



From Nollywood to Tanzania: Localisation Strategies in the Kiswahili Voice-Over Adaptation of Bloody Ring

Felix Kwame Sosoo & Josephine Dzahene-Quarshie

University of Ghana

Article History

Received: 12.06.2026

Revised: 01.09.2026

Accepted: 14.09.2026

Published: 23.09.2026

Keywords

Audiovisual translation

Film

Nollywood

Translation

How to cite:

Sosoo, F. K. & Dzahene-Quarshie, J. (2026). From Nollywood to Tanzania: Localisation Strategies in the Kiswahili Voice-Over Adaptation of Bloody Ring. *Journal of Linguistics, Literary and Communication Studies*, 5(2), 19-33.

Abstract

Film localisation in Tanzania is not simply a matter of transferring dialogue from one language to another; it is a culturally situated practice through which foreign audiovisual narratives are recontextualised for local audiences. This is particularly significant in the circulation of Nollywood films, whose Nigerian cultural references, social practices, and expressions may require negotiation within Tanzanian cultural and linguistic contexts. Tanzanian voice-over narration further complicates conventional translation models because the original English soundtrack remains audible beneath the superimposed Kiswahili narration, producing a hybrid, multilayered audiovisual text in which the narrator mediates both language and cultural meaning. This study examines the Kiswahili voice-over localisation of the Nollywood film *Bloody Ring* (2012), focusing on how the narrator reconfigures source meanings for Tanzanian audiences. Drawing on contemporary audiovisual translation, localisation, multimodality, and cultural mediation perspectives, the study employs qualitative analysis of selected film segments and their corresponding Kiswahili voice-over realisations. The findings show that localisation is characterised mainly by paraphrasing, omission, addition, cultural substitution, lexical adaptation, and creative reformulation, with the narrator sometimes reshaping meanings rather than reproducing the original dialogue closely. Some expressions and audiovisual elements remain unchanged because the original soundtrack is retained. The study argues that Tanzanian voice-over localisation is a hybrid form of cultural mediation that challenges linear text-to-text models of translation.

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Introduction

Audiovisual translation (AVT) involves the mediation of meaning through interacting verbal, visual and auditory resources. Recent scholarship therefore treats film translation as a multimodal practice in which linguistic choices interact with image, sound, music and performance (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2021; Guillot, 2020; Chaume, 2020). This perspective is relevant to film localisation, which seeks to make audiovisual content communicatively and culturally accessible. Localisation therefore matters because the movement of films between African societies does not necessarily involve movement between culturally identical audiences. Nigerian films may share themes of family, marriage, morality, spirituality and social relations with Tanzanian audiences while also containing culturally



specific references, forms of address, religious expressions, food, social institutions and everyday practices associated with Nigeria. Making such films accessible in Tanzania can therefore involve negotiation between cultural familiarity and cultural difference. This raises an important question for AVT research: how should translation be understood when the target-language mediator is not simply reproducing dialogue but actively reshaping an audiovisual narrative for a local audience?

Tanzania provides a productive context for examining this question because Kiswahili occupies a central position in public communication and popular culture. Dzahene-Quarshie (2009) demonstrates that the globalisation of Kiswahili involves the expansion of the language across national, regional and global contexts while also raising questions about the challenges that accompany such expansion. For audiences with limited proficiency in foreign languages, language constituted an important barrier to access. This situation contributed to distinctive forms of audiovisual mediation, particularly live video narration. Live narration, however, should not be conflated with voice-over or dubbing. In dubbing, the original spoken dialogue is normally replaced by a recorded target-language track, whereas in Tanzanian voice-over narration the original soundtrack remains audible while a Kiswahili voice is superimposed over it. Live video narration is a performance-based practice in which a narrator mediates the film as it is screened. These distinctions create different relationships between the original material, mediator and audience.

Research on Tanzanian film narration has established the creative and culturally mediated character of this earlier practice. Krings (2012, 2013) and Englert (2010) show that Tanzanian video narrators function not merely as translators but also as interpreters, commentators and entertainers who adapt foreign films for local audiences. This scholarship provides an important foundation for examining contemporary recorded voice-over localisation. International scholarship on AVT has increasingly moved beyond narrowly linguistic conceptions of translation. Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2021) and Chaume (2020) emphasise the interaction between verbal and non-verbal elements, while contemporary localisation research highlights the adaptation of audiovisual products to specific linguistic and cultural contexts. African audiovisual practices may also challenge models developed primarily within institutionalised translation industries because multilingualism, oral performance and audience-oriented mediation can shape translation practices in distinctive ways.

The circulation of Nollywood films makes this issue particularly relevant because Nigerian films have reached audiences beyond Nigeria, including Tanzania. Their localisation may require the negotiation of Nigerian linguistic and cultural references within Tanzanian communicative contexts. This process can also be understood in terms of glocalisation, whereby global cultural forms are encountered, interpreted and reworked within particular local contexts. Csajbók-Twerefou and Dzahene-Quarshie (2014) demonstrate that global cultural influences interact with local cultural practices rather than simply replacing them. This perspective is relevant to the present study because the localisation of *Bloody Ring* involves negotiation between a circulating African cultural product and locally meaningful linguistic and cultural forms.

Csajbók-Twerefou and Dzahene-Quarshie (2014), in their examination of Western popular culture in Russia and Tanzania, show how global cultural influences interact with local cultural practices rather than simply replacing them. Their perspective is relevant to the present study because the localisation of a Nigerian film for Tanzanian audiences similarly involves the negotiation between a circulating global African cultural product and locally meaningful linguistic and cultural forms. Existing Tanzanian scholarship has nevertheless concentrated largely on historical live video narration. Krings (2012, 2013) provides an important account of the narrator's creative role, while Existing Tanzanian



scholarship has concentrated largely on historical live video narration (Krings, 2012, 2013; Englert, 2010). Less attention has been given to contemporary recorded Kiswahili voice-over localisation of African films, particularly the ways in which the audible English soundtrack interacts with Kiswahili narration through omission, addition, paraphrase and cultural reformulation. This gap places Tanzanian practice at the intersection of established AVT categories and locally developed forms of audiovisual mediation.

The present study addresses this gap through an examination of the Kiswahili voice-over localisation of *Bloody Ring* (2012), a Nollywood/Ghallywood production. The study examines selected film segments and their Kiswahili voice-over to show how meaning is reproduced, omitted, added, paraphrased, substituted and creatively reformulated in a hybrid audiovisual environment. Accordingly, the study investigates the principal localisation practices evident in selected segments of *Bloody Ring*, with particular attention to omission, addition, cultural substitution, paraphrasing and creative reformulation. It argues that the Kiswahili voice-over is better understood as a form of audiovisual and cultural mediation than as a strictly linear source-to-target transfer

By focusing on *Bloody Ring*, the study contributes to African audiovisual translation scholarship by extending discussion of Tanzanian film mediation beyond historical live narration to contemporary voice-over localisation. It also demonstrates that African audiovisual translation can challenge conventional distinctions between translation, adaptation, commentary and performance. The Tanzanian voice-over narrator is therefore approached not simply as an equivalence seeker but as active cultural mediator whose linguistic and performative choices participate in making an imported African film meaningful within a different cultural and linguistic environment.

Theoretical Framework

This study is informed primarily by contemporary approaches to audiovisual translation, localisation, multimodality and cultural mediation. These perspectives are appropriate because the Kiswahili version of *Bloody Ring* is not simply a linguistic transfer but a hybrid audiovisual product in which the original English soundtrack remains audible beneath the Kiswahili narration. Contemporary AVT scholarship emphasises that audiovisual meaning is produced through the interaction of verbal and non-verbal modes, including dialogue, images, music, sound effects, gestures, and performance (Chaume, 2020, 2024; Díaz-Cintas, 2021; Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2021). Translation decisions must consequently be understood in relation to the audiovisual environment in which they occur. In voice-over, this relationship is particularly significant because the original speech remains audible beneath the superimposed target-language narration. The narrator therefore does not simply replace the source dialogue but interprets and revoices it while responding to the visual and auditory information available to the audience.

The framework also draws on localisation, understood as the adaptation of audiovisual content to the linguistic, cultural, and communicative expectations of a particular audience. Localisation may involve omission, addition, paraphrasing, cultural substitution, lexical adaptation, or creative reformulation where direct transfer would not adequately communicate the intended meaning in the target context. Such practices are examined not as isolated translation errors but as forms of cultural negotiation through which foreign audiovisual content is repositioned for Tanzanian viewers.

Cultural mediation constitutes a further component of the framework. Earlier research on Tanzanian video narration demonstrates that narrators can function as interpreters, commentators, entertainers, and cultural intermediaries who actively shape audiences' understanding of foreign films (Krings, 2012, 2013; Englert, 2010). This perspective is particularly relevant to the present study because the



Kiswahili voice-over narrator may condense, expand, reinterpret, or otherwise reshape the original dialogue while simultaneously responding to the film's visual narrative.

Accordingly, the study treats the localised version as a multimodal and culturally mediated performance rather than as a stable target text. The framework focuses on observable relationships among the original audiovisual production, the audible English dialogue, the Kiswahili narration, and the visual context. This approach makes it possible to explain localisation as an active process of meaning reconfiguration and cultural mediation and avoids imposing a linear equivalence model developed primarily for written texts.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive design to examine how *Bloody Ring* (2012) is localised through Kiswahili voice-over for Tanzanian audiences. The design is appropriate because the study focuses on identifying and interpreting observable changes in language, cultural reference, narrative presentation, and meaning within the localised audiovisual performance. The analysis treats the film as a multimodal object in which speech, image, sound, and narration operate simultaneously.

The primary data source is the 2012 Nollywood/Ghallywood film *Bloody Ring*, directed by Matthew Egole and Eloghene Obokia, together with its Kiswahili voice-over localisation circulated for Tanzanian audiences. The original English-language film provides the audiovisual source against which the Kiswahili narration is interpreted.

Data were generated through repeated viewing of the film and close observation of the relationship between the audible English soundtrack, the superimposed Kiswahili narration, and the corresponding visual scenes. The researchers did not treat the English and Kiswahili components as two independent textual versions. Instead, attention was given to moments in which the Kiswahili narration reproduced, condensed, expanded, omitted, paraphrased, substituted, or otherwise reconfigured information presented through the original audiovisual production. The visual and auditory context was considered alongside each selected segment to determine how the narration contributes to the construction of meaning.

Selection of analytical segments was purposive but guided by explicit criteria. Segments were selected where the Kiswahili narration demonstrated a clearly identifiable transformation of source meaning or a significant interaction between narration and audiovisual context. Particular attention was given to omission, addition, paraphrasing, cultural substitution, lexical adaptation, creative reformulation, and direct transfer. The selection also considered instances in which the narrator's wording could not be understood adequately without reference to the accompanying visual or English soundtrack. This approach avoids assuming that every Kiswahili utterance has a direct sentence-level equivalent in the original dialogue.

The selected segments were transcribed in a format that records the relevant English dialogue, Kiswahili voice-over, and contextual observations. Analysis then proceeded descriptively and interpretively, drawing on audiovisual translation, localisation, multimodality, and cultural mediation. The analysis focuses on the relationship between the original audiovisual production and the Kiswahili localised version rather than on the personal identity or biographical background of the voice-over performer. This approach ensures that the study remains focused on observable linguistic, cultural, and audiovisual features of the localised product. The study examined how particular linguistic and cultural choices reconfigure meaning within the hybrid audiovisual text and how the voice-over performance contributes to cultural accessibility. Ethical considerations were observed by



using the publicly available film solely for scholarly analysis, acknowledging its creators, and avoiding unauthorised reproduction or distribution of the audiovisual work.

Findings and Discussion

Summary of *Bloody Ring*

Bloody Ring is a Nollywood/Ghallywood production centred on King Osuma, a widowed monarch whose declining health creates pressure for him to remarry. His son, Prince Ulonna, is betrothed to Iruka, while Nmaku, Iruka's childhood friend, is drawn into the royal household through a series of personal and family circumstances. The narrative develops around the king's relationship with Nmaku and the misunderstanding it creates for Ulonna and Iruka. As the story unfolds, the king explains that his relationship with Nmaku is connected to a blood covenant he made with his deceased wife, symbolised by a blood-marked ring. His death subsequently resolves the misunderstanding, allowing Ulonna and Iruka to reconcile and accept Nmaku within their social circle. The title *Bloody Ring* therefore derives from the symbolic and narrative importance of the ring and the blood covenant.

For the present analysis, however, the film is not treated simply as a stable English text that has been reproduced in Kiswahili. The Kiswahili track is examined as a localised re-narration that interacts with the original film's dialogue, images, actions, sound and narrative sequence. This distinction is important because Tanzanian video narration may appropriate foreign audiovisual material and make the images serve a locally produced Kiswahili narrative (Krings, 2012, 2013). Thus, the analysis below compares selected source-film utterances with the Kiswahili verbalisation where a discernible relationship exists, while also recognising instances in which the localised narration condenses, expands or reformulates what is represented on screen.

Omission, Addition and the Negotiation of Meaning in Kiswahili Localisation

The relationship between the English dialogue and the Kiswahili track is most clearly demonstrated through instances of omission and addition. These strategies should not, however, be interpreted as simple deviations from an ideal word-for-word translation. In a Tanzanian localised voice-over, the narrator's task may involve selecting, compressing, explaining or reformulating the verbal content in relation to what the audience can already see and hear. Krings (2012) describes Tanzanian video narration as a form of appropriation and domestication in which the original moving images become the basis for a locally produced narrative. This perspective is more suitable for the present data than treating every Kiswahili utterance as a corresponding sentence in a translated script. The examples below therefore identify a relationship between the source dialogue and the localised track rather than assuming sentence-by-sentence equivalence.

One instance occurs when Iruka explains why she has come to see Nmaku. In the English version, she says: "The only problem is that I will be going to the forest to visit Ulonna today. He sent for me, but I just had to come here and see you. Please my friend, you would have to stay in my house, but I would go for something." The Kiswahili track renders the utterance as: "Kuna tatizo moja, nina kawaida kwenda porini kukutana na Ulonna leo... Shoga langu, utaitika kusubiri mpaka nirudi." The final clause, "but I would go for something," has no explicit counterpart in the Kiswahili rendition. Rather than treating this as an error, the omission can be understood as compression: the localised narration retains the principal communicative information—Iruka's need to visit Ulonna and her request that Nmaku wait—while dropping a less consequential detail. Because the visual sequence continues to identify the characters and their movements, the omitted information does not necessarily create a narrative gap. The strategy therefore illustrates how verbal economy can coexist with multimodal redundancy.



A similar pattern appears in Ulonna's angry response to the king's decision. The English dialogue contains: "Couldn't you have taken any of the maidens or any woman if it was just to save the situation? My wife to be? Huh! This is unpardonable." The Kiswahili track gives: "Kwanini hujachukua wanawake wengine? Kwanini hujachukua wanawake wengine? Mpaka mke nitaoa? Ah! Juu ya nini hivi!" Here, "This is unpardonable" is not reproduced as a distinct proposition. The localised version nevertheless retains the speaker's complaint through repetition, questioning and the exclamation "Ah!" The omission consequently does not erase the emotional function of the scene; instead, that function is redistributed across the remaining verbal material and the actor's performance. Such a reading is consistent with the multimodal character of AVT, in which meaning is produced through the interaction of speech, image, sound and performance rather than through dialogue alone (Chaume, 2020; Guillot, 2020).

Addition provides the reverse pattern. In the exchange "May the gods be with you," the Kiswahili track says, "Wakulinde pia! Kwaheri." The expression "Kwaheri" has no direct lexical equivalent in the source utterance. Its function is interactional: it closes the exchange and gives the localised utterance a natural conversational ending. The addition is therefore better understood as a pragmatic expansion than as an attempt to reproduce the source wording. In a similar example, Ofodile's "Please come, come, come" becomes "Njoo! Njoo! Njoo tuende huko njoo!" The added phrase "tuende huko" ("let us go there") makes explicit the direction of movement that is visually available in the scene. The narrator thus verbalises information that can be inferred from the image, demonstrating the complementary relationship between the verbal and visual channels.

A more substantial addition occurs in Iruka's explanation to the king. The English utterance is: "My king, I only did it to reduce the burden of what you carried for a long time." The Kiswahili track renders this as: "Mfalme wangu, sikuitenda kwa nia mbaya kufurahisha mwili, lakini nilitenda hivyo kwa kukuchunga." The phrase "kufurahisha mwili" ("to satisfy the body") and the expression "kwa kukuchunga" ("to protect/care for you") introduce explicit motives that are not stated in the English utterance in the same form. This is more than lexical substitution: it reframes the character's action through a moral and relational explanation. The addition consequently participates in characterisation, since it presents Iruka as acting from concern rather than from self-interest.

These examples indicate that omission and addition operate as forms of meaning negotiation within the localised audiovisual text. The localised track does not merely reproduce the source dialogue; it reorganises verbal information in ways that work with the images and the immediate narrative situation. This observation also qualifies the use of Nida's (1964) equivalence concepts in the study. Dynamic equivalence may help describe instances in which the localised expression prioritises communicative effect and naturalness over formal correspondence, but it should not be used as a blanket label for every departure from the source. Some omissions may arise from compression, some additions from narratorial mediation, and some reformulations from the need to coordinate speech with what is visible on screen. The analysis therefore treats Nida as a supplementary interpretive lens rather than as the primary explanatory model for Tanzanian video narration.

The examples should nevertheless not be taken to mean that omission or addition is uniformly used throughout the localised film. The analysis identifies observable relationships within the selected scenes rather than claiming that every scene follows the same pattern. To reduce subjectivity, three situations are distinguished: a source utterance with a discernible Kiswahili reformulation; a source utterance whose content is only partly verbalised; and a Kiswahili narration that adds information without an immediately identifiable verbal counterpart. This distinction is important because a



narrator's silence does not automatically constitute omission. Where information remains available through the image, the absence of verbalisation may reflect the complementary relationship between visual and verbal channels.

Similarly, the data alone cannot establish that a particular alteration resulted from censorship, religious sensitivity, audience expectations or technical limitations. Such explanations should be advanced only where supported by the audiovisual evidence or relevant scholarship. Krings (2012) shows that Tanzanian video narration involves active appropriation and domestication, while Krings (2013) demonstrates that a Tanzanian narrator can retell and reorganise a Nollywood film for local consumption. The present examples therefore suggest that even small changes can redistribute narrative information between voice and image.

Cultural Adaptation, Substitution and Domestication in Kiswahili Film Localisation

Cultural adaptation is a central feature of the Kiswahili re-narration of *Bloody Ring*. The localised track does not simply reproduce the verbal content of the English film; it selectively retains, reformulates, replaces, and expands cultural meanings as the narrative is rendered for a Tanzanian audience. This pattern is consistent with Krings' (2012, 2013) account of Tanzanian video narration as a form of cultural mediation in which foreign films are appropriated and retold through Kiswahili. The narrator's relationship with the source-film is therefore better understood as an interaction with a multimodal audiovisual text than as a conventional transfer between two independent written texts. Cultural substitution in this context becomes one of the means through which the narrator makes particular aspects of the Nigerian narrative intelligible within a different cultural environment.

The concept of domestication is useful for describing this process, although it should not be assumed that every substitution necessarily results from a deliberate attempt to make the film "more Tanzanian." In audiovisual translation, cultural meanings are communicated through the combined operation of speech, image, sound, gesture, setting and performance (Chaume, 2020, 2024; Guillot, 2020). Consequently, a localised expression may change the verbal representation of a cultural reference while leaving other aspects of the original setting visible and audible. The resulting product is therefore hybrid: the Nigerian audiovisual environment remains present, while the Kiswahili narration interprets selected elements through a local linguistic and cultural repertoire.

A notable example concerns religious terminology. In the English version, a character states: "My friend, the gods will not be pleased to hear you speak this way." The Kiswahili track renders the utterance as: "Usijisumbue shoga! Tulia! Mungu anajua yale yote." ("Do not worry yourself, friend! Calm down! God knows everything.") The two utterances are not formally equivalent. The plural "gods" in the source is replaced by the singular "Mungu" ("God"), while the remainder of the Kiswahili narration also reorganises the proposition. Rather than describing the change simply as translation error or as evidence of a particular religious motivation, it is more appropriate to identify it as cultural and discursive reformulation. The localised expression invokes a religious concept that is readily interpretable in Kiswahili, but in doing so it does not preserve the same plurality of supernatural agents expressed in the source utterance.

The significance of this substitution lies in what is gained and lost through localisation. The Kiswahili narration preserves the broader communicative function of invoking supernatural knowledge or authority, but the religious frame is altered. This demonstrates the tension inherent in cultural mediation: making a reference immediately interpretable can simultaneously reduce aspects of the cultural specificity of the source. Guillot (2020) observes that audiovisual translation involves cultural mediation in which translators negotiate between source-cultural meanings and target-audience



accessibility. The present example illustrates this negotiation without requiring the assumption that the narrator consciously intended to erase the source belief system.

Cultural substitution is also evident in references to food and drink. In the localised track, “yam” is rendered as “viazi” (“potatoes”), “pounded yam” as “ugali,” and “palm wine” as “coconut beer.” These examples are particularly significant because the objects referred to are material markers of cultural life. A source-language reference to a food or beverage may carry associations that are not automatically available to audiences outside the source environment. The Kiswahili substitutions therefore shift attention from the precise identity of the object towards a culturally more accessible category.

Source-film expression: “yam”

Kiswahili voice-over: “viazi”

Gloss: “potatoes”

Source-film expression: “pounded yam”

Kiswahili voice-over: “ugali”

Source-film expression: “palm wine”

Kiswahili voice-over: “coconut beer”

The substitutions, however, should not be described as exact cultural equivalents. Yam is not simply another name for potatoes, just as pounded yam and ugali refer to distinct food traditions. Likewise, palm wine and coconut beer are materially different beverages. Their use in the localised narration therefore represents functional or associative substitution, rather than preservation of the source reference. The narrator appears to replace a culturally specific item with a term that can be processed more readily by the target-audience. Such substitutions demonstrate the creative dimension of audiovisual localisation, where the objective is not necessarily to preserve every referential detail but to sustain the communicative progression of the scene.

A related pattern occurs in the treatment of social roles and titles. The English term “Prince” is rendered in some contexts as “mtoto wa mfalme” (“child of the king”), while “prinsi wangu” (“my prince”) is retained in another context. These alternatives demonstrate that the localised narration does not employ one fixed strategy for every occurrence of the same source term. “Mtoto wa mfalme” explains the social position through a descriptive Kiswahili expression, whereas “prinsi wangu” retains a form recognisably derived from the English title. The choice between description and retention consequently depends on the immediate communicative context.

The retention of *prinsi* also illustrates lexical adaptation in Kiswahili. Dzahene-Quarshie and Csajbók-Twerefou (2011) identify English as an important source of lexical borrowing in Kiswahili and show that borrowed forms may undergo linguistic adaptation. In this example, *prinsi* retains its relationship with the English source *Prince* while being accommodated to Kiswahili. The rendering of “elders” as “chifu” provides another example of cultural substitution. Although “elder” and “chief” are not institutionally identical, “chifu” invokes a recognisable form of traditional authority in an East African context. The substitution consequently makes the social function of the characters more immediately accessible while potentially altering the institutional specificity of the source culture. This distinction is important because localisation does not necessarily produce cultural equivalence. Instead, it can create an interpretive bridge between different systems of social organisation.



These examples support Krings' (2012, 2013) observation that Tanzanian video narration involves more than linguistic translation. The narrator operates as a mediator who interprets foreign audiovisual material through Kiswahili and local cultural knowledge. In this sense, the localised film becomes a hybrid text: Nigerian settings, characters, visual symbols and cultural environments remain on screen, while the Kiswahili narration selectively reframes their meanings. The result is neither a wholly foreign product nor a completely domesticated one.

The findings also require caution in applying Nida's (1964) concept of Dynamic Equivalence. Some substitutions can indeed be interpreted through the principle of prioritising communicative effect over formal correspondence. However, not every cultural substitution should automatically be labelled an instance of Dynamic Equivalence. The shift from "yam" to "viazi," for example, involves a substantial change in referential meaning, while the replacement of "gods" with "Mungu" modifies the religious frame. These are better described first as cultural substitutions or adaptations, after which Nida's framework may be used to illuminate the communicative rationale where appropriate. This avoids reducing the complex practices of Tanzanian audiovisual re-narration to a single equivalence model.

The cultural substitutions further demonstrate the hybrid nature of voice-over localisation. Unlike full dubbing, where the translated dialogue generally replaces the original speech track, voice-over permits the original audiovisual environment to remain perceptible while the Kiswahili narration is superimposed upon it. The audience can therefore encounter Nigerian cultural markers visually and aurally while receiving a Kiswahili interpretation of selected meanings. This layered structure reinforces the importance of multimodality in audiovisual translation (Chaume, 2024; Díaz-Cintas, 2021).

Paraphrasing, Evaluative Amplification and Creative Transformation of Meaning in Kiswahili Localisation

Paraphrasing, evaluative amplification and creative transformation constitute another important dimension of the Kiswahili localisation of *Bloody Ring*. Unlike cultural substitution, which primarily involves replacing a source-cultural reference with a more accessible target expression, paraphrasing reorganises the way an event, character or idea is verbally represented. Exaggeration goes further by intensifying an attribute, action or evaluation beyond what is explicitly expressed in the source dialogue. In Tanzanian audiovisual re-narration, such practices are significant because the Kiswahili voice does not necessarily reproduce every utterance spoken by the original actors. Instead, it may condense, elaborate or creatively reformulate the information presented through the combined channels of speech, image and performance. Krings (2012, 2013) therefore provides a particularly useful perspective for interpreting these practices as forms of retelling and cultural mediation rather than as straightforward textual translation.

One striking example occurs in a conversation concerning Nmake's family experience. The English dialogue states: "My mother has lost two seeds in her womb due to my father's beating. That is wickedness. It is wickedness." The corresponding Kiswahili narration is: "Mama yangu alipoteza meno sita ajili ya maangumi. Roho yake ni ya mchawi, yeye mchawi." This may be rendered as: "My mother lost six teeth because of the beatings. His spirit is that of a witch; he is a witch." The relationship between the two utterances is therefore not one of direct lexical transfer. The source refers to the loss of pregnancies, whereas the Kiswahili narration refers to the loss of six teeth. In addition, the repeated evaluation "That is wickedness" is reformulated as an accusation of witchcraft.



The change from pregnancy loss to the loss of teeth represents a substantial transformation of narrative information. It would be inappropriate to describe the two expressions as equivalent simply because both communicate suffering resulting from domestic violence. The localised narration retains the broader representation of violence and its consequences but changes the specific nature of the injury. This distinction is important for the present study because it demonstrates the limits of an equivalence-based interpretation. Nida's (1964) Dynamic Equivalence can help explain a shift away from formal correspondence where the localised expression seeks to communicate an intelligible response rather than reproduce source structure. However, it cannot by itself account for the extent of the semantic transformation in this example.

The second part of the Kiswahili rendering introduces an additional layer of transformation. The source expression "That is wickedness. It is wickedness" becomes "Roho yake ni ya mchawi, yeye mchawi" ("His spirit is that of a witch; he is a witch"). The source evaluates the father's conduct, whereas the Kiswahili narration attributes a particular identity and spiritual quality to him. The change consequently intensifies the condemnation of the character. Rather than merely describing the act as wicked, the localised narration associates the perpetrator with witchcraft. The result is an evaluative transformation in which the characterisation of the person becomes more explicit.

This example also illustrates why the narrator should be regarded as a cultural mediator. The term "mchawi" is not simply a dictionary substitution for "wickedness." It introduces a culturally meaningful concept through which the character's conduct is interpreted. The localised narration therefore adds an interpretive judgement to the scene. Guillot (2020) argues that audiovisual translation involves cultural mediation because translators must negotiate meanings that are communicated through linguistic and cultural signs. In the present case, the Kiswahili expression does not merely transfer the source evaluation; it reconstructs that evaluation using a culturally resonant concept.

A related transformation can be observed in the representation of the father through figurative language. In the source material, the character's conduct is associated with a dangerous or aggressive animal through the expression "Baba anatenda yake kama chui," rendered as "Father behaves like a leopard." The leopard comparison presents the father's behaviour through an animal metaphor associated with force, danger or aggression. In the localized narration, however, the expression "Roho yake ni ya mchawi, yeye mchawi" shifts the characterisation from animal imagery to spiritual condemnation. The two expressions consequently create different representational frames. The first relies on metaphorical comparison, while the second provides a direct judgement about the character's nature.

This shift demonstrates that paraphrasing in audiovisual localisation can involve changes in figurative structure as well as vocabulary. The narrator may preserve the evaluative force of a scene while replacing the particular metaphor through which that evaluation is expressed. Such transformation is especially relevant in a multimodal medium because the image may already communicate the physical circumstances surrounding a character's behaviour. The Kiswahili narration can therefore devote its verbal resources to interpretation rather than repeating information that the viewer can obtain visually. Chaume (2020) emphasises that audiovisual translation involves the interaction of verbal and non-verbal signs. The Kiswahili narration of *Bloody Ring* demonstrates this interaction by sometimes shifting the verbal emphasis from description towards evaluation.

The use of exaggeration further strengthens the narrator's interpretive role. In the source dialogue, the repetition of "wickedness" provides an emphatic moral evaluation of the father's conduct. The



Kiswahili rendering transforms this evaluation into an explicit accusation of witchcraft. The intensity of the condemnation is consequently increased. This can be described as evaluative amplification rather than simply “dynamic equivalence.” The term is preferable because it identifies what happens to the data: an evaluative statement in the source becomes a more strongly personalised and culturally marked judgement in the localised narration.

At the same time, the available data do not establish why the narrator made this particular change. It would therefore be methodologically unsafe to conclude that the transformation resulted from censorship, religious sensitivity, audience preference or an intention to conceal domestic reproductive violence. Such explanations require independent evidence from the narrator, production context or audience reception. What can be established from the audiovisual comparison is that the Kiswahili narration changes both the factual detail and the evaluative framing of the source account. The analysis should remain at that evidential level.

The distinction between paraphrase and summary is also important. Where the narrator reformulates a source utterance while retaining its principal proposition, the process may be described as paraphrasing. Where the narrator condenses several elements of an audiovisual sequence into a shorter statement, it is more appropriately understood as summarisation. This distinction responds directly to the nature of Tanzanian video narration identified by Krings (2012, 2013). The narrator may interpret events that are already visually represented rather than reproduce the original dialogue in full. Consequently, a Kiswahili utterance may correspond not to one English sentence but to an event, exchange or sequence of actions.

These transformations also complicate the use of the term “translation strategy.” If the Kiswahili narration were treated as a conventional translated script, replacing “wickedness” with “witchcraft” or pregnancy loss with loss of teeth would appear simply as inaccurate translation. When the track is understood as localised re-narration, however, the analytical question changes. We can ask how the narrator reconstructs characterisation, emotional intensity and narrative information through Kiswahili. This approach accommodates both linguistic transfer and creative intervention without assuming that every divergence constitutes an error.

Nida's (1964) framework remains relevant at this point, but only in a qualified manner. Dynamic Equivalence can illuminate the preference for communicative effect and target-language naturalness where a source expression is substantially reformulated. Nevertheless, the more extensive transformations in the present data exceed a simple opposition between formal and Dynamic Equivalence. The narrator is not merely selecting a target-language expression that produces a comparable response; the narration sometimes introduces new evaluative content or changes specific narrative information. Krings' (2012, 2013) concept of video narration and the broader audiovisual perspective provided by Chaume (2020) therefore offer a stronger account of the narrator's creative agency.

The Kiswahili track consequently demonstrates that creative transformation is not peripheral to localisation but part of the way the localised audiovisual product constructs meaning. Paraphrasing can reorganize source information, while exaggeration can intensify characterisation and moral evaluation. Because these changes operate alongside images, gestures, sound and the continuing presence of the original filmic environment, their meaning cannot be assessed through verbal comparison alone. The localised narration is thus better understood as an interpretive layer that selectively reconstructs the narrative for Kiswahili-speaking viewers.



Formal Equivalence, Literal Transfer, Multimodality and the Limits of Voice-over Localisation

The preceding sections have shown that the Kiswahili narration of *Bloody Ring* frequently departs from the English dialogue through omission, addition, cultural substitution and creative reformulation. Such departures, however, do not occur in every instance. Some utterances are rendered in Kiswahili with relatively close semantic correspondence to the source. These instances demonstrate that the localised narration moves along a continuum between close verbal transfer and more extensive re-narration. The degree of transformation varies according to the expression and its relationship with the audiovisual context.

For example, the English utterance “Don’t talk like that. This is your father’s house” is rendered as “Acha kusema hivyo! Hii ni nyumba ya baba yako!” (“Do not speak like that! This is your father’s house.”). The two expressions convey substantially the same propositions: a prohibition against speaking in a particular manner followed by a reference to the father’s house. The Kiswahili version nevertheless adjusts the first clause to a natural imperative construction. The relationship is therefore one of close semantic transfer rather than strict formal replication.

A similar relationship occurs in the exchange “Iruka, greet the elders,” rendered as “Iruka, wasalimie wazee” (“Iruka, greet the elders”). Here, “greet” corresponds to “wasalimie,” while “the elders” corresponds to “wazee.” The social situation visible in the scene supports the interpretation of the utterance, and the Kiswahili rendering does not require substantial explanatory intervention. Another example is “No, don’t worry! Don’t forget I came here all by myself,” rendered as “Usijisumbue, usisahau ya kuwa nimekuja mahali hapa peke yangu” (“Do not worry yourself; do not forget that I came here alone”). Although the Kiswahili wording is not structurally identical to the English, its central proposition and interpersonal function remain closely aligned.

These examples indicate that localisation does not necessarily require extensive modification. The narrator can retain source information closely when the expression is readily transferable and the audiovisual context provides sufficient support. Nida’s (1964) concept of Formal Equivalence can cautiously illuminate such cases by drawing attention to relatively close relationships between source and target forms. Nevertheless, these examples should not be taken as evidence that Formal Equivalence constitutes the principal theoretical orientation of the localised film. Nida developed his framework in relation to textual translation, whereas Tanzanian audiovisual re-narration involves speech, image, sound and performance. The present cases are therefore more appropriately described as close verbal transfer, with Nida serving as a supplementary interpretive reference (Chaume, 2020; Krings, 2012, 2013).

The multimodal nature of the adaptation becomes particularly evident in the treatment of music and other source-language elements. Unlike full dubbing, voice-over does not ordinarily require the replacement of the entire original soundtrack. The localised Kiswahili voice can be superimposed while music, sound effects and other elements of the original film remain audible. Consequently, the continued presence of source-language material in *Bloody Ring* should not automatically be interpreted as a failure or technical limitation of localisation.

For instance, the opening song performed by Nmaku’s father is retained in its original Yoruba form. The incantation associated with Ofodile also remains largely unchanged, while the Igbo expression *Chineke!* (“God”) is retained rather than systematically replaced with a Kiswahili equivalent. These instances demonstrate that localisation operates selectively. The principal narrative may be mediated through Kiswahili while particular linguistic and musical elements continue to signal the Nigerian cultural setting.



The retention of songs is especially significant because songs combine linguistic meaning with melody, rhythm, performance and cultural identity. Their adaptation therefore involves considerations that differ from those involved in translating ordinary dialogue. Liubinienė and Beniušytė (2014) demonstrate that successful song localisation requires attention to both linguistic meaning and musical form. In the present case, the continued use of Yoruba and Igbo songs preserves aspects of the source-film's cultural and acoustic identity. Their retention is also consistent with the characteristics of voice-over, where the original soundtrack can remain perceptible beneath or alongside the localised narration.

This layered structure reinforces the importance of multimodality in audiovisual translation. Meaning in film is not contained exclusively in spoken dialogue but emerges through the interaction of language, images, gestures, music, sound and performance (Chaume, 2020; Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2021). Thus, an expression that appears only partially represented in the Kiswahili track may nevertheless be supported by what the viewer sees or hears. The narrator does not always need to verbalise information that is already available through another semiotic channel.

The relationship between the localised *Bloody Ring* and Tanzania's earlier tradition of live video narration provides a further point of comparison. Krings (2012) describes Tanzanian video narrators as “cinematic go-betweens” because they did more than reproduce foreign-film dialogue. They could explain cultural references, comment on characters and events, and mediate the film for audiences in real time. Krings (2013) similarly demonstrates how a Tanzanian narrator could retell a Nollywood film through Kiswahili, transforming the foreign production through localised narration. Cultural mediation was therefore integral to the narration process.

The Kiswahili version of *Bloody Ring* shares this mediating tendency, particularly in its paraphrasing, cultural substitution and evaluative reformulation. It differs from live narration, however, in its mode of delivery. The voice-over is incorporated into a recorded audiovisual product and must operate within the completed sequence of images, performances and sound. The narrator's interventions are consequently embedded within the fixed audiovisual structure rather than produced spontaneously in response to an audience during a screening. This distinction changes the conditions of mediation without eliminating the narrator's interpretive role.

The difference also cautions against describing voice-over as simply a less effective form of live narration. The two modes have different communicative arrangements. Live narrators could respond directly to audiences and introduce explanations or commentary as circumstances required (Krings, 2012). In recorded voice-over, the localised narration becomes part of the audiovisual product itself. The narrator can still modify and interpret the source material, but such interventions are delivered through a predetermined recording.

The coexistence of close verbal transfer, creative adaptation and source-language retention consequently produces a layered localised text. Nigerian settings, characters, visual symbols, songs and linguistic expressions remain present, while Kiswahili provides the principal medium through which the narrative is interpreted. This relationship is consistent with Pérez-González's (2020) view of audiovisual translation as a multimodal practice in which meaning is distributed across several semiotic resources.

The analysis therefore demonstrates that the Kiswahili adaptation does not follow a single translation procedure. Some utterances remain close to their source meanings, while others are substantially reformulated or culturally substituted. At the same time, songs and selected source-language



expressions remain audible, reflecting both the multimodal structure of the film and the characteristics of voice-over. The resulting product is consequently neither a purely translated text nor a complete cultural replacement of the original. It is a localised audiovisual re-narration in which Kiswahili interpretation and Nigerian cultural and acoustic elements operate simultaneously.

Conclusion

This study examined the localisation of *Bloody Ring* into Kiswahili through selected segments of its recorded voice-over adaptation. The findings show that the localised version is not a uniform reproduction of the English dialogue but a hybrid audiovisual re-narration shaped by selective linguistic and cultural choices.

The analysis identified omission and addition, cultural substitution, lexical adaptation, paraphrasing, evaluative amplification, creative transformation and close verbal transfer. The examples demonstrate that these practices operate selectively: some source expressions are closely reproduced, while others are compressed, expanded, culturally reformulated or retained in their original form. The localisation therefore negotiates meaning across linguistic and cultural contexts rather than following a single translation procedure.

The study also distinguishes recorded Kiswahili voice-over from the live video narration documented in earlier Tanzanian scholarship. Because the original English soundtrack remains audible beneath the Kiswahili narration, the localised film constitutes a hybrid audiovisual form in which translation, adaptation and performance interact. Nida's equivalence concepts provide a useful supplementary point of comparison, but contemporary approaches to audiovisual translation, localisation and cultural mediation offer a stronger explanation of the range of practices identified.

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