has been trying to get his brother to lend him money to travel to Nairobi to pursue an acting career. Though the conversation is carried out in Kikuyu, Swahili and English words are thrown in from time to time and this reflects what actually obtains in such settings in reality. We also come to know that the father is coming in when we hear a manly howl coming from off camera and Mwas and his brother become alert. When the camera cuts to the location of the sound, we see Mwas' father who begins to sing in mother tongue. The howl is actually meant in keeping with typical African tradition to warn of the coming of the man to his home.

The father continues to sing and approaches Mwas' mother and neighbours who are seated and begins to harangue them, making them to scamper away. After they have left, the father turns and beckons Mwas. All this time, Mwas' father has been talking in mother tongue but when Mwas tells him he wants to go to Nairobi, he switches to English. The idea is so that he can demonstrate that despite being in the village he knows the ways of the city and he can even speak the language of the elite who reside in the city. The sub-text of all this is to show that he is a good example who has not struck it well despite knowing the ways and the language of the privileged. It is meant to dissuade Mwas from asking for money to go to the city because in all probability, the father does not have the money anyway. In this sequence is demonstrated how language code switching enhances reality of the film. A switch to English could also work to emphasize his father's insistence that he does not go to the city something that speaks to a depth of fear in the father of losing his son in the big city. Another subtext brought about by language code switching is when Mwas' father sings a Swahili song 'wamama

musilale' to his wife to mock and intimidate her as a way of hiding his own fears. The song is normally used to rally women to a cause towards self-empowerment.

In the city, the sequence at the police station where Mwas is booked following his arrest for loitering on the streets also demonstrates how difference in language enhances film's authenticity. In this sequence, the policeman who books Mwas uses Swahili language with heavy a mother tongue accent. Mwas' Swahili can be said to belong to the language used by largely young people who have not grown up in an urban setting, one can even detect the faint mother tongue affliction in his pronunciation. A Kenyan watching this sequence will readily place the origin of the policeman in the western part of the country inhabited by the Luhya community. Similarly a non-Kenyan will grow to appreciate that by no means is the Kenya nation homogeneous and that accent supplies the differentiating identity.

While in the police cell, Mwas is introduced to what is going to be his life in the city in the coming future by Otis, a gangster who mistreats him when they meet but finally becomes his friend out of the cells. Otis uses Sheng, a kind of language that is rampant in the streets of Nairobi. The conversation between Mwas and Otis that occurs in the cell serves to introduce Mwas to a new language register used among young people on the streets of Nairobi. This conversation also serves to provide a transition in Mwas from the rural to the city life so that later when we hear him use the correct Nairobi street language register, we know that a learning process has occurred in the young man. The language used by the inmates is majorly Sheng. Mwas sings in English though he does not fully understand the words of the song hence the song ends up being mere noise.

Indeed, the conversation that realistically and authentically qualifies the film as genuine occurs between Mwas and Otis towards the end. Mwas and Otis are seated leaning on a wall, waiting for near certain death that is coming by way of rogue policemen who are

in pursuit of them. The topic is on Amina, Otis' mistress but whom Mwas has come to love dearly. Otis has just been told that Mwas has been sleeping with Amina. The conversation runs in this manner;

Mwas;SikizaOti, siku manga Amina (listen Oti, I have not slept with Amina)

Oti; Poa (It is ok)

Mwas;lakinikuna vile namfeel (but I love her)

Oti; Basinikonawewe (then now it is me and you)

The words used in the above conversation are idioms borrowed from words used every day within the streets but are turned to refer to matters love and sex. These words imbue this sequence and conversation that is laden with heavy subtext, with subtlety for effective communication. For instance, the word *manga* is a Sheng word whose literal meaning in the street is 'eat' but in this instance, it is being equated to an act of making love. The word *poa* in its literal meaning refers to 'coming to an end' but in the conversation it is turned to mean acceptance. The word *ninamfeel* is a combination of a Swahili word *nina* (I am) and an English word *feel* implying a sensory perception. A combination of these words in the context supplies the meaning of the act of falling in love. Because this is the actual language of the street and the actors are well socialised in street ways, they are able to utter these appropriate words with appropriate non-verbal accompaniments thus imbuing the conversation with authenticity. A translation, as can be seen, would not even begin to scratch the surface of meaning to which this particular words supply to the viewer.

The Indian trader to whom Mwas is sent to by his gangster cousin speaks in heavily accented Swahili. This works well to reflect reality. The settings involve an Asian émigré who has a smattering of the local language and therefore one expects him to speak in that manner.

At the national theatre, English is the language mostly used for communication without any native language hindrance. This is easily acceptable because in theatre, theatre actors and characters do not have to be the same. Indeed film is a realistic medium where the object and what is represented are related iconically whereas theatre works mainly through symbolism.

4.5 The Language Disconnect in the *First Grader*

The First Grader is based on a true life story of a Kenyan, Maruge, who enrols in a local school after the government announces the abolition of school fees in primary schools. In the real life story Maruge wants to learn so that he can read his Bible. In the fictional story he wants to learn so that he can read a letter written to him from the government concerning compensation to him as retribution linked to his incarceration following the colonialist's brutal crackdown on the Mau Mau rebellion during Kenya's freedom struggle. The setting of the movie is in a Kenyan village after the introduction of free primary education. In the real story, Maruge lives on the outskirts of a Rift Valley Kenyan town, Eldoret.

Although the film was meant to be about Maruge's ambition to read and write, it is turned to focus more on teacher Jane. Teacher Jane is supposed to be a head-teacher in a primary school in a rural area. In most cases, such a teacher, especially one who teaches first graders as teacher Jane does, would likely be one who hails from among the villagers. It is this reality that has informed the Kenya government policy that mother tongue should be used to teach beginning learners especially in rural areas. This often is meant to ease communication between the young learners, their parents who are likely to know no other language other than their mother tongue and the teachers. Often children joining class one can hardly speak English in Kenya more so those from rural areas. To speak English is part of the reason that people go to school in the first place. We also know that teachers' conversation with parents in rural schools is hardly in English. Yet, Teacher Jane gives instructions to class one pupils in English and she talks

to parents in the same language. Nothing illustrates this more than when Teacher Jane is teaching a language lesson. During this sequence, her dialogue goes thus, ‘a fatty, a thinny.....’ These are not words that are used in Kenyan English and sound really strange. Together with her accent, one can clearly observe that teacher Jane does not capture the Kenyan speech mannerisms. In fact her accent sounds more South African. Yet when all this manifests in *The First Grader*, a film whose settings and story is grounded in Kenya, the film’s authenticity is thoroughly destroyed.

Furthermore, the old watchman who comes to inform Jane about Maruge does so in English which is a travesty of reality. Even if the watchman knows some English it is unlikely that he could use the Standard English to converse with teacher Jane in such a rural setting as he does.

When Jane and her husband Charles (Tony Kgoroge – South African) use English instead of Swahili or mother tongue around their house, at first it appears acceptable because of the fact that they are both schooled is well established through their having white colour jobs. However, a home context means often more personalised interaction and so a language they have been socialised in such as Swahili or mother tongue could represent the context better. English is a formal language and therefore has the effect of distancing and works best when participants are meeting the first time and in an office setting. But a husband and wife relationship is supposed to be close and such intimacy is best represented through a social language such as mother tongue. Indeed Jane’s and her husband’s cultural background is not laid bare, something that could have come if there was keen consideration on appropriate choice of language for the characters in the film. When setting and language does not conform, an audience is most likely put off because the film would have failed to meet the realistic threshold. In fact what the audience feels is that it is being taken for a ride. In other words one of the way if not the only one to qualify a characters cultural background is through language.

It should be pointed out that the quality of acting provided by teacher Jane (Naomi Harris – British with South African roots) is excellent. She displays honest emotions as she interacts with various players in the film. The problem rather lies in the use of the standard English dialect when the context does not require her to do so. The settings in the film consist of the going ons in a rural primary school in Kenya. It is expected, to fulfil the requirements of reality in the settings of *The First Grader,* to cast an actor who brings out the speech behaviour of the indigenous people. But much more than this, the language disconnect is further supplied through her accent which is clearly foreign. This accent problem is also evident in a number of actors in the film. For instance, Jane's husband, Charles, Mr. Chege (Israel Sipho Mokoe) a parent in the school and Kipruto (Vusi Kunene), the area schools' Inspector, also display the same accent disconnect. This clearly distances them from the Kenyan characters that they aspire to portray.

In the film, Maruge has never gone to school but he ironically talks fluent English to teacher Jane on his first day of school as he tries to get enrolment. There is nothing in this conversation that suggests English is not Maruge's first language and this does massive damage to the film's authenticity. Furthermore, the film is about Maruge knowing how to read and write so that he can read and understand the contents of a letter written to him from the Office of the President. This state of things indeed implies that Maruge should not be able to speak the English language which in the Kenyan context can only be acquired through classroom learning. For him to do so now neutralises the need for him to go to school. This assault on reality continues when Maruge converses in English in a conversation between him and children in his class.

4.6 Conclusion

It is clear from the foregoing analysis of choice of language in the four films that reality and therefore authenticity is increased through appropriate choice of language and a character that speaks the language cmpetently. The natural language of the speaker also

enables the actor to effect a performance that meets the threshold of authenticity required in film acting being accompanying speech with appropriate NVCs. The films *Saikati, Toto Millionaire* and *Nairobi Half Life* have poor exploitation of the formal and structural elements of film making but the careful use of language in *Nairobi Half Life* ensures that the genuineness of the film is better accepted aesthetically by audiences as opposed to the first two which foregrounds English as the language of dialogue in those films. On the other hand, *The First Grader* though using superior film formal manipulation of the film making elements, fails to reach the authenticity threshold mainly because of the inappropriate choice of language which does not match with the settings. Thus, for reality to be depicted in film, attention should be paid not only on settings but also to proper language that names the settings and context and thus give identity to the film.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

This study has demonstrated that appropriate choice of spoken language in film is important especially when considered against context for a realistic actor performance that impacts on the quality of film. In *The First Grader*, the language fails the reality test in that most of the visible elements, though done professionally, do not capture the Kenyan reality because the language accents that are foreign to Kenyan's experience are used and fail to resonate with the Kenyan reality. Foreign actors are unable to project a nuanced understanding of the cultural and contextual realities that obtain in the situation depicted in the film. In the films *Saikati* and *Toto Millionaire*, the inappropriate choice of language affects the films in two ways. Firstly the language chosen, English, does not meet the contextual requirements, and, secondly, the language affects performance in that the actors are unable to communicate by displaying a synergy between performance

and speech to produce an honest representation of events, experiences and actions. It is only a realistic and honest representation of the Kenyan experience which choice of language plays a part that will find favour with Kenyan and indeed international audiences. This in turn will result in the production of the necessary critical numbers of films that will satisfy local and international demand.

Thus, on the basis of the current study, a number of conclusions can be reached:

1. That use of formal elements of film to effect film aesthetics (quality) are unattainable by Kenya film makers currently owing to the underfunding that Kenya film productions experience based on the analysis of the films *Saikati*, *Toto Millionaire* and *Nairobi Half Life* in Chapter two.

2. That it is reality (content) that is depicted in films that is paramount over and above film form as demonstrated in the analysis of the films *The First Grader* and *Nairobi Half Life.* Whereas *Nairobi Half Life* does not deploy portent film formal elements to tell the story, the content of the film based on its close approximation to reality using appropriate choice of language ensures that it is better received by local and international audiences compared to *The First Grader* whose main strength lies in the portent deployment of film's formal elements.

3. That reality in film is only complete when there is appropriate choice of spoken language in the films, as indicated in findings based on the language choice analysis of the film *Nairobi Half Life* which makes it arguably the most successful Kenyan film so far.

4. That a story which has its roots in a peoples' culture will work even if the formal elements such as camera and sound recording are either poor or redundant. In other words, content is far much important than form.

5. That when film directors cast for their films they should select actors who have been socialised in the immediate environment that constitutes the settings of the film.

6. That when scripting for a film, the script writer should always give characters in the film language that is appropriate as well as use words characters are likely to use in the natural settings.

5.2 Recommendations

5.2.1 To the Government

The government should formulate film policies that will include appropriate choice of language to improve the quality of performance in films produced in Kenya for enhanced local and international consumption.

5.2.2 To Media and Film Industry Players

The film production process should include an appropriate choice of language at the various stages of film production. For instance, script writers need not write their scripts only in the English language, they can also do so in languages that are in reality appropriate for the contexts represented in the film. Only those films that meet the cultural expectations of the community they depict will lead to the growth and success of the film industry. Similarly when casting, directors should not only identify actors who fit the general description of the character but also those who demonstrate performance and language competencies that are required for successful portrayal of characters. In other words, actors chosen for characterization in film should always tend towards being culturally and spatially familiar with the characters being played.

5.2.3 To Institutions of Film and Media Training

Training institutions in film and media studies should incorporate relevant performance and languages competency studies in the film training curricula. This will strengthen and equip aspiring filmmakers with knowledge and skills that will ensure authenticity and acceptability of their products, hence, ensuring growth of the industry.

5.3 The Sum of It All

Film plays an important role in social, cultural, political and economic development of a country. It easily becomes a major source of employment and an effective tool and platform for cultural expression of a people and national identity. Film is the most powerful representation of all art forms especially among the culture industries that also

comprise newspapers, music, radio, television and books because of its inherent property to record life in its rhythms.

The continued consumption of film and other audio-visual products from the West only works to distort knowledge about self-identity as Kenyans. The tendency is that citizens appropriate some of the experiences imbibed from these foreign audio-visual products into their own lifestyles, thus destroying their own value systems.

While there may be contestation as who takes the most blame in the poor state of the film industry in Kenya, what is not in dispute is that a vibrant film industry whose underpinning is a good quality film that is commercially viable would greatly contribute substantially to the country's GDP basket.

In view of these developments, conscious and intentional effort to craft a film aesthetic that rhymes with the Kenyan audiences by all is needed. This study has demonstrated that choice of appropriate language is part of the problem that hinders the emergence of an appropriate Kenya film aesthetic.

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