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Hollywood in Uganda: local appropriation of trans-national English-language movies

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Hollywood movies are popular in Uganda. This paper reports a study that investigated access to English-language Hollywood movies in Uganda, by way of an ethnographic audience study carried out in slum areas of the city of Kampala. The researchers visited and participated in the watching and reviewing of English-language movies in makeshift video hall shacks, where interpretation of the films into Luganda, the most common local language, took place simultaneously with the viewing of the films. By way of unstructured conversational interviews, descriptions of events, photographs and reviews of movies, the paper examines the practices of interpreting and localising carried out by the hired interpreters (known as Vee-Jays). In particular, it describes how the interpreters operate as mediators who provide access to these English Hollywood movies and examines how the global gets infused into the local through processes of contextualisation of the films. The paper contributes to our understanding of how new forms of cultural representation are created, consumed and shared through digital and other media, and the effects digital technology has on the local movie entertainment industry.

Keywords: local/global; English in Africa; glocalisation; film; Hollywood; interpreter

Introduction

Uganda is a multilingual country with over 40 different languages. It is also the only East African country where the use of Kiswahili as a lingua franca is very limited. Instead, Ugandans prefer to use English as a common language of communication between speakers of different languages and as the language of government business. Despite this popular use of English, only a few highly educated Ugandans speak it fluently and understand it well. The majority of the population, especially those in Buganda, find it easier to understand foreign or exotic cultural processes such as Hollywood movies when rendered or presented to them in their local languages (Majola 2006).

This paper presents a study of local access to Hollywood movies among people who are not able to understand spoken English and it describes the language and cultural practices that make Hollywood movies accessible and popular amongst the poor in Uganda. We describe how digital media have changed the film industry in Uganda by enabling the production of voice-over interpretive commentaries of Hollywood movies in Luganda, the most common language spoken in the region. Luganda-speaking video

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interpreters/commentators and video hall owners have taken advantage of advances in digital recording technology to provide voice-overs in the form of simultaneous live interpretations as well as simultaneous recorded interpretations of the films, drawing on the cultural and linguistic background of the audience, to make sense of the films for the audience, and to make them available for local audience consumption in Uganda. The interpreters, known locally as Vee-jays (video-jockeys or VJs), are cultural and linguistic mediators: they bridge the global context of Hollywood film production and distribution, on the one hand, and local knowledge and tastes, on the other. We might describe this as the 'glocalisation' of Hollywood movies in Uganda (Duru 2010), but we use the term with some reservation. In glocalisation, as the process is described in the literature, the producers of the product or service are commonly involved in or aware of the contextualization of their product to suit the local contexts of distribution, while this is not the case with the local appropriation of Hollywood movies in Uganda. We start with a general account of the 'bibanda' industry, drawn from the limited literature available, and then go on to describe our own research on the topic.

The bibanda cinema industry in Uganda

Bibanda is the name for video halls found in slum areas of Kampala. In a *kibanda* (singular for bibanda) there are roughly-made wooden benches, two to three television screens, and a video recorder or a DVD. Sometimes there is more than one television screen, showing different films or a game of football simultaneously. The audience chooses what to watch. The bibanda are usually constructed using wood or mud and wattle and a temporary roof made of rusty recycled iron sheets or tin or other plastic/polythene and/or canvas sheeting material. They are mostly located in densely populated slum neighbourhoods where their target audience resides. In the up-market cinemas, in contrast with the bibanda, access is expensive, films are not translated and there are no live or recorded movie commentaries. The bibanda moviegoers are normally poor, people with limited or no access to and unable to afford personal television screens and DVD players and with limited English language resources (Marshfield and Oosterhout 2007). The clients of the bibanda range from school-going children as young as 10 years old to adults (Musinguzi 2004). Van Oosterhout (n.d.) provides a vivid description of the bibanda:

> Each day an estimated thirty thousand people in Kampala are going to the 'movies'. They sit down on wooden benches inside dark structures with welcoming names like House of Entertainment and Touch of Class. The television screen is the only source of light while everybody sits knee to knee watching the 'latest' Jet Lee film or a 'John' Rambo. They nibble on cassava fingers or kabalagalas (banana cookies) instead of popcorn. The Luganda voice-over blends in with the laughter and the awes of amazement as Jackie Chan shows the audience another daring stunt. In more than six hundred reeds, wooden and stone structures, popularly known as bibanda (shacks) or video halls, cheap entertainment is sold. For the price of a chapatti you can flee from the harsh realities of daily life, and enter the material and sophisticated world of covert western advertisement. Most beloved ingredients: high action, stunts and violence.

The live interpreters or voice-over interpretation are what keep people interested. Marshfield and Oosterhout (2007, 13) described the interpretation process as follows:

> The Vee-jay (interpreting/translating) culture is most visible in Kampala. The more then [sic] twenty translators . . . serve a variety of ethnic and linguistic groups. Some translators make it an art in itself to add their own humour to the content of the film. This means that they don't stick to the real storyline. Sometimes this is so because the Vee-jays themselves have received limited education and can, as a matter of fact, not translate the foreign films accurately. They make up for their lack of foreign language skills by pleasing their audiences with typical

> Ugandan humour. Around Makerere University, however, more serious translators are very popular because they stick to the official dialogues in the film. The popularity of a translator depends on the sophistication of his/her audience. Most translations are done in Luganda and distributed across the country.

In an interview reported by Lagarriga (2007), the president of one of the Vee-jays associations Nakibinge Joe explains that:

> The VJ is like a DJ. While the DJ is one who spices up music in a discotheque, and he can put things, which can make you move at least till morning, a VJ is also like that. He puts some jokes in the film, at the same time he translates it, at the same time he is also like an actor, because he's also acting . . . VJ's are the subtitles for the community, without us people cannot understand the movie. We live in the slum areas, but we can read and write, so we speak on top of the movie. We must be there. Some people in the audience looks more to the VJ than to the movie, because they see a man speaking alone for 90 minutes, or three hours, moving, narrating, exclaiming . . . They enjoy a lot! (Lagarriga 2007, 1)

This, then, is the context of video media text consumption in Ugandan slums. They are in the public domain and viewing or participation is commercialised. Three different types of movies are watched in Uganda: Hollywood, Nollywood (from Nigeria), and Bollywood (from India) movies; but we only focus on English-language Hollywood movies in this paper. Because of their limited educational experience and limited exposure to English, poorer Ugandans have difficulties in understanding English-language Hollywood movies. Additionally, the English spoken in Hollywood movies is American English, with accents that are sometimes difficult even for English-speaking Ugandans to understand. These factors change the experience of film-watching. Some audience members, as noted above, thus look more to the Vee-jays than to the movie. This is because they see a man speaking alone for 90 minutes, sometimes three hours, moving, narrating and explaining the movie. Vee-jays have different popularity ratings based on how entertaining their performances are (Lagarriga 2007). However, with the help of new media technologies, the shack video hall owners sometimes also get around the language barrier by buying movies with soundtracks interpreted in the local Luganda language.

The primary purpose of the Vee-jay intervention is to make Hollywood movies accessible in an entertaining way to a local kibanda audience. The Vee-jays are, therefore, engaged in re-contextualising the movies (Blommaert 2005; Gee 1990), or appropriating the global into the local, a process that we can call the glocalisation of the commodity. According to Musinguzi (2004), most of the movies watched in the bibanda are pirated copies. Copyright laws do exist in Uganda but their enforcement is weak. The shack video hall operators, therefore, take advantage of this weak enforcement of the law to have access to pirated copies or modified copies of the movie for commercial purposes.

According to Nakibinge in an interview with Lagarriga (2007), commentating or interpreting movies was first started in 1988 by a man named Lingo. He said people could not watch movies without him because they did not understand them. Commenting on movies, he moved around from the front to the back of the kibanda, describing to the audience what the movie was about in Luganda. This man was an uneducated man who did not understand English very well. The technology of the time was not yet well developed or available to enable him to control the sound track or to permit a voice-over recording of his commentaries and interpretations of the movie. Nonetheless, he managed to initiate an influential innovation that transformed the local cinema industry in Uganda. Within two years, others decided to take up this activity because the demand for interpreted movies was growing. With advances in media technology, it became possible to extend the commentaries from live-only performances to voice-over recordings of the commentator's or interpreter's voice

(Lagarriga 2007). Digital technological advances made it possible to switch off the original English dialogue or overwrite some sections with commentaries. The process of constructing an interpretation involves watching the film in its original form and then interpreting it to suit the local context based on the understanding of the local audience. There is presently a network of over 2000 bibanda in Uganda, functioning as local cinemas and general audio-visual entertainment venues for grassroots communities (Marshfield 2007). The bibanda are thus a very extensive site for the production and consumption of transnational movies in Uganda. Our concern in this paper is to report on our research into how these sites are experienced and valued, both on the part of the producers and consumers, and to consider them as sites of popular culture and adult education.

Conceptualising our research

We particularly focus here on two theories in the study of media production and consumption that informed our study: audience response theory and narative transportation theory. Audience response theory claims that audiences are active recipients or consumers of communications (Livingstone 1998). The theory recognises that, 'audience are plural in their decoding, [and] that their cultural context matters'. The theory is a refutation of an earlier media theory which assumed that, 'media texts have fixed and given meanings . . . that media influence works through the linear transmission of meaning to a passive audience and that an audience is an homogenous and uncritical mass' (Livingstone 1998, 4). We can consider the Vee-jay intervention from this perspective. The Vee-jays are consumers who themselves are actively involved in the process of decoding and producing meanings from Hollywood movies and making them available to other users in a culturally meaningful manner. These meanings may not be the same as those of the film's producers, though the intention to provide entertainment remains common to both. The Vee-jay intervention makes the entertainment contextually relevant for local audiences.

Narative transportation theory provides a compatible explanation of movie consumption. This theory explains that movie enjoyment comes with personal engagement or immersion into the film narrative world, through mental, emotional and imaginative connections that include identifying and empathising with some of the characters in the film (Batat and Wohlfeil 2009). Transportation is explained as a process by which, 'the consumer is transported to a world different from the current everyday personal experience' (Batat and Wohlfeil 2009, 372). This absorption need not be the same as the intention of the producers, since the audience in their engagements with the film create their own relationships, drawing on culturally relevant and specific meanings.

Local appropriation

According to Guralnik (1986, 68), to appropriate means 'to take improperly, as without permission', which is an apt description of the processes by which Hollywood movies are made available for local audience consumption in Uganda. According to Read and Stangos (1994), in visual art, to appropriate means: to adopt, borrow, recycle or sample aspects (or the entire form) of a man-made cultural product. The Vee-jays, therefore, are appropriating or 'taking hold of' the movies and making them relevant for local audience consumption (Lutz 1990). Bierschenk (2004, 2) used the term 'local appropriation' to describe 'how a global technology [his focus is "democratic election"] is appropriated at local levels'. His paper examines the local meanings of *democratic election* in the West African context.

O'Farrell (2003, 2) similarly described 'local appropriation' as the process of, 'communities and groups selecting, adopting and adapting communication tools so that they become rooted in their own social, economic and cultural processes'. The resources here, for local appropriation of Hollywood movies in Uganda, are those of narration, commentating and interpretation. The Vee-jays' practice is central in this process of local appropriation. Their specialist knowledge or ability to contextualise foreign and local cultures and traditions puts them in the privileged position of acting as mediators of movies generated in different cultural settings for the global entertainment industry. We can also talk of a process of cultural 'abrasion' (Varan 1998), where there are differences and dissonances in cross-cultural exchanges. The bibanda are venues of transcultural impact in this light and the Vee-jays are cultural mediators who show an understanding of the experiences of the audience as they encounter blended media presentations (Varan 1998, 100). Local values and Vee-jays' renditions of foreign values come together to form part of the audience experience during the video shows. This local appropriation of transcultural media interaction is made possible by direct, live and embodied interpreting, in some cases, and the adding of voice-overs in others, involving the recording of audio onto those used in the original production of the film. In some cases, this comes as a mix of the two audio sources; in others, a complete removal of the original sound track and voices.

Glocalisation

Glocalisation combines the words 'globalisation' and 'localisation' to emphasise the idea that a global product or service is more likely to succeed if it is adapted to the specific context or requirements of local practices and cultural expectations (Open University 2012). It is a process by which a product that is produced and distributed globally is adapted to suit local consumer preference (Duru 2010; Khondker 2004). In this case, globally distributed, Hollywood-produced movies are adapted for local use in shack video halls in slum settlements. Glocalisation refers to a situation in which, 'local people have both global and local perspectives at the same time. Glocalised folk zoom in and out; they have tremendous global awareness and insightful local knowledge' (Seshadri 2008, 1). The Vee-jays do not quite fit this definition in that their global awareness might be limited but they nonetheless are engaged in the process of producing glocalised movies.

Methodology: ethnographic audience study

In order to understand the Vee-jay practice of commenting on English Hollywood movies for local audience consumption in Uganda, we used a research method called ethnographic audience study. Ethnographic audience research was used by Tager (1997) in a study of audience understanding of *The Bold and the Beautiful* (a 'TV soapie'), where the audience was urban black viewers in Kwa Zulu-Natal. Brown, cited in Tager (1997, 97), explains that ethnographic audience research, 'assumes that audiences use and interact with television and other popular forms of entertainment in a variety of ways depending on intercultural, social, class, race, and age variables'. Ethnography usually refers to, 'forms of social research having . . . strong emphasis on exploring the nature of particular social phenomena, rather than setting out to test hypotheses about them' (Atkinson and Hammersley 1994, 248). According to Morley (cited in Tager 1997, 99):

> the aim of ethnographic audience studies is to examine the dynamics of the actions and constraints in the daily activities and practices of the individuals and groups who are engaged in the socially situated production and consumption of meanings.

Tager (1997, 99) further explains that ethnographic audience study acknowledges differences between people, and pluralises the meanings and pleasure that they find in television. This approach contradicts theories which stress that television meanings are singular. Ethnographic audience study is therefore a form of media study which takes into account cultural difference in audience response to media.

In our study of Vee-jays' interpretations and commentaries on Hollywood movies from the perspective of audience response theory, we identified three types of response. The first was the response that produced the Vee-jay intervention. The second type was the response to the Vee-jay intervention and finally, the third was the response to the actual movie action itself. We used visual ethnography and documentary photography, which are research methods involving the use of film, video, and photographs, to provide visual data. Visual ethnography involves the taking of pictures of phenomena under investigation while documentary photography deals with the study of existing pictures as evidence of what is being investigated (Denzin and Lincoln 1994; Harper 1994; Openjuru 2008).

We became observer-participants and we watched the Vee-jay-interpreted movies and interacted with different movie audiences as well as the Vee-jays. We visited a number of bibanda to experience the watching of these interpreted movies and to get an 'insider' view of these cinema halls. We particularly concentrated on two shack bibanda cinema halls. We transcribed sections of the English-language films and compared these with the interpretation provided by the Vee-jay to see how they contrasted and corresponded with each other.

Research context and research methods

We focused our research on shack video halls/bibanda located in a slum area in Kampala. Two of the bibanda we visited were located in Kireka, a suburb found in the eastern part of Kampala on the Jinja Kampala highway (Byrnes 1990). Our research subjects included owners and operators of the bibanda, the Vee-Jays and some of the regular clients. We used purposive sampling methods to select the bibanda owners and operators. These owners and operators are responsible for the procuring/purchasing of the English-language and interpreted movies and for playing them to their clients on video screens for a fee. They are also responsible for building the bibanda, where they run their business on the basis of trader's licences, obtained from the local council authorities. We also interviewed regular members of the audience who had come to participate in the movies. Our interviews were concerned with obtaining accounts of personal experiences in relation to the watching of the interpreted movies. We used convenience sampling to select the video halls, according to whether we could easily access them over time and whether there were fewer dangers for the female researcher. To collect data for this study, we used participant observation, guided and unstructured conversational interviews, and documentary review of selected interpreted movies.

Participant observation

We regularly visited two video halls and participated in watching the movies with other movie-goers over a period of one year, at a rate of about once a month. During our participation we listened, without recording the conversations, to what was going on in the shack video hall in relation to the movie content. We took note of the characteristics of people who regularly watched the movies, regarding their age and social status, as well as their bodily actions in response to the movies and the interpreters. We tried to identify the most popular movies and Vee-jays on the basis of the audience reaction. We observed the state

of the facilities and the furniture. We made our observations independently of each other and then analysed them together to identify common features. These common features constituted emerging themes in our study. Our recordings produced in-depth description of events but were not done on-site, because many of the shack video halls are temporary, illegal structures and their owners would not allow us to take photographs or record interviews with their clients. We also did not want to interrupt the natural flow of activities by conducting audio-recordings or taking photographs. We also conducted five on-site, unstructured, conversational, in-depth key informants' interviews with bibanda owners and operators. We randomly interviewed some of the movie-goers, aiming to get their responses to the interpreted movies. The interviews were done in Luganda with Luganda-speaking interviewees and transcribed in English.

Documentary review

To review the movies, we bought some of the voice-over interpreted/narrated film discs from video shops, along with the original English copies and we watched and listened to both the English and Luganda versions of some of the most popular movies on our computers and television sets in our homes. We transcribed some of them and compared both the English and the Luganda interpretations and narrations. We then met to discuss and analyse the differences between the two versions. We particularly concentrated on a movie titled, 'The Forbidden Kingdom', featuring Jet Li and Jackie Chan as the stars (produced in 2008, directed by Fusco and Minkoff).

To gain insight into the movies, we searched information from the Internet, for example, about the Jet Li and Jackie Chan film. This search had the objective of helping us to understand whether what the Vee-jays were presenting to their audience had any similarity to the original narrative intentions of the film.

In summary, data from different sources were recorded and studied, including data from documentary reviews, key informant interviews and in-depth observation of audience behaviours during the movies. The information from these sources was studied and collated using theme cards, which we used to draw out common understandings between the two researchers of the Vee-jay narration practices across the different movies.

Findings

Field observations

As described in the literature review earlier, our observations showed the Vee-jays performing a critical mediating role in audience enjoyment of Hollywood movies. The audience members who had limited fluency in English and limited understanding of the cultural practices that shaped the action of the films were nonetheless able to access these global trans-national films. They did so through the intervention of the Vee-jays, who mediated both the language and the cultural meanings informing the actions in the movies. All of the films interpreted in Kampala circulate in areas where Luganda is understood or popular (Lagarriga 2007). Luganda is one of over 40 local languages spoken in Uganda and it is one of the dominant languages spoken in Kampala. All the 30 shack video halls we visited played only Luganda-interpreted movies. The contextualization practices of the Vee-jays with regard to the movies included the substitution of place names in the films with local names and the use of local storytelling styles. These were accompanied in some cases by the use of local slang, the substituting of the names of the characters/actors with descriptive local names and the description of action in a manner that was closer to the daily experiences

of the audience. As one of the movie participants, a dry cleaner and an ardent customer of triple SJ cinema hall said, 'Interpreted movies are very interesting, more than original ones because they are spiced up'. He said that the interpreter related most things to the local environment by assigning actors and places with known and common Ugandan names. This makes the viewers understand the movie and feel more attached to it. The substitutions are meant to bring home some understanding through the use of known local comparisons.

We observed the Vee-jays spicing up their live performance with drama, action and local colloquialisms to produce a vivid and entertaining 'remix' of particular scenes. This complex mix of action and words created a meaningful and accessible localised reproduction of the film, a process of fitting foreign films into the local discourse practices of the audience in a way that helped the audience to understand and enjoy the experience.

In the transcript below, there is a verbatim extract of the narration and commentaries for a movie titled, 'The Forbidden Kingdom' (Fusco and Minkoff 2008), a very popular movie in Kampala's bibandas. The transcript shows an example of a Vee-jay narration and interpretation of English-language text credits as well as images, alongside the original. It occurs at the beginning of the movie, when the film credits were running and nothing was being said yet, on the original audio recording. What the Vee-jay says, then, as we show below, is much more than an attempt at verbatim translation of what is being said in the movie.

Excerpt 1. Narration when no words are spoken.
(Interpretation/narration of the Forbidden Kingdom [Fusco and Minkoff 2008])

Transcription of the English words actually said in the movies	English translation of the Luganda commentaries/narration
No words spoken, just actions	The Forbidden Kingdom Lions Gate has brought this movie To begin with Lions Gate and Casey Silver productions have brought this movie Got from Majestic plaza as usual. Rob Minkoff is the owner of the film. The film is called the Forbidden Kingdom. That is what we are on. It is the kingdom we are going to explore. In the beginning there was up on the hill a man playing with his stuff and he was a tough man, he is like a monkey. They came and attacked him. My friends look at trouble! They have provoked him and he fights off all of them from up the hill. Kumbe! (Actually!) There was someone dreaming about the scene. He had seen everything. As he woke up, the TV was playing a movie KUNG-FU. He has collected many posters; he is a KUNG-FU maniac. He is more interested than anyone else, he has collected all kinds of posters. Look at trouble – Collin Chaou, Liu Yifei, Li Bing Bing and Michael Angarano are on the posters he has collected and are in the movie. He has posters of all colours, he has watched many movies about KUNG-FU. He watches these films until he feels sleepy and as soon as he wakes up in the morning, he begins from where he stopped.

The use of *'Kumbe!'* which is a Kiswahili word meaning 'actually' is an example of one of the words used as a discourse marker, to signal a surprising twist in a story.

It is a story-telling strategy used by the Vee-jays to capture the audience's attention and is part of the local story-telling style enjoyed by both commentators and audience alike, part of their repertoire for 'spicing up' the movie narrative. Together with their use of local colloquialisms and references, it is this 'spicing up' that makes the film into a trans-national movie, and more interesting for the local audience.

In the transcript above, the Vee-jay verbally presents the film's credits, which are written on screen. We also noted that the Vee-jay's interventions when there was speech were not simply a version of the actors' utterances but also an explanation of actions. The excerpt below shows a comparison of the actual words said in the film and the English translation of the Vee-jay's Luganda commentaries/narrations.

Excerpt 2. Narration of conversation.

Transcription of the English words actually said in the movies	English translation of the Luganda commentaries by Vee-Jays
Jason Tripitikas: How long has he been imprisoned? Lu Yan: Five hundred years, give or take a few decades. They say when the Monkey king is free, Jed Emperor will return. Jason: I don't want to free the Monkey King, I want to go home. Lu Yan: Innkeeper, more wine. Jason: Haven't you had one too many? Lu Yan: Wine is my inspiration, in some areas I'm known as a poet. In some areas, I'm known as a beggar.	It's for a long time now and it's you who has returned to give him the stuff. He has spent time there now. It's said that, if the Monkey King is free even the Emperor will return. The boy said, I need to get home, I cannot free the Monkey King. The boy continued and asked, 'Don't you think you have had enough wine'. What you see actually is what adds my strength. He takes the bill to free himself. You know, I am also known as a beggar. Then he passed the bill to the boy.
Lu Yan: When I was your age, I was a scholar-warrior in training. My arrow was good, so too my Kung Fu. I was chosen to take the several examinations. To pass would place me among a short line of scholar immortals. I failed. Jason: You're not immortal? Lu Yan: If one does not attach himself to people and desires, never shall his heart be broken. . . . But then, does he ever truly live? I'd rather die a mortal, with a care for someone, than to live free as an immortal from his death. Jason: I don't want to lose you. Lu Yan: Forget about me.	In a way he had helped this boy Jason. Jason was feeling sorrows of all kinds. He had seen him becoming pale. Then he says that he will die as a mortal because it seems everything had changed.
Lu Yan: It is said that master and student walk side-by-side, sharing their fate, until they go their separate ways. Jason: I will never forget you. Lu Yan: I guess that's what being immortal truly means.	He said that it's said a master and his student walk together until a time comes when they have to separate.

What is clear from the above is that the Vee-jay's commentaries are not a word-for-word translation of the movies but a narration which the Vee-jay superimposes on the movie and which gets recorded and reproduced as part of the film-going experience. In the Luganda narration, Jason is referred to as 'the boy' and Lu Yan, the main character, is not named.

The Silent Monk is not named either. Ni Chang is called the Abbot and is sometimes called the Chief Monk. The commentaries, also, are in colloquial rather than standard Luganda.

Setting, observations and interviews

On one of our visits to a kibanda, this is what we noted:

> Outside at the entrance to the kibanda there is a small slate of wood serving as a chalkboard [see Figure 1 below] for advertising the movies of the day or the soccer matches of that day or week. From outside I am hearing a lot of loud sound coming from inside. At the door is a young man sitting on a wooden bench collecting fees from the clients as they enter, next to him is also a young man frying chapatti for the audience who would like to eat some as they enjoy the movie. The boy seems to be familiar with most of the clients; it looks like they are his regular clients. As we approach the door the young man was not very keen about taking our fees. He is looking at us very suspiciously. He seems not to be very comfortable with our presence. Inside the hall, I am seeing more than one television set; one set is showing a movie and another one a soccer match. The noise level inside the hall is confusing and unbearable. The walls are decorated with pictures of some prominent Hollywood movie stars and Nigerian actors and footballers. (Observation field noted: Saturday 15th January 2010)

On another day we visited another kibanda:

> In one of the bibanda we visited, the hall operator does not collect money at the entrance, but he does so when the audience is already seated for a time length of about 10–20 minutes. He says he does this to give an opportunity to the audience to assess if they would like to watch the movie or not. If they are not interested in the movie, they walk out and he does not charge them for the minutes spent in the movie hall. The hall is dark inside but the operator can identify all his audience and he knows who has paid and who has not. When asked how he does this, he says most of the audience is his customers and a few who are strangers can easily be identified. (Observation field noted: Saturday 22nd January 2010)

This particular movie hall has the interesting name of, 'Big Sounds Entertainment'. The school children are browsing for the next show that is on the display. This is how the movies are advertised, on display chalkboards, using written chalk information and movie covers that have pictures of some of the scenes. The chalkboard is ideal because it allows for the reuse of different titles that will be showing at different times of the day.

Figure 1. Chalkboard on which the next film shows are advertised.

A casual survey of different shack video halls revealed that the operators charge different fees for movies and soccer matches. A soccer match is more expensive than a movie by about 200 Ugandan shillings, which is about US $0.08. The movies normally last between two and three hours and cost about Ug Shs. 300 (about US $0.12). The audience appeared to be low income earners, ranging from 10 to 35 years of age.

David (not his real name) shows different kinds of movies, ranging from action to blue movies (pornographic films). He said, 'The blue movies are shown late in the night at about 22:30 hours and onwards to the adult audience only. At this late hour children are at home and therefore do not have to watch such movies'. He added that, 'The blue movies cannot be shown during day because if concerned authorities come and find it on, they may close down his kibanda'. He said that depending on the type of movie, children below 18 years of age, according to the Ugandan law, are not permitted into the movie hall.

Patrick, a local who frequents the movie hall, informed us, and we also noted, that the audience, including school-age children, preferred to watch Hollywood action movies. They would like to copy the Hollywood movie stars' ways of life and to lead the life that people do in Hollywood. They claim that the Hollywood movies stimulate their imagination in addition to providing them with an avenue for exposure to Western cultures that are beyond their reach. They get to see modern airports, cities and other such facilities.

When we asked opinions about Nollywood movies as compared to Hollywood, one of our key informants says, 'The Nollywood movies are also interesting to watch and help us to appreciate African culture' (Interview, 15th January 2010). He argues that, 'The African culture is almost the same everywhere in Africa, there is not much difference for example in the family cultural setting in Nigeria and that in Uganda' (Interview, 15th January 2010). For that reason there is no strong need for interpretation by Vee-jays of Nigerian English-language films.

We sat down on some of the benches inside the shack video hall, on one occasion, and documented the following:

> The movie is starting to play (entitled 'Thirty Seven days in Iraq'). The audience are becoming very quiet; everybody seems to be attentive now. I noticed that all the original sounds are turned off. It's only the interpreter who is talking. The audience appears to be enjoying the movie and they are keenly watching and listening to the interpreter. They are enjoying both the actions of the movie and the Vee-jay's words which interest them. The interpreter said something that I did not get clearly and the audience are bursting into a hearty laugher all around me. The young audience also appears to be enjoying, though at certain moments they ask their fellow audience seated next to them to explain what is going on in the movie. We also observed that the Vee-jays assign the actors names that are familiar with the local population; this makes the movie more interesting with the familiar names. (Observation field noted: Saturday 15th January 2010)

It is apparent that the interpreter is not the only person helping with access to meanings in the movies, since there are also inter-audience consultations going on during the movie, in addition to the interpreters' comments. We talked with a member of the audience after the movie about his response to the movie: 'The movie is very interesting and I enjoy such movies because they are spiced up' (Interview, 15th January 2010). He admitted that he does not understand English very well and that he benefits a lot from the interpreter's comments. He said, 'I prefer Singo (not real name), because he explains the movie much better compared to Amigo' (not real name). This indicates that the interpreters are rated and ranked in popular opinion and are local celebrities. In effect, the popularity of different Hollywood movies among the urban poor is affected by the relative popularity of these local Vee-jay celebrities who have contributed recorded or live commentaries for particular

films. Our interviewee also said, 'I cannot watch such a movie in my house because I do not have what it takes to watch such a movie' (Interview, 15th January 2010). He said that he does not have electricity in his one-room house. He does especially watch these movies in his free time and on Sunday afternoons and the fee is quite affordable.

Some of the bibanda have walls made of brick, although many of them are made of timber, supported with materials used for paper boxes. The floors are poorly cemented and they are quite dusty. Some have mud floors, so during the rainy season, the floors are quite damp because the rainwater flows and enters the hall. One kibanda we visited had very poor and dirty curtains hanging on the door:

> The curtain at the door is a very old piece of cloth pinned at one side of the entrance not to allow in light as people get in and out of the hall. The hall is dark to allow the audience to watch the movie without much interruption caused by light from the outside. The seats are wooden benches that are poorly made; they are very uncomfortable to sit on for a long period of time. (Observation field noted: Sunday 16th January 2010)

Although the shack video halls are very uncomfortable as described above, they are always full, indicating a very strong motivation to watch these interpreted Hollywood movies. In case of a power outage, the operator turns on a standby generator. When a movie is shown using a generator, the price goes up by about Ug shs. 200 (about US $0.08) to cater for the additional cost of running the generator. We observed, in one case: 'The generator is placed very close to the hall, so the noise from the generator distracts the ongoing movie and one is not able to listen to the words very well' (Field note: Saturday 15th January 2010). We could not see any fire extinguishers that could be used during an emergency fire outbreak.

Conclusion

In spite of the difficulties that many poor and uneducated Ugandans have in understanding the English used in the movies and the Western cultural context within which they are set, this has not hindered them from accessing Hollywood movies. The movies have infused in them a different culture that many Ugandans have adopted and hold in higher esteem than their own. Their ways of behaviours have been altered by the movies they watch. They learn to imagine different ways of life outside their local and national contexts and to make connections with other worlds outside their own, although all of this happens in localised ways.

This paper has developed an understanding of meaning making as a 'glocalising process' in the activities of Hollywood movie-interpreting in bibanda settings. It is generally understood that context is very important in ascribing meanings to any text, utterance or act (Blommaert 2005). In the case of Hollywood English-language movies, although there could be difficulties with the language per se, images and representations of actions accompany the spoken language and are more open to situated readings. Blommaert's (2005, 41) notion of contextualisation is useful for accounting for the ways in which people 'make sense' in interaction. In this case of situated interpretation we have new words being superimposed to give meaning to the actions.

What do we learn from this?

In this study, our attention was always drawn to how media can be used to reach people. As regards educational films, presented through video and television, there is a need to

pay attention to the cultural accessibility of the presentation. As this study shows, different social groups have different ways of cultural appreciation, as demonstrated by the poorer classes' preferences for interpreted movies and local language commentaries in the sites studied and described here. Intended messages may not be communicated in educational media if they do not fit with the audience's interests and resources for meaning making. The popularity of the interpreted movie reveals its potential as an educational tool for the larger population, in addition to its now accepted entertainment value. This educational potential will need to be studied and put to good use in adult and community education in the areas of agriculture, health education and other awareness creation programmes. The Vee-jays wield a lot of influence through these media outlets. This was well captured in a statement by the person who said, 'Some people in the audience look more to the VJ than to the movie, because they see a man speaking alone for 90 minutes, or three hours, moving, narrating, exclaiming . . . They enjoy a lot!' (Lagarriga 2007, 1). This strategy of creative interpretation could be useful and the interpreters might be trained as facilitators in community education so that they can make educational interventions in addition to their entertainment productions.

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