

15TH CONGRESS OF THE NIGERIAN INSTITUTE OF TRANSLATORS AND INTERPRETERS

THEME: BOOSTING THE NATIONAL ECONOMY THROUGH TRANSLATION

Sub- Theme 3: How Translation (Subtitling and Voice Over) can Revolutionalise
Nollywood?

**TOPIC: EXPANDING THE FRONTIERS OF NOLLYWOOD: THE IMPACT OF SUBTITLING AND
VOICE OVER**

Abstract

Having risen from obscurity to limelight, the Nigerian Movie Industry also referred to as Nollywood, has been identified as the fastest growing movie industry in the world and the second largest in the world. Nigeria's movie industry has also had economic impact on the country by becoming the country's second largest employer and now shows huge potential as an export product to the rest of the world. Across Africa, Nollywood has become a reference point for movie makers. This research paper seeks to evaluate the progress of Nollywood so far in qualitative movie production and identify the opportunities for the expansion of its frontiers with the subtitling and lip-synching (voice-over) technologies. Therefore, qualitative subtitling and voice-over technologies connote the input of Nigerian professional translators and voice-over specialists for its realization.

INTRODUCTION

The term 'Nollywood' was coined by the New York Times journalist Norimitsu Onishi in 2002 when he observed film-making activity in Lagos, Nigeria. The term mirrors two of the most famous areas of film production: Hollywood in the US, and Bollywood in India's Bombay. For some, Nollywood encapsulates the array of actors and actresses emerging from the film-making activity in Nigeria; for others, it refers to the collection of the thousands of movies that have been made there.

However, Nollywood is best understood as referring to the process of film-making in Nigeria, where the films are produced using any and all tools available, adequate or otherwise. This can mean creating movies in volatile and uncertain conditions, often with incredibly short turnaround times. Observing this seemingly impossible production environment is what inspired Norimitsu to coin the term 'Nollywood', which really refers to 'nothing wood', i.e., creating something out of nothing. To explain this a little further, a medical doctor, in describing his experience of the Nigerian film-making activities, likens it to performing open-heart surgery with forks and knives, but the genius of it all, he continues, is that the patient survives. The Nigerian movie industry has come from 'nothing' to all that the world acknowledges today.

Nollywood: The Evolution of its content

For many years, Nigerian films have been based on storylines showing –constant tragedy, romance, drama and comedy that arouses the viewers mind. Whether the main character is going through constant tragedy to end up triumphant or the characters are caught in a love triangle, there are always high drama plots to keep the audience interested.

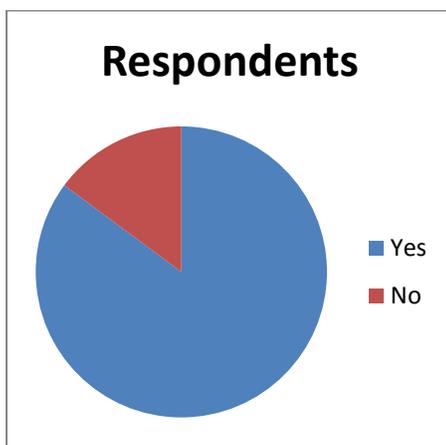
The Nigerian film industry is viewed in both positive and negative ways. Some find the plots to be highly repetitive and unrealistic, while others see them as expressions of the African culture.

Despite the many perceptions Nollywood carries, the industry manages to defy the odds with new thought provoking films and high production quality.

Another critical development in Nollywood came as its films started to reach new audiences abroad. Prior to the mass production of movies in Nigeria, Africans and people of African descent had only been served by film or video produced by either Europeans or Americans. The content of its movies needed to appeal to its audience in the diaspora. A survey was conducted and distributed through email and link posting on social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook. There were a total of 101 respondents. Survey respondents were greeted by a brief message stating the purpose and title of the research. Each respondent was anonymous and had the right to opt out of the survey at any time. The survey was geared toward film watchers, specifically Nollywood film watchers. The respondents were asked general questions to begin and were followed by questions on Nollywood.

Analysis

In terms of the content and production of films 85% of the respondents said they pay attention and 15% said they don't pay attention



Through the content analysis of the selected films and the survey we were able to determine that: the content of Nollywood movies are intensified. The strong plots hold a realm of genres including high drama, romance, and traditional/historical rituals and traditions. The characters in the films analyzed prove to have strong western influences by the style of dress many of the

characters wore modern and westernized clothing, by the character portrayals, many of the characters carried personas that aren't typical African portrayals, language was also another western influence noted in the analysis.

The choice of language varied in the films, some of the characters showed signs that there is a significant amount of westernization in the Nollywood industry.

Nollywood: The impact of technology

Although Nigerian films have been dated back to the 1960s, it was the advancements in digital filming, producing, and editing that boosted the countries film industry.

The role of technology is crucial to the story of Nollywood's evolution. Nigeria has long known about conventional film-making; however, a visionary young trader (Kenneth Nnebue) with a passion for films thought that combining the talent from the NTA with VHS (Video Home System) technology to meet the demand of Nigerians hungry for new entertainment was a good idea. The result was the straight-to-video release of *Living in Bondage*, a film whose commercial success effectively launched a whole film industry.

Alongside these events, digital technology was rapidly replacing audio- and videotape in both music and film industries around the world. This resulted in huge stockpiles of discarded VHS cassettes in vast warehouses all over Lagos and the south-east of Nigeria (Onitsha and Aba).

Nollywood: Expansion through Subtitling

The Nigerian film industry has gained recognition all over Africa and even in other parts of the world. The attempt by film makers in Nigeria to pass a message of cultural heritage to the people has made lots of people to move slightly away from the mainstream English films acted in Nollywood to movies acted in the local languages in the country. The Yoruba movies set the pace for the tribal film industry. Though the English language movies are dominated by a strong Igbo characterization, it is the Hausa and Yoruba film industries that have been churning out movies for the audience.

For internal consumption of movies produced in Nigerian languages, subtitles became a preferred option especially for the literate class. In this case, monolingual subtitling became the best choice and the country's lingua franca, English Language became the language of choice.

We can therefore infer from the above that Nollywood's expansion across the borders of Nigeria will necessitate interlingual subtitling.

The strategic positioning of Nigeria in West Africa among Francophone countries should be seen as an added advantage, a ready-made market for Nollywood aside from the millions of Nigerians who make the Nigerian diaspora across the countries of the world.

EXPANDING THE FRONTIERS OF NOLLYWOOD: SUBTITLING AND VOICE-OVER

Subtitling

Subtitling is many things, not least of which is a way of rendering a foreign language film comprehensible to an audience which does not understand its source language. Subtitles are displayed written text, which are usually shown at the bottom of the screen, and which give '...an account of the actors' dialogue and other linguistic information which form part of the visual image (letters, graffiti, and captions) or of the soundtrack (songs)' (Diaz-Cintas 2003:195). Usually, they are presented underneath or at the bottom of the picture, hence their name, and are normally centred (Bartoll 2004). They can be either closed teletext subtitles, which can be added to the picture as the viewers wish, viewed by means of a decoder or character generator in the television set or turned on by the spectator; alternatively they can be open subtitles, which are an integral part of the film or programme and cannot be removed according to the wishes of the viewer (Ivarsson 2003). Additionally, subtitles can be intralingual, interlingual or multilingual: intralingual subtitles are usually of the closed caption type, in the same language as that which is being titled, and are usually for hard of hearing viewers. Interlingual subtitles, on the other hand, are those which allow a foreign audience to understand the dialogue of a film; they are a form of language transfer and they are also usually written for adults or

children without hearing impairments (Bartoll 2004). There are also multilingual subtitles which are frequently seen in countries where two or more languages are spoken in the country, for example Belgium or Switzerland, in the latter case, one line is given to each language (Gambier 2004). As would be expected, multilingual subtitles consist of subtitles in several languages to be shown on the screen simultaneously.

The professionalism of the French Subtiter and its economic value for Nollywood

In a bid to expand its Frontiers and conquer the French world around, the Nigerian movie industry requires the services of Professional French translators with a Nigerian Language combination.

The Nigerian Institute of Translators and Interpreters must therefore rise to the occasion by serving as a regulatory body for Nollywood in order to win the francophone market already influenced by the productions of Nigerian movie Industry despite the language barrier.

A subtitled movie in French could be sold in Nigeria (over 170 million inhabitants) and in French speaking countries in Africa with an estimated population of more than 300 million inhabitants.

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF: VOICE-OVER & SUBTITLING TECHNOLOGIES

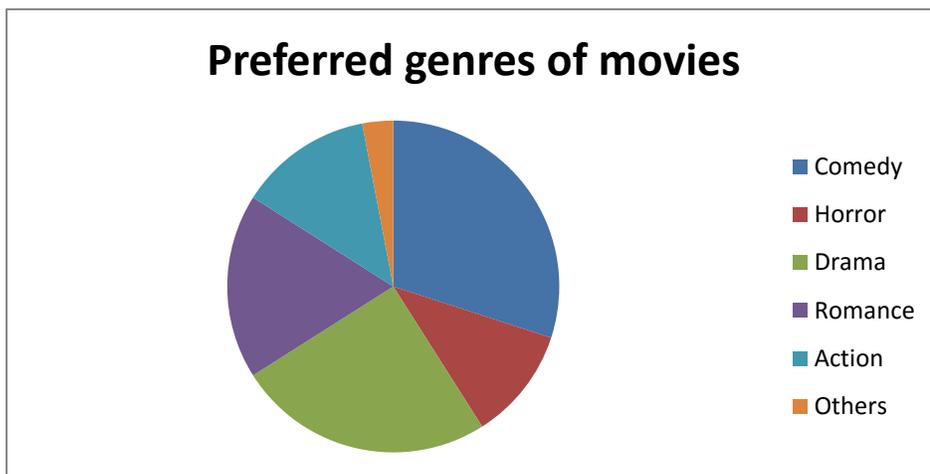
Generally speaking, there are two options to reproducing a movie: You can either produce a new audio file in your target language (voice-over) or you can add subtitles to your video. Let's have a closer look at three aspects of audiovisual translations that will help us to determine which is the right way to go:

Voice-over makes a lot of sense when you want to reach people on an emotional level with sales and marketing pitches. Here is a quick overview of the pros and the cons:

	SUBTITLING	VOICE OVER
Content type	Instructions Education	With more emotional bandwidth Sales, Marketing
Price	Cheaper	More expensive
Timeline	Faster	Slower
Workflow	Medium	Very complex
Additional benefits	SEO	

Content type

Nollywood productions revolve around emotions: love, passion, comedy, drama, action, horror but also are found educative according to an online survey on the preferred genre of movie below:



Comedy, drama, Romance and action have the highest ratio according to the survey. This implies that voice over will make more impact.

Price

Voice-over services cost more money than subtitling. One would need voice actors, an available studio, a sound engineer and a production specialist

Timeline and work flow

The laying of the sound track on the timeline and the editing process are time consuming for a professional work. The voices and the actions must correlate. The sound quality and the cultural barrier of French speakers in Africa must be overcome by providing standard French speaking that will appeal to the diversified French speakers.

It is important for any speaker to take time and speak slowly with lots of pauses to allow subtitles and voice-over to catch up. This is all the more crucial if you translate into a language that will expand. While translating from English to German, for example, the text will turn out to be about 30 percent longer. It also takes some time for the viewer to read subtitles. Rushing the viewer makes for a really bad user experience.

When shots are framed, it should be remembered that subtitles will need space at the bottom of the picture, so a wider frame with some dead space is advised. One will also want to make sure that the use of text in the video is minimized for the viewer's attention or for space in the frame.

Recommendations

Films with subtitles always rank and perform better with both Google and YouTube, and create more inbound traffic. One way to mediate this downside for voice-over is to subtitle the video too.

When subtitles are needed for a film, translators who specialize in subtitles are the only extra personnel that need to be hired. Not having to hire and work with voice actors saves time and money, but you run the risk of making the audience feel like foreigners who have to read in order to know what the characters are saying. Nollywood movie producers and marketers

should contact professionals in the field in order for their industry to gain more international recognition.

Voice-over, also known as “dubbing”, is the other option you have when trying to adapt your film or show to a foreign market. This process takes much more time and resources, including studio time and hiring voice actors. First, a translator has to translate the dialogue, which is then used by the voice actors. Sometimes this translated dialogue is created in such a way that it matches with the movements of the original actors’ mouths, which adds extra work in terms of the translator having to make sure and choose words with sounds that fit the mouth shapes and movements of the actors.

Subtitles may be seen as more “globalizing” in that they generally preserve everything about the film or show, and just add text in the target language.

Voice-over, on the other hand, may be a less globalizing option, since it caters directly to the target audience with voice actors speaking in their language and sometimes even their dialect and accent. Some would argue that this means the source culture doesn’t shine through as much, and therefore has less influence on the target culture. However, it might be just as effective or more so than subtitling, since an audience might be more likely to absorb and digest new concepts and ideas when they are being explained in their native language.

Basically, as long as your translation is good, both subtitles and voice-over are good options for making your film, show, or video a global hit.

The Nigerian Institute of Translators and Interpreters should therefore take the lead in developing courses and programmes for subtitling and voice-over of Nollywood movies as neighbouring countries such as Cameroon have started tapping into this “gold mine” that is proudly a Nigerian success.

CONCLUSION

The depth of the Nigerian film industry is clear in the range of topics explored in their films. However, the influence of Nigerian cinematography extends way beyond entertainment. Watching a Nollywood movie could mean several hours of entertainment as well as support for economic and democratic development abroad.

Romance has blossomed between Nigeria's iROKO and France's Canal+, who have signed a multi-million-euro deal to distribute Nollywood hits in French via an app. Until now, though, only Anglophone Africa could get this on the move. But a new partnership is due to change that, extending Nollywood's finest to a French-speaking audience via a phone app. Nigeria's film-and TV-streaming company iROKO and leading French pay-TV provider Canal+ will launch a subscription video-on-demand (SVoD) service for Francophone Africa this year.

How prepared must we then be at The Nigerian Institute of Translators and Interpreters to fully tap into this “gold mine”

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