

An appraisal of Audio-Visual Translation, Implications of Subtitling from Hausa of Sub-Saharan Africa to English

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Abstract - This research paper titled *An Appraisal of Audiovisual Translation, Implications of Subtitling from Hausa of Sub-Saharan Africa to English* explores the spectacular developments in Translation Studies that have occurred in the field of audiovisual translation (AVT) or film translation, most notably subtitling. Subtitling involves converting speeches of actors or characters (characters) to written texts in a movie below the screen. AVT generally is in a state of flux of ongoing changes. Subtitling traditions vary from nation to nation and across enterprises. Special emphasis is laid on intralingual subtitling; (the aspect of language learning) and interlingual subtitling for listeners or viewers. The paper evaluates the challenges of subtitles in movies of the Sub-Saharan Hausa region to English. The researcher used qualitative research method and interpretative approach of translation in order to find out the challenges translators face in subtitling in the movies. This involves extracting subtitles as data through transcription from the movie in a tabular form and comparing them with the translated subtitles followed by an analysis. The paper discovered that application of subtitling in Kannywood movies poses problems that may result in misinterpretation.

Keywords: Translation, Audiovisual Translation, Sub-Saharan Hausa, subtitling, English language, Kannywood

1 INTRODUCTION

Language is credibly complex its translation implies making lots of decisions according to the available data. A good translation is like a bricklayer who takes enough of his time based on skills, experiences and available resources in using the tools: blocks, mixing cement and sand; measuring and adjusting to achieve a good structure. The result is viewed as clear, shaped and well-structured as desired by the bricklayer. Though some scratches and edges may occur at the wrong positions due to human imperfections. Translation also has its tools, techniques and procedures that a translator uses with his competence and experience. In translation, the translated text and the translation are read as fluently as the original.

In line with the above, Nida (12) defines translation as that which “consists in reproducing in the receptor language (TL) the closest natural equivalent of the source language (SL) message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style”. The author is of the view that translation is “to change the form of SL message and reproduce the closest natural equivalent text in the TL, first in the meaning then in style”. Audiovisual translation is a whole new world of translation. Audiovisual Translation (AVT) or *La Traduction Audiovisuelle* (in French) fights with competing terms like audiovisual language transfer, diagonal translation, screen translation, multimedia translation and transadaptation. But nowadays,

AVT is commonly accepted and it covers interlingual subtitling, bilingual subtitling, intralingual subtitling, dubbing, voice-over and audio description.

Consequently, subtitling, as well as AVT are generally in a state of flux. This is due to several factors, which are in one way or another, related to the two-sided coin of globalisation and *glocalisation*, as well as technological developments. Firstly, subtitlers worldwide communicate more than they use to do at conferences, through professional organizations, and in journals devoted to translation in all its guises. Secondly, teaching in AVT is expanding, especially in learning. Subtitlers present their translated rendition of whatever is spoken at the precise moment when it is said, and any viewer with a grasp of the original language or SL can make an instant comparison.

Besides, audio-visual text in sum comprises various components (visual, auditory, verbal, nonverbal) which entails that separating the subtitles from the rest of the text is likely to lead to a different kind of analysis. Studying a film’s subtitles in isolation cannot lead to conclusions on how the viewers receive the movie or identify anything about the things that got lost in translation. The film’s viewers, after all, do not read the subtitles on paper. Gottlieb (105) in Munday (277) adds that subtitling is considered to be ‘intrasemiotic’. It operates within the confines of the movie and TV media and stays within the code of verbal language. The subtitler or translator does not

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even alter the original; s/he adds an element but does not delete anything from the audiovisual whole.

The framed approach is an interpretative perspective in the field of AVT. Interpretation is a critical approach in the area of research that aims at making AVT – subtitling visible in the disciplinary practice. The researcher identifies subtitles of a text in a movie as a way of understanding certain cultures and knowledge. This paper used both SL which is oral and TL translation subtitling to observe the techniques involved in the subtitling of English in Kannywood movies. This approach questions the techniques in the subtitles and some of the challenges by asking the following questions: does subtitling pass across the message through the audience as in the movie? How was this practice introduced in Kannywood? Whose culture do they disseminate?

Many researches have discussed issues on AVT and subtitling but to the best of the knowledge of the writers of this paper, no research on Kannywood subtitling has been done. Language learners or listeners are not allowed to compare or analyse the movie and its subtitling with the message to pass across in the movie.

There have been previous studies conducted, researches have been arranged based on the year of publication in the AVT. Furgani, (2016) research titled *A Study into the Challenges of Subtitling English to Arabic*. The researcher used qualitative research methods and the findings of his study have made practical contributions to enhance the quality of subtitling. It benefited academic research through expanding the literature in the field of subtitling which in turn will benefit future researchers.

Isele (2013) researched on *Machine Translation of Film Subtitles from English to Spanish - Combining a Statistical System with Rule-based Grammar Checking*. The author used quantitative research through a collection of data through questionnaires and evaluated the trained systems with automatic evaluation scores and compared the results to the SUMAT project.

Flanagan (2009) researched *Recycling Texts: Human Evaluation of Example-Based Machine Translation Subtitles for digital DVD*. The researcher incorporated two approaches to evaluation: automatic subtitling using corpus and human-based on an online survey: formative and comparative in rendering questionnaires forming quantitative research. Based on the above survey, this research study looked at the subtitling from an African language - Sub-Saharan Hausa, to European language, English, which do not have the same body of sounds, signs, thought, structure and set of methods of combining them. This necessitated the zeal of the researchers to address the observed gap.

In this respect, the researchers reviewed some concepts on AVT and Translation. Dore (20) defines AVT as “a mode of translation characterised by the transfer of audiovisual texts either *Interlingual* or *Intralingual*”. Sokoli (14) adds that the

study of AVT “as an instance of cross-cultural communication provides a broad, valuable framework”. Cintas (9) observed that “Audiovisual programmes use two codes: image and sound, whereas literature and poetry evoke, movies represent and actualize a particular reality based on specific images that have been put together by a director”. Thus, subtitling, dubbing and voice-over - are constrained by the respect they owe to synchronisation in these new translational parameters of image and sound. Subtitles should not contradict what the actors or characters are doing on the screen including time (i.e. the delivery of the translated message should coincide with that of the original speech).

2 SUB-SAHARA AFRICAN HAUSA AND ENGLISH CULTURES

Language and culture are inextricably bound. This is to say that culture is part of language just as language is part of culture. According to Blount (3), “culture is that which is what is distributed consisting of shared information across social groups of people, enabling effective cooperation”, and his definition of cultural models is that they are “devices that are used to package, transmit, and share information”. Culture in a society is a total system of expressed practices and behaviour including language. This is the reason why the meaning of a word is derived from the culture of the people that speak that language, (Zaki and Nwanjoku. Each language sees things differently. This is why the same life experience by two different communities is expressed differently. Take the case of Hausa and English for instance, both languages seem to have contrasting ways of interpreting ideas.

To clearly appreciate this, there is a need to review language and culture. The concept of culture has been the concern of many different disciplines such as sociology, language, philosophy, cultural studies and translation studies. Culture is considered to be intimately linked with language, just as language is in turn linked with culture. No wonder House (40) sees culture as “the overall way of life of a community or society, i.e. all those traditional, explicit and implicit designs for living which act as potential guides for the behaviour of members of the culture”. She added that culture “captures various societal and national subgroups according to geographical region, social class, age, sex, professional activity and topic”. She continued to explain that “culture is a personal, individual one relating to the individual’s guidelines of thinking and acting”. This is the level of cultural consciousness, which enables individuals to be aware of what characterizes their own culture and makes it distinct from others. The idea of translation as a specific type of intercultural communication also needs to be seen in a new and different light.

In this paper, Sub-Saharan Hausa is an African language spoken in some parts of Sub-Saharan Africa. In African languages, for example, names always represent the values, faults and features of the society. Machaba adds that “Naming is a very important tool used among various African

cultures to convey certain messages, either to an individual, family members or a community". Society plays a major role in influencing the choice of names given to individuals and entities. English itself is a European language. In most European languages, names simply serve to distinguish individuals and to identify them. Besides, Hausa is the largest ethnic group in Sub-Saharan Africa and the second largest language after Arabic in the Afro-Asiatic family of languages. On the other hand, owing to England's influential position within the United Kingdom, it can sometimes be difficult to differentiate English culture from the culture of the United Kingdom as a whole. Based on these facts, a translator must follow the culture of Sub-Saharan Hausa and that of English to transform the message to the target text (TT) using subtitles.

3 DEFINING TRANSLATION AND SUBTITLING

Though literary translation comprises three major kinds of literature and translation of films. In this research, the translation of films or AVT is our concern. Film translation is one of the important branches of literary translation. A movie is a recorded sequence of sounds and images displayed on a screen at a rate sufficiently fast to create the appearance of motion. A movie is judged to be good and successful only when the images and sounds are synchronized. It is a failure when the images and sounds are not synchronized. This involves technology; technology and subtitling are inseparable because Machine translation (MT) is involved.

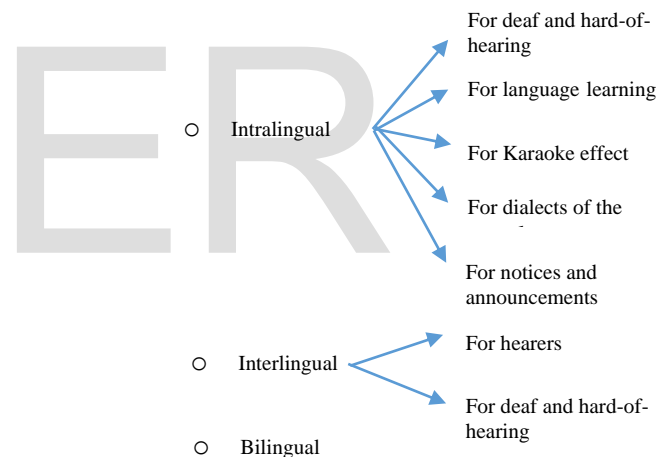
Thus, subtitles according to Luyken et al, (31) and Cintas (36) are defined as "... condensed written translations of original dialogue which appear as lines of text, usually positioned towards the foot of the screen". Cintas (9) adds that "subtitles entail a change of mode from oral to written and resort frequently to the omission of lexical items from the original". The extent here is concerned with, the dimensions of the actual screen are finite and the TT will have to accommodate the width of the screen. It involves the speed at which technological developments take effect. This is based on certain criteria: linguistic, time available for preparation, technical, method of projection and projection format. The time available for preparation has offline subtitling - this is where translators are required to carry out their task by subtitling with the use of complete sentences depending on the situation and online subtitling - which involves using MT where there was no time (in the case of interviews, political statements, sports programmes and news bulletin).

From a technical perspective, there are also technical parameters involved in subtitling. This includes open and closed subtitles. This was supported by Cintas, (21) who says that the basic difference between them is that, in the first instance, "the subtitles are burned or projected onto the image and cannot be removed or turned off". The movie and the subtitles cannot be disassociated from each other, allowing the viewer no choice as to their presence on screen. In the second

instance, "the translation or subtitle can be added to the movie at the viewer's will". The subtitles are hidden and can only be seen with an appropriate decoder or when the viewer activates them on the screen.

The method of projecting subtitles from this perspective represents in effect an excuse through the history of subtitling: mechanical, and thermal, photochemical, optical, laser and electronic subtitling. The technical process of transferring the subtitles to the actual movie has "undergone a considerable evolution, which has led to an improvement in their presentation and stability on-screen", Cintas (2014). The researcher focuses on the last two types. The current method of impression most commonly used in cinema subtitling is a laser. Jakobson (1959) is often cited as being one of the first academics to open up the field. He famously established three types of translation: Intralingual, (or rewording), Interlingual (or translation proper) and intersemiotic (or transmutation). From the linguistic perspective, the following types are discovered as represented by the diagram below:

3.1 DIAGRAM OF AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION



Source: Cintas (2015:14)

As indicated above in the framework, it is classified into three types of translation: on the one hand, Intralingual subtitling - for deaf and hard-of-hearing, for language learning purpose, for Karaoke effect, for dialects of the same language, and notices and announcements. And on the other hand, Interlingual subtitling - for hearers or listeners, viewers and deaf and hard-of-hearing.

Pym (8-9) explains that "the social function of a translation is to convert an "excluded" receiver (who does not have access to the SL) into an "observational" receiver (who can construe what is in the text), and sometimes into a "participative" receiver (who can respond to the text communicatively)". Moreover, Cintas (8) adds that subtitling may be defined as a "translation practice that consists of presenting a written text, generally on the lower part of the

screen, that endeavours to recount the original dialogue of the speakers, as well as the discursive elements that appear in the image (letters, inserts, graffiti, inscriptions, placards, and the like), and the information that is contained on the soundtrack (songs, voices off)". There are problems in translating humor into the subtitle. There is subtitling software which is a means for enhancing translation competence.

Our study is based on Nida that consists of 5 kinds of translation problems. They are i) ecology which explains season and geographical places where a good translator must have a good adjustment and many adaptations. ii) Material culture point out the same environmental features but there are so many cultural differences involved in it. A translator needs to find out how the native interprets such environmental problems. To avoid misunderstanding, this cultural situation should be explained. The cultural situation constitutes food, clothes, houses and cities and means of transport. iii) Social culture in our environment is very complex, the effect is a translator often has to face and confront many difficulties in interpretation and equivalence. The problem occurs in the translation that involved social practices. iv) organisation, customs activities and concepts like administrative politics, religion and the arts, and v) gesture and habits in one country or language are different from other countries or languages. Language includes culture also as an accumulation of cultural factors because of reason one of the factors that might influence translation is the special characteristics of the particular language.

4 ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The movie is titled *Auta* which was written and produced by Nura Akilu with Hausa settings, language and culture. The main character is *Auta* (the Benjamin of the family) and the movie lasts for 1hour: 33 minutes. Below represents the data extracted from the movie in a tabular form:

Extract 1

Original dialogue (01:14)	Subtitle - written text (translation)
<i>Amma na ji dadin haka. Da kyar a samu mutane masu irin halinka.</i>	I am really pleased with this, it's hard to find people with a kind of disposition this days.

Observation: The subtitle is more than two lines, there is a grammatical mistake of "this" which is an adjective in the singular form in place of "these" plural which will agree with the word "days".

Extract 2

Original dialogue (01:53)	subtitle - written text (translation)
<i>Amma yadda zan tantance macijin soshiya a cikin mutane ...</i>	But how to detect the green snake when it is hidden in a green grass in relation to people ...

Observation: The translator here is supposed to consider the word "*cikin*" before translating it as "relation". The subtitler should have used "amidst" or "among" not in relation.

Extract 3

Original dialogue (04:16)	subtitle - written text (translation)
<i>Dan ba mu wuri.</i>	Leave us.

Observation: It is ok in this context because the person spoken to is submissive to the speaker.

Extract 4

Original dialogue (04:45)	subtitle - written text (translation)
<i>"Ai ruwa ba tsaran kwando ba ne".</i>	If not you are so insignificant for me.

Observation: Here, the translator needed to find an equivalent or corresponding proverb that tallies with English culture but he translated the proverb in literal language. The proverb of Hausa should be accompanied by an equivalent in English but the translator merely used literal translation to replace the figurative one.

Extract 5

Original dialogue (05:06)	subtitle - written text (translation)
<i>Tun daga farko, sai da na tambaye ka tukuna, sai da na yi maka gargadi ka ce za ka iya.</i>	I warned you, I warned you from the very beginning, and you assured me of your readiness to venture into it.

Observation: It is also more than two lines. There is repetition in the English version where the translator uses emphasis. This will lead to the disappearance of the image.

Extract 6

Original dialogue (05:26)	subtitle - written text (translation)
<i>Zan wulakanta ka, zan tozarta ka, zan yi maganin ka, zan aje ka a cikin kunci na rayuwa har sai radda ka yadda ka ce za ka bi umurni na.</i>	More so, I would not hesitate to humiliate you, brutalize and subject you to a life of perpetual misery, until you become willing to succumb to my dictates.

Observation: The subtitle here is 118 characters, three times the normal 42 characters per line lasting 12 seconds. It may be readable but not acceptable.

Extract 7

Original dialogue (10:27)	subtitle - written text (translation)
<i>Hummi ni na isa, don Allah ka yi hakuri. Kai ka san ba zan ki zuwa, ba dalili ba.</i>	Come on, you know wouldn't do that please pardon me. You should know I must have had a strong reason for refusing to get in touch.

Observation: In English, the word “I” is missing in the translation which tempers the meaning of the message.

Extract 8

Original dialogue (11:51)	subtitle - written text (translation)
<i>Duk ka ki sakin jikinka, kana ta yin wani abu kamar wani raggo. Bari fa in fada ma fa, samun kyakkyawan abu sai an sha wahala fa, duk abu mai kyau sai an sha wahala ake samun shi. Dole ne, ya kamata ka san abun da kake yi.</i>	You shouldn't behave lazy, look no one ever succeeded without a little suffering, so you need to remain focused.

Observation: There is a deletion in the translation. The translator condensed the message. He shortened the message by identifying that the culture of English is not the same as that of Hausa. The emphasis is laid in Hausa that “bari fa in fada ma fa, samun kyakkyawan abu sai an sha wahala fa, This means same as above *duk abu mai kyau sai an sha wahala a ke samun shi*” in Hausa culture which is translated as “no one ever succeeded without little suffering”. There is a repetition of “fa” from the Hausa context which is not permitted.

Extract 9

Original dialogue (11:27)	subtitle - written text (translation)
<i>Wallahi wai baban Fauziya ne ba shi da lafiya. Ta kira a waya, ta ce an kwantad da shi a asibiti ma.</i>	Is Fauzy, her father took ill.

Observation: The subtitler needed to provide an equivalence here or equal value in English. S/he should consider the equivalence relationship that text A can should have with text B and not necessarily vice versa. The translator here did not consider the meaning of the source text or original dialogue. He further shortened the sentences rendering it meaningless. Also names should not be translated. Here in this case, “Fauziya” is translated as “Fauzy” and it is an abbreviation or nickname. Lost or omission and addition is a scale in balancing translation. Whenever something is lost, there should be a replacement but the summary is not the translation.

Extract 10

Original dialogue (15:01)	subtitle - written text (translation)
<i>Duk abin da za a yi ki shawo kan bawan Allan nan, da kisisina da kicihi da wata kissa irin taku ta mata, ki shawo kan shi ya turo magabatansa. A zo a gama</i>	Do what ever it takes to lure into making formal introduction as soon as possible in order to seal this relationship once and for all.

<i>magana a kammala komai. Kin ji na gaya miki ?</i>	
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Observation: A father is talking to his daughter about her suitor. There is need in Hausa to show the third person or character spoken about “suruki” which is “the suitor” referred to as “bawan Allan nan” in the film which is not captured in the subtitle. “Kan bawan Allah nan” is represented by “him” in English which is missing in the translation whereby the meaning will not be complete without the complement indicating whom the speaker is referring to as “the suitor”. Also “kissa”, “kisisina” and “kicihi” are tactics of women or their features in Hausa culture which is represented in the translation using the word “lure”. Grammatical errors are identified in subtitling like the determiner “whatever” was replaced with “what ever” orthographically while their meanings are not the same.

Extract 11

Original dialogue (01:30:25)	subtitle - written text (translation)
<i>In Allah ya yarda, rashin lafiya ce kawai, mutane ne ba su kulawa har abin ya tabarbare haka.</i>	She will, by God's grace it's just an ailment like any other, unfortunately people don't pay attention to cases like this.

Observation: It is more than two lines of a subtitle. From the original text, there is no “she will” i.e. from the Hausa version. This is added in the subtitle. Three types of constraints are explored in the course of the research - space constraints available on the screen, time constraints that last on the screen until the next begins and the need to synchronise the text and the audio tracks to achieve fluidity which does not prevent the viewer from receiving the message as intended. The researchers observed that space should not be more than two lines and not more than 42 characters per line; otherwise, the viewers will be forced to move their eyes from one corner to the other thus losing sight of other visual elements. As far as time is concerned, each subtitle should remain on the screen for at least one second and no longer than six seconds. There should not more than 21 characters per second. It is important that subtitle is on the screen whenever a sound or noise is heard and will always be present when one or more characters speak. According to Kapsaski the subtitle “normally appears exactly when the voice of the actor start being heard [...] and then disappears normally a bit after the utterances finished”.

5 RESEARCH FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Cultural and linguistic solutions - cultural equivalence, humour and rhyming; error analysis. Subtitle lines should always begin with capitalization. It should end at a natural linguistic break, ideally at or phrase boundaries. It should not break a person's name or title from within a line. There should

no break in a line after conjunction and bolding and underlining are not permitted.

However, in the movie generally, music, sounds of objects like phones and cars are not captured in the subtitles unlike in other movies. All synchronising digital hierarchy (SDH) tags do not follow conventions like sparks, echo, sighs, magnetic echo, laugh, shouts and grunts. In fact, as long as time, space and synchrony are met, SDH tags should be as complete and descriptive as possible. There was a sound that was not captured at the beginning of the movie without subtitling where the actress was shouting of pain. (*wayyo Allah na*) translated as [oh my God] in her hospital bed Also the music where *Auta* wanted to run away from his friend at Motor Park was not captured. The sound of the bike, the honk of cars were not captured either in the subtitle when the actress (*Rahana*) climbed *okada*. There are no one-to-one correspondences of the subtitles in the movie – transparent and not transparent ones. Universally, subtitles lack official international standards based on company or project-based solutions. Accessibility is taken into consideration.

There is also lack of consistency with the font size and style. Of course, this would be the ideal situation but time, as well as space constraints, force subtitlers to make difficult decisions and leave out the least relevant in order to preserve the fundamental. There were grammatical errors identified in subtitling like the determiner “whatever” which was mistaken for “what ever” which the meaning is not the same.

The researchers recommend that subtitlers should master the timeline because poor synchrony in AVT and adjustment should be avoided in the movies. There are also some problems concerning the choice of line divisions. Paying attention to synchronisation and line divisions is of paramount importance. It is expected that the time and space constraints of two lines of 42 characters or fewer per line at a maximum speed of 21 characters per second should be respected. Also, line divisions should make grammatical sense, Division after pauses or before complements seems to be the appropriate place to divide. Subtitles should stay on the screen for between one and six seconds. We observed that there is a greater correspondence between the text and the audio tracks and the level of synchronisation is adequate but some subtitles follow the time and space conventions.

There is a need for the Kannywood subtitlers to be trained or to be retrained in translation as well as finding equal value to texts or equivalents that are faithful to the SL. Here the subtitlers are not professionals and they need to consult professionals in order to meet international standards. Above all, they need to try as much as possible to meet up with their counterparts in the country like Nollywood. Directors and producers in Kannywood should have enough time for rehearsals before shooting their movies. However, the subtitlers had synchronization problems of mixing audio and

subtitles ranging from haste or rush in producing movies within two to three days. There is also a problem of proofreading and editing translated texts considering the culture of the languages.

6 CONCLUSION

The researchers have traced the film translation background and discussed the concept of translation studies, translation, Audiovisual Translation concerning the study. The researchers reviewed some works of literature and empirical studies relating to the study in order to have an insight into the field. The study looks at the AVT and the aspect of subtitles in movies are with special reference to - *Auta*. The researchers used qualitative method and interpretative approach in identifying the challenges of English subtitles in Kannywood. The writers extracted data from the movie through transcription, presenting it in a tabular form followed by its analysis. They identified some challenges in subtitling like synchronisation of text and audio. They suggested that movie directors should respect time and space constraints of two lines of 42 characters or fewer per line at a maximum speed of 21 characters per second, and observe line divisions in subtitling.

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List of Abbreviations

Audiovisual Translation	-	AVT
Digital Video or Versatile Disc	-	DVD
Machine Translation	-	MT
Source language	-	SL
Synchronous digital hierarchy	-	SDH
Target language	-	TL
Target text	-	TT