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## NIGERIAN SCRIPT TEXTS AS CREOLIZED REALITY REFLECTION

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**Abstract.** The article deals with the peculiarities of script texts within the realm of cinematography, a contemporary art form. The research endeavors to elucidate the primary characteristic features of Nigerian script texts, which undergo creolization towards the norms of British English and local languages and cultures. Screenwriters initiate the filmmaking process by crafting a script text, serving as the essential foundation for directors, actors, stuntmen, costume and makeup designers, as well as editors. Nigerian script texts manifest as creolized texts, distinguished by a notable feature: the detailed inclusion of authorial remarks providing extensive information for future utilization. Each film script embodies a creolized text, contributing to the transformation of structural substance into a new cinematic reality. Nigerian script texts undergo multiple instances of creolization, adapting to the requirements of local languages and cultural peculiarities. The research validates Nigerian script texts as creolized compositions characterized by detailed authorial remarks, shedding light on language-specific features such as grammar transformations resulting in simplification processes. The most prevalent grammar simplification processes entail the consecutive use of nouns and pronouns, a preference for simple verb tenses, and the omission of auxiliary verbs in interrogative and negative sentences. The grammatical alterations observed in Nigerian scripts are attributed to the influence of local languages and Nigerians' aspiration to adhere to local language features, thereby preserving cultural heritage.

**Keywords:** cinematography, Nigerian films, Nollywood, script texts, local languages and cultures, grammar transformations

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## НИГЕРИЙСКИЙ КИНОСЦЕНАРНЫЙ ТЕКСТ КАК ОТРАЖЕНИЕ КРЕОЛИЗОВАННОЙ РЕАЛЬНОСТИ

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**Аннотация.** В статье рассматриваются особенности киносценарных текстов, являющихся частью такого современного вида искусства, как кинематография. Целью работы является анализ ключевых особенностей нигерийских киносценарных текстов, которые подвержены креолизации – адаптации норм британского английского языка к местными языками и культурами. Процесс создания киносценарного текста является начальным этапом создания кинофильма, содержащим подробные инструкции для будущих режиссеров, актеров, каскадеров, дизайнеров по костюмам и гриму, монтажеров. Текст киносценария представляет собой креолизованный текст с такой характерной особенностью, как подробная инструкция в форме авторских ремарок, объем которой может превышать диалогическую речь персонажей. Для нигерийских киносценарных текстов характерны грамматические трансформационные процессы, к наиболее продуктивным относятся: последовательное употребление существительных и местоимений; использование простых видовременных форм глагола, опущение

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вспомогательных глаголов в вопросительных и отрицательных предложениях. Грамматические трансформации продиктованы влиянием местных языков и желанием нигерийцев следовать нормам местных языков.

**Ключевые слова:** кинематография, нигерийские фильмы, Голливуд, киносценарный текст, местные языки и культуры, грамматические трансформации

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Film industry is considered a modern type of global art. Representing a synthesis of such branches as literature, fine arts, theater, music, cinema is a special art type reflecting national, linguistic, cultural coordinated systems. The increasing interest of researchers in different texts variants led linguists to the problem of film analysis.

From the semiotics point of view, a movie can be considered as a text. It was within the framework of semiotics that the concept of cinema text was proposed. A film text is a staged motion picture. An interesting approach is the idea that, “the text of a film can be broadly defined as a completed audiovisual work on the screen, or narrowly as a dialogue between characters” [2]. The film analysis needs a comprehensive approach based not only on editing screenplays but also on observing various script aspects, such as intonation of characters, pauses, and hesitation of heroes.

The leading researcher of English-language films S. Kozloff also emphasizes the importance of “non-verbal components of the film, considering that acting, shooting features, editing and sound effects are most closely related to the verbal component” [9, p. 90].

The analysis of cinematographic features in our research work is based on the Nigerian Film Corporation, also known as *Nollywood*. In our work, the linguistic and cultural features of the contemporary art, cinema, are analyzed on the example of Nigeria, which is one of the leading developing cinematography worldwide.

*A motion picture as an object  
of film discourse realization*

There are several definitions in relation with the film named “media text”, “creolized text”, “film text”, “film discourse”, “cinematic discourse” which are used as synonyms in modern cinematography. A movie is a media text, it is a message containing information and presented in any form and genre of media (newspaper article, TV show, video clip, film, etc.) [5], while media (mass communication media) are “technical means of creation, recording, copying, replication, storage, distribution, perception of information and its exchange between the subject (communicant) and the object (communicator)” [6, p. 12].

The message in the script text is transmitted by means of media texts determining multiple aspects to the recipients, the need for technical means for perception, the remoteness of communicants, the reproducibility of the message, and others.

A script text is a creolized form of writing and is perceived by future film viewers through the author's

ideas revealed in the plot. This narrative is brought to life on screen through collaborative efforts, involving the creation of special lighting, artistic space, and editing to produce the final product.

One must stress, “there is the difference between polycode text or creolized text, as generic in relation to all texts that include elements of different semiotic systems, and we will also take into account that among the polycode texts there are those that are distributed through the media, and, therefore, are media texts. So, considering the film as a polycode text, we must take into account its audiovisual and media nature when analyzing it” [7, p. 437].

However, “in order to comprehend the meaning of a movie, we consider it necessary to take into account extra linguistic factors, since they help to read the true message that the authors send to the viewer behind the external content. It is necessary to reconstruct the ideal addressee for whom the film is designed, to understand which alternative world is being recreated in his mind under the influence of a work of cinematography, and for this it is already necessary to study not just the text, but the discourse.

There are many research works of film discourse from a linguistic point of view mainly having a practical orientation. The most significant work of the English-language film discourse to date has been undertaken by S. Kozloff who does not only consider linguistic basis for the film discourse analysis, but also requires special attention to main film genres being the main criteria of film peculiarities” [8, p. 109].

Many linguists analyze the verbal component of the film based on the editing record and deal with the written text since the editing record does not take into account prosody [1]. This allows the authors to make a comparison between a written type of text and a novel itself, both text types are able to be the ground for future script texts being transformed to the necessary point before turning into a movie [9].

However, S. Kozloff does not share this point of view as there are many other written text types such as printouts of subtitles which turn out to be only a part of the oral text type where some words are transmitted. While dealing with written text type the researcher stresses that some elements, such as interruptions or slang, as well as old-fashioned exclamations and local accent peculiarities, can be lost, but they are of great linguistic and cultural importance as well [8, p. 26].

It is true to say that “it is incorrect to identify a montage recording with a screenplay, since, firstly, there may be several scenarios, and only one of them turns into a film, while others continue existing as

reference material for those interested; secondly, the script contains instructions concerning the meaning of replicas, the actors' acting" [10].

*Nollywood as the cinematography in Nigeria*

The history of Nollywood development is comparatively young, it has been developing for about 20 years, while initially this sphere was based solely on the principle of self-financing, and it is only now that the Nigerian Government has declared its interest in promoting the film industry as a sphere of the national branch of culture.

The production of the first Nigerian films dates back to the beginning of the XX century. During that period, the norms of the British English language and British culture had a key influence on the state of the film industry as a whole. Traditional theater productions of the Yoruba people enjoyed special success, and it combined the unification of traditional art forms: music, dance, acrobatic numbers, drama. This tradition flourished until the 1980s and provided a platform for presenting traditions, costumes and aspirations of the indigenous peoples.

The technical revolution in the film industry began in the 1990s, it was the time when digital video cameras replaced old-style movie cameras.

The Nigerian film industry currently produces more than 2,000 films per year, the company employs more than a million Nigerians, with total sales of 200–300 million US dollars per year. The digitalization of Nigerian cinema has significantly contributed to the rapid development of culture in a developing country, unlike anything seen before [4].

The production, distribution, and sale of films across various media initially lacked economic state support. However, later on, specific sectors of the film industry received subsidies from various state organizations, with key players being the National Film and Video Censorship Board of Nigeria and the Nigerian Film Corporation.

It should be noted that the broadcast of Nollywood films on the state channels of Nigeria started only about 12 years ago. Until 2010, state TV channels exclusively featured American or Indian blockbusters.

One must stress, "the active development of the film industry has undoubtedly had a positive impact on the degree of local population income, providing local residents with a range of additional opportunities for specialized industries of workers in the field of technical equipment (operators, sound engineers, electricians, editors). In addition, the development of cinematography contributed to the growth of local population employment while developing tourism industry" [3, p. 6].

The success of the independent film production cluster in Nollywood in the period of 1970 was determined by the spread of digital technology when broadcasting TV shows started. The period of the 1990s was marked by the need to represent foreign films and programs aimed at familiarizing with the

peculiarities of foreign cultures. It was during this period that there was a preference for importing video products from South America, in particular, the so-called "soap operas" from Mexico which were actively broadcast.

It should be noted that English has an official status in Nigeria, Nollywood turned to English almost from the very beginning of its development, considering the impressive potential for the distribution of films not only within its own country, but also in English-speaking African countries, as well as internationally.

For example, unlike the Bollywood film industry, which is characterized by the mandatory use of the autochthonous Hindi language as a film language, films in English are typical for Nollywood [11]. It should be added that "Nigerian films are particularly popular among English-speaking Africans, for example, in Ghana and Uganda" [14, p. 12]. In addition, the number of African diasporas around the world is more than 169 million Africans, who are able to become a potential huge market for Nollywood cinema products. A large diaspora of Nigerians (more than 2.5 million people) lives in the capital of Great Britain – London, they prefer films produced in Nollywood, since such films demonstrate the features of numerous African linguistic cultures in general and the specifics of Nigerian traditions in particular.

*Script text as the special text type*

Script text presents a certain text type which has been creolized to the new reality. We believe this creolization process lies in adaptation of written text to be another complex textual formation. The new characteristics of the creolized text allow it to make visual, structural, semantic and functional influence on readers by means of complex pragmatic impact.

The linguistics of the text makes it possible to research textual categories of the script and to reveal the mechanisms of verbal and paralinguistic means interaction, "it considers the process of decoding verbal and nonverbal information and its interpretation" [12].

The analysis of creolized texts from the psycholinguistic point of view includes verbal and nonverbal elements, and, it is important to say, the text is creolized several times switching from one culture to another [13].

Since mechanisms are used to extract meaning from a creolized text and a verbal text are identical, a creolized text has the same basic textual categories as a verbal text, including integrity, coherence, modality, temporal relatedness (prospection and retrospection), locativity.

We agree that the category of modality should be interpreted broadly as a special category including a variety of qualification types to the reported, including both subjective (emotional, positive, negative) and objective (logical, intellectual) assessment of the text content. Russian linguists stress that "in creolized texts, paralinguistic means carry a significant share of modal information. And the category of locativity in

creolized texts acquires a complex meaning and is understood as a category reflecting spatial relations both through verbal and nonverbal, primarily iconic, means" [13, p. 64].

Creolized texts are an actual object of linguistic research, while there are different points of view on the leading components (verbal or nonverbal ones) in terms of the impact on the recipient [11].

Thus, "based on the research of creolized texts of television advertising, one can say, they are created on the basis of fourteen semiotic systems, three of which belong to the verbal sphere (oral speech, written text and conditional letter tactics), and the rest are non-verbal (color, storyboard, dance, kinesics, statics, facial expressions, music, singing, sound effects, costume and the appearance and condition of the characters, objects)" [13, p. 68].

Creolized or video-verbal texts can be divided into types according to some criteria:

- by the nature of the iconic component, static text (poster, leaflet), two-dimensional (video-verbal text in a movie) and three-dimensional (video-verbal text in a theatrical play) can be distinguished;

- by the nature of the verbal component, it is possible to distinguish oral (live speech or a recording of this speech) and written (handwritten or printed) texts;

- according to the role of the image and the ratio of the information amount transmitted by various signs, it is possible to distinguish rehearsal (the image basically repeats the verbal text), additive (the image brings additional information), excretory (the image highlights one of the aspects of verbal information that exceeds the iconic in volume), oppositional (the contradiction between the picture and the verbal part), integrative (the image is embedded in the verbal text or vice versa), pictorial-centric (with the leading role of the image) texts" [13, p. 71].

When creating a creolized text, it is necessary first of all to solve the tasks of organizing communication and the tasks of implementing influence, which presents certain difficulties, since contact between the sender of the message (text) and its recipient is, as a rule, delayed. "The task of organizing communication is thus reduced to the task of attracting the recipient's attention and retaining it, while the creolized text tends, on the one hand, to comply with the accepted norms for this type of text, and, on the other hand, its full compliance with them leads to "ultra-comfortable" conditions for the perception of the text, due to which the recipient loses interest in it" [2].

*Nigerian script text as the reflection of the ethnic and culture identity*

Nigerian script text is a special text type which is characterized by key textual characteristics as well as other text types. The key characteristics are: integrity, coherence, articulateness, informativeness, modality, completeness; such textual categories as local and temporal relatedness (chronotope), anthropocentricity,

pragmatic orientation are considered as additional categories [5].

The practical part of our research is based on the analysis of the linguistic and cultural specifics of the script text "Arbitration", created by the Nigerian film director Chinaz Onuzo in 2016. The foundation of the script text "Arbitration" is based on the representation of the Nigerian judicial process specific features. The plot of the script develops around a judicial conflict: the director of a well-known company is accused of inappropriate behavior towards a former employee; the former employee has been fired and is trying to restore justice.

A characteristic feature of both British and Nigerian scripts is the presence of the so-called "slug line" or "fade in" which are mandatory components of scripts that reveal the elements of the time and place events in the film. For Nigerian script texts, a specific feature is an impressive amount of detailed description in the form of author's remarks before each episode, for example:

- FADE IN  
INT. ANTEROOM – DAY

*A common hotel. Afternoon time. No one in the hall. There is nobody to speak to. Not a single person. A WOMAN is just to herself. She is sitting and scanning a document using her ipad. This is OMAWUMI HORSFALL herself. She's gorgeous. Chic. In her middle twenties. Wearing perfect gray trousers suit. Designer glasses and pink purse [12].*

The example presents the vivid description of a place where the action of script plot takes place. The reader understands in details that the main character is a young attractive lady who is perfectly dressed, she's fashionable and is thinking about an important business. The screenwriter pays special attention to the detailed characteristics of the main character – *she is well dressed, carefully studies the information using a tablet*. So, providing the reader with detailed information, the screenwriter prepares the reader to the future events by creating special atmosphere using the context.

- FADE IN  
INT. BATHROOM – DAY – MOMENTS LATER

*Afternoon. Just a mirror and her face. The face is intelligent. But tired and scared. Scared? Is it really her face? The face of Dara Olugobi. Could it be true that she is searching for something. Something she had never expected before. Hands are trembling. She tries to pull herself together. No use. She's nervous. Furious of not controlling herself she clasps she trembles. Stops. This is what she needs. A nod of cheer. The test. The additional one. The door opens. Dara sees Omawumi enter via the mirror. Turns [12].*

The example is the author's comment, it depicts the situation when the character is extremely nervous and can't control her emotions. To make the reader understand the peculiar situation and stress of the character the screenwriter purposely uses detailed exaggerations while describing the scene: first, we read the

information about the place where the heroine is now (*Afternoon. Just a mirror and her face. The face is intelligent. But tired and scared*); second, we understand how nervous she is (*Hands are trembling. She tries to pull herself together. No use. She's nervous*); third, the character is able to overcome the nervousness and pulls herself together (*Stops. This is what she needs. A nod of cheer*); and, finally, she has found the decision (*The test. The additional one*).

Such part of the script text as dialogic communication makes up on average from 50% to 60% of the Nigerian script text, the rest is for author's remarks. Dialogues among the characters are close to the real communication of Nigerians in daily life. The part of the script containing dialogic texts corresponds to various language variants typical for Nigerians: the *mesolect* language variant which is a transitional stage between the *acrolect* that corresponds to the norm – British English as much as possible, and the *basilect* variant used by illiterate Nigerians which is characterized by many phonetic, grammatical and lexical mistakes.

Dialogues of script texts are based on the language variant *mesolect*, comprising rare inclusions of the language variant *basilect* to demonstrate the specifics of the lower strata of Nigerian society and stress their mistakes in speech [3].

British English, being the language of Nigerian films and scripts, is the subject to the phenomenon of *creolization* which we define as the process of adaptation to the realities of local languages and cultures. Creolization of British English leads to changes at all language levels of the Nigerian English: phonetic, grammatical, and lexical ones. In our research work we have identified transformational processes characteristic of Nigerian scripts that results in the grammatical subsystem of Nigerian English. The most productive grammar transformations are:

- the use of a noun and a pronoun within the same semantic syntagma, sequentially following each other:

OMAWUMI: *No need to say anything. You my sister and I obeyed. Mother we put her interset as first* [12].

The example demonstrates the use of nouns and pronouns directly following each other (*Mother we*) which is incorrect for British English. It should be mentioned, Nigerian English is oriented on local languages grammar rules, according to which the word order of nouns and pronouns is arbitrary. This peculiar feature is especially typical for Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo – the main popular local Nigerian languages.

- simplification of specific verb tenses due to the influence of autochthonous languages:

OMAWUMI: *Of course she understand she do it wrong. Funlayo knows what she did it twice already* [12].

The tendency of using simple verb tenses of Active and Passive Voice in Nigerian English is explained by the local languages influence. Firstly, Nigerians tend to use simple structures; secondly, it illustrates the necessity of using simple verb forms in

dialogues to sound naturally; thirdly, it stresses (purposefully) the level of Nigerian's illiteracy.

One must stress, nearly 30% of modern Nigerians are still illiterate and make many mistakes in their speech in English. This is a topical social problem in Nigeria, as many people do not have a chance to obtain proper education. High-level education is extremely expensive for middle class Nigerians; therefore, there are many people who have no higher education and do not have a chance for a successful career.

It's important to stress that cinematography is a strong power to make influence on people's lives, it reveals serious problems of the society. Nigerian cinematography depicts many problems Nigeria faces today. The hottest to discuss are corruption, ethnic conflicts, and social problems (poor education being a key problem).

One must stress, the variety of Nigerian film genres have been changed according to the social needs: before, Nigerians preferred soap operas, dramas and comedies, while now, the most popular genres are those reflecting social inequality – political dramas and psychological dramas that reflect these problems. Undoubtedly, modern films cannot be of a single genre, they are a combination of several genres types. The aspects also touched upon in modern Nigerian films are ecological problems and poverty.

- non-compliance with the sequence of tenses rules when transferring sentences from direct speech to indirect:

GBENGA: *No, I say i will not do that! Never! Do it yourself!* [12].

The sequence of tenses rule does not work in Nigerian English dialogic speech as it depicts the conversation of close friends. Moreover, the example depicts excessive exclamations in the character's speech. It is true to say, Nigerians are very emotional people; therefore, their speech is full of interjections of all types.

- the omission of auxiliary verbs in interrogative constructions:

DARA: *You have my back right?* [12].

It is necessary to use the auxiliary verb *will* or to express the request *would* for British English, but in the text of the Nigerian script we face the omission of the auxiliary verb which is due to the influence of autochthonous languages. For example, it is not typical for the Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo languages to use auxiliary verbs to form interrogative and negative verb forms [4].

In conclusion, cinematography is a modern way of art, reflecting main social problems of the society worldwide. Nigerian film industry is an example of popular mass media being able to influence people not only in Nigeria but in many countries abroad due to globalization and nativization processes.

Nollywood being famous film industry branch is of great interest for researchers of mixed aspects. In our research work, the question of Nigerian cinematogra-

phy and script text peculiarities was analyzed from historical, economic, cultural, and linguistic perspective.

Script text is a semiotic construct, represented by a sequence of signs united in meaning. This specific text type is a linguistic object of analysis for structural-semantic, compositional-stylistic and functional-pragmatic unity. Scripts perform a communicative function, they can be of written and oral pattern. This text has the categories of coherence, anthropocentricity, local-temporal relatedness, retrospection, prospection, informativeness, consistency, integrity, modality, and, as an artistic text type, the category of conceptuality (the presence of the main formulated idea of a work of art). The leading script text category is informativeness. To understand the text, one needs information that is not conveyed directly, but relies on his background.

The text can contain different types of signs: indexes, iconic signs, and symbols. A movie is a text, a semiotic system that includes different codes that are in a synergy relationship.

In the film, “as a semiotic system, different codes are combined, creating a single value that cannot be reduced to the sum of the values of individual codes; there is no single point of view on whether verbal or nonverbal components are the leading ones in polycode texts, but, apparently, the role of the verbal component is still of great importance” [5].

One should not contrast text and discourse, but use a discursive approach as more convenient for describing and explaining such a complex phenomenon

as the production of modern English-language film industry, especially scripts in English. We consider the film as discourse which has the properties of integrity, coherence, informativeness, communicative and pragmatic orientation media.

Nigerian cinematography is the reflection of historical, economic, cultural and linguistic aspects. The English language being official language of the country influences much the development of Nigerian cinematography. To be a success, a film needs the perfect ground for future aspects development. We believe this ground is a profound script text as it serves a necessary building material. The script text is a common text type, but it has its unique peculiar features as this text type is creolized to cinematography needs.

Nigerian screenplays are under the influence of implementation, transformational processes, which contribute to the adaptation of the British English language to the realities of local linguistic cultures. The grammatical structure of the Nigerian English language in the screenplays is the subject to interference processes from autochthonous languages. As a result of such transformational processes in the grammatical subsystem of Nigerian screenplays, there is a tendency to simplify the grammatical structure.

The most crucial aspect of modern cinematography is the ability to prompt people to contemplate. It has the real power to reflect the most topical problems of the society. For Nigerian cinematography, the hottest problems to discuss are social and ethnic inequality and corruption.

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