

**CONFIGURATION OF KENYAN FILM ACTING: A STUDY OF  
EIGHT SELECTED DRAMA FILMS**

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**DECLARATION**

This thesis is my original work and has not been submitted to any other institution of higher learning for a degree or any other academic award.

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## OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

**Acting** – Involves an actor/actress taking a different persona as demanded by the screenplay or the film itself so as to perform to an audience. In the case of film, the film camera acts as a medium that relays the performance to the audience in different locations.

**Actor/Actress** – A person in a theatrical play or film who takes on a different persona so as to perform a play on stage or act in a film. He/she is the main visual element on a stage play or feature film.

**Africanness** – The state or quality of being African and the identification with Africa as a continent that has a unique set of cultures. In the study, the term does not restrict itself to a native of the continent but also those who inhabit the continent and identify with the cultures in the continent.

**Character** – Given qualities (physical, mental and emotional) of a scripted fictitious individual in a plot of a film or play. The actor/actress has to take on the qualities of the scripted character so as to perform in the play or film.

**Configuration** – Pattern as observed in given elements under discussion in the films/texts.

**Drama Film** – A presentation of stories in real life settings or situations that portray realistic characters in conflict with either themselves, others, or forces of nature. The plot of drama films relies on the emotional and relational development of the characters

**Kenyan Film** – A film shot in Kenya with a storyline that reflects the country and the majority of the cast and crew in key roles being Kenyan.

**Realism** – This is the faithful/truthful representation of a state or situation in the society and everyday life.

**Short Film** – This is a motion picture that has a running time of between 15 minutes to 40 minutes, including credits.

**Social Context/Environment** – The immediate physical and communal setting in which one lives. It further denotes the culture, education, people and institutions that one interacts with and is influenced by. In the study, social environment will not only entail the setting in which the actor/actress is located but also his/her community in life and how they determine his/her acting.

**Text** – The films under study in this research will be referred to as visual texts that can be analysed just as written texts.

**Two-shot** – A film shot that features two people in the same frame.

## ABSTRACT

Acting is one of the most obvious items that one observes in a play or film. Indeed, when one goes to watch a play or film, one usually observes the characters acting so as to tell the story dramatically. However, it ought to be appreciated that actors/actresses perform differently according to their abilities, creativity, social contexts and culture. Hence, this study aimed at analysing the techniques of acting as employed in selected Kenyan films by establishing their characteristics and comparing them to established theoretical frameworks. This research analyses eight films, namely: *Killer Necklace* (2008) by Judy Kibinge, *Weakness* (2009) by Wanjiru Kairu, *Maisha* (2010) by Andrew Odera, *Taharuki* (2011) by Ekwa Msangi-Omari, *Pulse* (2011) by Erick Wanyama, *Madam Chief* (2011) by Joan Kabugu, *Blurred Birth* (2011) by Victor Ogoah and *My Faith* (2014) by Bruce Makau. This is a descriptive study, which employed System Acting, External Acting Method and Speech Act Theory as its base theories. The study employed the theories with the aim of verifying the effect of the social environment on the actor/actress and identification of patterns inherent in the acting techniques. The first Chapter of the study acts as an introduction, with the second Chapter analysing the actor's/actress' use of voice. The third Chapter examines the actor's/actress' use of facial expressions, gestures and postures. The fourth Chapter deals with the actor's/actress' use of movements, stage business and proxemics. The final Chapter forms the conclusion and it observes that there are discernible patterns employed in acting and although most of the actors and actresses interviewed had attended short topical workshops conducted by various directors and academicians on performing, they were not grounded in acting theory. Hence, most of the time they performed their roles through their understanding and observations of how individuals operated in society. Finally, the study notes that acting techniques employed by the actors/actresses had a communicative value as focus group participants were able to accurately identify the facial expressions, gestures, postures, movements and proxemic elements in the frames and short video clips derived from the selected films.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### **1.0 Background to the Study**

Acting is perhaps the most discussed and least understood aspect of cinema and television. Since the functional film gained ascendance in the first decade of the twentieth century, the actor/actress has been one of the most visible and important elements of screen narratives. The apparent neglect of acting stems from the subject's resistance to academic analysis (Pearson and Simpson, 2001).

Pearson and Simpson's concern that acting is perceived to be an art form that may present enormous challenges in theorizing may arise from the fact that acting is a wide and varied field with loose parameters set to define it as an academic field. Wilson and Goldfarb (2002), who have tried to analyse acting from a historical perspective, assert that it is almost as old as the human race. The scholars note that from the earliest days of civilization, people have mimicked others and have told stories, imitating the voices and gestures of the characters. To the scholars, acting is not only that which is performed on a proscenium stage, but also in rituals and ceremonies, which involves costumes and assigned roles.

However, screen acting for feature films may be seen to be pointedly different from the wide parameters that Wilson and Goldfarb define to be acting. Barsam (2007) notes that screen acting is an art in which an actor/actress uses imagination, intelligence, psychology, memory, vocal technique, facial expressions, body language, and an overall knowledge of the filmmaking process to realise the character created by the screenwriter.

In consideration of this view, acting is not an art that one can mimic (or should mimic) from another individual in its exact sense since it encompasses the use of imagination and intelligence, which are inherent in the actor/actress playing a role. Hence, even if an actor/actress is taught to play a certain role in a certain way, there will always be variations shaped by the actor/actress' own creative input, guided by a director or teacher and sharpened by the actor/actress' culture, social environment and personal observations.

Cockerham (1999) notes that culture provides people with a common identity and perspective. Persons living in groups develop shared meanings and understandings of their world in order to cope with the demands of everyday life. Bellah *et al* (1985) see culture as patterns of meaning that any group or society uses to interpret and evaluate itself and its situation. Brockett and Ball (2004) relate culture to acting by noting that, in many ways, it is an extension of everyday human behaviour. Indeed, an actor/actress is not a cold, robot-like individual who is supposed to drop his/her identity the moment he/she steps into his/her professional shoes. If Brockett's and Ball's postulations about acting are accurate, then the social context in which the actor/actress has been nurtured will automatically be carried onto stage when an actor/actress is performing.

Stanton and Banham (1996) hold that the present-day African theatre is enriched and complemented by its coexistence with traditional forms, skills and understanding. Stanton's and Banham's postulations can be related to film acting since the African actor/actress still depends on traditional forms of African theatre in terms of skills,

identity and what performance really entails. The scholars point to examples in Asia where there are formal works such as *Natyasastra* and *Zeami's treatises on the Nō* which encode traditional acting genres. In the Kenyan situation, the actor/actress grounds his/her understanding of acting in traditional forms of theatre that he/she has been exposed to in his/her community festivals, and later to performances during the annual Kenya Schools and Colleges Drama Festivals.

Ayodi (1997) while investigating the influence of Stanislavski on acting in a Kenyan television serial concludes her study by encouraging Kenyan theatre and film practitioners to read Stanislavski and abide by his teachings on acting. Kahuro (2018) concludes in his study on stage directing in Kenya that directors with academic background and vast research in theatre have a wide and rich range of directing techniques. He further notes that the Stanislavski system acting is the most common acting style used in Kenya. However, this study proscribes to the possibility of a technique in acting that is based on a people's traditions and understanding of society and which is not rooted in Stanislavski's teachings.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

From the foregoing discussion, the multiplicity of tools point to the fact that there cannot be one acting style and that actors/actresses perform differently according to their abilities, creativity, social conditions, contexts and culture that they have been exposed to.

In this regard, this research sought to analyse acting in selected Kenyan films with the aim of examining the influence of the actor's/actress' social environment on techniques of acting. It sought to interrogate the 'Africanness' in the performance of the actor/actress in the selected films and compared it to the canons as outlined in established acting theories.

### **1.2 Objectives of the Research**

- a. To describe the configuration of acting in the selected films.
- b. To examine the influence of the social environment in which the actor/actress is located with regard to his/her technique in the selected films.
- c. To determine the communicative value of the acting techniques in the selected films.

### **1.3 Research questions**

- a. What are the configurations of acting in the selected films?
- b. How does the actors'/actress' social environment influence their techniques in the selected films?
- c. Do the acting techniques have any communicative value?

### **1.4 Research assumptions**

- a. There are different configurations of acting in the selected films.
- b. An actor's/actress' social environment influences his/her acting techniques.
- c. The techniques employed in acting in the selected films have communicative value.

### **1.5 Justification of the Study**

Pearson and Simpson (2001) note that although the actor/actress is the most prominent element on television or cinema screen, the art of acting is perhaps the most discussed and yet least understood. This study hopes to contribute to the scholarly material on acting and the nature of film performances in the selected films. It is also expected to serve as a link to the practical aspect of acting for film and the theoretical knowledge available in this field. Although it was limited to acting in a number of selected Kenyan films, the study hopes to encourage other scholars to look at acting as exhibited in films from various African countries.

### **1.6 Scope of the Study**

This study analysed the following films: *Killer Necklace* (2008) by Judy Kibinge, *Weakness* (2009) by Wanjiru Kairu, *Maisha* (2010) by Andrew Odera, *Taharuki* (2011) by Ekwa Msangi-Omari, *Pulse* (2011) by Erick Wanyama, *Madam Chief* (2011) by Joan Kabugu, *Blurred Birth* (2011) by Victor Ogolah and *My Faith* (2014) by Bruce Makau.

For a film to be selected it had to be a short drama in terms of genre, be acted by Kenyans and be directed by a Kenyan. The film also had to have a cast of less than six individuals (both in major and minor roles). Since this study was aimed at investigating the performance of the Kenyan actor/actress and the intricacies of his/her technique, it demanded that the characters in the films be kept at a minimum. Hence, each of the films chosen had less than three main characters and had a running time of between 15 to 40 minutes within which the actors/actresses had to perform.

### **1.7 Delimitations**

The study only focused on the acting techniques and configurations employed in the target eight films since this enabled the study to analyse multiple aspects of acting. The time limit set for the research also demanded that only a minimal number of films were selected as primary texts for the study.

## **1.8 Review of Related Literature**

### **1.8.0 Introduction**

This section pays attention to documented material on acting. It gives a brief historical background of acting while discussing essential aspects that were considered when analyzing the selected films. The section starts from a global historical background to acting and concludes by highlighting notable studies on acting in Africa while paying special attention to Kenya. The gaps in the literature reviewed have been identified and their contribution to this study acknowledged. The section also highlights the plotting, characters and setting of the films under consideration.

### **1.8.1 A Global Historical Background to Acting**

Hartnoll (1967) postulates that nothing is known of the performance of the very early actor. However, modern day acting has historically been associated with the Greek tragic actor. Baldry (1971) notes that in the earliest days of tragedy the poet himself was alone in the arena. He cites Aristotle who alluded to the fact that Aeschylus increased the number of actors to two, and Sophocles added a third and set in motion formal acting as we know it now. This study appreciates the origin of acting on stage as performed by the Greeks and carried on to the modern day acting, but it will restrict itself not on the historical context of acting but on Kenyan film acting.

Bert (1994) observes that classical theatre began as a relatively simple event performed in an open area. Later, it developed into a spectacle staged in monumental theatres. However, even with the development of staging of plays, acting has remained the heart of all theatre and narrative fictional films. Wilson and Goldfarb (2002) see film acting as

one person or a group of people taking position in front of the camera and begin to portray a character or a set of characters to speak and move in ways that convey an image of the character. They note that acting is almost as old as the human race.

Bert's, Wilson's and Goldfarb's historical perspectives of acting relates it to different ages by noting that impersonation has been a recognizable form of acting which continues through to the present day. The authors' contributions have been acknowledged in this research because they outline the history of acting and firmly place the human voice and gestures in the realm of acting and as essential tools for the actor/actress to express him/herself. However, this research focused primarily on social context in acting and how attendant traits influence acting in the selected Kenyan films.

Scott (1975) differentiates theatre and film by noting that stage training is highly useful to the screen actor/actress (as are professional skills in gymnastics, modelling, or ballet). However, technological intervention changes the performing conditions of cinema. The film actor/actress plays without the benefit of a live audience. He/she performs disjunctively and plays his/her scenes out of dramatic sequence. Bordwell and Thompson (2008), while comparing theatre and film acting, note that in theatre we are usually at a considerable distance from the actor on stage. We certainly can never get as close to the theatre actor/actress in the same way the camera can in a film. Filmed from very close, the actor's/actress' tiniest eye movement may be revealed. Thus, the film actor/actress must behave differently from the stage actor/actress as the camera has the ability to reveal

a character's intentions more clearly with the actor/actress underplaying his/her role than is possible when one is watching a stage play.

Although stage and film acting can be regarded as being similar, the factors outlined by Scott (1975), Bordwell and Thompson (2008) differentiate a stage performance from a screen performance. The cited factors were taken into consideration in this research as they formed the basis for the techniques in acting and determined whether the actor/actress was communicating to his/her audience. This study read the selected films with the aim of determining whether the acting was believable and had an impact on the intended audience. Scott (1975) also notes the impact of technological interventions such as the use of sound and emergence of starky modernistic sets at the time and their effects on film acting. This research took Scott's observations on technological interventions in acting into consideration as the selected films were being analysed. It was appreciated that variables such as the way the stage (or location) has been set, camera angles and light set up affect the way the audience interprets the performance.

### **1.8.2 Studies of Acting in Africa**

While Stanton and Banham (1996) on one hand conclude that the influence of Western-style education continues to determine elements of theatrical forms and language in much of the contemporary drama, Atsiaya (2012), on the other hand, notes that there is a big problem when it comes to defining African theatre in its purity, especially when trying to demarcate the border between what is traditional and otherwise. Atsiaya observes that

African communities have been evolving over time, with many new experiences being registered.

Stanton's, Banham's and Atsiaya's studies on African theatre were important to this study since they highlight its uniqueness. The scholars note that while African theatre (and acting) may be unique, foreign influences have been imparted on it. They also note that African theatre/acting is not homogeneous and different countries (more appropriately, different clans) have their own unique theatre. This study appreciates the fact that theatre on the continent has been influenced by methods and instructions from other continents, but actors/actresses in Africa also derive some of their techniques from their individual societies. This study aimed at investigating these societal influences on acting and to determine the extent to which foreign nationals and cultures inform the techniques in the Kenyan film.

Kerr (1995) says that black actors were included in movies made in Africa since the start of film production at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. He cites the first full-length feature film made in South Africa (*Die Voortrekkers*, 1916) as involving African actors. Although the Africans in it were depicted as ignorant barbarians who were obstacles to civilization, the experience exposed them to the techniques of film acting. Kerr (1995) notes that Shabani bin Yusuf (a Zanzibari professional actor) had so superb acting skills that he was employed by the Bantu Educational Kinema Experiment (BEKE). However, BEKE commented on the aesthetic problems of trying to transpose Yusuf's essentially

participatory acting technique to the more artificial mechanical demands of cinema acting.

Kerr (1995) places Africans in the film acting scenes since films started being made on the continent. The fact that these actors/actresses had an already established style which BEKE felt had to be adjusted so as to be in line with film acting was crucial in establishing the premise that the social environment and culture of the actor/actress were important in determining their acting style. This study used Kerr's (1995) observations on the acting employed by BEKE performers as an anchor towards the establishment of the differences and similarities between Kenyan acting that is informed by the actor's/actresses social environment and that which is influenced by foreign media/factors.

Ukadike (1994), notes that, although a wide variety of Hollywood and European cinematic practices are evident in African films, black African filmmakers have used these practices to forge their own cinematic language and style. He notes that African filmmakers intentionally combine both African and Western practices.

This study was specifically interested in highlighting the similarities and differences in acting which could be registered when observing a film made in Kenya by Kenyans. Although the research restricted itself to eight selected films from Kenya, it expounded on the similarities in Acting and how the actor's/actress' culture is revealed in his/her performance as postulated by Ukadike (1994) in his focus on African theatre.

### **1.8.3 Contextualizing Content in the Selected Films**

The first film, *Killer Necklace* (2008), is a film which revolves around the lead actor, Mbugua (played by Steve Mwangi), and his struggle to gratify a lady he has fallen in love with. The film starts by introducing Mbugua with his girlfriend (Muthoni) and her obsession with a gold necklace in a shop at a market. Mbugua's infatuation with the girl and her desire for the necklace make him join a criminal gang where he is tasked with robbing an old woman. After the robbery, Mbugua discovers that Muthoni is not who she appears to be.

The film has three main characters with Mbugua being the axial character around whom the story revolves. It explores a variety of emotions, from passion to despair, with Mbugua on the one hand being depicted as being passionately in love at the start of the film until his dejection at the end. Muthoni, on the other hand, is depicted as being in love with Mbugua at the beginning of the film. However, at the end she is seen as being materialistic.

The film was shot in different locations with the most prominent being an elegant house where Muthoni resides and an open field where Jonah (criminal friend to Mbugua played by Abubakar Mwendwa) takes time to give Mbugua counsel (in this case, negative advice). This puts the film in its proper perspective. Other spaces used are Jonah's house in a slum, Mbugua's grandmother's room (also in a slum), a market, two roads (one in a decent estate and another one in a low economic area) and a city street.

The second film, *Weakness* (2009), is a 15-minute film which does not revolve around a particular character but whose story involves four characters. It is shot in a single location and only has three characters with speaking lines, with a fourth only appearing at the end of the film.

The film is about strained family relations as revealed at the start when Robert (played by Melvin Alusa) rushes across a living room to open the door for a visitor who turns out to be his brother Nicky (played by Maqbul Mohammed). The very first words the two brothers exchange indicate that they have strained relations. The third character, Susan (Robert's wife), joins the two brothers almost at the end of the film. Her entry is crucial as she binds the beginning of the film to the conclusion since she exposes an ugly secret that Robert has been hiding from his brother.

The film is unique because most of the shots taken are either close-ups or medium shot (mid-shots). The two types of shots are used in cinematography to refer to the field of view. Zettl (2010) notes that the field of view refers to how close the object seems to the viewer, or how much of the 'field', or scenery, in front of one is in the shot. Pramaggiore and Wallis (2006) state that medium shots and close-ups tend to produce a greater sense of intimacy by allowing viewers to focus on actors'/actress' faces and individual emotions. Owens and Gerald (2011) further support this view with regard to the close-up shot by arguing that it is effective for revealing detail, emotions and drama. They note that sometimes it can even reveal too much: it thus encourages the audience to

concentrate on a specific feature. Out of the 198 shots used in *Weakness* (2009), 164 are either close-ups or mid-shots.

The third film, *Maisha* (2010), is about a murder and the actions taken by various individuals in relation to the murder. In the film, the protagonist's fiancée is murdered by a killer hired by his former girlfriend (Jezebel). The film is about Jezebel's plot to get back her former lover using whatever means necessary, with the murder of the protagonist's fiancée forming a sub-plot.

The film has three main characters with three others taking supporting roles. It has been shot in different locations with the main setting being the protagonist's (Tony's) house. Although there are multiple locations in which the film was shot, the director managed to limit the number of performers to eight.

The fourth film, *Taharuki* (2011), has three main characters only in it: Waridi, Kevin and an intruder (the villain). These are the ones who have speaking lines. Its title, *Taharuki* (trans: suspense), defines the 12 minute short film without a clear story line and the theme is only implied in the conversation between Waridi and Kevin. Its theme is not entirely clear as the conversation between the two key characters only implies that genocide is taking place outside the boutique in which they are trapped. The nature of the genocide or the opposing sides and why exactly the actions are taking place are not revealed. The film also leaves the viewer in suspense as Kevin is first introduced while seriously wounded outside Waridi's boutique, but the actions that led to his wounds are

not fully explained. In the conversation between Kevin and Waridi, one can tell that he was to get documents for smuggling children outside the country but decided to try to save other children who were being held captive at the place where he was to get the documents. It is not revealed which children he was supposed to save and why the ones being held in captivity were not deserving of rescue.

*Taharuki* (2011) has been shot in one location (the boutique) with only two occurrences of the camera shooting outside the confined locales of the shop. The most extensive shots outside the shop occur in a series of disrupted flashbacks which explains Kevin's wounds. The boutique has two rooms with most of the action taking place in a confined interior room, with the outer room only being used once when Waridi (played by Mirriam Chemmoss) is seen passing through as she goes to check the store front and drags Kevin into the shop.

The fifth film, *Pulse* (2011), is a drama film with a bit of implied comedy in which a young man thinks he has accidentally caused the death of a teenage girl in his friend's house when he gave the girl alcohol spiked with an illicit drug. The film starts with Dan (a lead character) seated on a bed in deep thought. A teenage girl (Dama) in school uniform can be seen lying behind him on the bed. While Dan is still trying to figure out how to handle the situation, his friend Samson comes over and through a flashback Dan reveals what happened. However, soon afterwards Samson's girlfriend, Trish (played by Marion Bosire), arrives followed by Vento (the owner of the house). As Vento is inquiring on what is going on, there is a knock on the door and Trish tries to scream so

that she can be rescued by whoever is knocking. Dan and Sam pull her down to the bed and cover her face with a pillow while Vento talks to the lady who has been knocking at the door. Trish is unfortunately suffocated as Dama wakes up from her drugged blackout.

The film has a total of six characters, with four of them taking the lead roles. Out of the six characters, Dama does not have speaking lines. *Pulse* (2011) is acted in a small crowded room, but a few shots are taken at a veranda outside the main door as the different characters open it to either speak or allow other characters in. Although *Pulse* (2011) has a story line, it does not seem to be driven by a specific theme or a message.

The sixth film, *Madam Chief* (2011) is a film about corruption, misuse of power and exploitation. Although its title points to the fact that it is about a female Chief (played by Joyce Arigi), she actually turns out to be the antagonist with a young man (Mwambia – played by Elsaphan Njora) being the protagonist. Despite the fact that the Chief has more screen time, the viewer has to put him/herself in Mwambia's position in order to appreciate the story and the themes therein.

The film is about Mwambia, a young high school graduate, who visits the Chief's office in search of university scholarships application forms. He faces a lot of hurdles in his dealings with the Chief in what could have been a very simple task.

The film is set in seven locations: the exterior of the Chief's office, the interior of the office, a bar, a street in a town centre, Mwambia's mother's house, the Chief's house and

the exterior of her house. It has two main characters (Mwambia and the Chief) with other characters appearing in minor roles. There are no secondary characters. Frensham (1996) distinguishes secondary characters from minor characters by noting that secondary characters are those who interact with the protagonist and have a significant effect on the plot or main character/s. Minor characters are those who add colour, atmosphere or comic relief, deliver messages, open doors and generally contribute to the world of the unfolding drama/story.

The seventh film, *Blurred Birth* (2011), is about infidelity, a theme that is revealed at the end and from which the title is derived. Although infidelity is an important theme in the film, *Blurred Birth* (2011) also has other key themes such as family relations and corruption/greed.

*Blurred Birth* (2011) starts with an expectant lady, who is not referred to by name throughout the film, pleading with her husband (Sang) for money so that she can go for an antenatal checkup. Sang says he has no money since it is the middle of the month. He then leaves the house. On the way to work he is almost knocked down by a car whose driver was busy on phone while driving. The driver (who is also not named) offers money to Sang so that legal action is not taken. With the money at hand, Sang goes back home and finds his wife in labour. He rushes her to a hospital but the lady in charge of admissions demands a bribe for the wife to be admitted. While Sang is out in the corridors waiting for the wife to deliver, her phone rings and he answers it only to hear a man's voice asking "how is the mother of my child"? The voice changes from the thinned

telephony voice to an actual voice as Sang looks down the corridor to see the driver (who almost run him over) uttering the words he hears in his wife's phone.

The film has seven characters, with Sang and the wife being the main characters. Secondary characters include Sang's neighbour, the driver and the lady in charge of admissions at the hospital. The two minor characters are a guard at the hospital gate and a nurse in the hospital.

The eighth film, *My Faith* (2014) is about the hardships that a family faces and which are overcome through faith. It has two main characters: James Siwa and his wife, Faith, who has a spinal cord injury which has left her bedridden. It has three secondary characters and one minor character, with most of the action taking place in Siwa's house. The house is divided into two, a bedroom and a living room where most of the action takes place. Other settings include Siwa's house rooftop, the veranda and an office space.

The film dwells on the financial difficulties which James faces due to his wife's spinal cord injury. Financial difficulties as a theme in the film binds all the characters together as James owes money to two of the secondary characters and the minor character takes the role of an enforcer backing up a creditor. The third secondary character is James' freelance employer who rejects James' work because someone else has bribed her to publish their work.

## **1.9 Theoretical Framework**

### **1.9.1 Introduction**

This study made use of Constantine Stanislavski's (1936) System Acting, the External Acting Method (mechanical acting) (1885) and the Speech Act Theory (1962) to outline its argument. Panovski (1993) notes that Stanislavski introduced the first consistent and systematized theory of theatre as applied to acting and directing. Tomaric (2008) holds that the Stanislavskian approach to acting is considered the foundation of modern television, stage and movie acting. Hence, System Acting contains the necessary tools that this study needed when analysing the selected films. Conversely, External Acting Method is applicable and noticeable in theatre and film (Weissman, 1965). Therefore, it was necessary that its tenets be outlined for comparison with the internal (Stanislavski's) acting method. Speech Act Theory was used to give insights in the philosophy of language as used in the dialogue identified in the selected films.

### **1.9.2 System Acting**

Constantine Stanislavski's version of System Acting has been outlined in three books which he authored: *My Life in Art* (1924), *An Actor Prepares* (1936) and *Building a Character* (1949). These books outline Stanislavski's version of system acting which brought out psychological depth and searched for 'inner truth'. He held that each character in a play had an objective – something very specific that they were trying to achieve within each scene. In the larger picture, he believed that there was one larger objective that carried the character through the play – he called this the 'super objective'. According to Balme (2008), Stanislavski also believed that it was crucial to understand

the thought process of the character to learn why their objective was important to them and what drove them to get what they wanted.

Stanislavski's books address topics that range from general analysis of acting on stage to in-depth actor training exercises that educate the actor on how to move on stage. He outlined in detail the use of emotive memory and the method of physical action in relation to actor training and performance on stage. Stanislavski was extremely focused on creating truth on stage – truth that was fundamentally separate from truth in real life. He did not want the actor/actress to believe that they actually were the character that they were portraying. Instead, he did want them to believe in the imaginary creation of this character (Stanislavski, 1936).

In performance, the System also took the analysis of text a step further. It introduced the concept of subtext – what the character was really saying underneath the actual words, meaning that the emotional connection of the actor/actress with his/her words would explain his/her intent even if it was contrary to what was said. Stanislavski noted the importance of subtext through the use of the actor's/actress' body (posture, gesture, mannerisms and movement) in a performance since this was what carried the audience along in the play (Stanislavski, 1949).

Stanislavski expressly aimed for the book, *Building a Character* (1949), to provide the external technical means of bringing a character to life before an audience. Sawoski (n.d) notes that Stanislavski felt that the body (of an actor/actress) needed to be trained to

improve posture, and make movements supple and graceful. To Stanislavski, there was no room for mechanical gestures or mannerisms in the theatre. A gesture, for example, needed to reflect inner experience to become purposeful, logical and truthful.

The three books by Stanislavski point to the expectations he had when observing his actors/actresses. These expectations were invaluable in analysing the performance of actors in the materials chosen for this study. This study employed Stanislavski's analysis in performance when examining subtext, intonation of an actor/actress, body postures, gestures and choice of actions. It also relied on his propositions of how to identify the objectives of a character in different scenes and the determination of truth in terms of presentation in a performance.

Stanislavski's last book, *Building a Character* (1949), was crucial in the analysis of the films selected for study as it outlines his perspectives of physical characterization, movement and speech, which were central elements in this study.

Tomaric (2008), while discussing the popularity of the System, notes that it is considered the foundation of modern television, stage and movie acting. This study used it as its primary theory because of its prominence in the film industry. It was also necessary to identify significant aspects of System Acting so as to establish the variations of the acting style in an actor's/actress' performance and determine whether the social environment influences his/her performance.

A version of System Acting (Method Acting) proposed by Lee Strasberg together with some members of the Actor's Studio has been prominent in the Hollywood films with Marlon Brando being one of the most famous actors to practise the acting style (Ray, 2001). Another proponent of the acting style is Stella Adler, who visited Stanislavski in Russia and used his teachings when instructing students at the Actor's Studio in the United States of America (Monaco et al, 1991). Scott (1975) notes that Elia Kazan and Lee Strasberg refined the Stanislavski's System for the Broadway stage in order to handle the psycho-analytical concerns of playwrights such as Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams.

### **1.9.3 External Acting Method**

External Acting Method is a theory that came into existence in the seventeenth century with the work of Charles Le Brun (cited in Balme, 2008) and later advanced by Francois Delsarte (also cited in Balme, 2008).

Le Brun provided a visual canonization of the passions in his illustrated treatise *Method pour Apprendre a Dessiner les Passions* (trans. *Method to Learn to Draw the Passions*) (1707). Although the exact number of passions, or emotional states, was never finally fixed, Le Brun provided forty-three illustrations with commentaries. They show different passions in their variations and mixed forms. Basic passions include: astonishment, rapture, simple love, desire, hope, sorrow and despondency.

Francois Delsarte (Cited in Balme, 2008), who attempted to systematize the external acting method, developed it not just for the stage actor/actress but also for the singer and dancer. External Acting Method emphasises the interdependence of the body and emotion (or the 'spiritual act' as Delsarte termed it). In the same vein Brockett & Findlay (1973) note that Delsarte divided and subdivided the body into parts and related each to the physical, mental, or emotional-spiritual realms. Eventually, he arrived at an elaborate scheme whereby he sought to describe how the feet, legs, arms, torso, head, and every other part of the body were to be used in communicating particular emotions, attitudes, or ideas.

Delsarte (Cited in Zorn, 1968) saw that movement involved a "semiotics" (Delsarte's own term) - a sign system that could be "read" by observers. Thus, the body encodes meaning which the viewer can decode. He recognized that physical "signs" come from various sources - some gestures are ours alone and express our individuality; some are social or cultural conventions, like waving "hello"; and some may be biologically connected to our emotional reactions.

The complexity of Delsarte's System specifies a vast range of potential gestures and postures by working through a series of principles which define a space of variations across head orientations, stances, hand shapes, leg positions and arm orientations as well as the meanings they convey. Further, Delsarte (Cited in Zorn, 1968) argues that the zones of the body and space around it tend to be associated with differing intellectual, emotional and physical interpretations.

Le Brun's (Cited in Balme, 2008) contribution to acting with his illustrated passions formed the basis of external acting and was vital in interpreting the facial expressions of actors in the analysis of texts in this study. Delsarte's extensive focus on body control, posture and gesture, was used in this study in relations to movements of actors while in character. Delsarte's emphasis on the existence of physical signs and his detailed specifications which could be noted by the audience when an actor/actress is in character was crucial in the analysis of the films under study.

#### **1.9.4 Speech Act Theory**

Speech Act Theory was founded in the work of Frege, J. L. Austin (1962), and later expounded by J. R. Searle (1967). The theory is characterised by two main ideas. One is that a distinction has to be drawn between the meaning expressed by an utterance and the way in which the utterance is used. The other idea is that utterances of every kind can be considered as acts (Sbisa, 2009).

Austin's (2003) analysed ordinary language and from the perspective of 'performative utterances' that take form as declarative sentences and, when issued under appropriate circumstances, are not descriptions, but performances of an act. The concept of performative utterances was found to be useful when analysing dialogue in the selected films. Bayat (2013) expounds this concept by noting that while using language people do not produce only an isolated series of sentences, but also perform an action. In other words, by using language they either do something or make others do something.

Searle (cited in Bayat, 2013) notes that speech act is presented in real language situations. Accordingly, he says that the basic assumption on the Speech Act Theory should be that the smallest unit in human communication is the implementation of certain types of acts.

Austin (2003) indicates that three acts can occur simultaneously while performing a statement. The first one being the locution act that describes only the action of saying something. The second is the illocutionary act, which is to do something by saying something. The third is the perlocutionary that tells the effect left on the hearer. The perlocutionary act is also connected to the conclusion of something said.

The Speech Act Theory was especially important in this study as it helped put the utterances of the actors/actresses in the selected films under perspective. It assisted in the identification of the end result expected by the characters when engaged in dialogue. The theory also helped in the assessment of the effectiveness of the dialogue that the characters were engaged in as it gave pointers on actions expected by the receiver when he or she hears what is uttered by the speaker.

## **1.10 Research Methodology**

### **1.10.1 Introduction**

This section describes how the research was conducted. It dwelt on the research design, sampling procedure, data collection instruments, data collection methods and procedures and finally data analysis.

### **1.10.2 Research Design**

This is a qualitative research to examine the target texts in depth, leading to conclusions arising from the analysis. Denzin and Lincoln (cited in Newman and Benz, 1998) define qualitative research as being multi-method in form, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. They note that qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study, personal experiences, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactions and visual texts. Bandyopdhyay (2015) observes that qualitative research uses a wide variety of forms of data; however, its focus is on language, signs, meanings, body language and related aspects.

Kothari (2004) describes qualitative research as that which is concerned with qualitative phenomenon which relates or involves quality or kind. He says that this type of research aims at discovering the underlying motives and desires. Mugenda and Mugenda (2012) note that when using qualitative methodology's principles and procedures, information is obtained in a natural setting without intentionally manipulating the environment. The key assumption of the qualitative approach is that reality can exist in multiple ways and can be understood in different ways.

This research is descriptive in nature as it states the situation as viewed in the texts as they are. Kothari (2004) states that in descriptive research, the researcher has no control over the variables: he/she can only report what has happened or what is happening. Descriptive research also includes attempts by researchers to discover causes even when they cannot control the variables.

### **1.10.3 Sample Size**

Morse (2000) observes that estimating the number of participants in a study required to reach saturation depends on a number of factors, including the quality of data, the scope of the study, the nature of the topic, the amount of useful information obtained from each participant, the number of interviews per participant, the use of shadow data, and the qualitative method and study design used. Although Morse (2000) was referring to a sample size that comprises of human respondents, his views were helpful in informing the research on what to consider when selecting a sample.

This study deals only with the acting in drama films in Kenya and has a sample of eight (8) selected films. The films were selected as described in the sampling procedure (see section 1.10.4 in the subsequent pages). Indeed, Sandelowski (cited in Boddy, 2016) notes that a sample which is very large does not permit the deep, case-oriented analysis that is the *raison-detre* (trans: reason of existence) of qualitative inquiry. Malterud, Siersma and Guassora (2016) hold that the more information the sample holds, relevant to the actual study, the lower amount of participants needed.

The data gathered by observing the films was supplemented by focus group discussions and interviews from the film directors and actors/actresses. Morse (2000) notes that if data are on target, contain less dross, and are rich and experiential, then fewer participants will be required to reach saturation. Malterud, Siersma and Guassora (2016) opine that to offer sufficient information power, a less extensive sample is needed with participants holding characteristics that are highly specific for the study aim.

The film directors, actors and actresses interviewed in this research had firsthand experience in the acting in the films and were considered to be a rich and experiential source of data. The study aimed at interviewing all the directors for the film sample, but only managed to achieve a 50 per cent success rate as described in section 1.10.6.2 b i. Three (3) actors/actresses were to be interviewed from each of the selected films, but the study only managed to interview 62.5 per cent of those sampled. Nevertheless, the percentage was deemed sufficient because of the firsthand knowledge the actors/actresses were able to give to the study.

#### **1.10.4 Sampling Procedure**

##### **1.10.4.1 Sampling Procedure for Primary Texts**

Gaskell (2000) notes that unlike the sample survey where the probability sample can be applied in most research situations, there is no one method for selecting respondents for qualitative inquiries. He states that because the numbers of respondents are necessarily

small, the researcher uses his or her social scientific imagination to inform the selection of respondents.

In light of Gaskell (2000) observation, this study used purposive sampling with the films having met identified predetermined qualifications. Silverman (2010) notes that purposive sampling allows us to choose a case because it illustrates some feature or process in which we are interested. For a film to have been selected for this study it had to conform to the expectations listed below:

- a) It had to belong to the drama genre.
- b) It had to have a Kenyan cast.
- c) It had to be directed by a Kenyan.
- d) It had to be a short film of between 15 to 40 minutes in length.
- e) It had to have less than three main shooting locations.
- f) It ought to have been made for release to film theatres and festivals (not straight to television films).

The sample frame constituting of 81 films (total number of short films in the Kenya Film Commission Archives as of May 2018) was used and the sample size of eight (8) films picked as per the requirements outlined earlier in this section. The study settled on using films submitted to the Kenya Film Commission since the commission is a government institution with its archives open to the public.

The films picked were: *Killer Necklace* (2008) by Judy Kibinge, *Weakness* (2009) by Wanjiru Kairu, *Maisha* (2010) by Andrew Odera, *Taharuki* (2011) by Ekwa Msangi-Omari, *Pulse* (2011) by Erick Wanyama, *Madam Chief* (2011) by Joan Kabugu, *Blurred Birth* (2011) by Victor Ogoalah and *My Faith* (2014) by Bruce Makau.

#### **1.10.4.2 Sampling Procedure for Actors/Actresses**

The interviewees were recruited through purposive sampling technique. Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016) note that purposive sampling technique is the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses. In the technique, the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience. In this research, the films selected specified the population to be interviewed. Hence, purposive sampling was the best method to use to select the population (directors, actors and actresses) to be interviewed. The study originally aimed to interview all the directors of the selected films and three actors/actresses in each film.

Despite all efforts made to contact the directors, actors and actresses, the study only managed to interview 4 out of the 8 envisioned (representing 50 per cent of the directors sample size). Two (2) of the directors were female and the two (2) others male. Fifteen (15) main actors and actresses were interviewed out of a total of 24 hoped for (representing 62.5 per cent of the actors/actresses sample size). The total interview response rate received was 59.4 per cent due to some of the directors', actors'/actress' busy schedule, which made it impossible to get an interview. One (1) director and two (2)

actors are based in the United States of America and did not respond to the study's interview requests. One (1) director and an actor were unwilling to be interviewed. Another actor and an actress demanded payment before the interview; which is unethical. Hence, the interviews were terminated for the two cases. In one instance, the research had to resort to an online interview as the actress (Miriam Chemmoss) is based in the United States of America. One other actress (Marrienne Nungo) was interviewed by use of the short message service (SMS) as she had a busy schedule which made it impossible to meet the interviewer personally. Apart from verbal gratitude, the interviewees were not financially or materially compensated for their participation. Below is a detailed table on the sampling particulars of interviews:

<b>Film Title</b>	<b>No. of Actresses Interviewed</b>	<b>No. of Actors Interviewed</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>Killer Necklace</i> (2008)	0	3	3
<i>Weakness</i> (2009)	0	2	2
<i>Maisha</i> (2010)	0	0	0
<i>Blurred Birth</i> (2011)	1	0	1
<i>Madam Chief</i> (2011)	2	1	3
<i>Pulse</i> (2011)	1	0	1
<i>Taharuki</i> (2011)	1	0	1
<i>My Faith</i> (2014)	3	1	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>15</b>

#### **1.10.4.3 Sampling Procedure for Focus Group Discussants**

Kitzinger (1995) notes that groups can be naturally occurring (for example, people who work together) or may be drawn together specifically for the research. She observes that using preexisting groups allows observation of fragments of interactions that approximate to naturally occurring data. The author postulates that additional advantages in naturally occurring groups are that friends and colleagues can relate each other's comments to

incidents in their shared daily lives. They may also challenge each other on contradictions between what they profess to believe and how they actually behave.

The idea of a focus group discussion can be naturally occurring is supported by Wilkinson (1998), who notes that the participants (usually 6-8, and rarely more than 12) may be pre-existing groups of people (e.g. family members, work colleagues) or they may be drawn together specifically for the research.

The participants for the focus groups for this study were recruited through the placement of advertisements on various social media sites and classifieds platforms. However, the advertisements did not yield results as those who made inquiries on the focus group discussions as a result of the advertisements did not show up for the actual event.

Word of mouth was also used to recruit participants, with those who showed interest in taking part in the research being encouraged to do so. This method of soliciting participants was more successful and resulted in eight (8) focus group discussions. Five (5) focus group discussions were held in Nairobi City County, with two (2) being held in Nakuru County and one (1) in Machakos County. The breakdown in the composition of the groups is as follows:

<b>Group No.</b>	<b>Geographical Location</b>	<b>Nature of Participants</b>	<b>No. of Females</b>	<b>No. of Males</b>	<b>Total</b>
Group 1	Kasarani Sub-county. Nairobi.	General public	2	4	6
Group 2	Kenyatta University	Students	9	4	13
Group 3	Kenyatta University	Students	7	5	12
Group 4	Nairobi City	General public	4	8	12

Group 5	Nakuru County	General public	6	6	12
Group 6	Nakuru County	General public	4	8	12
Group 7	Kenyatta University	Students	4	8	12
Group 8	Machakos County	General public	4	7	11
<b>Total</b>			<b>40</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>90</b>

The selected participants were informed that the focus group discussion was not a job and participants were being admitted on voluntary basis. The participants had to be Kenyan citizens, over 18 years of age and able to communicate in both Kiswahili and English.

#### **1.10.5 Study Location**

This study was conducted in Nairobi City County, with the sample being drawn from Kenya Film Commission archives. All the face to face interviews were conducted in Nairobi, apart from one which was held in Nakuru County.

Five (5) of the eight (8) focus group discussions were conducted in Nairobi City County because of its metropolitan nature. The Report of the Nairobi Cross-sectional Slum Survey (2012) notes that as the capital and largest city of Kenya, Nairobi has always been the major attraction of various segments of the Kenyan population – from rural and other urban areas – in search of better livelihood opportunities. The World Population Review holds that Nairobi is a very ethnically diverse city and Kenya’s major ethnic groups are present in the city. These factors made Nairobi City County an ideal place for conducting focus group discussions as all the Kenyan community can be found in the county. Two

(2) focus group discussions were conducted in Nakuru County and one in Machakos County. These focus group discussions were meant to diversify the study.

## **1.10.6 Data Collection Instruments and Procedures**

### **1.10.6.1 Data Collection Instruments**

#### **a. Unstructured Observation**

Gorman and Clayton (cited in Baker, 2006) define observation studies as those that ‘involve the systematic recording of observable phenomena or behaviour in a natural setting’. In this research, the observable phenomena were the films viewed while noting the behaviours of the actors/actresses within the films’ setting.

Mulhall (2003) notes that unstructured observation is used to understand and interpret cultural behaviour. It does not follow the approach of strictly checking a list of predetermined behaviours such as would occur in structured observation. Mulhall (2003) observes that researchers using unstructured methods usually enter ‘the field’ with no predetermined notions as to the discrete behaviours that they might observe. They might have some idea as to what to observe, but these may change over time as they gather data and gain experience in the particular setting.

This research employed unstructured observation as a data collection tool when viewing the sampled films (see Appendix A1, p. 222). The research had a predetermined criterion of what comprised acting, which was used to classify the different elements of the same. The elements were the actor’s/actress’ use of voice, facial expressions, postures, gestures, movements, stage business and proxemics.

Furthermore, Mulhall (2003) notes that unstructured observation in data collection provides insights into interactions between dyads and groups capture context/process and inform about the influence of the physical environment. These reasons made unstructured observations the best method to be used when viewing the films as interactions between actors/actresses is central to a given performance. Also, the environment depicted in a given scene is central to the perception of meaning intended by the director.

#### b. Unstructured Interviews

The interviews were conducted on a face-to-face basis as defined by David and Sutton (2011). The authors note that unstructured interviews using semi-standardised questions seek to emphasize the validity of each individual interview. They attempt to let the interviewee tell their story and so determine to a greater extent the flow of the dialogue. However, the semi-standardized questions outlined the boundary (topic) to which the interviewee was to restrict him/herself when responding. The interviews were formally arranged, timetabled and observed by the lead researcher/research assistants.

Gaskell (2000) notes that the topic/interview guide is, as the label suggests, a guide, and it should not be followed slavishly as if the research depends on it. In this research, although the researcher tried to adhere to the order of the questions as stipulated in the guide (see Appendix A2, pp. 222 - 245) adequate measures were taken so as not to ask a question that had already been answered while tackling a different one. Follow-up questions that were not included in the guide were also asked when necessary.

Bandyapadhyay (2015) notes that one way of interpreting data is by posing specific questions to concerned people regarding the gaps identified or mistakes that need clarification. He further notes that by carrying out meaningful interviews, appropriate rapport should be established between the researcher and person/persons to be interviewed.

#### c. Focus Group Discussions

Wilkinson (1998) defines a focus group as an informal discussion among selected individuals about scientific topics. She notes that there are many possible variations on the basic method, but centrally it involves one or more group discussions, in which participants focus collectively upon a topic selected by the researcher, and presented to them (most commonly) as a set of questions, although sometimes as a film, a vignette, a set of advertisements, cards to sort, or a 'game' to play.

Wilkinson (1998) notes that focus groups have been used as an adjunct to other research methods as part of a multi-method research design. In this research, focus groups were used with the presupposition that sense-making is produced collectively. The researcher was able to observe how people engage in the process of sense-making with views constructed, expressed and defended.

### **1.10.6.2 Data Collection Procedures**

#### a. Primary Data Collection Procedures (Observation)

This research is a textual study where data was collected through unstructured observation from the primary texts: the selected films. These films were keenly viewed

and acting techniques noted. This was done in stages as outlined in data analysis (Section 1.10.2 and Appendix A1, pp. 41 - 42).

During this process, notes were taken and stored electronically for data interpretations. Particular attention was paid to the actor's/actress' voice, body postures, gestures, movements, facial expressions and stage business engaged in.

## b. Secondary Data Collection Procedures

### i. Interview Procedures

The study took the directors' and actors'/actress' views into consideration through personal interviews. The directors were sought for since they were the brains behind the creative endeavour that formulated the selected films. Gupta (1981) argues that while film-making is physically a group activity, it must also be a product of an individual's imaginativeness. He notes that the creative film director has a sort of vision of his/her film which guides the crew and cast to the final product. Hence, the director will guide actors/actress to perform according to what he/she has perceived in his/her mind. This makes his/her contribution important for consideration in this study.

The actor's/actress' opinion was relevant as he/she is the physical representation of the character in the film. Cameron and Gillespie (1996), while arguing from a performance point of view, say that the actor/actress stands at the centre of theatre. He/she is its linchpin, its keystone: without him or her, there is nothing – an empty building, a hollow space. It is from this anchor that Gupta (1981) notes that people go to see films so that they can watch other people (actors/actresses perform). The study interviewed

actors/actresses with the basic aim of knowing their respective background in acting and what factors influenced their performance in the selected films. The study interviewed a total of fifteen (15) actors/actresses from the eight selected films.

The researcher started all the interviews by ensuring the interviewees were at ease and understood what the interviews entailed and how they were going to be used. The researcher also made certain that the interview locations were comfortable and that the interviewees were the ones who chose respective times for the interviews. This made it possible for the interviews to be conducted in a leisurely manner with the interviewees responding to questions posed credibly.

The interview guide developed to gather responses from directors, actors and actresses included modules on the interviewees experience, knowledge of acting theories, relationship between the director and actors/actresses and opinion on what determines an actor's/actress' performance.

#### ii. Focus Group Discussion Procedures

Wong (2006) notes that conducting a focus group discussion requires a lot of resources.

The process involves formulating research questions, developing protocols, soliciting for participants, arranging venues, facilitating focus groups, transcribing, analyzing data and reporting the findings.

Williams (2001) states that when selecting a focus group participants, one should strive for homogeneity in order to ensure that the participants will be comfortable speaking with each other. The participants who took part in this research were put into different groupings depending on their educational qualifications and age.

A discussion guide was used to increase the comprehensiveness of data collection in order to make it more efficient. The questions used to guide the focus group discussions were derived from the research needs as observed from the preliminary viewing of the selected films. Selected frames were shown to the focus groups for interpretations of what was observed. In the first section of the discussions, a total of seventeen (17) frames and one (1) short video of facial expressions from the target films were screened for the focus group participants. The second section had one video of movement extracted from *Killer Necklace* (2008). The third section concentrated on posture, with a total of eleven (11) frames of different postures displayed by the actors/actresses from the various target films screened. The fourth section on gestures had a total of three (3) frames and five (5) videos from the films being screened for analysis by the focus group participants. The fifth section on proxemics had eight (8) frames screened. Some of the frames included in the group discussions did not have a specific feature to be noted but were strictly for control purposes.

The moderators who guided the focus group were taken through a training session on what was expected of them as they guided the discussions. The training session also made them familiar with the content to be discussed.

### iii. Literature Research Procedure

Literature with relevant information which highlights acting and performance in both the African and international contexts was considered. Theories and literature on the actor's/actress' movements on stage, gestures, body postures, facial expressions and voice were used to give a more detailed explanation on how such techniques have been used in the Kenyan/African theatrical context.

The literature was sought from libraries, available journals and books relevant to the study. Suitable books on acting techniques were obtained for comparisons with regard to the conventions of acting. Film productions that had employed techniques similar to those used in the primary data were acquired and observed for comparison purposes. Relevant and credible internet sources were accessed for the analyses of the primary texts.

#### **1.10.7 Data Analysis**

This research used textual analysis to examine the responses gathered through questionnaires and relate these to the target films. Spark (2006) notes that textual analysis is the method which communication researchers use to describe and interpret the characteristics of a visual message. She notes that there are four approaches to textual analysis, which include: rhetorical criticism, content analysis, interaction analysis and performance studies. This research used the content analysis approach to evaluate the selected texts.

Discourse analysis was also used to evaluate responses given by the interviewees and focus group discussions. Potter (2009) states that discourse analytic research can be conducted on virtually any set of materials which involves talk and texts as it allows a degree of standardisation across a sample of interviewees and allows the study to focus on particular topics or themes in a concentrated manner.

Observable data was dealt with in accordance with the procedure laid down by Flick (2009). He suggests three steps in conducting a film analysis, with the first step being 'looking and feeling' where he notes that the films are regarded as a whole. Hence, the impressions, questions and patterns of meaning which are conspicuous are noted. Consequently, the general acting was observed broadly with the *mis-en-scene* (trans: *placing on a scene*), cinematographic technique and the plot of the respective film being taken into consideration.

The second step comprises of re-watching the films with reference to the research questions. The films were also watched with key scenes being noted for further review.

The third stage demands that structured microanalysis be conducted on individual identified scenes and sequences. This should lead to descriptions and patterns in the display of the excerpts. Here, the research made extensive use of the tools provided by the Stanislavski System (1949) and the External Acting Method (1968) to determine how

the actor's/actress' style conforms or digresses from the techniques provided by the various proponents of the said theories.

This study added a fourth step to the analysis procedure as laid down by Flick (2009). The step entailed the answering of the research questions. This stage demanded that the study moves deeper into understanding the data and making conclusions of its larger meaning. Data collected from secondary sources was also considered here.

The data was also discussed according to how 'believable', 'truthful', or 'realistic' the characters were thought to be. According to Abrams, Bell and Udris (2001) for the audience, interpreting a performance involves assessing how far the actor/actress has 'become' the character, which may only be discussed in terms of credibility, truthfulness or realism. Barsam (2007) adds appropriateness, emotionality, wholeness and unity to the list of what should be considered when analyzing a character's performance in given films. The research also used the given parameters [by Abrams, Bell and Udris (2001) and Barsam (2007)] to analyse an actor's/actress' technique in acting.

#### **1.10.8 Conclusion**

This Chapter gave an introduction to the study by outlining the research problem, objectives, questions, literature review, theoretical and methodological framework. The next Chapter contextualizes content in the selected films by presenting their plots, characters, setting, themes and other unique observable features.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE ACTOR'S/ACTRESS' USE OF VOICE IN THE SELECTED FILMS

#### 2.1 Introduction

This Chapter embarks on an in-depth analysis of the films by looking at the actor's/actress' use of his/her voice. In acting, as noted by Stanislavski (1949), poor speech creates one misunderstanding after another. He observes that it clutters up, befogs, or even conceals the thought, the essence and even the very plot of the play. To Stanislavski (1949), we may not speak in the uneducated way on stage as we do in ordinary life.

The Chapter first gives a preliminary analysis of the selected films. Secondly, it looks at selected scenes, considers scholarly opinions and interviews actors/actresses and directors regarding technique and influences when it comes to **voice quality, pitch, power** and **tempo**. This section will also consider the efficiency of the use of **pauses, silences, hesitations** and **emphasis** in the selected films.

**Pause** can simply be defined as a temporary stop in speech or action and is different from **silence**, which is the absence of sound. **Emphasis** in this study is defined as the stress given to a word or words when speaking.

#### 2.2 Elements of the Actor's/Actress' Voice – Quality, Pitch, Power and Tempo

Adams (1986) notes that the voice has four elements: **quality, pitch, power** and **tempo**. He observes that variety and contrast in interpretation are brought about when the four

elements of voice are utilized in an intelligent way. **Voice quality** is the characteristic sound of the voice brought about by the mode of vibration of the vocal cords or folds. Adams (1986) equates **voice quality** to tone of voice and explains that tonal quality often expresses an individual's personality: kind, loving and compassionate. **Pitch** is the property of sound that is determined by the frequency of the waves producing it. Mugubi (2017) notes that **pitch** refers to this 'loudness' occasioned by the frequency of the vibration of our vocal chords. **Voice power** relates to volume or projection of one's voice. It is the rate at which sound energy is emitted by the vocal codes, while **tempo** is the rate, speed or time used to make an utterance. Mugubi (2017) opines that in speech, we can emphasize our message by controlling the speed with which we articulate our words. In this regard, therefore, **tempo** in performance would effectively connote or convey: for example, annoyance, worry, tranquility, reconciliation, subjugation, adoration and tenderness.

The voice elements are interconnected as they must be used together to make speech believable. In fact, voice must work together with the actor's body for one to be understandable. However, at times voice in film takes precedence over all other aspects of acting. Bordwell and Thompson (2008) note that an actor's/actress' performance may sometimes exist only on the sound track of the film. They give an example of the film *A Letter to Three Wives*, where Celeste Holm's character, Addie Ross, speaks a narration over the image but never appears in the scene. Bordwell and Thompson (2008) place a film's commentary within the parameters of acting, with the actor/actress only depending on the use of his/her voice when giving a performance. One such instance where the

actor's narration is crucial in understanding a given film is in *Taharuki* (2011) where Kevin (a lead character in film) explains the events in a flashback as illustrated below:

The flashback begins with an unidentified man's face cast in shadows while running. The flashback is cut to an extreme close-up of Kevin's battered face with Waridi's hand in shot wiping off blood from his face. He winces without making a sound as the cloth is pressed against his face.

**Waridi:**        *Kwanini walikupiga risasi?*  
(Why did they shoot you?)

The scene is cut to the flashback with a mid-shot of the running man who can now be identified as Kevin. He has a bag clutched on his chest while running. Two people can be seen a short distance behind pursuing him. The scene cuts back to the present with a close-up shot of Waridi with her eyes wide open and eyebrows slightly squeezed together. She does not blink as she listens.

**Kevin:**        *Sikuweza kuwawacha Waridi.*  
(I couldn't leave them Waridi.)

The present is cut again to a flashback. The two men who are pursuing Kevin can be seen faintly. A title appears (Title: *Kenyan border five hours earlier*) accompanied by Kevin's voice narrating his ordeal.

**Voice-over:**    Those children did not ask for genocide, it was decided for them.

While the narration is going on, a car headlight flashing at close-up is in shot. A man in the background appears to be holding a rifle. The next shot is of Kevin's face with a flashlight illuminating him. His face is passive as he looks past the shot with his mouth partially parted.

**Voice-over:**    Everything was set up. The bodies were already there and the Bio was waiting.

In a quick flash, money exchanges hands. The flashlight that had been used to light Kevin's face is now directed on the hands of the character who has been handed the money. The hands can be seen counting the money. The shot is cut to the man's face as he looks

up past the camera, then looks down, then up again and nods his head a bit in acknowledgement and finally hands over an envelope from his pocket.

**Voice-over:** I gave him the money, and he gave me the papers just like you said he would. But the whimpering and the crying just kept getting louder and louder.

Faint whimpers can be heard as the shot is cut to a close-up of Kevin. He is seen turning his head slowly to look towards a number of bags on the side of the room. He then turns his head back towards the flashlight. The scene is cut back to the present.

**Waridi:** *Si tulishazungumza kuhusu hii topic? Kazi yako ilikuwa kwenda kuokoa wale wengine. Si ulisema uta-handle hii job?*  
(Hadn't we talked about this topic? Your job was to go save the others. Didn't you say you could handle the job?)

Waridi speaks with an intense expression on her face as her eyebrows are raised with her eyes wide open in a stare directed at Kevin. As she says "your job was to go save the others," she looks to the left away from Kevin who is on the right of the screen, then looks back with the same intense stare as she talks. She continuously shakes her head as she talks.

**Kevin:** *Lakini ni watoto.*  
(But they are just children.)

The scene is cut back to the flashback. A silhouette of a man can be seen at a distance struggling with a bag.

[*Taharuki* (2011): Scene 5B]

The use of the voice-over in *Taharuki* (2011) places the flashback images in their proper context as it gives information that the viewer is not privy to. The information revealed by the voice-over include: the fact that Kevin has been shot, the nature of the mission that Kevin was to undertake, the presence of children in the scene and it introduces the Bio (the villain in the film) for the first time.

Throughout the film, Kevin seems to be in pain (though not as intense as one would expect from a person who has just been shot) and his face is bloody. In the flashback, the goons pursuing Kevin can be seen catching up with him and giving him a severe beating before taking the luggage he was carrying. However, the fact that Kevin has also been shot is only revealed through Waridi's (played by Miriam Chemmoss) words at the start of the scene.

Furthermore, although the viewer could see a tightly rolled band that may possibly be taken as either drugs, money or some other substance changing hands swiftly, the fact that it is money that has been given is revealed in the voice-over. The information presented through the visual of the enclosed bags with a faint whimper in the background is also too scanty to point to the fact that there are children present. It is only when Kevin mentions the children that the viewer puts the visual (bags) and sound effects (whimpering) into perspective. The Bio, who is the antagonist and plays a significant role at the conclusion of the film, is also introduced by the voice-over.

*Killer Necklace* (2008) has also employed the use of the actor's voice extensively, especially in a scene where Jonah (played by Abubakar Mwendwa) is seen giving advice to Mbugua (played by Steven Mwangi). Here, it is Jonah's voice that communicates his relationship with Mbugua and his opinions are revealed. The scene does not employ flashback but is dependent on the dialogue between the two key characters as seen below:

The scene is set outside under a tree in a playing field and starts with a high angle shot of Jonah seated on a stool with his back towards the camera while looking at Mbugua who is seated on the ground. Jonah is being prepared for a shave by a barber whose hands can be seen in the shot as he wraps a piece of cloth around Jonah's shoulders. Jonah's hair, which is short, has shaved lines cutting across it like a maze. The shot is cut to a low angle close-up shot of Jonah looking down past the camera (towards Mbugua) and speaking with a flat pitch.

**Jonah:** *Ni lazima ujuwe pahali umetoka, we ni nani, roots zako....*

(It's a must you know where you are from, who you are, your roots...)

The camera shot is cut to a high angle close-up shot of Mbugua listening while seated on the ground and staring down. As he starts to talk his eyes shift a bit and then glance at Jonah before looking back down.

**Mbugua:** Lakini huyu dame ananimaliza.

(But I'm really into this girl)

The shot is cut to a long shot of both Jonah and Mbugua, with the barber, two ladies and a hawker who can be seen walking into the frame. The director cuts to a close-up shot of Jonah at a low angle while he is still looking down past the camera.

**Jonah:** *Usitupishwe mbao, madem wanadoe unoki machali wamesota kwa movie za kiindi, ehh jo! ushakua mhindi au nini?*

(Don't be fooled, ladies with money fall for men without wealth in Indian movies, ehh jo! Have you become an Indian or what?)

The camera changes to a high angle close-up shot of Mbugua as he answers. He glances up at Jonah then gazes past the camera as he speaks.

**Mbugua:** *Haunielewi.*

(You don't understand me.)

The shot is cut to a low angle close-up shot of Jonah.

**Jonah:** *Shosh wako anaendeleaje, anaskia poa?*

(How is your grandmother doing, is she feeling well?)

The camera changes to a high angle close-up shot of Mbugua. He answers while looking at a point past the camera and only looks steadily at Jonah at the end of the sentence.

**Mbugua:** *Jo! Ninoma, anaumwa na mimi sina chapa ya ku-buy dawa.*

(Jo! It's hard, she is in pain and I don't have money to buy medicine.)

The camera angle changes to a high angle close-up shot of Jonah.

**Jonah:** *Nilikupea mchoro.*

(I gave you a plan.)

The shot is cut to a low angle close-up shot of Mbugua.

**Mbugua:** *Zii.*

(No.)

The camera angle changes to a low angle close-up shot of Jonah as he stares past the camera towards Mbugua. As he talks he keeps on moving his eye brows up and down.

**Jonah:** *Nimekuwekea hii job kwasababu bro wako alikua right man wangu. Lakini, hee! Wee vile naona, wee ni left man.*

(I've been saving this job for you because your brother was my right-hand man, hee! But you seem to be a left-hand man.)

The shot changes to a high angle close-up shot of Mbugua. When he starts talking he looks up past the camera towards Jonah and only looks away towards the end of the sentence.

**Mbugua:** *Bro wangu, aliangushwa kwa moja ya hizo waks zako.*

(My brother was killed in one of your jobs.)

[*Killer Necklace* (2008): Scene 23A]

The partial scene quoted from the drama film above makes extensive use of close-up shots of the two main characters as they converse. The intonation, pitch, projection and tempo of the two characters' voices do not vary significantly in the dialogue. Also, one

can tell that the two characters have known each other for a significant length of time as it is revealed that Jonah knows and provides for Mbugua and his grandmother because of the relationship he had with his brother. Although the two characters have known each other for a while, Jonah's tone is more patronising than friendly as he addresses Mbugua. The patronising tone is especially obvious when Jonah tells Mbugua that he has a job that he has specifically set aside for him as a favour to his (Mbugua's) late brother.

The camera angles reinforce the tone of voice in communicating the nature of the relationship between the two characters. Monier (1958) explains the psychological effect of camera angles by noting that when filmed from a low angle, an actor appears imposing: the shot suggests power and domination. Conversely, when filmed from above he looks smaller and less important. He states that by taking advantage of this fact the movie-maker can emphasize personality, or even exaggerate it for the purpose of the story. Hence, in *Killer Necklace* (2008) Jonah can be perceived as being superior to Mbugua because of the camera angles used when framing the close-up shots of the two characters. Consequently, the suggestion that Jonah's tone is patronising is justified as the shots also suggest that he is superior to Mbugua. Figure 2.1 in the subsequent page illustrates the camera angles employed in relation to the two characters.



The camera angles used in Jonah and Mbugua's dialogue scene suggests the nature of their relationship and puts Jonah's tone towards Mbugua in perspective. Fig 2.1

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Barba and Savarese (1991), while discussing the use of speech in theatre, opine that variety is one of the primary factors to consider. They note that one of the greatest faults in the speech of real life and the voice of the inexperienced actor is monotony. Furthermore, Benedetti (1976) notes that an actor/actress creates with his/her body and voice, sights and sounds which contribute to the artistically patterned experience we call a play. Hence, even when an actor/actress is framed in a close-up shot, he/she uses all the resources he/she has and needs for the particular scene to communicate to his/her audience. In the case of the scene from *Killer Necklace* (2008) quoted above, the characters have made very little use of voice variation or facial expressions and instead have relied on their (monotone) voices to communicate. However, the above scene is only an initial part (lasts 54 seconds) of a conversation that lasts two minutes. The second half of the scene displays more emotions as the excerpt below indicates:

After Mbugua mentions his brother's death in the conversation, the shot cuts to a low angle close-up shot of Jonah. His volume and pitch become higher. He is staring fixedly at Mbugua as he speaks.

**Jonah:** *Nishalipia death ya bro wako mara mob na leo ndio ilikua siku ya mwisho.*

(I've paid for your brother's death a lot of times and today is the last time.)

The shot cuts to a high angle shot with the back of Jonah's head in the foreground with Mbugua at the background. Mbugua is staring at a point in front of him as he listens to Jonah.

**Jonah** (cont.): *Hii time yote nani hushugulikia we na shosh wako, nani hukulipia cole?*

(All this time I've been providing for your grandmother and who pays for your college?)

The shot changes to a low angle close-up shot of Jonah. His voice has progressively increased in pitch and tempo. His eyes do not blink as he speaks.

**Jonah** (cont.): *Bila mimi mungekua mukimanga nini? Hizo mbuku zako na hiyo kilamu yako ya ubabini?*

(Without me what will you be eating? Those books of yours and your posh English?)

The shot changes to a high angle close-up shot of Mbugua. He looks up at Jonah then starts to speak in a gentle voice and only glances down for a bit before looking up at Jonah again.

**Mbugua:** *Jonah, makarau siku hizi wamepewa shoot-to-kill orders na minister wa security. Mimi siwezi....*

(Jonah, these days the police have been given permission to shoot- to-kill by the Minister of Security. I can't...)

Mbugua's speech is interrupted by Jonah who now occupies the camera frame.

**Jonah:** Three, hundred, thousand, shillings

Jonah says the lines slowly while accentuating each word. The camera cuts to a high angle close-up shot of Mbugua as he answers while looking at a point past the camera.

**Mbugua:** *Kuna njia mob zaku-make dough.*

(There are a lot of ways to make money.)

The camera cuts back to Jonah in a low angle close-up. His pitch is flat, with tempo also on medium pace.

**Jonah:** *Kama? Hizo class zako za accounts, Zenye mimi ndio hukulipia?*

(Like? Your accounts classes, the ones I pay for?)

The camera cuts to Mbugua in a high angle close-up shot. He starts speaking while looking past the camera towards a point in front of him and only looks at Jonah at the end of the sentence.

**Mbugua:** *Nikimaliza nitapata waks poa.*

(When I complete I will get a nice job.)

The shot is cut to a low angle close-up of Jonah.

**Jonah:** *Hmm! Janta small, kwa kampu bigi na unalipwa two bob...*

(Hmm! Small work, in a big company and get paid two shillings.)

The shot is cut to Mbugua in a high angle close-up as he looks up past the camera to Jonah and maintains eye contact as he takes in what he is being told.

**Jonah** (cont.): *...Alafu three bob, mpaka uzeeke ukuwe kabuda na utambi na kipara...*

(...Then three shillings, until you are an old man with a big tummy and a bald head...)

The shot is cut to Jonah in a low angle close-up shot.

**Jonah** (cont.): *...na ukiboo watoyi ukiwapigia story za the best days of my life...*

(...while you bore children with your stories of the best days of my life...)

Jonah changes his voice when saying ‘the best days of my life’ to make it known he is being cynical. The camera cuts to a high angle close-up shot of Mbugua as he looks at Jonah as he talks while looking down at Mbugua.

**Jonah** (cont.): *...kumbe sahiyo wangukuwa wana-wish ume-die. Hmm! Mbugua...*

(...however at the time they will be wishing that you were dead. Hmm! Mbugua...)

The shot is cut to a low angle close-up shot of Jonah as he steadily stares at Mbugua while speaking.

**Jonah** (cont.): *...utaji-waste, ukitajirisha tubuda flani tuzayee, na wewe jee?*  
(...you will waste yourself while making some old men rich, but what about you?)

Jonah pauses as the shot cuts to a low angle close-up shot of Mbugua who is still looking up at Jonah.

**Jonah** (cont.): *Na wewe jee Mbugua?*  
(What about you Mbugua?)

The last line is spoken with Jonah's pitch raised a notch higher.  
[*Killer Necklace* (2008): Scene 23B]

Frensham (1996) notes that just like a screenplay and a sequence, each 'ideal' dramatic scene has a beginning, middle and end. He argues that each dramatic scene contains text (what the characters are doing), dialogue and subtext. The text in the quoted scenes from *Killer Necklace* (2008) is restricted to the characters' facial expressions, actions (such as looking towards or away, shaking one's head) and the voice elements.

The cited dialogue has a clear beginning, middle and end. Its beginning takes the form of advice being given to Mbugua by Jonah when he reminds him that he must know his roots. Advice given by older members of a given African community is considered as education by the younger generation. Otiende, Wamahiu and Karugu (1992) note that in the process of informal learning, the entire community was the teacher. One learnt from one's elders, including the parents, grandparents and older siblings. The behaviour and activities of older females were copied by younger girls, while boys imitated older males. Hence, the move by Jonah to give advice to Mbugua is considered appropriate in the

African societal setting. Although Jonah's advice is negative and misleading to Mbugua as he encourages him to engage in crime, it is done from his personal observation and perception of the society. Giddens (2001), while citing functionalist theories, notes that crime may be caused if the aspirations held by individuals and groups in society do not coincide with available rewards. This disparity between desires and fulfillment will be felt in the deviant motivations of some of its members.

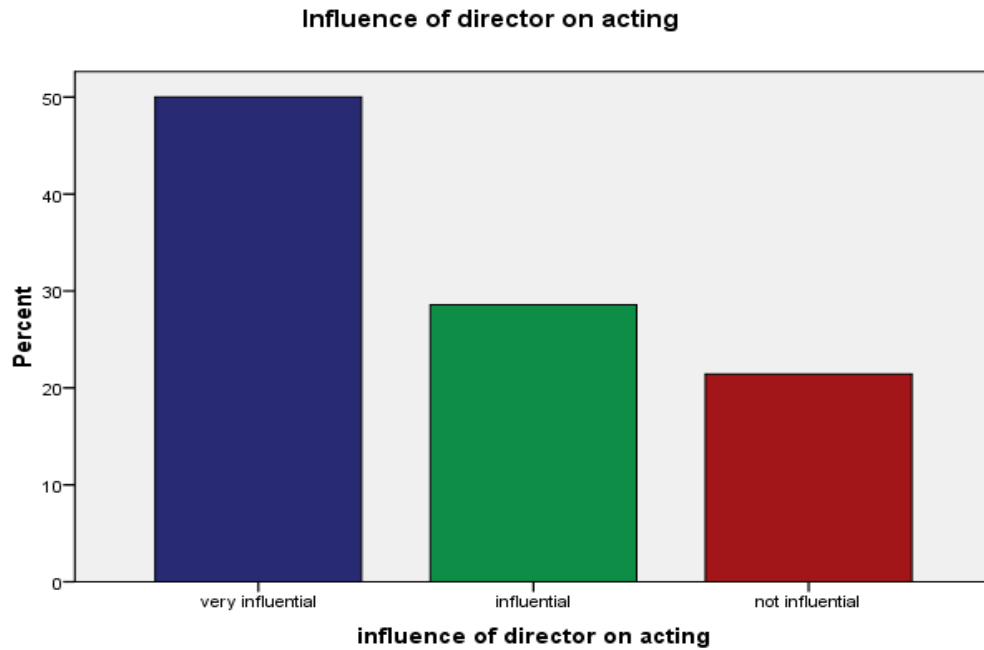
The middle of the scene is marked by Mbugua's rejection of Jonah's advice and his mention of his brother's killing. At this juncture Jonah becomes more animated as his pitch rises, tempo becomes faster and he makes use of more facial expressions to indicate his disapproval of Mbugua's thoughts and opinions. Heffner (1973) confirms that excitement or anger may cause an individual of extremely slow natural rhythm to speak rapidly and tensely. Conversely, rapidness/fast tempo and tension may be used to convey excitement and anger. Adams (1986) notes that a high-pitched voice is often the result of tension, emotional upset or illness. Indeed, in the second half of the scene, the dialogue between these two characters takes a shift as Mbugua is reduced to a passive receiver of information while Jonah does the talking. It can be noted that the camera keeps on shifting between the two characters, thus revealing the animated Jonah and passive Mbugua's neutral expression.

Stanislavski (1949) notes that there is scarcely any use for loudness on stage. He opines that, in majority of cases, it serves no purpose except to deafen those who have no understanding of art. In the above cited scene, Jonah becomes animated and raises his

voice to display his annoyance at what he perceives as Mbugua's challenge to his way of life and his (Mbugua's) ignorance of the working of society. Stanislavski (1949) insists that if an actor/actress is to increase his/her volume, it must be done in gradual degrees so that he/she can eventually reach the ultimate stage of loudness which he terms as *forte fortissimo* (trans: very loud). Indeed, this can be seen in the above quoted scene from *Killer Necklace* (2008) where Jonah starts his speech in a monotone and increases his pitch and volume as he becomes animated.

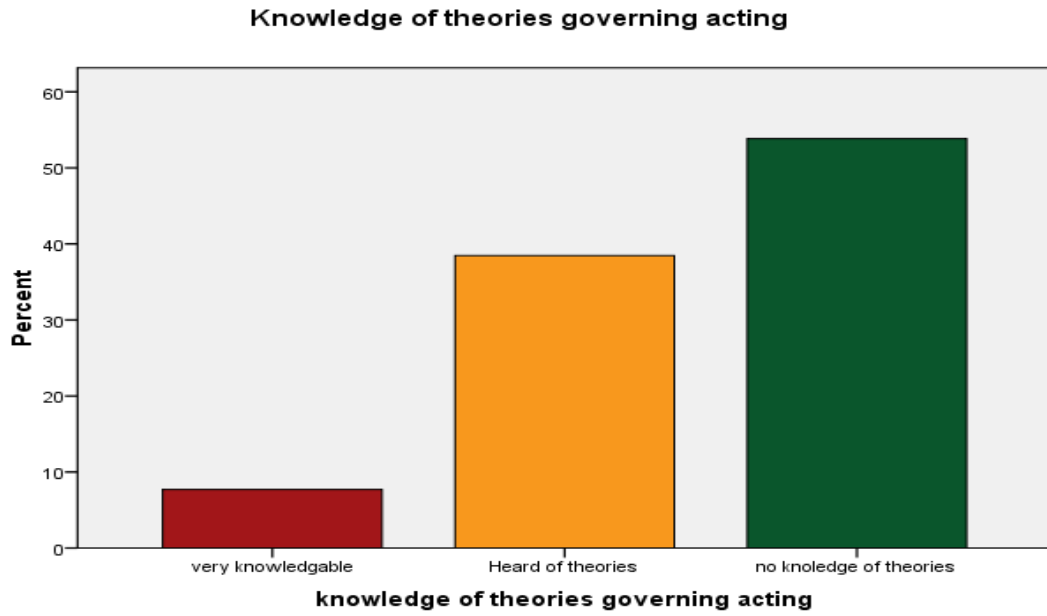
Although the dialogue in the scene conforms to Stanislavski's expectations of how it should be conducted while acting, both Abubakar Mwendwa and Steven Mwangi (who played Jonah and Mbugua respectively) had never attended training on System Acting and were performing according to their experiences and personal interpretation of the parts. Both actors were dependent on the directions given to them by the various directors in both stage and film while performing in assorted projects for their personal development in the field. The interviews with various actors and actresses concluded that the director's influence on the film and actors/actresses in them is significant as displayed in the chart below:

**Table 1 - The Influence of the Director on Actor/Actress Performance**

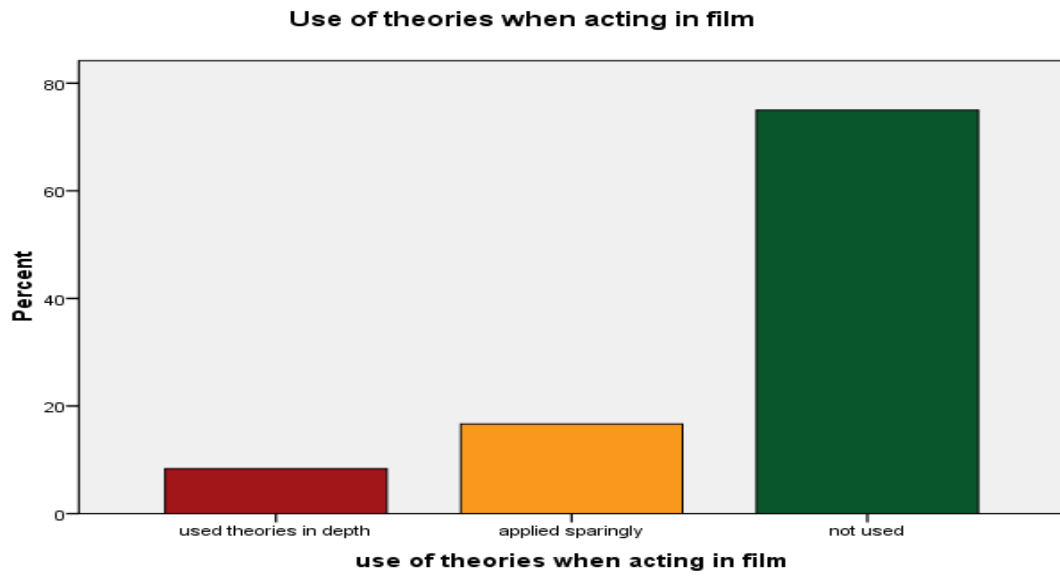


Mwendwa and Mwangi stated that skills were sharpened through their interest in acting that started while attending the Schools and Colleges Drama Festivals when they were still pursuing their ordinary level education. Mwendwa (personal communication, 25<sup>th</sup> February 2017) notes that in the training (workshops and seminars) he had attended on acting, the emphasis was never on acting theories but on practical performance. Interviews with the actors and actresses revealed that a majority of them did not know acting theories indepth or used the theories when preparing for or performing in films as outlined in the graphs below.

**Table 2 - Actor/Actress knowledge of theories governing acting.**



**Table 3 - Actor/Actress application of theories to performance**



Mwendwa (personal communication, 25<sup>th</sup> February 2017) confessed that although he did not take alcoholic beverages or visit social places where alcohol was sold, he had to prepare for the role he played in *Killer Necklace* (2008) by observing his friends who took alcohol and visit the backstreets of Nairobi where people from the low economic strata visited to get entertained while taking alcohol. Through his observations of the social life in Nairobi, he was able to master his role as a gang leader in *Killer Necklace* (2008).

*Killer Necklace* (2008) was Steven Mwangi's first professional appearance as an actor and he was dependent on the film's director (Judy Kibinge) to give him guidance on how to go about performing his role (personal communication, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2017). Mwangi stated that his acting was influenced by watching different actors who performed on television since childhood and by the role-playing they used to engage in while emulating police and thief sequences that they had observed in films.

Ayodi (1997), while investigating the Stanislavski techniques in the *Tahamaki* series, concluded that the techniques were employed by the *Tahamaki* group instinctively and partially. This was because only one actor out of the seventeen members group had read Stanislavski's System. Ayodi's (1997) conclusion can be related to the performance in *Killer Necklace* (2008) since the three (3) actors interviewed and the film's director (Judy Kibinge) did not have specific training in the Stanislavski System but they employed it instinctively.

Indeed, Kibinge (personal communication, January 10, 2017) said that her experience in film was acquired through working with more experienced directors, producers and actors, and not through formal training. Hence, whatever directions she gave to the actors/actresses were not based on any one established technique (either Mechanical Acting or System Acting) but her own understanding of acting acquired through observing productions that she had been engaged in. According to Kibinge (personal communication, January 10, 2017), actors/actresses work best when they can relate the screenplay to reality which they face in their day to day lives. While directing actors/actresses she at times permits them to alter or even rewrite their lines to suit their interpretation of the characters they are playing as this frees the individual from the lines and improves the actor's/actress' performance.

Although Jonah in *Killer Necklace* (2008) becomes loud progressively as he talks to reach *forte fortissimo*, Jane (character name) in *My Faith* (2014) raises her pitch suddenly when uttering a single word '*Tena*' (Trans. again) in response to her brother-in-law request for money. The sudden and swift way the word is uttered shows her irritation and immediately changes the lukewarm way the two have been addressing each other. The single word confirms the disgust (see Figure 3.6 in Section 3.2.1; p. 112) that Jane feels towards her brother-in-law and changes the tone of the conversation from lukewarm to confrontational.

### 2.3 Pauses, Silences and Emphases

Adams (1986) notes that when most people speak they use dramatic pauses and highlight meaning by emphasizing particular key words. This is carried out unconsciously, without undue awareness or inhibition. However, it is much harder to accomplish speech naturalness and realism on stage and before a camera using someone else's words and ideas. **Silence** in acting is the state of not speaking and it is an important as well as a creative device in film. Balazs (1985) notes that the presentation of silence is one of the most specific dramatic effects of the sound film as no other art can reproduce silence the way film does.

Adams (1986) posits that the **pause** is used to emphasize an idea, to indicate division of thought, to allow for the taking in of air and to help the listener to quickly grasp the meaning of what is being said. Pauses also help to bring pace, tempo and rhythm to dialogue delivery. Heffner (1973) opines that the amateur actor often fails to attain naturalness because he/she mechanically recites lines without pauses. He concludes that in addition to intonation, pause is one of the most powerful elements of naturalness. A pause at the right place in line with the right intonation preceding and following it is a major means of giving emphasis to a word, group of words, or idea, and for making the speech seem perfectly natural.

Esposito and Mariinaro (2007) state that the pause is a characteristic of spontaneous speech, as well as other types of speech. For the authors, the pause is the presence of silent intervals (empty pauses) and vocalizations (filled pauses) that do not have a lexical

meaning. Pauses are different from hesitations since they are deliberate while the latter are done at the spur of the moment before one does or says something, often because one is uncertain or nervous.

Directors and actors who know their trade recognise the importance of pauses when required. Msangi-Omari has used pauses in some scenes of *Taharuki* (2011) to enhance suspense as shown below:

The scene starts with Waridi walking towards an injured Kevin who is sitting on the floor with his back supported by a kitchen counter. She kneels next to him and places a bottle on the floor while talking to him:

**Waridi:**        *Shhh! Polepole.*  
                      (... Slowly.)

She pauses as she takes a piece of cloth and tries to clean the blood from one of Kevin's head wounds but he seems to be unsettled as his eyes dart left and right then he turns his head towards Waridi but looks past her as if trying to locate something. In a quick motion he starts rocking back and forth then looks straight past the camera, looks left of the screen then looks ahead again as if unsure of what to do.

**Waridi:**        *Nini?*  
                      (What?)

She pauses as Kevin lurches forward towards the camera and vomits. The camera then cuts to a medium shot of Kevin and Waridi in which we see her reaching for a glass and a soft drink bottle with a clear liquid in it from the kitchen counter. She inspects the glass quickly then proceeds to pour the content from the soft drink bottle into the glass quickly. She hands the glass to Kevin.

**Waridi:**        *Kunywa.*  
                      (Drink)

Kevin clutches the glass together with Waridi's hand as he gulps the water. He then pulls his head back as he turns it away from the glass of water.

**Kevin:** Ammm!

He lurches forward again and spits the water on the floor. He leans back and slumps on the counter behind him as Waridi places the glass on the floor.

**Waridi:** Sorry, *kuna shida ya maji hapa.*  
(... there is a water shortage here.)

She pauses again as she reaches out and touches the side of Kevin's head tenderly then holds his chest while asking:

**Waridi:** *Walikufanyia nini?*  
(What did they do to you?)

**Kevin:** *Niko sawa,* it's just a little bruising.  
(I'm Ok, ....)

He tries laughing but ends up coughing. The shot changes to a close-up of Waridi as she looks towards Kevin whose head can be seen out of shot on the side of the screen at the foreground.

**Waridi:** *Ulipata makaratasi?*  
(Did you get the papers?)

She pauses while waiting for an answer, then slightly swings her head backwards.

**Waridi:** *Nini kilifanyika?*  
(What happened?)

[Taharuki (2011): Scene 5A]

In the above drama film extract, Msangi-Omari uses both pauses and silences to build up on the suspense. Frensham (1996) notes that suspense is something a writer (in this case a director) should create at all levels of a screenplay: for the script as a whole, for each act, for each sequence and for each scene. All these overlap and form part of each other.

Suspense has been created in the cited scene by Waridi's questions which do not elicit immediate answers from Kevin. The scene starts in the second minute of the film and at this time an injured Kevin has just been introduced. Suspense is first created by the fact that the audience does not know what happened to Kevin or the social condition under which the film is based. Up to this point, the audience has seen Waridi's odd response (she grabs a knife) on hearing a sound coming from the adjacent room, but it turns out to be Kevin's arrival. A poster of Raila Odinga (one of Kenya's political leaders) has also been shown with blood stains on it. These factors, together with Kevin's wounds, indicate that there is violence taking place outside the confines of the boutique, but the causes and extent of the violence have not been explained.

The first pause in the scene, which is after Waridi kneels next to Kevin, gives a chance to the viewer to assess the gravity of the situation by having a close look at Kevin's face. Waridi uses a low pitch and projection when urging Kevin to take it easy, which indicates her concern for his condition. After a brief pause, Kevin shows signs of discomfort and lurches forward to vomit. At this point Waridi becomes alarmed and asks '*Nini?*' (trans: What's wrong?). Her pitch is higher, projection louder, which indicates that she is alarmed by the sudden development in Kevin's condition. Waridi's pitch and projection drop when she hands Kevin a glass of water after a pause in speech. Although from this point her pitch, power and tempo remain the same, she addresses Kevin while pausing so that he can reveal what happened to him, but Kevin takes his time to disclose the information and by so doing he creates suspense. Indeed, four out of the six times Waridi speaks in the cited scene she asks questions which go unanswered. Hence, the use of the

pause in the scene does not only create suspense but reveals Waridi's alarm over Kevin's state.

Frensham (1996) notes that film is primarily a visual medium and images, not words, are the screenwriter's (in this case director's and actor's) basic currency. Hence, the accepted rule is: show, don't tell. Pramaggiore (2006) observes that screenwriters are careful to avoid dialogue that reiterates information already made clear by the image. The pauses in *Taharuki* (2011) give room for the audience to observe the actions of the actors/actresses instead of depending on their hearing abilities to understand the story. Even without the uttering of romantic words between the two characters in the film, the viewers can notice that they are close through their actions. However, whether Kevin and Waridi are involved in a romantic relationship is not revealed in the entirety of the film. Indeed, the exact relationship between the two characters is not divulged.

Miriam Chemmoss, who plays Waridi in *Taharuki* (2011), (personal communication, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2016) says that she first had to internalize what the character was going through by studying people and their natural reactions to a dilemma. She also used emotional recall of situations which were similar so that she could perform the role to satisfaction. Chemmoss, who is a trained actress, infused Stanislavski's techniques, Chekhov, Meisner and Strasberg's methods (especially emotional recall which Strasberg borrowed from the early works of Stanislavski) to perform her role in *Taharuki* (2011). Chemmoss' preparation for a role and engagement with it was noted to be an exception

as most actors and actresses interviewed were not grounded in acting theory (see Table 2 and 3, p. 58).

In *My Faith* (2014) the pause has been used to introduce a new topic in a conversation between Siwa and his sister-in-law (Jane). In the scene, Jane asks how her sister is doing after entering the room and making herself busy by arranging, in the cupboard, groceries that she came with. Siwa replies then pauses for a bit and continues: ‘Uhh (pause), by the way (pause), *na*-need favour.’

Riis (2004) states that a pause occurs exactly at the point at which a new line is conceived and the previous line dies. Indeed, by Siwa’s interjection -Uhh- and pausing it means he is moving from the small talk that the two have been engaged in. He reveals after the second pause that he needs a favour; hence, signaling the start of a new topic.

However, Esposito and Mariinaro (2007) note that pauses will surface in the speech stream as the end product of a ‘planning’ process that cannot be carried out during speech articulation and the amount and length of pausing reflects the cognitive effort related to lexical choices and semantic difficulties for generating new information. In the cited line, Siwa pauses twice, meaning that the topic he is about to engage is to be handled delicately. The interjection and the first pause gives him some time to think of the best way to phrase his next sentence. The first pause is followed by the phrase ‘by the way’ then another pause before the new topic is introduced.

In fact, the words ‘by the way’, as uttered by Siwa, have not introduced a topic or communicated anything worth noting. Perrault (1990) states that speech acts aim to relate three aspects of utterance: the type of action they are being used to perform; the syntactic and semantic features of the utterances; the state of the world before and after the utterance (mental states of participants and observers). In the utterance, ‘by the way’, there is no action suggested, nothing has been declared, interrogated or proposed and certainly the mental states of the participants and observers is the same as before the phrase.

Indeed, the phrase ‘by the way’ can be taken to be simply an extension of the first pause. It has been used to signal that Siwa is still in the planning process of choosing the best words to communicate his thoughts, which later turn out to be a request for a favour. Indeed, Siwa takes time to think about the words to use to request the favour because the preceding conversation between himself and Jane has revealed that the two have a rather cold relationship.

Kairu’s *Weakness* (2009) has also used the pause in a way similar to *My Faith* (2014). In *Weakness* (2009) Nicky reveals the purpose of his visit after a short pause as cited below:

Robert is standing next to the kitchen while holding a mug and Nicky is sitting in the living room as the two converse. The shot is framed in a mid-shot of Robert as he addresses Nicky

**Robert:** So, what was my wife mourning and complaining about this time?

The shot cuts to a medium close-up of Nicky seated on a chair in the living room.

**Nicky:** Ahh! The usual I supposed, they were speaking in hush tones which is usually the queue for me to disappear.

Nicky speaks as he waves his right arm about in front of his face. He then moves it to scratch the bridge of his nose as he continues talking with his arm in a waving motion.

**Nicky (cont.):** But I...(voice trails off)

The shot is cut to a long shot of the two. Robert is seen walking towards Nicky in the living room while carrying his cup.

**Nicky (cont.):** ...heard them talk about babies, when are you going to get one.

**Robert:** That's no one's business.

He takes a seat as he speaks his line.

**Nicky:** Yeah man, I have my own *shidas* (problems)...

The shot cuts to an over the shoulder shot (Robert's shoulder) with Nicky on the frame. He speaks as his arm that is resting on the arm of the seat rises a bit and lands back on the arm rest.

**Nicky (cont.):** ...last thing I want to do is poke my nose in your problems.

His elbow is resting on the arm of the seat, while his open hand is pointing to the direction in which Robert is sitting.

**Robert:** (curtly) Yes what do you want?

**Nicky:** Actually, white, two sugars (smiles)...

The shot cuts to a long shot. Nicky's right hand can be seen to be motioning in unspecified gestures as he speaks.

**Nicky (cont.):** ...thank you that would be good.

**Robert:** Very funny, every time I see you, 'can you give me something'.

The last phrase has been said in a cynical way. The shot cuts to an over the shoulder shot (Robert's shoulder) as Nicky responds.

**Nicky:** That's not true.

The shot is cut to an over the shoulder shot (Nicky's shoulder) with Robert on the frame.

**Robert:** It's true.

The shot is cut to a long shot with both Robert and Nicky in the frame. Nicky talks as his right arm makes a quick motion back and forth while his elbow remains in position on the arm rest.

**Nicky:** We converse, we are conversing now.

**Robert:** Conversing?

**Nicky:** Yes...

The shot cuts to an over the shoulder shot (Nicky's shoulder) with Robert seen on the shot while Nicky is talking.

**Nicky (cont.):** ...brother to brother.

**Robert:** So this is just a courtesy call?

The shot cuts to an over the shoulder shot (Robert's shoulder) with Nicky in the frame.

**Nicky:** Well essentially. (Pause) And...(the word is stretched) I need a soft loan.

[*Weakness* (2009): Scene 1]

In the preceding extract, Nicky maintains a nonchalant attitude with quick responses whenever challenged by Robert. It is only when he is revealing the real reason for the visit that he pauses. Just like Siwa and his sister-in-law's relationship in *My Faith* (2014), Robert and Nicky's relationship is cold. Hence, Nicky might have paused to search for more fitting words before revealing that the reason for his visit is to ask for money as Robert had suspected.

However, the suggestion that the situation and approach of the characters asking for a favour in *My Faith* (2014) and *Weakness* (2009) is the same might be misleading. Although the context in which the favour is requested in both situations is hostile, Siwa's approach is measured as compared to Nicky's. In Nicky's situation, he confirms to Robert that his (Nicky's) visit is essentially a courtesy call, pauses, then he literally states that he needs a soft loan. The request for a soft loan contradicts his preceding assertion that his visit is a courtesy call. Although Nicky pauses and stretches out the word 'and', he does not beat about the bush when asking for the loan. Hence, Nicky's pause might not share the same reason as Siwa's in *My Faith* (2014) as Nicky appears not to have needed the time to plan or engage in a cognitive effort related to lexical choices and semantic difficulties for generating new information. Nicky seems to know what he wants and states it directly to Robert.

The pause as used by Nicky in the given extract from *Weakness* (2009) is in line with Riis' (2004) opinion that a pause occurs exactly at the point at which a new line is conceived and the previous line dies. Esposito and Marinaro (2007) point to the existence of linguistic pauses that are used as a means of discourse segmentation. In the extract, the pause indicates a break from a conversation and signifies a turning point in the flow of ideas. Nicky uses the pause to indicate a break from his insistence that the visit was just a social call with no reason underlining it.

However, it is possible to conclude that the pause as used by Nicky is more of hesitation as it appears to have been done at the spur of the moment with the extended ‘and’ signaling his uncertainty. However, the stretched ‘and’ falls into the category of the filled pause as explained by Esposito and Mariinaro (2007) where they note that filled pauses are defined as the lengthening of a vowel or consonant. Hence, the extended ‘and’ emphasises the demarcation between the foregoing discussion and the new point to be introduced. In this case, the point is contrary to the opinion that the locutor has made.

The use of hesitations in *Madam Chief* (2011) clearly demarcates pauses from hesitations. Mwambia hesitates a few times when talking to the Chief (see extract in section 3.2.2). In the conversation, Mwambia first introduces himself to the Chief then proceeds to request for the service he seeks. However, before he finishes the sentence he hesitates and reconsiders the word he has used -want- to state the service he requires. The hesitation is as a result of his realization that the word ‘want’ is a demand and in his case it might disqualify him from receiving the service he seeks. Indeed the hesitation is followed by the choice of a more appropriate word ‘request’.

In the same conversation between Mwambia and the Chief (see extract in Section 3.2.2), the Chief comments that it is smart of Mwambia to be reading newspapers to which he replies in the affirmative, but then pauses (hesitates) and backtracks with a response in the negative. Indeed, the hesitations are as a result of the nature of the relationship between the Chief and Mwambia. The Chief gives him a hostile reception when he walks into her office and this affects his demeanor. Mwambia hesitates at every point in the

conversation as he is nervous and uncertain about how to proceed in order to ensure he gets the service he needs from the government administrator.

Hymes (cited in Bayat, 2013) indicates that while learning a language, children acquire a set of social rules in addition to the grammatical structures. With this ability called communicative competence, appropriate usage patterns are learnt along with the grammatical knowledge. The author notes that in this way, the knowledge of when to talk or not to talk, to whom, how, where, and what to talk about is obtained. In *Madam Chief* (2011), Mwambia, armed with this communication rules and knowledge of the society, knows that even the slightest blunder in the way he asks for service would mean that he would not get it. Indeed, after making the effort to use all the right words and the best approach, Mwambia still does not get the service sought, and the Chief does not give him a reason why she has rejected his request.

Silence has been used in *Madam Chief* (2011) to show the attitude of the Chief and allow action to take centre stage. Balazs (1985) notes that this could be extremely vivid and varied. A silent glance can speak volumes: its soundlessness makes it more expressive because the facial movements of a silent figure may explain the reason for it. Silence also makes us feel its weight, its menace, its tension. He observes that in film, silence does not halt action even for an instant and such silent action even gives it a living face.

In the cited text in *Madam Chief* (2011), Mwambia's verbal greeting is met with silence and the outstretched hand ignored. It is only after he introduces himself and states the

nature of his visit that the Chief responds by asking a question. In fact, up to the point when the Chief enquires about Mwambia's performance, she does not look at him or talk to him but only gestures that he could sit as she goes about shuffling through the papers on her desk.

Msangi-Omari has used silence as a device to introduce the flashback as cited in Scene 5B. She uses the fragmented flashback to answer Waridi's (see Scene 5A; pp. 62 - 63) questions directed at Kevin. The characters in the flashback do not speak and their actions are only explained by Kevin in a voice-over. However, because of the use of the voice-over, it will be misleading to classify the flashback as having employed silence in telling the story.

A more effective use of silence as a device in acting can be seen in *Blurred Birth* (2011) and *Pulse* (2011). Both drama films use silences extensively in their opening scenes.

Balazs (1985) notes:

How do we perceive silence? By hearing nothing? That is a mere negative. Yet man has few experiences more positive than the experience of silence. Deaf people do not know what it is. But if a morning breeze blows, the sound of a cock crowing over to us from a neighbouring village, if from the top of a mountain we hear the tapping of a woodcutter's axe far below the valley, if we can hear the crack of a whip a mile away – then we are hearing the silence around us. (p. 117)

Balaz (1985) observes that silence does not mean the absence of sound but the creative use of sound so that the watching audience appreciates the quietness or lack of conversation between characters in a scene. In both *Blurred Birth* (2011) and *Pulse*

(2011), silence is not the complete absence of sound but the use of it sparingly. Both films use sound extensively to make the perception of silence more comprehensive. In *Blurred Birth* (2011) the sound of a newspaper shuffle as the husband peruses through it, together with the sound of cutlery as he takes his tea, helps stretch the silence and adds to the communicative value of the scene. The extract from the drama film below demonstrates the use of silence in *Blurred Birth* (2011):

The scene starts with a person seated and presumably giving a narration of the first scene of the film.

**Narration:** She never made it alive, the health officials said yesterday.

The person's face is hidden behind a newspaper held high in front of his face. The headline reads, 'Giving birth now an expensive affair.' The shot is cut to an expectant lady washing utensils in the adjoining kitchen.

**Expectant lady:** Sang, you know I have to go to the clinic today. Yesterday you said you didn't have money.

She continues talking while looking at the individual reading the paper as she turns, carrying a tray from the kitchen. Her face is expressionless and her voice does not reveal any emotions.

**Expectant lady:** I hope you have the money today.

She says this as she puts the tray on the table in front of the man reading the paper while looking at him. The shot is cut to a mid-shot of the man as he lowers the paper and looks at the expectant lady with his head tilted sideways. His police uniform can now be seen with a police tag hanging on the breast of his blue pullover and he also has a police cap on.

He leans forward while still looking at the woman then looks down at his paper without uttering a word. The shot is cut to an over-the-shoulder shot of the lady as she serves the tea then turns and walks back to the kitchen. It can now be seen that the kitchen is separated from the living room by a curtain. The shot is cut to Sang as he

stirs his tea (the cup is out of shot). The expectant lady who is still out of shot speaks:

**Expectant lady:** Sang.

Sang looks up with one eye slightly squinted and forehead faintly scrunched. His hand which extends out of shot can be seen moving slightly (presumably stirring the tea). The expectant lady who is still out of shot speaks:

**Expectant Lady:** It's been nine months.

The shot is cut to the lady. Her arms are on her waist (arms akimbo) while looking at the man, whose cap (which is out of focus) can be seen at the lower right side of the screen. As she speaks, her eyebrows are raised and forehead crunched.

**Expectant Lady:** We have not booked a hospital bed, we have not bought anything for the child. What happens if I go into labour right now?

The shot is cut to Sang taking a sip of his tea calmly. The shot is cut to an over-the-shoulder shot.

**Expectant Lady:** You are not even listening to me.

Sang is seen taking another sip from his cup. The shot is cut to a close-up shot of Sang with his eyes opened wide and his eye brows lifted up making his forehead wrinkle.

**Sang:** Look, ever since you got pregnant all you do is ask (*the last word - ask- is stretched out*).

[*Blurred Birth* (2011): Scene 2]

In this extract, Sang continuously ignores the expectant lady's (presumably his wife) persistent queries which are designed to elicit a response. Judging by Sang's reactions (facial expressions and stage business employed) it can be said that he resents the expectant lady. He is first introduced reading a newspaper as the expectant lady addresses him. This is a symbolic process as he takes his time attending to the newspaper while

ignoring the expectant lady who is serving him with some tea as she continues to address him. It is only when the tea is placed in front of him that he puts the newspaper down and establishes eye contact with the expectant lady for a brief moment before his eyes drift back to the newspaper.

The fact that Sang takes such a long time before responding to the expectant lady's pleas makes the audience notice the silence and generate conclusions about their relationship. In fact, apart from the expectant lady's voice in the above extract, the only other sounds that can be heard are those by the newspaper as its pages are flipped over and the sound of a teaspoon as Sang stirs his tea. Consequently, these sounds jointly make silence more communicative to the audience.

Kayongo-Male and Onyango (1984) note that African family communication processes are better understood in terms of symbolic interactionism than most other perspectives. Family members have gestures which are commonly used. Some families use gestures or spatial distance more than words to communicate. The authors further note that lack of public display of affection is one of the more resilient features of African family life. Hence, Sang's silence can be understood from a cultural perspective. His silence gives room for facial expressions and stage business to be used to communicate his feelings.

In *Pulse* (2011), silence represents panic as Wanyama uses sound effects (in this case a phone ringing) to stress on the awkward situation that the lead character is in as illustrated below:

The film starts with a close-up shot of a cell phone as it rings repeatedly and its screen indicating *Dad* as the caller. The shot is cut (but with the phone still ringing in the background) to that of a young man seating on a bed with his interlocked hands on his chin and the forefingers held straight, almost touching his nose. His eyes are looking forth intently as if deep in thought and his chest is heaving as if he is taking deeper breaths than usual.

A young lady can be seen lying on a bed behind the young man. The shot is cut to an extreme close-up of the young man's face with a concentrated gaze and lips parted. The shot cuts to a tracking shot of the young lady lying on the bed and tracks her figure from the feet extending to the waist, then cuts back to the close-up shot of the young man.

The shot is cut again to the young lady on the bed and starts to track her from her hand, which is stretched across the bed, to her shoulder. The phone stops ringing as the shot is cut to the upper torso of the young lady. The camera tracks a bit towards her face then the shot is switched back to the close-up shot of the young man as he gazes intently while looking past the camera. He turns and looks towards the screen left at which point the shot is cut to a mid-shot to show him reaching for the phone on a chair next to the bed.

He picks up the phone and then the shot is cut to a close-up of the phone with the screen showing – *6 messages from dad*. He opens one of the folders on the phone and the message reads – *was tied up in the office running late but will be home soon*. The shot cuts to a mid-shot as the young man puts the phone back on the arm rest and resumes his original posture. A loud knock is heard at the door and the young man jerks up in shock while staring past the camera intently with his chest heaving even heavier than previously. The knock is heard again and the shot is cut to a mid-shot positioned at the side of the young man, showing him staring towards the screen right. His chest can be seen heaving heavily as the knock is heard again then a voice speaks from out of shot:

Voice: *Wee! Dan fungua*, time bad.  
(You! Dan open-up...)

[*Pulse* (2010): Scene 1A]

Silence in this scene is made more prominent by the sound of the phone ringing unanswered. Holman (2010) notes that it is the expectation of the audience that

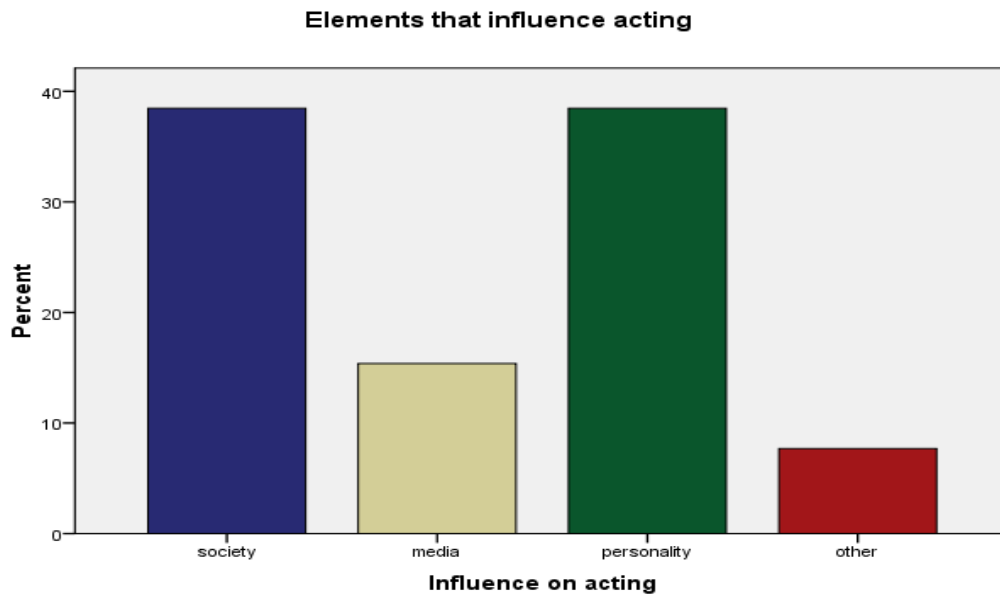
everything we see on the screen which makes a noise should be heard and thus covered by a hard sound effect, unless the sequence is a montage. Hence, a close-up shot of a phone with its screen lit, indicating that it is ringing, the audience will expect to hear its sound.

The ringing phone also introduces a sense of urgency with its persistent loud sound and the fact that Dan does not look at it and the lady on the bed is not stirred by it makes the scene much more intriguing. Dan later picks it from the seat's armrest and finds six (6) new messages from Dad (it is later revealed that it was the girl's father calling). These factors create suspense in the scene as the audience waits to discover why the character is behaving the way he does.

Although silence is used to give the young man (Dan) space to think, his motions when breathing and posture taken indicate that he is worried about something and is trying to seek a solution. The sound effects used draw attention to the silence and make his posture and stage business much more visible than they would have been if words were used to explain the scene. According to the film's director, Erick Wanyama (personal communication, 28<sup>th</sup> December 2016), the actors/actresses were required to aim at a particular level of tension throughout the film as they reacted to the dead character in the room. To Wanyama, an actor's/actress' performance is determined by his/her experiences in life, natural responses and upbringing. This view by Wanyama was confirmed by the actors and actresses interviewed who agreed that the society (community) that they live

in and their individual personalities have a major impact on how they perform in their different roles as portrayed in the chart below:

**Table 4 - Elements that Influence Acting Styles**



Emphasis has also been used in the target films through the stressing of some words, a single word or in some instances, only a part of a word. Stanislavski (1949) notes:

How are we to single out, in a long speech, the key word and a series of words which are of minor importance but necessary to the comprehension of the whole? They cannot all be equally important; naturally some will require more and others less emphasis, a third group will be even less essential, they must be deliberately toned down and relegated to the background. (p. 156)

In the film *Killer Necklace* (2008), Kibinge has uniquely used the pause to put emphasis on a phrase that guides the audience on the relationship between the two characters in Scene 23B. The last sentence in the dialogue between the two main characters (Jonah and

Mbugua) in the scene is a challenge to one of the characters (in this case Mbugua) and has been repeated for emphasis. Jonah repeats the phrase ‘*Na wewe jee?*’ while addressing Mbugua. The phrase is used to emphasize and finalize Jonah’s opinion, giving him the last word, in the conversation. The emphasis puts the power relationship between the two characters into perspective.

In the phrase ‘*Na wewe jee?*’ the last word ‘*jee*’ has been stressed by the character raising his pitch and stretching the vowel sound. Mugubi (2017) notes that human speech is not just about grammatical material transmission. He observes that human speech also incorporates emotion and mood so that from the selective prominence of some words, one may tell a speaker’s agitation, disquiet, joy, sadness, fear; in a nutshell, a speaker’s mental disposition. In the case of Jonah’s speech in *Killer Necklace* (2008), he stresses the word ‘*jee*’ as a challenge to Mbugua to consider his position in life in regards to the conversation they had been engaged in.

Kibinge has used the same technique in the same scene when Jonah speaks the numbers three hundred thousand shillings. Although the words highlighting the amount could have been spoken out in a flow, Jonah says each number as if it was a unique and distinct entity so as to emphasize the amount to Mbugua. The use of emphasis when speaking out the numbers helps to dramatize and show the significance of the amount in question. The fact that Jonah utters the amount when Mbugua is expressing his reservations of joining Jonah’s gang, makes the figures stand out.

In fact, Jonah as a character has used emphasis as a form of expression when speaking throughout the film. This form of communication makes his character distinct from the others and gives him a unique quality with which the audience can identify and expect whenever he talks. Frensham (1996) notes that when a screenplay writer is developing a character, he or she must consider how they speak, what they sound like, what pitch and speed is their voice and other related information so as to create an intriguing character, who catches the audience's attention and is believable.

Sang [see extract: *Blurred Birth* (2011) Scene 2; pp. 74 – 75] has used emphasis to show disgust and irritation over the continuous questioning by the expectant lady. In the extract Sang only speaks out once and the viewer can immediately notice that the words are spoken out of irritation. However, Sang stretches out the word 'asku' to make it sound longer than it usually is by drawing out each letter in the word to show the extent of his irritation.

Emphasis of words to show irritation has also been used in *Maisha* (2010) when Jezebel and Christine first meet. In the scene, Jezebel opens the door to the house after hearing a knock and sees Christine. Christine does not bother to extend greetings or pleasantries but simply says 'youu' (emphasizes the syllable u). The single word puts the relationship between the two characters into perspective by showing the indifference between them.

Stanislavski (1949) argues that words must be computed, combined and coordinated in a way calculated to use the weaker stresses for the purpose of enhancing the strongly

stressed words. In the extract from *Blurred Birth* (2011), Sang addresses the expectant lady in a calm voice. He does not raise his voice (use a high volume) or pitch but simply accentuates the last word 'ask' to communicate his annoyance.

Stanislavski (1949) points to what he terms as a scale of accentuation where he notes that strongly stressed key words must not compete with each other, but rather fuse into a whole line facilitating the transmission of a difficult phrase. The scale of accentuation challenges the way phrasing has been used in the first scene of *Maisha* (2010) as illustrated below:

The screen is dark with the introductory titles running with a low humming sound effect playing. With the screen still in black, dialogue is introduced:

**Tony:** Can I come in?

**Jezebel:** Sure.

**Tony:** Look Jezebel, I know what you did.

The dark screen is cut to an over the shoulder shot of a man's side in front of the camera and a lady (Jezebel) further at the door as she responds to the man (Tony) while closing the door. The shot is in black and white. Jezebel starts moving towards Tony then the shot is cut to an over the shoulder shot (Jezebel's shoulder) showing Tony's reaction. His face is screwed up with anger as he stares at Jezebel

**Jezebel:** What do you mean, I'm...

**Tony:** Stop playing stupid, don't take me for a fool.

The shot is cut back to an over the shoulder shot of Tony with Jezebel's face in view. She shakes her head slightly from side to side as she replies with her face showing no emotions.

**Jezebel:** Are you trying to accuse me of something?

The shot is cut to an over the shoulder shot of Jezebel's shoulder, with Tony's face in view.

**Tony:** It's about Michelle, how could you?

The scene is cut to black as more introductory titles are run. The scene is then faded in as Jezebel responds to Tony in an over the shoulder shot of Tony's shoulder with Jezebel's face in full view.

**Jezebel:** Ok! Listen, I don't know what lies they have been feeding you...

The shot is cut to Tony's face with Jezebel's shoulder and the side of her face being seen on the foreground as she continues to speak in a louder pitch.

**Jezebel:** ...but I had nothing to do...

**Tony:** Stop lying Jezebel, I'm sick and tired of your lies.

Tony uses higher volume when speaking the line. The scene is cut to black as more introductory titles are run. The scene is cut to an over the shoulder shot of Tony's shoulder with Jezebel talking to him.

**Jezebel:** Tony, look, I will never do anything to hurt you. I love you.  
*(The underlined word has been spoken slowly)*

The shot is cut to a close-up shot Tony.

**Tony:** Love! You call this love!

The shot is cut to black as more titles are run. The shot is cut back to a close up of Tony.

**Tony:** There is only one person that I ever loved and you took her away from me.

The shot is cut to Jezebel's close up then back to Tony.

**Tony:** You are going to pay for what you did.

[*Maisha* (2010); Scene 1]

Brockett (1964) postulates that the good actor/actress creates ‘the illusion of the first time,’ no matter how often he/she has performed the role. To give such performances he/she must concentrate on what is happening around him, not in a general sense but upon the specific phrases, intonations, gestures, and movements, and must respond in the appropriate key and at the appropriate moment. Lewis (1969) notes that many actors/actresses today do not select telling moments for their emotional peaks. They are so busy being neurasthenic that the play loses its rhythms. *Maisha* (2010) employs a cold start to peak the audience’s interest in the film. However, the dialogue lacked strongly stressed key words apart from those used by Jezebel in a single sentence.

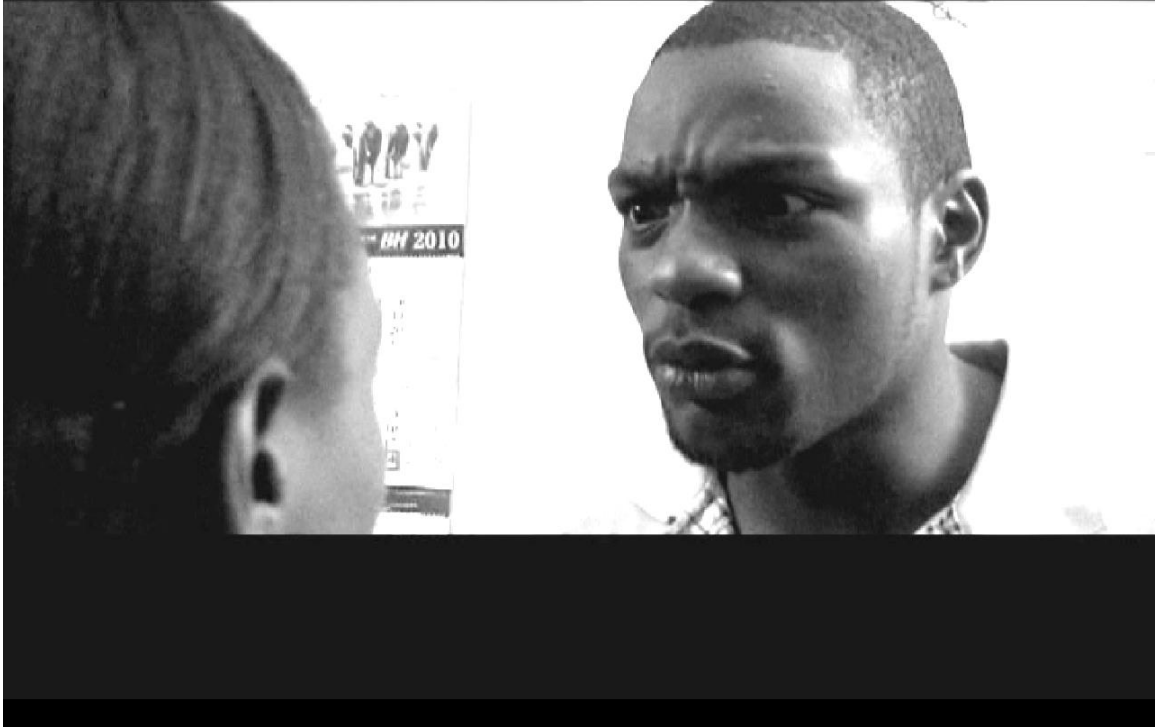
The dialogue in the extract is supposed to represent a heated exchange between the man (Tony) and his ex-girlfriend (Jezebel). In the extract, Tony has gone to Jezebel’s house so that he can get to confront her about his fiancée’s murder. Although Tony’s face reveals the anger he harbours towards Jezebel in the scene, his voice does not convey the same. Tony’s volume is high as he speaks, but his tone does not display the anger that is expected of a character seeking answers while enraged. Indeed, the same tone has been used throughout the scene, making it monotonous and lacking depth of expression.

Heffner *et al* (1973) notes that the different situations, the different emotions, and the different individuals to whom they are addressed will colour and change delivery of a speech. Thus the actor/actress must sense all that lies behind a speech, as well as understand its meaning. In the extract, the situation, the emotions and whom the words are addressed to are not appreciated in Tony’s delivery. This makes the speech

ineffective. In other words, the emotions, the mood and suspense which were to result from the scene are lost.

Indeed, Austin (2003) notes that for some years scholars in Speech Acts have been realizing more and more clearly that the occasion of an utterance matters seriously, and that the words used are to some extent to be 'explained' by the 'context' in which they are designed to be or have actually been spoken in a linguistic interchange. Hence, the choice of words by Tony do not reflect the context in which they are spoken or the occasion of the utterance.

Furthermore, Barsam's (2007) concept of inherent thoughtfulness and emotionality are lacking in Tony's performance. His actions do not convey the character's thought process or feelings behind his actions or reactions. Griece (cited in Sbisa, 2009) notes that speaker meaning is prior to sentence meaning and it consists of the intention of the speaker to produce an effect in the hearer by means of the hearer's recognition of the intention to produce that effect. In Figure 2.2, Tony can be seen to be visibly angry but his words do not convey anger.



Tony's face displays his anger towards Jezebel (facing away from the camera) but his voice lacks the tone expected of an angry person. Fig 2.2

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The scene/film has a curious start which might have contributed to undermining its general mood. The first words uttered by Tony when he arrives to confront the prime suspect over his fiancée's murder are: 'can I come in?' Although the phrase has been uttered in a calm voice without any indication of excitement, it does not conform to the nature of the confrontation in the scene. In Stahelski's *John Wick* (2014), Viggo Tarasov (antagonist in the film) calls John Wick to apologise for the actions of his (Viggo's) son who has killed Wick's dog and stolen his vehicle. Viggo starts a phone conversation with a greeting and continues by reflecting back to their shared past, but gets no answer from Wick throughout the call.

The phone call and Wick's attitude towards the caller sets the mood and establishes the protagonist's open hostility towards the antagonist. Woodward's *American Violence* (2016) has an even more dramatic start to the film where a vile old man is complaining to his wife about the quality of breakfast presented to him when suddenly a man walks in and violently knives him to death without saying a single word. These two films present a scene of a person wronged and out to confront the aggressor.

In both *John Wick* (2014) and *American Violence* (2016) the protagonists do not engage in pleasantries with the antagonists before the confrontation. The anger by the protagonist can be clearly recognised from the onset of the scene, a factor that is missing in *Maisha* (2010). Indeed, Stanislavski (1949) notes that all we ask is that an actor on the stage lives in accordance with natural laws. If a character is angry, then the anger must be seen and heard by the audience in order to be appreciated and regarded as being truthful.

Wanyama's *Pulse* (2011) has used diegetic sound at various points to introduce new characters and also heighten the suspense (see extract in section 3.3). In *Pulse* (2011) a knock at the door always presents more difficulties to the already desperate situation that the characters in the room are facing. The knocks on the door are always followed by the calling out of the names of the occupants of the house. In one instance, the visitor (Trish – played by Marion Bosire) calls out persistently and loudly for her to be allowed in while knocking at the door as shown in the extract below:

A mid-shot captures Sam sitting while leaning forward with both his hands supported by his knees. After a few seconds he glances up quickly towards Dan on his right (Dan is out of shot) then looks at Dama sprawling on the bed (a quick pan shot of Dama is done). He then turns his head to his left (towards the door) and pauses momentarily before speaking while pointing at the door to his left.

**Sam:** I think there is someone at the door. (Pause) *Kama ni Vento*, we need to hide her.  
(... If it is...)

The shot is cut to another mid-shot positioned to the right side of Sam as he stands and quickly heads to the bed where Dama is sprawled while at the same time beaconing to Dan using his right hand to follow him.

**Sam:** Quick, quick, help me get her under the bed.

The shot is cut to a long shot from a high angle as Sam bends down on the lower side to the bed and retrieves a pair of socks from a pile of shoes on the floor and wears them on his hands.

**Sam:** Quick, quick, help me get her under the bed.

He stands as Dan speaks.

**Dan:** What?

**Sam:** Shut up and do what I am telling you.

Sam slightly bumps Dan's hand towards the direction of the bed with his hands that are now dressed in socks as if they were gloves. They grab Dama with Sam pulling her legs towards the edge of the bed and Dan supporting her back. A loud knock is then heard from the door as Sam and Dan struggle to put Dama in sitting position. The knock is heard again as Sam and Dan lift Dama from the bed and move her to the lower side of the bed. As they place her on the floor, the knock is heard again. They remain squatting on either side of Dama as the persistent knock continues then a voice accompanying the knock is heard.

**Voice:** Samson. (Pause) I know you are in there, let me in.

Sam and Dan look at each other and Sam shakes his head sideways with a slight scowl on his face. The knock is heard again.

**Voice:** Samson, Sam, I know you are in there, let me in.

The knock is heard again as Sam and Dan look at each other and then turn their heads towards the direction of the door.

**Voice:** Samson, Sam, Samson.

Dan turns towards Sam and addresses him.

**Dan:** Does your girlfriend ever stop.

[*Pulse* (2011): Scene 1B)

The knocks and persistent demands take up another 40 seconds as the characters discuss on how to deal with the character (Trish) at the door. The knocks take a total of 1 minute and 15 seconds of screen time and seem to last for an eternity as Dan and Samson (the people in the room) try to consider the options of either ignoring her or promptly sending her away so that they can contain the situation. It is only when Samson opens the door that we see Trish for the first time and attach to a face the voice that has been heard in the duration of the knock.

Bosire (personal communication, 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017) says that *Pulse* (2011) was the first film that she acted in and was dependent on the director for guidance on how to go about her performance while also using techniques that she had developed as a theatre actress. According to Bosire, her personality also played a major role in her acting in *Pulse* (2011) as the character (Trish) was a demanding and forceful individual as seen by her persistent knocking at the door and later behaviour while in the room with Dan and Samson.

Emphasis in the above extract can be seen through the repetition of the knocks and the continued yelling of the name of one of the characters in the room. Indeed, the knock and calling out of names of the people in the room is a standard fixture in *Pulse* (2011). Gannon (1987) notes that repetition offers the pleasure of extended suspense and delayed gratification to even the youngest audiences. In the two extracts (Scenes 1A and 1B) from *Pulse* (2011) the repetitive knock leads to suspense. The extended knocking and reference to one of the characters in the second extract (Scene 1B) intensifies suspense as both the characters in the room and the watching audience wait to see what will happen. Indeed, both Sam and Dan remain on the floor besides 'the corpse' that they have been carrying and gaze at the door while waiting to see whether Trish will continue knocking and calling for Sam or if she will give up and go away.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

This Chapter looked at the way actors/actresses used their voices in their performance. It analysed the films while considering scholarly opinion on techniques related to the use of the actor's/actress' voice. Actors, actresses and directors were interviewed regarding what influenced them in their use of voice quality, pitch, power and tempo. The Chapter also considered the use of pauses, silences and emphases when speaking in the selected drama films.

The use of the voice-over in *Taharuki* (2011) places the flashback images in their context since it gave additional information which the viewer was not privy to. It showed the

importance of the actor's/actress' voice as it gives information not seen in the visuals but which is crucial in the understanding of the film.

*Killer Necklace* (2008) has employed the actor's/actress' voice creatively by utilising everyday communication techniques between individuals, which is mundane, and escalates these ordinary techniques to display the actors'/actress' emotions primarily through the use of tempo and pitch. The actors'/actress' use of their voices in the selected scene in *Killer Necklace* (2008) guides the audience to a more accurate understanding of the precise relationship that they have.

Pauses and silences have been used in *Taharuki* (2011) to enhance suspense in given scenes. The pauses in the film also expand the creative space available to the actor/actress to communicate by allowing the audience to observe the actions of the actor/actress instead of depending on their hearing abilities to understand the story.

The pause in *Weakness* (2009) and *My Faith* (2014) have been used to introduce a new topic in an ongoing conversation. Although there are a number of differences in the way the pause has been used in the two films, they share the fact that the pause indicates a turning point in the flow of ideas. In *Weakness* (2009) the pause is essential at the point where Nicky reveals the true purpose of his visit, and in *My Faith* (2014) it indicates the end of small talk between the in-laws and introduces a new topic, which is a request for a favour.

*Blurred Birth* (2011) and *Pulse* (2011) have employed creative use of sound to make the perception of silence more comprehensive. In *Blurred Birth* (2011) the use of silence in the initial scenes when the audience is first being introduced to the main characters (Sang and the expectant lady) communicates the nature of the relationship in which the two characters are caught up. In *Pulse* (2011), silence represents panic as the main character, Dan, is seen to be in an awkward situation and is thinking of ways in which to redeem himself. The sound of the ringing phone that is unanswered in *Pulse* (2011) creates suspense.

Emphasis has been used in various scenes of *Killer Necklace* (2008) to dramatize speech (especially Jonah's) and also to show the significance of the topic that is under discussion. In fact, the use of emphasis when talking is one of the characteristics which define Jonah as a distinct character in the film.

In *Blurred Birth* (2011), Sang emphasizes the last word in his speech to show irritation at the monologue that the expectant lady has been engaged in while addressing him. Christine in *Maisha* (2011) also used a single emphasised word to indicate her irritation and antagonistic attitude towards Jezebel.

The use of voice by actors/actresses in the films discussed in this Chapter points to the extent in which it assists the actor/actress perform a role. However, a common denominator which is revealed is that almost all the actors and actresses interviewed do not have formal education in acting. Although most of them had attended short topical

workshops conducted by various directors and academicians on performing, they were not grounded in acting theory and most of the time undertook their roles through their understanding and observations of how individuals operate in the society that they live in. Indeed, among the people interviewed, it was only Miriam Chemmoss, who had formal education in acting and who applied some practical elements of various acting theories to enhance her performances.

However, the performances of actors such as Abubakar Mwendwa and Steven Mwangi which are informed by their observations of society constitute an effective and engaging means of communicating meaning to a viewing audience as they too live in the same society and appreciate how people act. The next Chapter will analyse actors'/actress' use of facial expressions, gestures and postures in the selected drama films.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE ACTORS'/ACTRESS' USE OF FACIAL EXPRESSIONS, GESTURES AND POSTURES IN THE SELECTED FILMS**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous Chapter analysed the actors'/actress' use of voice. This Chapter looks at the actor's/actress' use of facial expressions, gestures and postures in the selected drama films. Facial expressions in this Chapter refer to the features of the actors/actresses faces. Facial expression (or the lack of it) is used to judge the actor's/actress' emotions, state of mind or reactions. Gesture refers to the movement of the hands and head to convey a feeling, attitude or communicate information that may at times be accompanied by vocalizations. Posture is the body position of an actor/actress and may at times hold meaning according to the context it is used.

The Chapter refers to selected scenes in the films which are then compared to other films that have employed a similar style of acting. Literature related to acting and contributions arising from interviews with directors and actors/actresses in the selected films have also been considered. Focus group discussions were also held on various frames and videos related to this Chapter. The findings of the discussions have also been summarized and given at different points in the Chapter.

## **3.2 The Actors'/Actress' Use of Facial Expressions**

### **3.2.1 General Facial Features**

Remland (2000) states that the human face is our most expressive organ. Morris (cited in Remland, 2000) points out, “the human face has the most complex and highly developed set of facial muscles in the entire animal world,” so our ability to manipulate this muscles makes it possible for us to show others a nearly infinite number of distinct faces.

In film acting, Barsam (2007) notes that the first screen actors/actresses were usually rejects from stage or fresh-faced amateurs eager to break into the emerging film industry. Lack of experience (or talent) wasn't the only hurdle facing them. Since no standard language of cinematic expression or any acceptable tradition of film direction existed at the time, these first actors/actresses had little option but to adopt the acting style favoured in the nineteenth-century theatre which they then tried and adopted in their screen roles. The resulting quaint, unintentionally comical style consisted of exaggerated gestures, overly emphatic facial expressions and a bombastic mouthing of words (which could not yet be recorded on film). This characterized the stage melodramas which were popular at the turn of the twentieth century.

Barsam (2007), while commenting on the directing style of D. W Griffith, observed that Griffith worked out more naturalistic movements and gestures for his actors/actresses rather than training their voices. Close-ups required the actors/actresses to be more aware of the effects that their facial expressions would have on the audience and actors' and actress' faces increasingly became more important than their bodies.

The actors’/actress’ facial expressions have held an important part in their performances since the eighteenth century with Charles Le Brun’s (cited in Balme, 2008)) visual canonization of passions being used extensively by actors/actress’ in this period up to the nineteenth century. The way a person looked (facial characteristics) was held to be very important in the eighteenth century by some scholars to the extent that the Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso (cited in Giddens, 2001), working in the 1870s, believed that criminal types could be identified by certain anatomical features. He investigated the appearance and physical characteristics of criminals, such as the shape of the skull and forehead, jaw size and arm length in order to determine who was most likely to be a criminal or deviant to societal norms. Indeed, Remland (2000) notes that the practice of physiognomy, which proffered the view that our facial features reveal our true character, is no longer taken seriously. He, however, adds that not long ago, face reading was widely practiced and revered.

These studies highlight the fact that the way a person (in this case an actor/actress) looks, plays an important role in determining the character that the individual will be assigned. Monaco (2009) holds that a film actor, thanks to dubbing, doesn’t even require a voice: dialogue can be added later. But the face must be extraordinarily expressive, especially when it is magnified as much as a thousand times in close-ups. He notes that a film actor/actress will often consider a day well spent if he/she has accomplished one good ‘look/facial expression’. Tucker (2015) supports this view by noting that in the early

stages of an actor's/actress' career their major contribution to a drama is often the shorthand of getting the look right.

The importance of the expressions on ones face in acting is revealed in *My Faith* (2014) where Faith is only shown moving in the introductory montage of the film. The body of the film shows her as an invalid suffering from a spinal code injury that has left her paralyzed. Her tools of expression in the film are restricted to her voice, eyes, head movements and facial expressions that form the core of her emotional expression.

The selected drama films in this study have made considerable use of close-ups of the actors'/actress' faces to communicate the different emotions that they are experiencing at that particular point during the performance.

In *Taharuki* (2011) Msangi-Omari has used a number of close-up shots of the actors/actresses to show the emotions of the characters. In the film, Kevin can clearly be seen to be wounded as he has a bloody face with a gashing wound on his forehead and on the left cheek as illustrated in Figure 3.1.



A close-up shot of a wounded Kevin explaining the events that transpired in his meeting with the Bio (villain in the film). Waridi on the foreground (in shallow focus) is listening to the tale. Fig 3.1

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Kevin is experiencing a considerable amount of pain because of the nature of his wounds. However, Waridi tries to wipe off the blood from his face, he does not make a sound but the pain can be felt from his facial expression as he winces (see extract in Section 2,2; Scene 5B; pp. 45 – 46). Throughout the film Kevin does not employ dramatic antics to stress the pain he must be feeling. Despite the fact that we know that he was beaten and we have been informed by Waridi that he has also been shot, the pain he is feeling is underplayed as demonstrated in the following extract:

Kevin and the villain are framed in a two-shot with both their upper bodies being seen as they stare at each other. They are both on the floor with the villain kneeling while looking at Kevin whose back is slumped against a kitchen counter. The villain's left hand is lightly placed on Kevin's shoulder while his right is holding an item in the shape of a rod that later turns out to be a casing for a knife.

**Kevin:** (Talks while his body is shaking) There are more like me (pauses while swallowing saliva), you know. You can't kill all of us.

The shot cuts to Waridi listening passively in her hiding place and then cuts back to the two-shot with the villain replying to Kevin while staring at him intently.

**Villain:** (Talks while smiling) I don't have to, you always end up killing each other.

The villain lets go of Kevin's shoulder and leans back. He exclaims lightly while taking the knife from its casing. Kevin closes his eyes at this point then opens them but looks at the knife and not the villain.

**Villain:** Hhhhh...

He drops the casing on the floor while lightly waving the knife as he looks at Kevin, then mumbles as he reaches for Kevin's jacket.

**Villain:** Okay.

He moves Kevin's jacket slightly to the side as he leans towards him. The shot is cut to a side shot of the villain's face as it turns into a grimace with the sides of the mouth curled down and an intense look in his eyes as he stares at Kevin. His head jerks slightly as a sound is heard (*flitrrk* – presumably the sound of a knife piercing through Kevin's flesh). The shot is cut to Kevin:

**Kevin:** Ahhhh...

Kevin grunts and is seen shaking violently. The close-up shot shows his face is passive with his eyes closed. The next shot (a two-shot) shows Kevin's eyes squeezed shut so that the side of the eyes become knitted, lips parted and stretched horizontally (lip

corners pulled). The villain can be seen next to Kevin with both his arms extended towards Kevin's abdomen, but the frame is cut above his wrists so that whatever his hands are doing is not seen. He moves his arms back slowly revealing a bloody knife on his hands as Kevin slumps lifelessly back onto the kitchen counter.

[*Taharuki* (2011): Scene 5C]

The eight focus group discussions on Figure 3.2 (see subsequent pages in this section), which shows the stabbing action by the villain with Kevin supported by the kitchen cabinet agreed that his (Kevin's) facial expression is that of physical pain. The focus group participants pointed to the fact that Kevin's mouth is wide open and eyes shut meaning he is in physical pain. However, the wounds on Kevin's face also led the groups to the conclusion that he is feeling physical pain.

The knife in Figure 3.2 is not visible and the groups could only speculate on the role that the villain was playing in the picture as his expression or posture does not reveal an exact emotion or attitude. In the various focus group discussions, the view of the participants ranged from suggestions that he is helping Kevin to those who held that he is torturing him.

Baldry (1971) notes that a smile or a frown may mean more to the audience than anything said. In the above extract (*Taharuki* (2011): Scene 5C), the facial expressions used by Kevin convey more to the audience than dialogue would have done. Kevin's facial expression as he is stabbed expresses his physical pain as well as mental anguish arising from his fate. He does not scream or fight but accepts that he is destined to die at the hands of the villain.

The scene from *Taharuki* (2011) can be compared to a scene in *Weakness* (2009) where the two brothers (Robert and Nicky) fight and one of them ends up injured (see Fig. 3.3). Although the pain of an injury after a fight may be different from that of one facing imminent death, it is possible to draw comparisons in terms of facial expressions used in the two films. This assertion is supported by Bordwell and Thompson (2008) who note that some basic facial expressions (happiness, fear, anger) are understood easily across cultures. In *Weakness* (2009), a short scuffle between the two main actors (Nick and Robert) sees Nick fall down and hurts himself. He grunts loudly and his face expresses pain with his mouth open wide, and his eyes squeezed shut. The close-up shot captures him shifting his weight on the floor from his right to his left, freeing his right hand to swing from the floor where it was supporting his body to his lower back to indicate the source of the pain.

Similar to the facial expression of Kevin in *Taharuki* (2011), the focus group discussants unanimously agreed that the facial expression displayed by Nicky in Figure 3.3 is that of physical pain. The factors identified to reach the conclusion were the open mouth and his eyes. A participant in one of the focus group discussion noted that Nicky is in agony because he seems to be screaming. Conversely, in the film, Nicky does not scream but only grunts a few times and uses the facial expression displayed in Figure 3.3 to communicate.



The expression of physical pain in *Taharuki* (2011). Fig 3.2

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The expression of physical pain in *Weakness* (2009). Fig 3.3

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Kevin's and Nicky's facial expressions of pain in the respective films share a number of similarities. Both their eyes are shut tight and mouths open. Le Brun (1980), in his description of the facial expression of bodily pain, notes that all the motions of the face will appear acute if the character is experiencing acute bodily pain. He observes that the eye-brows are elevated and come nearer to each other; the pupils will be hidden under the brow; the nose rising up and forming wrinkles in the cheeks; the mouth open and drawn back, making a kind of square Figure. He adds that all the parts of the face will be more or less full and distorted, in proportion to the impact of the pain.

Izard (1990) notes that there are voluntary and involuntary facial expressions which involve different neural pathways. He asserts that the central processing of involuntarily produced sensory feedback is automatic, as is any subsequent effect on emotional experience. He states that voluntary expressions are learned. Hence, any connection between voluntarily produced facial feedback and emotional experience may depend on the interaction of the feedback from various contextual and cognitive factors.

Facial expressions associated with pain may be classified as involuntary sensory feedback which is automatic. However, it should be noted that actors in both films are performing a role for an audience and in reality they do not feel the pain that they are presenting. The similarity of the facial expressions in both *Weakness* (2009) and *Taharuki* (2011) point to the fact that actors/actresses present certain expressions through observations of individuals in society.

Stanislavski (1936), while discussing the actor's/actress' adaptation of an appearance, notes that the actors should first of all assimilate the model. He/she should study it from the point of view of the epoch, the time, the country, condition of life, background, literature, psychology, the soul, way of living, social position, and external appearance.

Ekman (1999), while studying facial expressions in different cultures, concludes that some of these are universal. This can be seen in both *Taharuki* (2011) and *Weakness* (2009) where Kevin and Nicky in the respective films display similar facial expressions

when acting pain. A comparable expression can also be observed in Le Brun's (1980) illustration of bodily pain.

However, Ekman (1999) notes that the universality of facial expressions does not mean that they will always occur when emotions are experienced. This assertion relates to the selected films where the actor's/actress' face remains expressionless even when he/she is in a difficult situation or facing a challenge. In *Taharuki* (2011) Kevin's face does not reveal any emotion (see extract in Section 2.2: Scene 5B; pp. 45 - 46) as Waridi prods him to reveal what happened. The same blank look can also be seen in Kevin's flashback when he first meets the villain up to the point where he is running with the package in his hands.

The blank expression is a common element which is shared throughout the sample films. In Scene 23A of *Killer Necklace* (2008) [extract in Section 2.2 (pp. 48 - 49) and Figure 2.1 (p. 51)] both Mbugua and Jonah use minimal facial expressions in their conversation. As the scene progresses (Scene 23B; pp. 51 - 54) with Jonah's face becoming more animated, Mbugua maintains the same blank look as he listens to Jonah. By looking at Mbugua in this scene, one cannot tell whether he agrees with Jonah's thoughts on society or not.

Scene 2 of *Blurred Birth* (2011) (extract in Chapter 3; pp. 74 - 75) introduces Sang attentively reading a newspaper that has covered his face as the expectant lady addresses him. The lady, who is presumably his wife, badgers him on his lack of plans concerning

her delivery. But when Sang lowers the newspaper, his facial features do not reveal his emotions. He sips his tea then turns his attention back to the newspaper he is holding. The fact that he does not show any emotion towards the pregnant lady can be interpreted as being indifferent to her and her plight.

Prince (1997) notes that a film actor/actress has to understand when a little is too much. He or she must know how every facial expression and vocal projection appears when magnified in the giant motion picture screen so that they can precisely calibrate and control these reactions – to the smallest degree. Pearson and Simpson (2001) hold that the closer scale of film and television in combination with editing allows audiences greater access to the actor's/actress' face, enabling them to rely more upon subtle facial expressions as a way of conveying meaning. Relating this point to *Blurred Birth* (2011), Sang does not have to convey his feeling towards the expectant lady through a scowl or such like devices but simply look at her as she speaks and then turn his attention back to the mundane task of reading the newspaper. This by itself communicates his perception of the lady to the audience.

However, at times feelings must be communicated through facial expressions for better understanding of the parties involved in an exchange. Izard (1990), while expounding on voluntary facial expressions, notes that any connection between voluntarily produced facial feedback and emotional experiences may depend on its interaction with various contextual and cognitive factors. Contempt is a sensory feedback that is learned and may be expressed physically while interacting with other actors/actresses. The expression of

contempt can be clearly seen in *My Faith* (2014) where Siwa is talking on phone with a newspaper editor who is negative towards him even though he is not there to see her expressions as sketched in the extract below:

Siwa is standing outside his house after conversing with his debtors who have just left. He exhales then reaches for his phone from his trouser pocket and makes a call. The phone can be heard ringing as the shot is cut to a close-up of an envelope being held by a person in motion. The camera tracks left of the person to show a camera bag slung on the person's shoulder then to a lady seated on a desk picking up a call as the envelope is put on her table.

**Lady:** Mrs. Mukazi.

**Siwa:** Hallo Mrs. Mukazi, it's James. (Pause)

The shot cuts to Siwa standing outside his house.

**Siwa:** James Siwa (pause). Yes, (pause) I was wondering if you got my photos?

The shot cuts back to Mrs. Mukazi as she reaches for an envelope with her right hand while holding the phone with her left. The right hand extends off the shot and as it appears back in shot again it is holding an envelope.

**Lady:** Oh! James, yes I did, but I am sorry we can't use them.

As she is reaching for the envelope (presumably with Siwa's photographs) her facial expression changes. She squashes her eyebrows together to form creased lines, squints her eyes and pushes her lips upwards towards her nose as she informs Siwa that his photos cannot be used.

The shot is cut to an extreme close-up of the envelope with Siwa's name and postal address written. It is then cut back to a mid shot of Mrs. Mukazi as she listens to Siwa with the same facial expression.

**Siwa:** What do you mean you can't use them?

The shot is cut to Siwa as he listens to Mrs. Mukazi. His mouth is open, eyes staring past the camera with his eyebrows slightly pulled together to form a bit of wrinkles.

**Lady:** Some of them were out of focus and too far from the scene.

The shot cuts to Mrs. Mukazi as she ends her sentence, then back to Siwa.

**Siwa:** But the last three were taken there, right there where the accident happened.

**Lady:** Sorry James...

The shot is cut to Mrs. Mukazi. She is looking towards the camera direction but in a quick motion she turns her head towards her left side as she reaches out to attend to something.

**Lady (cont.):** ...there is nothing we can do about those photos.

She finishes the sentence as she turns towards the camera direction and hangs up the phone. The edges of her lips are curled downwards as she hangs up.

The next shot shows Mrs. Mukazi reaching into the envelope that was put on her desk. The shot is cut to a close-up of her hands as she counts money that is still partially concealed in the envelope.

[*My Faith* (2014): Scene 13]

Le Brun (1980) describes contempt as an expression by the eyebrows knit and lowering towards the nose, and at the other end very much elevated. The eyes are opened wide with the pupils in the middle and the nostrils drawn upwards. The mouth is shut with the corners down and the under lip thrust out further than the upper one.

Mrs. Mukazi's facial expression as seen in Figure 3.5 (p. 111) was shown to the focus group discussants and all the groups agreed that the emotion displayed relayed contempt. The groups reached the conclusion that the expression reveals contempt because of the way the character's mouth is curled and the wringed forehead.

The description of contempt by Le Brun (1980) is similar to the facial expression by Mrs. Mukazi when she first starts talking to Siwa as described in the extract above. The only difference noted between Le Brun's (1980) description of the facial characteristics depicting contempt and Mrs. Mukazi's expression in *My Faith* (2014) are the character's eyes. While Le Brun (1980) holds that the eyes are open widely with the pupils in the middle, Mrs. Mukazi's eyes are squinted. Apart from the difference on the eyes, the facial expression as described by Le Brun (1980) and as seen in *My Faith* (2014) point to the fact that facial expressions may be universal and not culturally determined.

A similar expression to Mrs. Mukazi's can be seen in *Taharuki* (2011) when the villain is about to stab Kevin. The villain's lower lip is thrust out further than the upper one and his nostrils are drawn upwards with a piercing stare directed towards Kevin. However, the villain and Kevin in *Taharuki* (2011) have a puzzling relationship displayed by their characteristics (explored in Section 3:3). Hence, although the villain might have the facial expression of contempt, his feelings towards Kevin could be more complex (see Fig. 3.4 in p. 110).

The focus group discussants were, however, unable to reach a conclusion on whether the villain in *Taharuki* (2011) was displaying contempt or disgust. The lack of a concrete conclusion on the facial expression was due to the fact that the subject or object that the villain is looking at is not shown. One focus group participant concluded that there might be a bad smell that the character did not like, hence the expression. The discussants found it easy to conclude on the emotion Mrs. Mukazi's expression (see Fig 3.5, p. 111)

communicates in *My Faith* (2014) because of the phone held on her ear, meaning that she was talking to a person at the other end whom she felt contempt towards or that she felt the topic being discussed was beneath her.

Some focus group discussants associated Jane's expression (see Fig. 3.6, p. 112) in *My Faith* (2014) with contempt. However, there was a lot of disagreement on the said expression as there were opposing opinions in the various focus groups as some discussants felt that the character (Jane) might just be tired after a long day at work or she dislikes the person who had opened the door for her. Indeed, Jane's expression lacks the distinct downward arc of the lips as done by Mrs. Mukazi or the villain.



Facial expression of contempt by the villain (The Bio) in *Taharuki* (2011). Fig 3.4

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Facial expression of contempt by Mrs. Mukazi in *My Faith* (2014) Fig 3.5

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Facial expression of Disgust by Jane in *My Faith* (2014) Fig 3.6

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The focus groups were also able to agree without delving into extensive debate on the expression of anger as displayed in Figure 2.2 (see section 2.3, p. 86) from *Maisha* (2010). Le Brun (1980) notes the facial expression of anger as being expressed by red and fiery eyes; the pupils wild and flashing; the eyebrows alike, either lifted or depressed; the forehead frowning, with wrinkles between the eyes; the nostrils open and extended with the lips pressing together.

The image (Fig. 2.2; p. 86) presents Tony with his forehead furrowed (frowning) and wrinkles between the eyes, but with an animated mouth. Indeed a number of focus group

participants were able to note that he was engaged in an argument or a heated exchange with the person (Jezebel) facing away from the camera. Although the focus groups noted the mouth as a point of interest, most of the participants said that the eyes and the area around the eyes were the most responsible for showing the emotion (anger) that the character (Tony) felt.

Wamakobe (2015) confirms that the expression displayed by Tony constitutes anger. In her research on non-verbal cues among the Abasamia community of Busia County, she describes '*singikhe muno*' expression as displayed in a picture of a person's face. She notes that '*singikhe muno*' expression shows the person's forehead pulled together in a frown pushing down the eye brows. The eyes seem to bulge out putting tension on the eyelids. Wrinkles are formed from the nostrils to the corners of the mouth. Wamakobe (2015) concludes the expression described shows anger, annoyance or visible disgust. In Tony's case, the characteristics outlined are more particularly pointed to anger than disgust.

Although Le Brun (1980) notes that the facial expression of anger includes red and fiery eyes, with the pupils wild and flashing, these characteristics were noticeably absent in Tony's expression of anger in *Maisha* (2010). Indeed, the focus groups were able to note the intended expression exhibited by Tony with ease without looking deep in his eyes or noting the behaviour of his pupils.

Ekman and Keltner (2000) hold that facial expressions may be the most universal of the different facets of emotion because of their role in meeting different social problems which have been observed in different cultures, such as forming attachments, negotiating status, or apologizing for transgressions. Ekman and Keltner (2000) conclusion can be noted in *Madam Chief* (2011) where Mwambia maintains a blank expressionless face with wide eyes in most of his interactions with the Chief as a way of being humble in order to create a favourable environment so that he can receive the service he requires. Mwambia's expression is a way of negotiating status, as he humbles himself by use of his expression so as not to offend the Chief who is in a position of power. Indeed, the 6<sup>th</sup> scene (see extract in section 3.2.2; pp. 117 - 119) of the film, Mwambia is blatantly ignored by the Chief but his humble expression remains the same with only a minor variation when he is surprised by the Chief's actions.

In *Pulse* (2011), Trish attempts to form an attachment with Sam when he opens the door. She leans on the door frame and starts touching her hair as she keeps smiling at him as they chat. Mandal (2014) notes that sexually or romantically interested people frequently make eye contact, exaggerate a smile and laugh too much or do trivial things. Wamakobe (2015) holds the same opinion that the smile can communicate friendliness and cooperation. In *Pulse* (2011), it is only when Trish enters the room and realizes the dire situation that Sam and Dan are in that she stops smiling and flirting.

### 3.2.2 The Actor's/Actress' Eyes

Adams, Nelson and Purring (2013) note that the eyes are often regarded as the 'window to the soul'. They postulate that for humans, the eyes are particularly useful in ascertaining mental and emotional states of others.

The importance of the actor's/actress' eyes when acting is best captured by Stanislavski (1949) in the description of an individual's action as follows:

As Tortsov was describing these personal experiences he squinted one eye almost imperceptibly, as though he were bothered with an incipient sty. In the meantime he opened his other eye wide and raised the brow above it. All this was done so that it could be scarcely noticed even by those standing close to him. Yet even these slight changes produced a strange effect. (p. 4)

The cited quote in Stanislavski (1949) shows that by an actor/actress simply changing the way his/her eyes are set produces a noticeable transformation in appearance. Indeed, Goffman (1963) notes that even when one has closed his/her eyes one can still communicate to his/her audience as closed eyes do not always mean that one has departed from the gathering by dozing off. Barbe and Savarese (1991) assert that the eyes are the most active of all human sense organs. Other sensory receptors, such as the ears, accept rather passively whatever signals come their way, but the eyes are continuously moving as they scan and inspect the details of the visual world.

Bordwell and Thompson (2008) hold that the most expressive parts of the face are the brows, mouth and eyes. All work together to signal how the character is responding to the dramatic situation. The actors'/actress' eyes in the selected films are among the most

expressive expressions which are employed to convey an attitude, condition, emotional state or subtext. In Scene 5A of *Taharuki* (2011), Kevin's discomfort at the start of the scene is first noted by the way he darts his eyes right and left as if trying to locate something in the room.

It should also be appreciated that it is not only what the actor's/actress' eyes are doing that communicate to the audience but also where one is looking as he/she is addressing another person. Also, where the other person is looking as he/she is being addressed conveys additional information to the audience.

Researchers who study eye contact in face-to-face interactions report a common pattern: when partners have unequal amounts of power and prestige, the one who first breaks initial eye contact is sending a symbolic message of deference or submission to the other. The lower-status person is also more likely to maintain eye contact when listening to the partner, but will look down or away when speaking. (Calhoun, Light and Keller, 1995; Burgoon, Guerrero and Flody, 2016).

This notion can be demonstrated in the conversation between Mbugua and Jonah in *Killer Necklace* (2008). In the conversation between the two [see extract *Killer Necklace* (2008): Scene 23A (pp. 48 – 59) and 23B (pp. 51 – 54). Also in Fig 2.1 (p. 51)] Jonah is pointedly staring at Mbugua as he speaks, but Mbugua is either staring at some point in front of him (but not towards Jonah) or looking down. He only glances at Jonah once in a while and gets to hold Jonah's gaze at the end of Scene 23B.

Eye contact (or lack of it) between individuals of unequal amount of power and prestige can also be seen in Scene 5C of *Taharuki* (2011) where the villain is observed to be constantly staring down at Kevin even when killing him. At the start of the extract (5C) Kevin holds the villain's stare as they talk, but when he removes the knife from its casing, Kevin's focus shifts from the villain's face to the knife and later on closes his eyes as he dies. The villain's pointed stare when killing Kevin reveals his sadistic nature since he does not seem to have any remorse in taking Kevin's life in the same way a butcher will slaughter a goat. He does not seem to hate Kevin or even to be annoyed at Kevin's action of trying to rescue the children he had captured. Rather, he kills Kevin simply as a matter of principle or because it has to be done (the same way a butcher will slaughter a goat as a routine duty he has to perform).

Kabugu's *Madam Chief* (2011) demonstrates lopsided power relationships much more clearly, between the Chief (played by Joyce Arigi) and a young man (Mwambia – played by Elsaphan Njora) who is seeking her services. The relationship is so unbalanced that the Chief throws away all civility when expressing herself as illustrated in the extract below:

A wide shot at a high angle captures the Chief seated at a desk while busy looking at some papers laid out in front of her. Mwambia is seen entering the office and turns to greet the Chief. The shot is cut to a mid shot of Mwambia from below his shoulder to his legs which are cut off from the shot by the Chief's office desk. He is holding an envelope with his left hand and thrusts out his right hand towards the camera direction to shake the Chief's hand.

**Mwambia:** Hallo Madam.

The shot is cut to a mid-shot of the Chief who does not acknowledge Mwambia's hand as he waits for a handshake. The Chief, without looking at Mwambia who is standing in front of her, waves her arm past his outstretched hand towards the general area of the visitor's chair. The shot is cut to Mwambia as he withdraws his outstretched hand and takes a seat and starts talking. His eyes are wide open with eyebrows raised as he looks at the Chief directly while addressing her. His right elbow is on the armrest of the chair he is sitting on and he has turned his body to face the direction of the Chief. Although seated, his back is not leaning on the chair's backrest.

**Mwambia:** My name is John Mwambia and I want...

Mwambia pauses slightly, looks down towards a spot on the Chief's desk then blinks three times in quick succession. The shot cuts to the Chief who is still attending to a document on her desk, then cuts back to Mwambia who has resumed talking.

**Mwambia (cont.):** I mean, I am requesting for the college scholarship form.

The shot cuts to the Chief who is turning her attention to a different document on her desk without looking at Mwambia.

**Chief:** Your performance?

The shot cuts to Mwambia as he responds to the Chief. He raises his right hand slightly as he shifts it on the chair's arm rest while speaking. He is looking directly at the Chief with his eyes wide open.

**Mwambia:** B plus.

Mwambia's mouth remains slightly open as he gazes at the Chief while waiting for an answer. The shot is cut back to the Chief who is moving her hand across the desk to reach for a different document on the table but does not look at Mwambia.

**Chief:** How did you know about the scholarships?

The shot cuts back to Mwambia who is still looking directly at the Chief. He flaps his arm up from off the shot on the lower frame of

the screen as he answers the Chief. The hand enters the shot and is dropped back to its position on his lap as fast as it appeared.

**Mwambia:** Monday's newspaper.

The shot is cut back to the Chief, who now looks at Mwambia and her hands have stopped shuffling documents on her desk. Her head is slightly tilted sideways as she regards Mwambia with her eyes peering at him from the top of her reading glasses.

**Chief:** So you read the papers. Smart.

As she is saying 'smart', she shifts her head slightly to the right and back to its original position in a quick motion, while at the same time raising her eyebrows and lowers them with the motion. The shot is cut to Mwambia who is looking at the Chief but gradually looks away as he answers her.

**Mwambia:** Yes.

He nods his head slightly as he says 'yes' then quickly looks back at the Chief as he expounds on his answer.

**Mwambia (cont.):** No! I borrowed a friend's.

A phone starts ringing loudly as the shot is cut back to the Chief whose eyes can be seen darting to the desk as she shifts her head slightly to the right then to the left. She moves her head aggressively to the right again while jerking her chair slightly to the left while leaning back. She then tilts her upper body to the right as she reaches for a bag that is out of shot (on the floor next to her chair).

The shot is cut to an over the shoulder shot (the Chief's shoulder) to show a wide eyed Mwambia looking on at the Chief's activities as she dumps her bag on her table. The shot is cut back to the Chief who is hurriedly tossing the contents of the bag on to the table in search of the ringing phone. She puts a pair of shoes on the desk, followed by a clutch bag. The shot cuts to an over the shoulder shot (Mwambia's shoulder) of the Chief who is out of focus but is still in the process of chucking out items onto her desk.

[*Madam Chief* (2011): Scene 6]

In the cited exchange, Mwambia's presence in front of the Chief is so insignificant that she does not even bother to look up to see who is talking to her. During this initial contact, Mwambia becomes so guarded with his responses that he weighs and reconsiders all the answers he gives to the Chief. His insignificance is further demonstrated when the Chief turns her attention to searching for the ringing phone in utter disregard of his presence in the room.

Arising from the preceding scene, it can be argued that the lower-status person is more likely to maintain eye contact when listening to someone superior as noted by Calhoun, Light and Keller (1995), but will look down or away when challenged (see Figure 3.7, p. 121). However, this must be considered in context. Mwambia gazes at the Chief at the start and at the end of the scene when she is busy attending to other duties (looking at documents on her desk or searching for her phone). But, when she finally gets to look at him and comments on his answer (that Mwambia read about the scholarships in a newspaper), he looks away while considering it then looks back quickly while retracting the answer. Indeed, Bordwell and Thompson (2008) note that when an actor/actress glances away in a conversation, it suggests distraction or evasion. If an actor/actress blinks, it suggests a reaction to what is happening in the scene (surprise or anxiety).



Mwambia looking at the Chief (out of shot) as she goes about her tasks in *Madam Chief* (2011).  
Fig 3.7

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Joyce Arigi (personal communication, 20<sup>th</sup> January 2017) says that before she picks up a role, she has to do personal research by finding out what the director expects and what she should do to perform the role as expected. In performing the role of the Chief, Arigi states that she first had to look at how Chiefs operate and behave, and in this particular instance she observed her aunt and elder sister who have held jobs as administrators before and noted that they had a tough and commanding presence which she infused in her role. Arigi, who has only attended acting workshops offered by different directors but has never gone through formal education in film or acting, says that she always finds out

who the target audience is and the message that the director wants to convey through the various actors/actresses in the film.

Joan Kabugu (personal communication, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2017), *Madam Chief's* (2011) director, says that the first step in having a great acting performance is by choosing the right actors/actresses. When picking an actress to play the Chief, she sought a strong authoritative woman with considerable experience in acting. Kabugu, who has also never had formal education in film and theatre arts apart from various workshops and seminars offered by different directors, says that an actor's/actress' performance is determined by his/her acting background (experience), passion and research on the part. According to Elsaphan Njora (personal communication, 24<sup>th</sup> February 2017) an actor's/actress' performance is influenced by all the experiences one has had. He identifies his experiences in education (both formal and informal), previous performances that he has enjoyed and also the fear of giving a poor performance (see Table 4, p. 79).

*Blurred Birth* (2011) shares some similarities with *Madam Chief* (2011) in the expressions of the eyes. The opening scene of *Blurred Birth* (2011) (see extract in Section 2.3, pp. 74 - 75) introduces Sang and the expectant lady as she badgers him on his plans concerning her delivery. Although she stares at Sang much longer than the reverse, it cannot be taken to mean that she has more power and prestige than Sang. In her case, she is trying to check for a response from him, while his stare shows contempt and irritation.

There are variations in the way Sang looks at the lady: First, with the eyes opened wide and his eyebrows lifted making his forehead wrinkle. Secondly, he looks up with one eye slightly squinted and forehead faintly scrunched. Thirdly, he looks at the expectant lady with his head tilted sideways. However, all the variations communicate an open scorn for her as his actions back up the stare with other signs which communicate that he does not care for her concerns. Sang does not hide or even try to suppress his scornful stare as a sign of respect or attempt to display propriety. This probably means that he has the power and prestige in the relationship between the lady and him. Nonetheless, it must also be noted that the lady holds Sang's stare (she does not look away) as an indication that she is holding her ground on the issues she has raised.

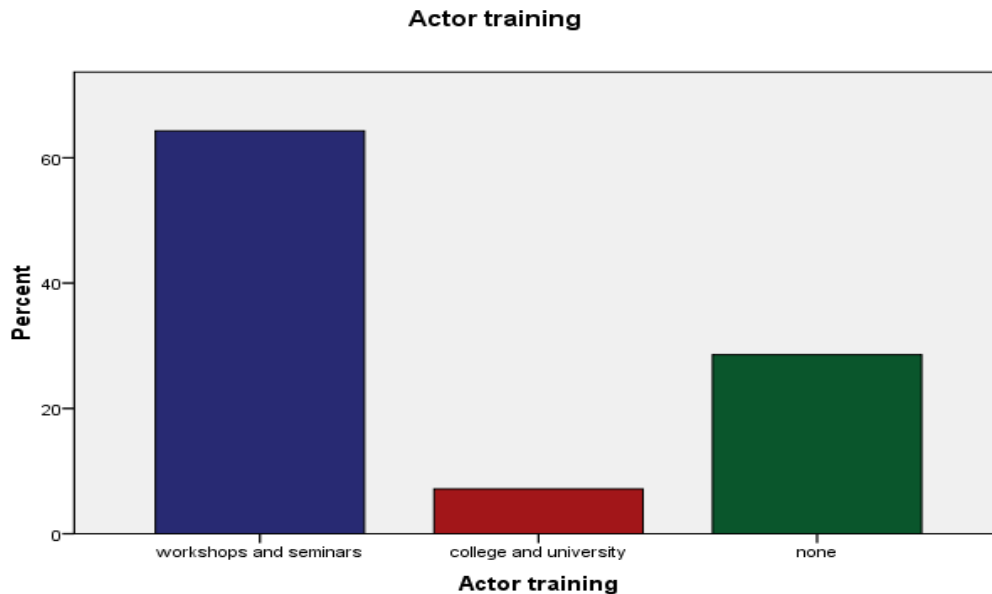
Wamakobe (2015) notes that in the Abasamia community in Western Kenya, children avoid eye contact with the elders as a sign of respect. She posits that in many ethnic groups in Africa, eye contact is sometimes used to signify the gravity of a verbal statement. It can also imply that more has been meant, or understood, than can easily be expressed verbally. The author states that too little eye contact in Abasamia community, for instance, might give the impression that one has something to hide, or perhaps that one dislikes the other person and wants to avoid closer interaction.

Siwa (played by Joe Kinyua) and Jane's (played by Alison Nyawira) first encounter in *My Faith* (2014) displays the disdain the two characters have towards each other. The scene starts with Siwa opening the door only to find Jane standing there staring at him with piercing eyes, her forehead faintly wrinkled and mouth slightly squeezed together in

a pout (see Fig. 3.6, p. 112). Siwa glances at her then moves aside to let her pass while coolly responding to her greeting that is more of a formality to maintain civility rather than an attempt to genuinely know how the other party is doing. This first meeting and the attitudes displayed by the two characters establish the hostile feelings they have towards each other. Indeed, the two engage in small talk but barely look at each other at the same time in the scene.

Nyawira (personal communication, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2017) notes that she was expected to play the mean sister-in-law in the film. Nyawira, who has not attended formal training in acting, says that her acting technique has been greatly influenced by television shows she used to watch when she was still a child and her general personality determines the role she plays in any given film or stage play. Kinyua (personal communication, 18<sup>th</sup> November 2018) had also not attended any formal training in acting at the time of the production of *My Faith* (2014) but said he always subconsciously employed method acting. It was after his performance in *My Faith* that he got to know of method acting as a technique in a workshop he took part in. Indeed, most of the actors/actresses interviewed had attended workshops/seminars on acting but lacked formal educational background on acting as displayed in the chart below:

**Table 5 - Actor's/Actress' Education in Acting**



*My Faith's* director, Bruce Makau, asserts that the actors/actresses in the film were all known to him and he picked them according to his perception of their abilities for different roles. Makau, who has not had formal training in directing or acting, says that an actor's/actress' performance is determined by his or her experience in both acting and in life. He says that what he/she looks like could most likely determine the role that he/she could get in different productions (personal communication, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2017). Indeed, Nyawira and Makau agree that the actors'/actress' individual personality is crucial when determining what role he/she is to play. In the interview, Nyawira confirmed that she struggles with roles that demand her to act mellow and nice, but is at home with those that require her to be mean and crazy. In *My Faith* (2014), Nyawira plays the role of a mean sister-in-law who does not appreciate the efforts that her brother-in-law is making towards providing for her sister.

The first interaction between Siwa and Jane in *My Faith* (2014) shares a number of similarities with the opening scene in *Weakness* (2009) and the point where Jezebel and Christine meet in *Maisha* (2011). In *Weakness* (2009) Robert rushes to open the door because of the persistent ringing door bell. He opens the door and stares out with eyes wide open. He sees Nicky and his forehead wrinkles immediately as his eyes get narrow while speaking. He says: “Ah, Jesus Christ, Nicky, I almost had a heart attack.” The look conveys disappointment, a fact that is confirmed by the first words Robert utters to his brother. Indeed, Wamakobe (2015) notes that eye contact is sometimes used to signify the gravity of a verbal statement.

In *Maisha* (2011), the first word that Christine says when Jezebel opens the door to Tony’s house is ‘You’ (stretched out for emphasis). Her forehead is slightly wrinkled and eyes open wide in a glare as she utters the word. The scene relates to Wamakobe’s (2015) conclusion that eye contact can imply that more has been meant, or understood, than can easily be expressed verbally. The glare by Christine is a challenge towards Jezebel, while at the same time expressing her dislike. Indeed, the glare intensifies the impact of the word uttered by Christine.

The next scene after the meeting at the door between Christine and Jezebel in *Maisha* (2011) involves the two of them sitting at the lounge while engaged in a staring contest (the camera intercuts the shots of the two women as they glare at each other) before they both look away from each other as shown. Although the glares exchanged by the two

women communicate the mutual dislike they have towards each other, when they both stare away from each other it shows that neither is interested in talking to the other.

In the concluding act of *Pulse* (2011), Vento notices Dama (whom they all thought to be dead) rising from the floor where she had been placed. He looks at her with eyes wide open. His mouth is also slightly open as he intently stares at the character who is out of shot (see Fig. 3.8, p. 125). Mandal (2014) notes that surprised people frequently step backward (if standing) or lean backward, show open mouth and wide-open eyes.

Indeed, all the focus groups agreed that the picture (Fig. 3.8. p. 128) represented an individual who is shocked or surprised. In one of the group discussions, the participants felt that Figure 3.8 displayed anger until one of them stated that it could have been due to shock and gave an example that the person in the frame might have been eating *jaba* (slang for khat) but when reaching for the next stalk he discovers that it is not there which makes him surprised. Apart from the one focus group, others found the image displayed easy to decode and immediately concluded that it was shock or surprise. Most of the focus group participants felt that the eyes of the character presented the surprise that he felt more than the other facial features could reveal.



Vento's look of surprise in *Pulse* (2011) when he sees Dama (out of shot) moving. Fig. 3.8

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### 3.3 The Actor's/Actress' Use of Gestures

Dean and Carra (1979) note that although the face may be of great benefit in conveying the intellectual and emotional expression of a part of a play, the body is able to express just as much if it is handled correctly. Goffman (1963) asserts that although an individual can stop talking, he cannot stop communicating through body idiom. He/she must say either the right thing or the wrong thing. He/she cannot say nothing. L'Abbe Delaumosne, Delsarte's most famous pupil (cited in Zohn, 1968), holds that gesture is

more than speech. He observes that it is not what we say that persuades, but the manner of saying it.

Brockett and Ball (2004) note that gestures normally involve only the hands and arms, but at times the torso, head, feet, or legs may be used gesturally. The authors, who advance their argument from the theatrical acting point of view, postulate that gesture can provide a subtle means of gaining emphasis, because a gesture by a performer who is about to speak is usually sufficient to shift attention to him/her at the right moment. This fact is shared by Kolker (2001) who, while reflecting on acting and the shooting of films out of sequence, notes that the actor/actress must be able to call upon his or her tricks or talents for emotional delivery on demand and without a real sense of connection to what was going on before or may go on after, when the final cut is assembled. He observes that, like the writer and composer, the actor/actress creates on demand and in disconnected bits – a look, a gesture, a piece of dialogue.

Matsumoto, Frank and Hwang (2013) opine that much of our conversations are regulated by nonverbal cues so subtle that the average person does not notice them. Burgoon (cited in Leathers and Eaves, 2016) notes that verbal and nonverbal channels are inextricably intertwined in the communication of the total meaning of an interpersonal exchange. In acting, nonverbal cues are noticed by the audience, although sometimes they may not be communicating information that can be decoded. In fact, Matsumoto and Hwang (2013) note that gestures can be broadly classified into two categories – those that co-occur with speech and those that can occur independently of speech.

In *Weakness* (2009), Nicky moves his right hand several times in gestures that can at times be decoded and other times they simply act as speech accompaniment (see extract in Section 2.3; Scene 1; p. 67 - 69). Nicky uses gestures such as waving his arm about, scratching the bridge of his nose, lifts his arm from the seat's arm rest and lets it fall back in place again. These gestures are used purely as speech accompaniments and do not communicate any specific information to the audience. Remland (2000) notes that communication does not take place if an action that is performed without the intent to send a message. Harrigan (2013) concludes that the encoded nonverbal behaviour may range from conscious and deliberate to automatic and unintended. Nicky's gestures above can be classified as automatic without a particular meaning attached to them as the intent to send a message cannot be noted.

*Blurred Birth* (2011) also employs speech accompanying gestures that are more extreme than Nicky's in *Weakness* (2009). In *Blurred Birth* (2011) Sang is almost knocked down by a vehicle as he crosses the road while going to work. He approaches the driver and leans to the window so that he can confront him. As he speaks to the driver who is seated inside the vehicle, the camera (placed inside the vehicle) can only capture the driver and Sang's hand movements. The hand movements by Sang cannot be attached to a specific meaning being communicated but as a speech accompaniment showing his anger towards the driver. The extensive use of hand movements can also be seen in Ombogo-Scott and Mbutia's *Unseen, Unsung, Unforgotten* (2008) where two women are captured gossiping about Neema's HIV status. The women make extensive use of their hands as

speech accompaniment, but without the gestures having any specific meaning attached to them.

However, in *Weakness* (2009), there are some motions that Nicky's right hand makes which communicate specific information that supports the words he is uttering. Nicky's open hand is towards the direction of Robert when he says that he has his own problems and does not need to be poking his nose into Robert's. Later, he moves his hand in a quick back and forth motion in the space between himself and Robert as he emphasises that they are conversing. The gesture of pointing and the movements of the hand back and forth illustrate the point Nicky is making.

In *Pulse* (2011), Vento makes use of his hand and forefinger to demonstrate the point he is trying to make as he speaks, and later the finger takes a central role on its own as it communicates effectively to all the occupants of the room without the need for words as outlined in the extract below:

Vento walks into the room as Trish is screaming.

**Vento:** What is this? *Nduru ni za nini?*  
(...what is the screaming about?)

Vento has extended forearm with an open palm facing upwards as he talks.

**Sam:** I can explain.

**Trish:** Aki Vento, Dan....

**Vento:** *Ebu nyamaza.*  
(Keep quiet.)

Vento points his forearm to Trish's direction and raises it up and brings it down as he addresses her. The palm of his hand remains open while facing upwards while making the gesture.

He lowers his arm as he looks down and continues speaking.

**Vento:** *Ni nini huyu anafanya kwa* floor?  
(What is this one doing on the floor?)

**Dan:** Wait, *kuna* story *hapa*.  
(..., there is a story here.)

**Vento:** Story *gani*.  
(What story.)

**Trish:** Dan *na* Sam *wamemada huyu dem*.  
(Dan and Sam have killed this girl.)

Vento moves closer to Dama on the floor while keenly looking down (Dama is not on the frame). He then stops and speaks while looking at Sam on his right.

**Vento:** *Mumededisha mtoto wa karau wa* upstairs *kwa keja yangu. Mtoi wa chuo*.  
(You have killed the child to the police officer who lives upstairs in my room. A school kid.)

He is looking at each of the room's occupants from his right to left while talking. When he mentions 'upstairs' he uses his forefinger to point up and shifts the same finger to points to himself when he refers to his room. He then lowers his arm and looks at Trish on his immediate left then Dan, who starts speaking when they lock eyes.

**Dan:** It was a mistake.

When Dan speaks, Vento's arm is raised swiftly to the front of Dan's face with the forefinger extended. He then lowers the arm a bit and the forefinger points to the chair, at which point Dan and Trish sit on it, with Sam sitting on the bed.

[*Pulse* (2012): Scene 1C]

Ekman and Friesen (cited in Burgoon, Guerrero and Floyd; 2016) propose five primary functions of nonverbal behaviour. They include redundancy (duplicating the verbal

message), substitution (replacing the verbal message), complementation (amplifying or elaboration on the verbal message), emphasis (highlighting the verbal message), and contradiction (sending opposite signals of the literal meaning of the verbal message).

Burgoon, Guerrero and Floyd (2016) appreciate the functions as highlighted by Ekman and Friesen, which link verbal and nonverbal communication, but argue that nonverbal behaviour need not be relegated to auxiliary status. The authors argue that nonverbal behaviour hold equal partnership with verbal behaviour and often operate independently in achieving communication goals.

In *Pulse* (2012), Vento uses his voice, hand and then forefinger to achieve his communication goals. When he walks in the room he demands to know what the screaming is about with his hand extended and an open palm facing upwards. In the functions of nonverbal behaviour outlined by Ekman and Friesen, the hand gesture is redundant as the verbal message expresses the demand clearly. Vento uses the same gesture when saying '*Ebu nyamaza*'. Indeed, the gesture at this turn changes from a demand to a means of specifying whom he is addressing. The open hand compliments the verbal behaviour as it show whom exactly the message is intended. This is similar to Nicky's open hand directed at Robert in *Weakness* (2009) where he specify that he does not need to pock his nose in Robert's problems.

Wamakobe's (2015) study of the non-verbal cues among the Abasamia community in Western Kenya, notes that a picture showing the speaker pointing at something to

duplicate the verbal message of '*Ula*', (translated to mean) 'that one'. The focus group participants used in the study agreed that the pointing act referred to 'something over there' or someone singling something out as 'that'.

In *Pulse* (2012), Vento uses his forefinger to communicate a variety of messages to his audience. He first uses the forefinger as a means of duplicating the verbal messages when referring to the police officer living upstairs (points up) and to his room (points to his chest). However, when Dan speaks, Vento raises his arm quickly with his forefinger extended towards Dan's direction. The hand stops and maintains the same position in front of Dan's face as a warning and not as a way of specifying 'that' or 'something over there' as noted in Wamakobe (2015). Indeed, Vento does use words to accompany the gesture, but Dan clearly gets the meaning of the gesture and shuts up immediately.

Vento then lowers his arm to waist level and points to the seat behind Dan and Trish, at which point the trio (Dan, Trish and Sam) sit. The same gesture of the forefinger pointing turns from a warning to an instruction. It is also not accompanied by words but is clearly understood by the intended audience. When considering the use of the forefinger as a warning and venue for giving instructions, Burgoon, Guerrero and Floyd (2016) argument that nonverbal behaviours often operate independently in achieving communication goals is appreciated.

Burgoon, Guerrero and Floyd's (2016) argument is further supported by the landlady's pointing gesture in *My Faith* (2014). In the film, the landlady (played by Marrienne

Nungo) approaches Siwa and starts pointing towards the general direction of the door as Siwa steps out of the house to talk to her (see figure 3.9). The landlady does not speak as Siwa exits the house but keeps pointing as if unsure or trying to remember something. The pointing together with her facial expressions introduces her as an unconventional character who may be of unsound mind. Although, the pointing does not have a specific meaning, it is among the first indicators that the character is not normal. Nungo (personal communication, 21<sup>st</sup> April 2018) says that she did not have any professional training at the time she acted in *My Faith* (2014). She outlined her brief in the film as acting a character who was sane with tonnes of insanity.



The landlady pointing at the general direction of the door while looking at Siwa. Fig 3.9

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In the selected drama films, it is easy to note that some gestures employed are easily understandable by the intended audience as they are commonly used by a given population. In the flashback by Kevin in *Taharuki* (2011) (see extract in Section 2.2 - Scene 5B; p. 45 - 46), the villain makes use of a simple gesture - a nod - to convey to Kevin that the amount given is agreeable and he proceeds to give him an envelope, thus honouring their deal. When Mbugua is first seen going into the mansion where his girlfriend lives in *Killer Necklace* (2008), he is accosted by the groundsman (played by Sam Kihui) who insists that they know each other. Although he denies this and budes past him, the grounds-man gazes at him while nodding his head as if trying to search for a

distant memory of how and where they met. Kihiu (personal communication, 31<sup>st</sup> January 2017) says that even for a simple role, an actor/actress must base his or her performance on the observations of people in different situations.

Delsarte (cited in Zohn, 1968) notes that a nod of the head means confirmation, yes or well. Duck (1994) posits that adults can usually comprehend one another's gestures, but we do so only because we share an ability to place behaviours in a cultural context. Giddens (2001) notes that there are no gestures or bodily postures that have been shown to characterize all, or even most, cultures. He observes that in some societies, for instance, people nod when they mean no, the opposite of Anglo-American practice. In the case of *Taharuki* (2011) and *Killer Necklace* (2008), as well as the other Kenyan films observed, a nod of the head is a positive sign as indicated by Delsarte. Indeed, Wamakobe (2015) confirms that the nodding of the head is considered a common indication of accord, agreement and understanding.

Contrary to the nod, is a sideways shake of the head which is a negative sign. A short video extracted from *Killer Necklace* (2008) was screened to the focus group participants in which a vehicle is captured driving down a street in slow motion, then a clip of a woman seated in front of a house while using a sewing machine and shaking her head sideways after glancing at the vehicle as it drives past her. The focus groups immediately concluded that the woman disapproved of the occupants in the vehicle or something related to the vehicle because of the sideways shake of the head after glancing at the vehicle.

Giddens (2001) states that, like facial expressions, gestures and bodily postures are continually used to fill in utterances, as well as convey meaning when nothing is actually said. This can be observed in *Madam Chief* (2011) (see extract in Section 3.2.2 – Scene 6; pp. 117 - 119), where the Chief uses her hands to instruct Mwambia of what is expected of him. She ignores Mwambia's outstretched hand (an extension of a greeting) but simply waves her hand past Mwambia's to point to the general direction of a visitor's chair (thus instructing him to be seated). This is similar to the nod, which is a sign that does not need to be accompanied by words to be understood.

In Scene 5C (see Section 3.2.1; pp. 99 - 100) of *Taharuki* (2011), the villain has his hand placed lightly on Kevin's shoulder before he proceeds to kill him (see Figure 3.10; p. 139). This gesture is perplexing as the villain has already been established as a corrupt and violent human being. But with his hand placed lightly on Kevin's shoulder, he seems merciful. Indeed, a similar gesture can be seen in *Nairobi Half Life* (2012) where Mwas approaches an actor cum 'acting agent' who is part of a traveling theatre group, which has just concluded putting up a show. The 'agent' informs him that he has to pay Ksh. 5,000 so as to get casted for plays in Nairobi, but when Mwas looks discouraged by the amount mentioned the 'agent' reaches out and taps his shoulder repeatedly while reducing the figure and urging him not to be worried.

In *Taharuki* (2011), the gesture by the villain clarifies the perception that he derives pleasure in killing. It seems that he kills Kevin because he thinks it has to be done. To

him, Kevin's heroic act of trying to save the children is betrayal. Figure 3.10 portrays the villain with Kevin as they talk while looking at each other.



The villain with his arm placed lightly on Kevin's shoulder before killing him in *Taharuki* (2011).  
Fig, 3.10

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However, Scott (1975) recognizes that the actors'/actress' gestures need to do nothing more than simply add dynamism to the image. This can be seen in Scene 26 of *Killer Necklace* (2008) where Mbugua is introduced to a conman allegedly selling gold necklaces in a tavern. When a merchandise vendor points to Mbugua the direction of the conman, the latter beckons him using his fore and middle fingers. Mbugua approaches and stands next to his table. The conman (who is a dwarf) jumps on top of his chair and

sniffs on Mbugua with his eyes wide open then he starts narrating a tale loudly while gazing animatedly at the people seated around him. He holds both his arms up and moves them continuously as he speaks. He later steps up onto the table as he removes his hat and throws it on the floor. He starts moving his upper body from side to side while addressing those seated around him. Then he removes a bunch of 'gold' necklaces from his pockets and holds them high so that the tavern patrons can admire them as they dangle from his fingers.

The video extract from scene 26 was screened for discussion by the various focus groups and the findings were varied. The focus groups were first asked for their opinion on why the conman sniffs on Mbugua and the responses were as follows. One participant in the seventh focus group said that the odd action defines the conman's eccentric character. Another participant in the same focus group discussion stated that the sniffing is to intimidate Mbugua. The view that the sniffing was a method of intimidation was shared by a number of other focus groups, with a participant in the second group saying that the conman is probably a witchdoctor who is trying to assert himself. However, the findings were inconclusive as none of the focus groups agreed on the particular reason as to why the conman sniffed on Mbugua.

The discussants only viewed a segment of the scene and were to draw conclusions based on the short segment watched. It started at the point where Mbugua is beckoned by the conman and ends when the conman steps up on the table. All the focus groups agreed that by the conman moving his fore and middle finger back and forth it is a sign of a

summon. The participants noted that the method of beckoning is demeaning to the person being summoned. Furthermore, a short video from *Killer Necklace* (2008) of Muthoni (Mbugua's girlfriend) being summoned by her employer using the forefinger was shown to the discussants and they still reached the same conclusion that it was demeaning towards the person being summoned. One participant stated that that was the way a naughty child would be summoned by an adult so as to get punished.

Hartnoll (1967), while making comparisons between the melodrama of the nineteenth century and modern comedy which replaced it, observes that the latter gives little scope for gesture or raised voices. Adams (1986) supports this view by stating that actors/actresses must learn to be still for the camera. They must learn to move and gesture only when it is essential to do so. Indeed, Stanislavski (1949) notes that in acting no gesture must be made merely for its sake. An actor's/actress' movement must always have a purpose and be connected to the content of the part. He asserts that an excessive use of gestures dilutes a part as water does to good wine.

In the films observed, sweeping and broad gestures have been avoided by actors/actresses in preference to mild and pointed gestures which do not call attention to themselves. When one observes the conman's gestures as he dramatizes the scene with his eccentric behaviour, they are seen as being acceptable and in accordance with the norms that might be expected in society. This is especially true when one takes the deprived setting of the scene into consideration. The tavern is in a low-income area with people taking alcoholic beverages. Indeed, the focus groups noted that Mbugua is beckoned by the conman

(whom they thought to be a witchdoctor) and who seems to have an eccentric character. They thought that he could be having supernatural powers and is inviting Mbugua into his domain. However, the use of the fore and middle fingers by the conman to summon Mbugua or the use of the forefinger by Muthoni's employer to beckon her are disrespectful gestures.

Nonetheless, when the conman starts speaking loudly and moving his arms in unspecific gestures in the tavern, they are received as normal behaviour. Moreover, no one around him objects when he steps up on top of the table to captivate his audience more. However, the first act of sniffing on Mbugua before he starts speaking is awkward and might only be explained as a way in which the director wanted to get the audience's attention in order to introduce the conman as an unconventional character. Indeed, none of the focus group discussions held could conclusively attach a specific meaning to the action of sniffing by the conman.

However, Stanislavski (1949) is not totally against the use of strong gestures as used by the conman in *Killer Necklace* (2008). The author gives the example of speech and action which favours strong gestures. In the example, he says that if an irate host is throwing an unwelcome guest out of his house he will use strong language, accompanied by appropriate gestures energetically pointing to the door. In *Killer Necklace* (2008), the conman can be said to be giving a grand show, accompanied by grand gestures so as to attract and hold his audience's attention. This can also be seen in Louis Leterrier's *Now You See Me* (2013) where the magicians must use grand gestures in order to create an

illusion. In the film, the magicians' illusions are both to fascinate and at times a con game with the gestures being for show and a distraction from their real intent.

Although the other films under analysis have not used eccentric characters like the conman in *Killer Necklace* (2008), they have employed grand gestures at some points. Trish in *Pulse* (2011) has used a grand gesture by holding the back of her head using both of her hands (see Figure 3.11; p. 141) after seeing Dama's body on the floor in Vento's room. The various focus groups that saw the image agreed that the gesture represented disbelief.

However, it is worth noting that the gesture used by Trish has variations that have been used in the various films under consideration. Dan, also in *Pulse* (2011), uses a variation of Trish's gesture (see Figure 3.11; p. 144) by placing his left hand at the top of his slightly bowed head when Sam informs him of the gravity of the situation after seeing Dama's lifeless body on the bed. The discussants came up with varied opinions over what the gesture meant, with some of them holding that it denoted confusion while others saying that the character (Dan) was thinking of what to do. A short video extracted from *Maisha* (2010) also has a variation of Dan's gesture in *Pulse* (2011). The video clip from *Maisha* (2010) shows J-Killer removing his jacket and cap, extending his right hand to his hair then rubbing it back and forth while looking around the room. He then proceeds to the wardrobe that is on his left. The focus groups concluded that the gesture by J-Killer showed that he was worried, with most of them saying that he must have done something wrong to make him fret.

Indeed, the same gesture has been used repeatedly in *Mashall* (2018) where P (an individual who is mentally unstable) is walking up and down in a small sparsely furnished room while talking to himself as he tries to seek a solution to a crime he has committed. In the film, P rubs his hair several times to show confusion and worry.



Trish reacting to the sight of Dama's body on the floor in *Pulse* (2011). Fig 3.11

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Dan reacting to Sam's declaration that the situation he (Dan) is in is indeed serious. Fig. 3.12

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*My Faith* (2014) has also used grand gestures to communicate where the character (never identified by name in the film) addresses Siwa nonverbally. The character knocks on Siwa's door, and when Siwa opens, the character raises his right hand and rubs his middle finger and thumb together then he raises his left hand and brings it down in front of Siwa with his palm facing upward.

The focus group participants related the gestures by the unnamed character in *My Faith* (2014) to the act of demanding for money. The rubbing of the forefinger and thumb signifies money, and the hand with the palm facing upward in front of an individual is a demand for something. The focus groups noted that the two gestures are common expressions. The groups agreed that the palm facing upward is a demand and not a polite way of asking for something. One participant said that the palm up gesture can only be used when the item one is demanding belongs to the person who is making the demand and that it is arrogant and rude. In the film, Siwa seems to understand the gestures by the character and his only concern is that he does not know the character making the demand as he asks '*Na we ninani?*' (trans. And who are you?).

One of the most common gesture that is present in most cultures is the handshake. Andersen, Gannon and Kalchik (2013) categorize it as social-polite touch that occurs in first meetings, business and formal occasions. The authors note that the social-polite touch signals respect and inclusion as well as conveying some degree of equality.

Wamakobe (2015) observes that touch is a commonly used nonverbal signal among the Abasamia community of Western Kenya. She notes that shaking hands, holding, embracing, pushing, or patting on the back all convey messages and are accompanied by verbal utterances such as 'congratulations, welcome home, you made it'. The World Trade Report (cited in Njoroge, 2018) illustrates the position of greetings and courtesies of shaking hands in Kenya. The report notes that there are many different types of shakes for different relationships. It gives an example of a long extended clasp as being typical

for well-known acquaintances and a brief, standard handshake for someone one has just met.

In *Madam Chief* (2011), the extension of a hand when Mwambia greets the Chief is expected and considered socially appropriate. However, apart from this failed effort to extend a formal handshake in *Madam Chief* (2011), all the other films do not have characters shaking hands as a social-polite gesture.

In *Weakness* (2009), Nicky and Robert do not exchange greetings when Robert opens the door for Nicky. In fact, Robert seems to be disappointed that it is Nicky at the door. The same can be witnessed in *My Faith* (2014), where Jane simply utters the word ‘*Mambo?*’ (slang for what’s up?) and proceeds to pick a carrier bag next to her and walks past Siwa. This is also the case in *Pulse* (2011) where the characters walk into the room one after the other without a formal handshake.

The lack of a handshake between the characters in both *Weakness* (2009) and *My Faith* (2014) can be attributed to the fact that they are not happy to see each other. However, in *Pulse* (2011) it might be due to the fact that one of the characters in the room is ‘dead’. The presence of a ‘corpse’ in the room suspends the social politeness expected of characters as they note that the situation in the room is grim as soon as they step in. Indeed, in the film, the only character who extends a greeting to the other is Trish. She greets Sam verbally when he opens the door for her.

Leathers (cited in Leathers and Eaves, 2016) suggests that nonverbal cues can provide certain distinctive kinds of information that cannot usually be obtained from the spoken word. The nonverbal behaviours of individuals reveal not only how they feel about themselves but how they feel about the individual with whom they are communicating.

In *Maisha* (2011), Jezebel greets Tony by hugging him on two occasions. The first instance is when she makes a surprise visit to his office so as to reestablish contact, and the second occasion is when she ‘bumps into him’ in his favourite pub. Hanley (1973) notes that women’s touch is more likely to be interpreted as having sexual intent than men’s. Indeed, Wamakobe (2015) notes that hugging and kissing are not common in Abasamia community of Western Kenya.

In Hanley’s (1973) and Wamakobe’s (2015) perspective, the act of Tony and Jezebel hugging signals the sexual intent between the two characters. In reality, the authors’ interpretation of hugs is correct in regard to Jezebel’s intentions towards Tony. In *Maisha* (2011) Jezebel has been portrayed as a jilted scheming lover who will stop at nothing to get the love of her life back.

However, Hall and Knapp (2013) observe that according to the social meaning model, within particular social groups or cultures, certain non-verbal behaviours tend to be associated with specific meanings. The authors give an example of smiles and hugs, which are a sign of affection. They note that this does not mean that these behaviours have only one meaning no matter what the context is. In *Maisha* (2011), Tony hugs

Christine when she comes to visit him. In this instance, Tony's hug is simply a warm greeting. Indeed, Tony might also simply have hugged Jezebel as a friendly greeting.

Oruka (cited in Misiya, 1985) says that in Kenya, there are currently four main cultural trends, and almost all of them are too deficient in philosophy to be able to withstand the encroachment of values from modern technology. He outlines the cultural trends as: traditional African culture; Christianity; African Westernism; and the undefined culture in transition.

Although hugging might not be acceptable, or deemed to be sexual in nature in the traditional African culture, it is permissible in African Westernism and the undefined culture in transition. Kendon (2007) notes that all gesturing is shaped by social processes. Indeed, Odipo (2016) while analysing plays on national healing and reconciliation presented at the Kenya National Drama Festival, observes that in one play (*Forty Minutes*) the aggressor (named Daudi) and the tormented (Kwame) decide to bury the hatchet and come face to face in a warm and affectionate embrace as a mark of forgiveness.

Consequently, the director and actors/actresses in *Maisha* (2011) were simply reenacting behaviour that is already shaped by the social process and accepted by society. Therefore, although the hug might have sexual connotations, it is also accepted as a warm greeting extended to friends and those close to an individual.

### 3.4 The Actor's/Actress' Use of Postures

Hall and Knapp (2013) note that posture communicate attitudinal states and general affect, as opposed to the specific emotions communicated by face and voice. Bordwell and Thompson (2008) observe that how a character walks, stands, or sits conveys a great deal about personality and attitude. They note that stage acting gave early films a repertoire of postures that could express a character's state of mind.

Adams (1986) holds that an actor/actress in performance is required to show evidence of 'feelings'. The 'feelings' must be revealed and projected in a visible and audible way so that an audience easily comprehends them. One such instance when the actor's/actress' feelings are seen through postures can be found in *Maisha* (2010) (see Figure 3.17; p. 158). In the film, after Tony has been informed by the lead detective regarding his fiancée's murder case that it might have been his former girlfriend (Jezebel) who orchestrated the murder, he is seen seated outside his house while leaning forward. His right hand is on his forehead with the elbow resting on his lap. By this posture alone, Tony displays an image of someone who is mentally tortured and in deep thought.

A similar posture has been used by Dan as he contemplates on what to do with the lifeless body on the bed in the first scene [see extract in Section 2.3 – Scene 1A (p. 77); and Figure 3.15 (p. 156)] of *Pulse* (2011). In the scene, Dan is sitting on a bed while leaning forward with his interlocked fingers on his chin and the forefingers held straight almost touching his nose with his elbows on his lap. This posture, like that in *Maisha* (2010), presents an image of a deeply disturbed person trying to seek a solution to a

pressing problem. A similar posture has also been used in *My Faith* (2014) to convey the emotions of the lead character, Siwa, when he is almost giving up on his faith and life. The same posture has been used repeatedly in *Malooned* (2007) when the two main characters try to open the door to the toilet that has trapped them. In the film, the posture of one's head supported or buried in the hands with the elbows on the laps while seated presents the frustration of the characters.

At the start of *Madam Chief* (2011), a man with a band-aid on his head is sitting on a bench outside the Chief's office with a lady (presumably his wife) standing over him while attacking him loudly concerning his drunkenness. The man is seated while leaning forward with his elbows on his lap but his hands extending away from his body and not in contact with his head. His head is bowed (looking down), meaning he does not make eye contact with the woman who is towering over him while shouting at him. Although this posture is similar to the ones used by Tony in *Maisha* (2010), Dan in *Pulse* (2011) and Siwa in *My Faith* (2014), it has one striking difference in that the man's hands are not in contact with his bowed head.

Mehrabian (1972) notes that a depressed, downcast, or dejected posture is communicated by a forward-leaning trunk, a bowed head, drooping shoulders, and a sunken chest. Wamakobe (2015) in her research on non-verbal cues among the Abasamia community in Busia County states 60 per cent of her respondents identified *ebibaso/emaparo* (deep thoughts) in a picture that showed a person with the palm of the hand placed on the cheek. An accompanying furrowed brow further demonstrated deep concentration.

Wamakobe (2015) notes that the remaining 40 per cent of her respondents associated the picture with someone who is absent minded. Indeed, in Figure 3.17 (p. 158) from *Maisha* (2010) Tony's face is furrowed but his hand is on the side of the face. Apart from the single illustration that shows Tony with his forehead furrowed, none of the other characters in the frames have a furrowed head.

The pictures of the various postures displayed in Figures 3.13 to 3.19 (pp. 154 – 160) were presented to focus group participants for their reactions. The focus group concluded that the character in Figure 3.13 (p. 154) [frame taken from *Madam Chief* (2011)] is either frustrated, despair or defeated. The various focus groups interpreted the context to be a sporting event because of the presence of other people in the background, a conclusion that played a part in informing their opinion.

The focus groups concluded that Tony in Figure 3.14 (p. 155) [frame extracted from *Maisha* (2010)] is either defeated, downcast or disappointed. The participants identified the way Tony has tilted his head down and the position of his hands on his lap as the telling features for their conclusion. In fact, one participant noted that the posture Tony has taken is what communicates his emotions rather than the facial expression he has.

The focus groups interpreted Dan's posture in Figure 3.15 (p. 156) [frame taken from *Pulse* (2011)] as a person in deep thought or calculating his next move. The groups construed the image to mean deep thoughts or calculating because of the way the hands of the character have been placed on his chin. The participants who held the view that

Dan (the character in the image) was calculating his next move were influenced by the sight of the lady sprawling on the bed behind him.

The focus group discussants concluded that the posture used by the character [Siwa in *My Faith* (2014)] in Figure 3.16 (p. 157) represents sadness, frustration or stress. The participants pointed to Siwa's squatting, placement of the hands on the lap and his bowed head supported by his hands as the determining factor for their conclusion.

The focus groups construed the posture in Figure 3.17 (p. 158) [Tony in *Maisha* (2010)] to represent a person thinking, worried or disappointed. However, the focus groups were influenced by the facial expression of the character when considering the posture. Indeed, a variation of the same shot (see Fig. 3.18; p. 159) was screened for discussion to the focus groups and some participants said they could not tell the emotions of the individual in the picture. One of the discussants stated that the picture could simply be that of a person basking in the sun. A different focus group discussant observed that the image could be of a person who simply wants to be alone. Although the participants could not agree on what the posture in Figure 3.15 stood for, the majority felt that it represented a thoughtful/meditative person.

A variation of the above images with a character looking directly at another with his hand placed lightly on the side of his head [see Fig. 3.19 (p. 160); extracted from *Weakness* (2011)] was presented to the focus group discussants for their opinion. The groups found that the posture represented a character concentrating or engaged in the conversation that

is taking place. A number of participants pointed to the fact that the character's head is not resting on his hands, meaning that he is not in distress. Other participants noted his facial features (flat expression) and eyes gazing forward as the reason for their conclusion that the character is simply engaged in conversation. Although none of the participants mentioned the presence of another character facing away from the camera, it is possible that it played a role in their conclusion that the characters are engaged in conversation.



A man outside the Chief's office with his hands on his lap and his wife standing next to him (foreground Figure – wearing a black shirt and white skirt) in *Madam Chief* (2011). Fig 3.13

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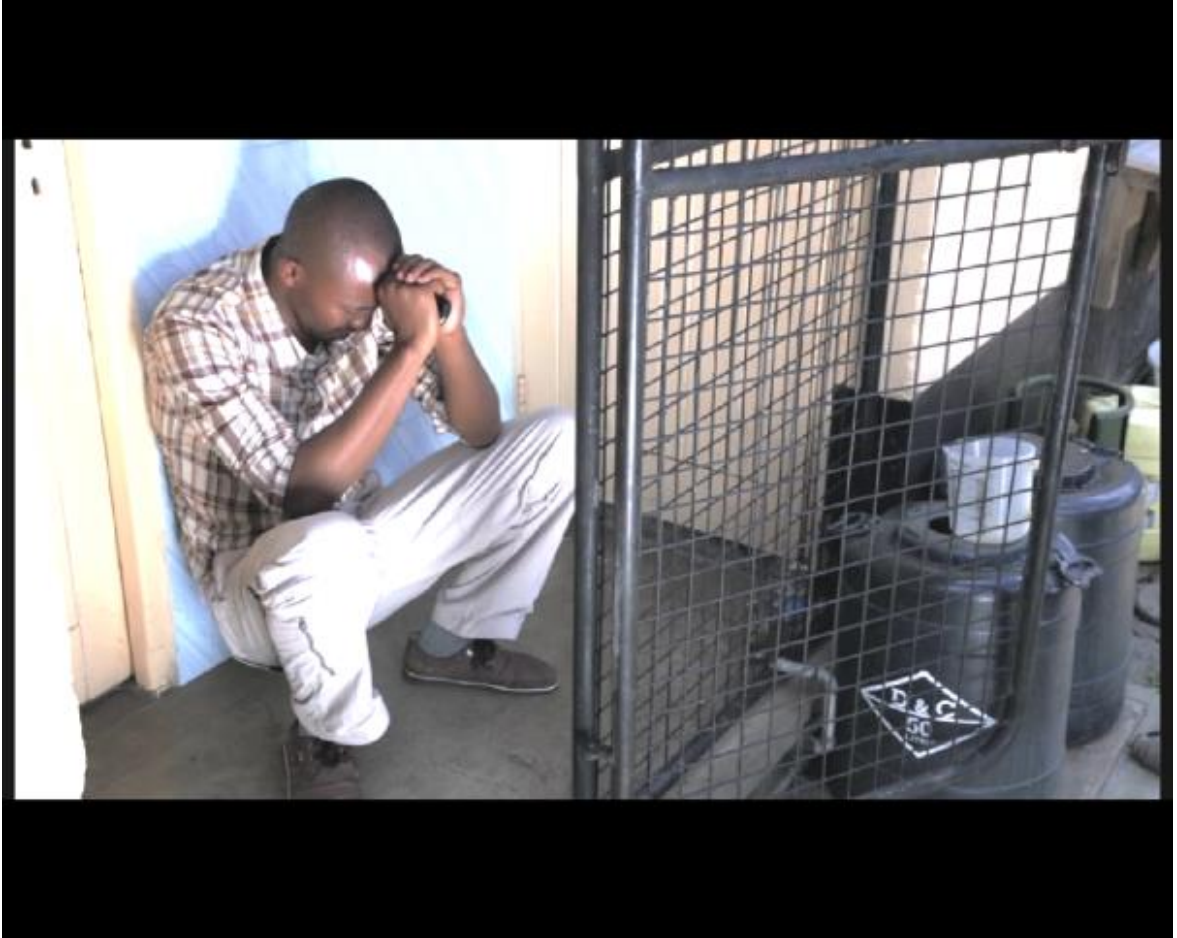


Tony being comforted by Christine after discovering his fiancée's dead body in the bedroom in *Maisha* (2010) Fig. 3.14

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Dan contemplating the situation in *Pulse* (2011) Fig. 3.15



Siwa in emotional and psychological turmoil in *My Faith* (2014). Fig 3.16



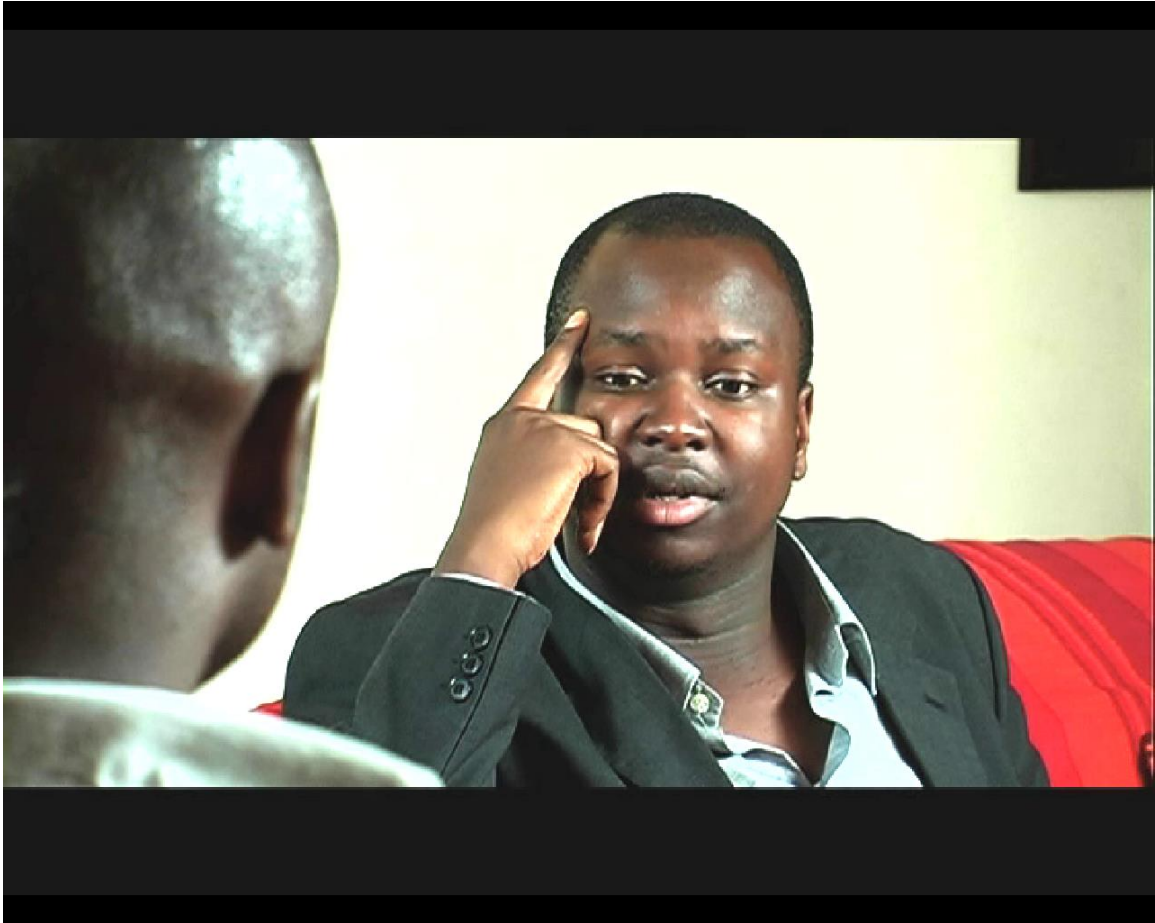
Tony sited outside his house while deep in thought after being informed that his former lover was behind the murder of his fiancée in *Maisha* (2010). Fig. 3.17

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Variation of Fig. 3.14 with Tony captured in a long shot in *Maisha* (2010). Fig. 3.18

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Nicky engaged in a conversation with Robert in *Weakness* (2009). Fig. 3.19

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It can be concluded that the posture as used in Figure 3.13 in *Madam Chief* (2011) symbolizes a man who is cowed and trying to avoid a confrontation. Although the focus groups termed the posture to be frustration, despair or defeat, the context in which it is used in the film is that of a person who is fearful. In the film, the man's wife is seen standing next to him while shouting at him.

The same posture as observed in *Madam Chief* (2011) has been used multiple times in Darabont's *Shawshank Redemption* (1994). In Darabont's film, the posture is seen as one of the favourite prisoners' position when they are discussing issues or when

contemplating on various matters. However, the posture used by the man in *Madam Chief* (2011) and that used in *Shawshank Redemption* (1994) are different in that the man in *Madam Chief* (2011) has his head bowed, thus signifying shame or cowardice. In *Shawshank Redemption* (1994), the posture has been used while the prisoners are discussing various matters. Hence, their heads will be held high as they interact with each other. The posture as used in *Shawshank Redemption* (1994) can also be seen in *Unseen, Unsung, Unforgotten* (2008) where Vicky joins her friends seated on a bench and starts chatting with them with her elbows on her laps and hands pointing away from her body. The same posture has also been used in *Saikati* (1992), when Saikati's Uncle is talking to her mother about Saikati's betrothal. Both the uncle's and the mother's hands are supported by their elbows on their respective laps as they talk.

Kolker (2001) observes that acting styles, borrowed from the stage and further exaggerated into the pantomime of silent films, established conventions of demeanor and gesture. These, modified over time, are still used and are specific to particular genres. He notes that a man or woman may no longer raise the back of a hand to the forehead to indicate melodramatic distress, but a man will bury his head in both hands and a woman puts both hands up to her mouth to show that she's shocked and frightened. Although Tony in *Maisha* (2010), Dan in *Pulse* (2011) and Siwa in *My Faith* (2014) have not buried their heads in both hands to show melodramatic distress, the posture that they have taken still bears the same meaning when observed in context of their situations in the films. Indeed, in all the said films, the focus groups agreed that the images presented to them with the particular posture showed a person in distress, deep in thought or defeated.

However, Ray (2001) notes that a bowed head is indicative of grief and is one of the non-naturalistic conventionalized gestures that the audience could associate with the silent movie acting. Hence, an actor/actress does not have to bury his/her head in both hands to depict grief but simply bow it. In *Maisha* (2010), Tony has his head bowed and elbows on his lap with the hands extended away from his body when the inspector first approaches him for questioning. In the scene, Tony is not seen crying in grief or employing any other melodramatic way of portraying anguish but simply bows his head.

Giddens (2001) has noted that there are no gestures or bodily postures which have been shown to characterize all, or even most, cultures. However, the postures taken by Tony in *Maisha* (2010), Dan in *Pulse* (2011) and Siwa in *My Faith* (2014) seem to characterize a number of cultures. In fact, Kolker (2001) has noted it in his example of how actors/actresses have historically presented distress through postures.

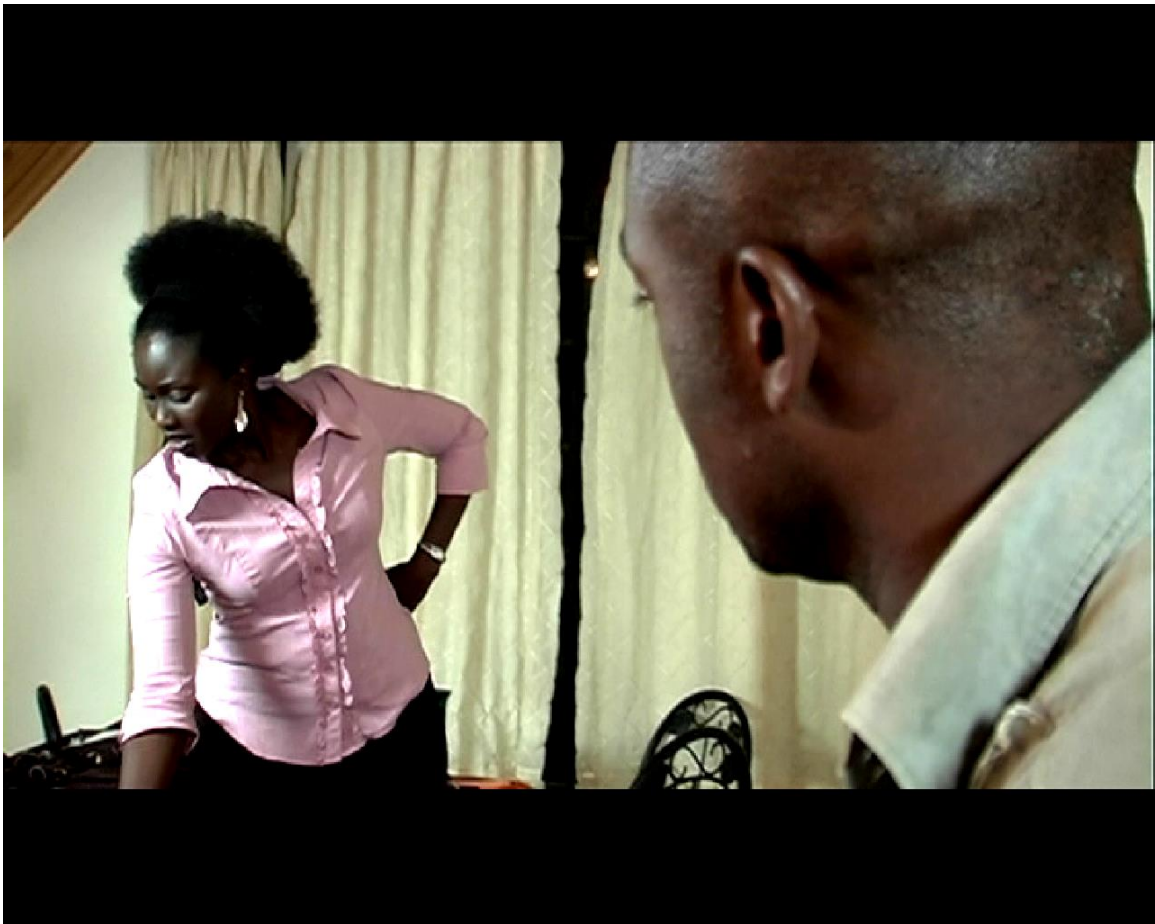
As observed, postures are a common mode of expression and are easily appreciated by one's audience because of their ease in terms of conveying meanings. Hence, a film's audience will relate to the hand on the chin/cheek as a sign of deep thought, distress or defeat. Indeed, the focus groups agreed that arms akimbo [as displayed by the expectant lady in scene 2 of *Blurred Birth* (2011) as seen in section 2.3] is a sign of defiance. The focus groups were able to relate the expectant lady's posture (both hands on her waist) in *Blurred Birth* (2011) to that of Robert's wife in *Weakness* (2009) who had only the left arm on her waist (see Figure 3.20; p. 164). The participants noted the posture as the

single determining factor for their conclusion that the ladies are defiant. Some participants termed the posture as being bossy, confrontational or a sign of a woman who is about to get angry. The same posture (arms akimbo) has been used by the wife to the man in Figure 3.13 (p. 154) when leading him from the Chief's office after they had been dismissed in *Madam Chief* (2011).

Matusumoto and Hwang (2013) note that open arms and legs in a seated position generally communicates a more positive attitude and openness, whereas arms akimbo (arms on hips) generally is associated with more negative attitudes. Remland (2000) states that placing your hands on your hips (known as the arms akimbo gesture) is a relatively unconscious action, but in Malaysia and the Philippines it is an expression of considerable anger. In *Weakness* (2009), *Blurred Birth* (2011) and *Madam Chief* (2011), arms akimbo is a posture associated with a negative attitude (irritation or anger). In all the films, the characters who posed with arms akimbo were women and the focus group also alluded that the posture is commonly associated with them.

Although the arms akimbo is categorically associated with a negative attitude, at times it may be used to communicate different attitudes and emotions. Indeed, in *Unseen, Unsung, Unforgotten* (2008) Jacky, who has her left hand on her hip, angrily tells her sister Vicky to get her own place as she (Jacky) is tired of her (Vicky) deteriorating attitude and lifestyle. The posture as used by Jacky is in line with the expectation of what arms akimbo aims to communicate. However, in the same film, Neema poses for a few seconds with her arms akimbo after assisting Tabu to load foodstuff for a children's home

into his car. This film presents a different use for the posture, as Neema is seen to be happy doing the task at hand and only uses the posture to indicate her tiredness and communicate her need for a break.



Robert's wife in a confrontational posture after discovering a bag and bra in her house that belong to Robert's mistress in *Weakness* (2009). Fig. 3.20

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In the first half of *Weakness* (2009), before the confrontation between the two brothers, Robert and Nicky maintain a positive posture with their hands and legs open as they talk. Indeed, the banter between the two brothers is light and although at various points it gets sensitive, it is never outrightly offensive. In *Maisha* (2011), Tony and Jezebel are seated in a bar with Jezebel's legs crossed but oriented towards Tony's direction (see Figure 4.3;

p. 190). Jezebel's posture in the context that the two are in is considered negative. In addition to the fact that her legs are crossed, she is also looking at a direction away from Tony. Jezebel's posture led to debates in the various focus group discussions as some participants thought that Tony was intruding into Jezebel's personal space as he faces her with open legs and hands while she is looking away and with crossed legs. However, her body orientation convinced the participants that she is interested in the conversation and the person talking to her.

However, the focus group discussants reached a different conclusion in relation to Muthoni's employers' relationship in *Killer Necklace* (2008) (see Figure 4.4; p. 191). The participants noted that the man was reading a newspaper with his legs crossed and oriented away from the lady, meaning that there was conflict in the relationship. Indeed, one participant noted that the lady might be broaching a topic that the two had discussed over and over again to the point of irritating the man whenever it is mentioned. The observation by the participant is in fact correct as the lady was reminding the man that it is their wedding anniversary and pointing to the fact that he must have forgotten to get her a present.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

This Chapter analysed the actor's/actress' use of facial expressions, eyes, gestures and postures in the selected drama films. It referred to sample scenes and compared them to similar scenes in other films. Literature related to acting and feedback from interviews with directors, actors and actresses in the selected films were also considered. Focus

groups' conclusions on identified frames and videos were analysed and findings infused in the Chapter.

Arising from the analysis of the actors'/actress' use of facial expressions to symbolize pain in both *Weakness* (2009) and *Taharuki* (2011), it was generally noted that such performers presented certain expressions through observations of individuals in society. It was also observed that actors/actresses performing pain in both *Weakness* (2009) and *Taharuki* (2011) expressed these using facial expressions which were similar to those described by LeBrun (1980). Ekman's (1999) conclusion that there is strong evidence of some universal facial expressions is supported by the performance of the actors in both *Taharuki* (2011) and *Weakness* (2009) who have presented pain in a similar manner.

Ekman's (1999) conclusion on the universality of facial expression is also supported by the focus groups as they identified the facial expression of contempt by the villain in *Taharuki* (2011) and Mrs. Mukazi in *My Faith* (2014). This was also the case in consideration of the facial expression of anger by Tony in *Maisha* (2010). However, Jane's facial expression, which in essence is also contemptuous considering the way she regards Siwa in the film, generated a lot of debate in the focus groups and a concise conclusion was elusive.

It was also noted that it is not always necessary for an actor/actress to have a facial expression to be able to express him/herself. Sometimes a blank expression is all that he/she may need to be able to communicate creatively to an audience.

The actor's/actress' eyes are also an important tool of expression. The direction in which the actor/actress is looking, how many times one blinks (or if they blink at all), how his/her pupils are moving and reacting convey information to the audience. The eyes are a significant mode of expression especially when it comes to relaying power relations among individuals in a scene.

Gestures, which range from simple symbols such as a nod to complex animated antics done by an actor/actress [as displayed by the conman in *Killer Necklace* (2008)], can be used in acting as a means of communication and also as a tool to make a film scene more dynamic. Although gestures are not universal, a majority of them are shared among cultures and this makes them easily understandable by different societies. In the selected films, the gestures used were registered and were meant to fulfill clear objectives in support of dialogue or as a substitute for the same.

It was also noted that some gestures help in communicating power relations between characters. This was observed in two instances in *Killer Necklace* (2008) where the conman beckon Mbugua and where Muthoni is summoned by her employer. The use of a finger or two moving back and forth to beckon an individual was seen to be a demeaning and inappropriate way of telling an individual to move closer, according to all the eight focus groups that watched the short video.

The cultural traditions associated with greetings as a gesture are changing in society as observed in the various films. The greeting (or lack of it) is communicative, and how the greeting is extended may explain the relationship between individuals.

Postures are a common mode of expression and should be easy for an audience to interpret and attach meanings to them. Hence, a film's audience will relate to postures as they are in common use to the society from which the film originated. However, they must be related to the context in which they are used in order to be comprehended. A simple posture such as a bowed head can have different meanings depending on the context in which it has been used. In *Maisha* (2010), Tony bows his head because of grief, but the man in the first scene of *Madam Chief* (2011) bows his head because of shame or cowardice.

Finally, it was observed that open and closed postures are indicative of the relationship between individuals. However, the individual's body orientation must also be considered when judging the nature of communication conveyed by the posture taken.

Various actors and actresses interviewed agreed that the techniques they used in the selected films were grounded in their observations of society and previous experiences in acting. The next Chapter analyses the actor's/actress' use of movement, stage business and proxemics in the target drama films.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE ACTOR'S/ACTRESS' USE OF MOVEMENTS, STAGE BUSINESS AND PROXEMICS IN THE SELECTED FILMS

#### 4.1 Introduction

The previous Chapter considered the actor's/actress' use of facial expressions, gestures and postures in a performance. This Chapter examines the actor's/actress' use of movements, stage business and proxemics in the selected films.

Although **movement** can generally be defined as the change of place or position of your body or part of your body (Cambridge International Dictionary of English, 1995), in this section the term **movement** primarily refers to a character walking from one point to the next. The Chapter will analyse how respective movements have been executed and attach a meaning to them. Stage business is the activity performed by a character for dramatic effect while proxemics refer to the amount of space that people feel is necessary to set between themselves and others.

Reference is made to selected scenes in the drama films which will then be compared to others that have employed similar styles of acting. Literature related to acting, feedback from interviews with directors and actors/actresses and findings from focus groups discussions will also be considered.

## 4.2 Actors'/Actress' Use of Movements

Barba and Savarese (1991) note that on stage there are technical as well as emotional reasons for movement. They hold that movement may be made for aesthetic reasons of good composition or out of sheer necessity of opening up an area for an entrance or an exit. Bordwell and Thompson (2008) observe that how a character walks, stands, or sits conveys a great deal about personality and attitude. Brockett and Ball (2004) recognize the importance of movements while acting by stating the functions which they play. First, they note that, they give emphasis because they catch the eye and direct attention to the strongest movement. Secondly, they characterize in the sense that they give the example of an elderly person who normally uses fewer and slower movements. Thirdly, movements clarify situations. Fourthly, movements may be used to build a scene to a climax or to provide contrast and establish tempo. Fifthly, movements may be indicative of dramatic style.

All the target films have some form of movements as the characters go about their business while trying to achieve their objectives or complete respective tasks. However, the most significant film whose characters use movements most to communicate meaning is Kairu's *Weakness* (2009) where the two main performers move about the set (a living room) in a way that could convey intended meaning to the audience.

The film starts with Robert coming from the bedroom while buttoning his shirt in a huff, then proceeds to clearing a few articles of feminine clothing on the living room floor in a hurry as the door bell rings incessantly. He deposits the items of clothing in a handbag,

which is also on the floor, then dumps it at the corner of the living room. He then heads to the door and opens it only to discover it is Nicky (his brother). Nicky walks into the room and heads straight to the fridge near the open kitchen adjacent to the living room while engaging in small talk with Robert. He opens the fridge as he converses with him then closes it without getting anything from it and heads to one of the living room chairs and takes a seat. Robert also heads to the fridge after closing the living room door and gets a bottle of water from it while responding to Nicky's small talk on his current writing efforts. He stands near the kitchen counter for a few seconds while talking with Nicky about his wife and daughter, then walks to an adjacent chair to Nicky's and takes a seat.

The topic shifts to Robert's wife, at which point he rises and heads to the adjacent open plan kitchen to make a hot beverage for himself. He stands next to the kitchen counter for a few seconds after making his drink then proceeds to his seat at which point Nicky asks for a loan. As Nicky is talking about how he plans to pay back the loan, Robert heads back to the kitchen and gets a diary from a kitchen drawer. The diary gives a summary of the sum that Nicky owes him. Robert tells him the exact amount owed then heads back to his seat. Nicky in turn informs him that their mother has given him the ancestral land belonging to the family so that he can clear his debt with the bank and that he will use the remaining proceeds of the funds acquired to settle the loan he is requesting from Robert. At this point Robert rises and walks slowly past Nicky towards the camera as he looks past it passively.

In the above summary of the movements of the two characters (Robert and Nicky) in *Weakness* (2009), it can be noted that there are both technical and emotional reasons which inform their roles. The movement by Robert from the adjoining room to the living room where he collects the articles of clothing on the floor and his movement to the door are technical since he is seen to be attending to a task that needs to be done (hiding the evidence of infidelity). However, when Robert walks towards the camera position this constitutes an emotional reason for movement as he is not seen to be performing a task but is reacting to the information given by Nicky.

Although it can be noted throughout the conversation that the two brothers have strained relations, the last movement made by Robert when he walks slowly past Nicky towards the camera indicates the beginning of open hostilities between the two which eventually culminate in a fight. Robert's slow walk past Nicky marks a shift from the common ground he held with his brother to a more contemptuous attitude which shows not only the disdain he has towards Nicky but his family in general.

However, Robert has also used movement to show irritation when Nicky mentions Robert's wife's visit to his home. This seems to make Robert uncomfortable as he stands and walks to the kitchen, while all along he had been comfortable sitting and listening to Nicky's stories about his tribulations caused by his wife and daughter. The move from the seat to the kitchen is a sign of irritation and displeasure with the topic being broached. Indeed, Mehrabian (1971) notes that generally, walking about during conversation with another indicates distress.

In the film, Robert is seen as a strong character since he exhibits more instances of strong movements than Nicky. His stronger character can also be appreciated from the fact that he is in his house with Nicky being a visitor who needs financial assistance. Henley (cited in Smith, Vogel, Madon and Edwards, 2011) suggests that nonverbal communication could be related to the expression of power and dominance in certain relational contexts. The author proposes that the person with higher power in a relationship could exert and maintain his or her power through the use of nonverbal behaviours, whereas the person with less power in the relationship must express nonverbal behaviours that show acceptance of the behaviour exhibited by the powerful person.

Both Maqbul Mohammed (played Nicky) and Melvin Alusa (played Robert) (personal communication on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2017 and 1<sup>st</sup> December 2017) said that they have not had formal professional training in acting apart from workshops and seminars organized by various film directors. They both note that the main factor that has influenced their technique in acting is the television content that they have both been exposed to. Other influences on their technique are internet research and the observation of people in society (see Table 4, p. 79).

Unlike *Weakness* (2009) where a number of movements are made for emotional reasons, *Pulse* (2011) has particularly employed movements for technical reasons. This might be due to the fact that the film is set in a small crowded room with a bed, two seats and a table taking up a lot of space, leaving very little room for the characters to move about.

Notwithstanding the size of the room, *Pulse* (2011) also has more characters and they enter the space much earlier as compared to *Weakness* (2009) where Robert's wife walks into the house almost at the conclusion of the film. Indeed, most of the time the characters in *Pulse* (2011) move about the room because they have to and not because of aesthetics or conveyance of emotions. Andersen, Gannon and Kalchik (2013) note that the density of space, an objective measure of the number of people in a given unit or territory, constrains and guides how individuals interact.

In *Pulse* (2011), the most prominent non-technical movements in the film are made by Sam when he moves away from the bed after calling out Dama's name to check whether she is actually dead. The second non-technical movement is when he sits on the chair to think of a solution to the problem. Both manoeuvres are weak movements which show the desperation that Sam is facing as he tries to distance himself from the situation that he is trapped in. He in fact confirms that he does not want anything to do with the situation by clearly telling Dan that he (Dan) should be the one thinking of a way out of the predicament.

In the film, Vento's stronger position in the relationship with the other individuals in the room is seen when he simply orders them to take a weaker position by motioning them to take seats after being briefed on the mishap (see extract in Section 3.3; Scene 1C). The movement of taking seats by the three characters without protest shows the unequal power relations between Vento and them.

*Taharuki* (2011) also shares similarities in regard to movement with *Pulse* (2011). Although *Taharuki* (2011) is set in three rooms, most of the action takes place in only a single room. However, the room is not cramped as the one in *Pulse* (2011) and does not accommodate a lot of characters. In *Taharuki* (2011), the actors and actress do not move when there is no clear reason accompanying the movement. In fact, it is only Waridi who is seen moving up and about while trying to accomplish various tasks. She first goes out to get Kevin, then she tends to him as he is seated with his back leaning against the kitchen counter (a position that he maintains throughout the film), and finally she goes to hide from the villain when he approaches the room.

In *Killer Necklace* (2008), the conman's movement may be seen as a way of building his character. The conman (who is a dwarf) first jumps on top of the chair as a means of attracting the attention of his audience around the tavern and also those watching the film. The move also introduces his unconventional character as well as showing his full features as the camera frames him from his legs to the head. But Mbugua is still seen to be taller than him. The conman then steps up on the table in a move to raise his stature and hold his audience's attention. By standing on the table, he becomes taller than Mbugua and is able to talk down at him as the latter in turn looks up at him, the reverse of what was in the previous shot when Mbugua was looking down at him.

Davidson (1992) observes that if a camera is positioned at a character's knee height but pointed upwards (low angle), so that the character's entire body fills the frame, the image produced will give the impression that he/she is very tall, powerful and menacing. If,

however, the camera is positioned slightly above the character's head and pointing downwards, he/she will appear much smaller and less significant. Katz (1998) notes that by merely shifting camera angles, a director can suggest not only the ups and downs in a character's fortune but also the attitude that an audience should adopt towards any personality or action in the film.

With Davidson's (1992) and Katz' (1998) views taken into consideration, the conman's movement from the floor, to the chair and finally climbing on top of the table gains more significance than just revealing his unconventional character. When Mbugua first walks up to the conman, he leaps from the ground to the chair, but Mbugua is still taller than him. This means that Mbugua looks down at the conman as he starts his narration. Indeed, at one point the camera is placed at a high angle tilting down towards the conman who is standing on a chair, showing how Mbugua sees him (as being inferior).

The conman then steps on to the table and effectively becomes taller than Mbugua, meaning that Mbugua has to look up at him. This indicates that the conman has shifted the balance of power between himself and Mbugua. The camera at this point shifts from regarding the conman from a high angle to a low angle (tilted up) at some points to emphasize the shift of power. Mbugua effectively becomes the less significant individual between the two as the conman gets his attention and that of the people around him in the tavern because of his elevated position.

The conman exhibits strong movements throughout the scene by moving higher as he climbs onto the chair, then the table. Focus groups who had viewed the opening part of the scene unanimously concluded that the conman was asserting himself through his movements. It is only after Mbugua hands the conman the money for the 'gold' necklaces that the latter exhibits weak movements by jumping off the table and sprinting away having achieved his intention of ripping off Mbugua.

Actors/actresses have also engaged in simple movements for various dramatic reasons, and the most prominent example of this can be seen in *Madam Chief* (2011) when Mwende (played by Joy Karambu) meets Mwambia in the streets and asks him whether he has filled in his college scholarship forms. She first informs Mwambia that she has already filled in her college scholarship forms. She then asks him whether he got his. At this point he looks behind and bends slightly as if he is attending to something. He then turns and looks at Mwende as she talks about the two of them going to the same college. He turns again and bends slightly while checking on something out of shot. The shots used in the scene are over the shoulder and mid close-up with the two, such that the audience cannot see what Mwambia is attending to every time he turns. It later turns out that he was checking on a cob of maize that was being roasted.

Although Mwende and Mwambia's conversation is centred on college scholarship forms, he never reveals to her that he is yet to fill them. The two times she pauses to give him time to respond to her query and comment, he turns to attend to a task off screen and never gives a pointed answer. His turning is not only to attend to the task or make the

audience curious about his unexpected behaviour but is also a way of avoiding to give an answer to Mwende. In the scene, Mwambia continually exhibits weak movements by turning away from Mwende as he bends. Karambu (personal communication, 1<sup>st</sup> February 2017) says that her performance in the film and as an actress in general was influenced by society and her observations of people and the way they reacted in different situations (see Table 4, p. 79).

Diderot (cited in Duerr, 1962) notes that an actor/actress overcome by emotion, or living his/her role, can neither judge his/her effects nor consistently achieve them. Diderot observes that the kind of actor/actress who is overcome by emotion has no 'full freedom of mind' for attending to those essential stage tasks. He explains that the actor/actress can only attend to other stage tasks when 'he/she imitates anger,' or any other emotion, and in so doing controls and designs it – in the same way that he/she wisely and with full command of himself/herself imitates drunkenness instead of being truly drunk onstage.

Timoney (2016) highlights the fact that early in Stanislavski's career he could be found wandering the streets of Russia in character - as a trump, a fortune teller, a drunk – as an acting 'experiment'. The author observed that Stanislavski would truly walk in the shoes of characters he wished to play, gaining relevant life experience.

In *Madam Chief* (2011), the second scene introduces the audience to a major flaw in the Chief's character; that she is an alcoholic as she is seen pouring a drink into a plastic disposable cup from a whisky bottle and forcing the content down her throat with a

wince. Later, the Chief is in a bar taking alcoholic beverages while dozing at the same time due to her inebriated state. She confronts the waitress by loudly informing her that she (the Chief) knows her, then stands up, staggers a bit to the right then left and finally stands still. She looks before her and recognizes the man and lady who were at her office earlier (see Fig. 3.13 in section 3.4; p. 154), shouts “you again” and pushes them. This makes her almost lose her balance as she staggers forward, propelled by the push motion. She regains her balance then turns as she heads towards the camera while walking lazily with a slight wobble. The Chief uses strong movement continuously in the scene as she propels herself forward in her drunken state. The movement shows her bullish character as she drunkenly moves forward and pushes the couple who were not engaged with her.

The same strong movements can be seen in *Maisha* (2010) when Jezebel opens the door to Tony’s house when responding to a knock only to find Christine standing outside. Christine says “you” with a smug look on her face then moves forward towards the door forcing Jezebel out of the way. As in *Madam Chief* (2011), the strong forward movements demonstrate the assertiveness of the character in question, while forcing the opposing character/s to be submissive by displaying weak movements.

The movement in *Maisha* (2010) shares strong similarities with *My Faith* (2014) where Siwa responds to a knock on the door only to find his sister-in-law standing outside (see Figure 3.6 in section 3.2.1; p. 112). After exchanging cool greetings, Siwa moves back to let her pass. Hence, Siwa displays a weak movement while his sister-in-law engages strong movements as she moves forward past Siwa into the house.

The use of strong and weak movements can also be seen in the second scene of *Blurred Birth* (2011) where Sang confronts the driver of a vehicle that almost hit him. He approaches the driver and accuses him of speeding, using a phone while driving, driving an unroad-worthy vehicle and finally attempted murder. When Sang mentions the last accusation, the vehicle driver who up to that point had maintained a calm and collected look is taken aback. He secures the vehicle's hand-break, switches off the engine, opens the door and steps out.

The motion by the driver of stepping out of the car is a strong movement and indicates that the last accusation (attempted murder) is to be challenged. The previous accusations mentioned by Sang did not seem to move him but attempted murder (which is the most serious accusation) captures his attention and he steps out of the vehicle and stands up so as to be on equal footing with Sang. Indeed, it is when the driver is out of the car and standing that he mounts his defence and accuses Sang of walking without looking where he was going. If the driver had defended himself while still seated in the vehicle, his defence would have been weak because of his position, but by stepping out of the car and standing up he appears stronger and able to defend himself.

#### **4.3 Stage Business in the Selected Films**

Brockett and Ball (2004) describe stage business as physical activities such as filling in and smoking a pipe, arranging flowers, wrapping packages, eating and drinking and duelling. They note that stage business must be carefully timed to make appropriate

points and coordinate with dialogue to avoid diverting attention from important lines or action. Bordwell and Thompson (2008) postulate that a sense of realism may be created by giving the actors/actresses small bits of business to perform while they speak their lines.

Stage business can range from simple acts such as reading a newspaper as seen in *Blurred Birth* (2011) (see extract -Scene 2- in Section 2.3; pp. 74 - 75) to more complicated actions as seen in *Madam Chief* (2011). In *Blurred Birth* (2011), Sang's action of reading a newspaper and attending to the tea that has been served to him rather than looking at the expectant lady as she addresses him, puts his silence in context. His silence in this case can be taken to be resentment because of his being more engaged with the newspaper and tea rather than with the expectant lady. If he was not occupied in the actions in the scene and continuously looked at the expectant lady (or avoided looking at her) then the interpretation of his silence might have been different because of the different circumstances presented in the scene.

The expectant lady is also engaged in stage business as she addresses Sang in *Blurred Birth* (2011). She is seen washing dishes and serving tea to Sang as she tries to get him to respond to her plea. The duties she is attending to in the house are prescribed by societal expectations as Kenyatta (1961) notes that the entire housework naturally falls within the sphere of women's activities. He explains that in the Agikuyu community the women are essentially the home makers, since without them there is no home in the Gikuyu sense (this cultural norm is shared by many African communities). She is responsible for

looking after her hut and her household utensils, granary, and her garden. Hence, the expectant lady is engaged in stage business that highlights the natural setting of an African home.

The stage business as demonstrated above in *Blurred Birth* (2011) is comparable to the fifth scene of *My Faith* (2014) where Jane walks into Siwa's house and proceeds to the cupboard adjacent to the door and starts putting the content in the bag (groceries) in it. The two (Siwa and Jane) engage in a halfhearted conversation as she arranges the groceries.

In *Blurred Birth* (2011), the expectant lady's attitude towards Sang is civil as she requests for money to go to the clinic, but in *My Faith* (2014), Jane's attitude is confrontational as she feels superior to Siwa. The fact that she has brought the groceries and can be seen arranging them in the cupboard while Siwa looks on communicates the unequal balance of power between the two as they converse. The favourable status she enjoys in the relationship is further communicated when Siwa asks for assistance and her answer is '*tena*', meaning that this is not the first time that Siwa has asked for money from her.

Kenyatta (1961) notes that the father is the supreme ruler of the homestead. He is respected and obeyed by all the members of his family group. He explains that a father's position in the community depends largely on the type of homestead he keeps, and how he manages it. Hence, Jane speaks to Siwa as if she is superior because she has become

the provider for the family, a fact that is confirmed by the stage business she is engaged in - putting groceries in the cupboard.

In *Killer Necklace* (2008) the deception that is fronted by Muthoni is revealed through stage business. At the beginning of the film, Muthoni is seen taking a luxurious bath, applying makeup skillfully and picking a bottle of perfume from a choice of many delicately designed bottles, before going to the market. Her deception is revealed at the end of the film when she is seen attending to her supposed 'parents'. It is through stage business that the viewer gets the impression that Muthoni is from a rich family and at the end conclude that she is a maid and not a child/blood relation to the owners of the home.

Stage business in *Taharuki* (2011) has been used to highlight the recurring theme throughout the film. The film starts with a person tuning a small shortwave radio to various stations and trying to listen keenly on what is being reported in the different stations. The character (Waridi) becomes alerted when she hears a sound coming from the adjoining room. She switches off the radio, puts on a wig, grabs a knife from the table and goes out to the adjoining room to investigate the source of the sound.

The actions displayed in the opening scene of *Taharuki* (2011) depict a state of uncertainty as Waridi is trying to listen to a variety of stations so as to get to know the state of affairs outside her boutique. On hearing a sound from outside the boutique, she grabs a weapon (knife) before going to investigate. The stage business shows the tension in the film and makes the viewer feel the uncertainty that the character is facing.

In the sixth Scene of *Madam Chief* (2011) (see extract in Section 3.2.2; pp. 117 - 119), the audience can draw conclusions about the Chief's attitude through her activities from the moment Mwambia steps into her office. The Chief is seen to be busy sifting through various papers on her desk as Mwambia enters her office and extends his hand in a greeting which is disregarded. He states the service he needs and even answers questions posed by the Chief while she is busy with the papers on her desk. Up to this point one might conclude that she is attending to an important and urgent task while at the same time attending to Mwambia. However, this conclusion is soon shattered when her cell-phone rings and she stops all her activities so that she can trace the whereabouts of the ringing phone.

The actions by the Chief in Mwambia's presence not only create a sense of realism but highlight important character traits and even themes in the film. Her actions reveal her arrogant nature and her lack of respect for the people she is supposed to serve. This is further highlighted by the fact that she drops all that she was doing so that she can earnestly search for a ringing phone in total disregard to the stranger seated across her table and in need of her services (see Fig 3.7 in Section 3.2.2; p. 121). Indeed, the Chief's actions are central to the scene and communicate much more than the dialogue.

However, there are some other bits of stage business that may not have meaning but they work to enhance visual design of a film without aiming to communicate subtext to an audience. An example can be found in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Scene of *Maisha* (2010) in which Christine

and Michelle are talking on phone about the impending visit by Christine. In the intercut scene which also employs a split screen of both of them on phone at some points, Michelle can be seen flipping through a magazine for a while as they chat before she is immersed in the conversation and puts the magazine aside. The act of reading a magazine while conversing on phone does create a sense of realism, but does not give additional information about the character to the audience.

Although in *Maisha* (2010) stage business has been restricted to small bits of actions, *Weakness* (2009) has extensively used this to keep the audience engaged in the single location (and scene). At the start of the scene, Robert heads to the door and opens it for Nicky who comes into the room and heads straight to the fridge. He opens it, takes a disinterested look inside then closes it and heads to sit on one of the adjacent living room chairs. Robert also heads to the fridge after closing the door and gets a bottle of water that he drinks as he heads to the adjacent open plan kitchen while conversing with Nicky. He then leaves the kitchen and goes to sit on a chair next to Nicky's.

The movements by the two characters from the door to the fridge and to the seats (with Robert making a brief detour to the kitchen) have neither technical nor emotional objectives. Indeed, the characters could have moved from the door to their respective seats without any information being lost to the audience. Hence, the movements could be classified as being stage business which enhances the aesthetic qualities of the scene by improving its visual design.

However, Adams (1986) argues that all movements before the camera must be justified. They must tell a story. He posits that no action should be undertaken unless it has a bearing on what the character is saying and feeling. The author notes that a character's actions must represent attitudes and emotions in order for them to be justified.

In *Weakness* (2009), a number of movements can be justified as argued by Adams (1986) but a few can only be seen as stage business to enhance the visual design of the scene. Indeed, Snyder and Drumsta (1981), while referring to pantomime, note that there are a number of techniques or 'actor's helpers' which can be used to enhance the actor's/actress' performance. Snyder's and Drumsta's (1981) input on performance can be related to movement in *Weakness* (2009) as Nicky's and Robert's movements may not carry emotional meaning or are technically necessary but can be seen as being 'actor's helpers' which are used to enhance the performance of the two actors in the film.

*Sunset Limited* (2010), which is filmed in a single room with only two characters, has employed the same technique as *Weakness* (2009) where movement plays a central role in visual design. The characters in *Sunset Limited* (2010) move to different seats at different times in the film to simply avoid the monotony of having the same background or set of shots. Although at times the objective for a movement can be deduced from the conversation the two characters are having, most of the time it is simply to enhance the performance of the actors in order to improve the visual design of the scene.

#### 4.4 Proxemics

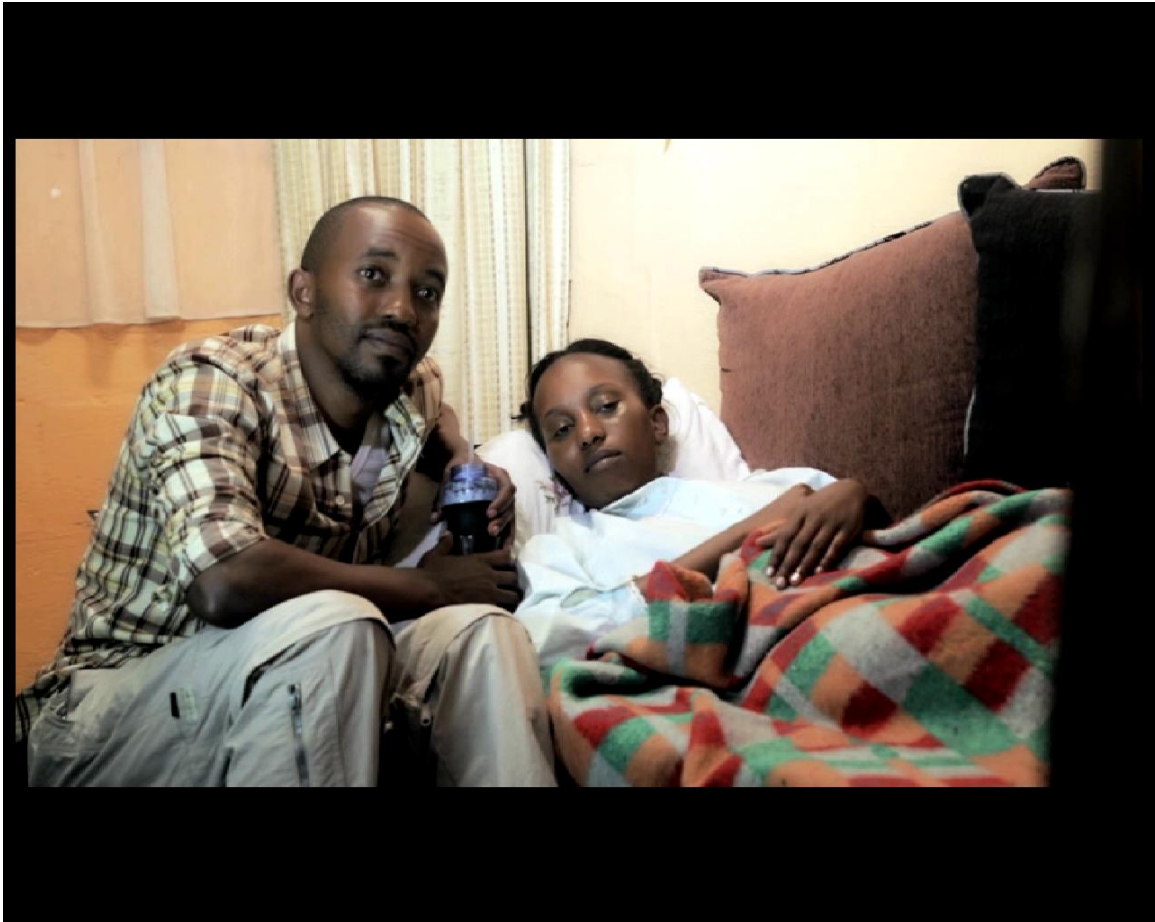
Jain and Choudhary (2011) note that proxemics is a culture sensitive communication symbol since the space between people reserved for categories of acquaintance vary depending on the cultural interpretation of the distance. Indeed, Wamakobe (2015), while referring to the Abasamia people of Western Kenya, observed that, generally, young people stand further away from adults. She explains that the distance does not convey much of a message by itself but it shows that the young are respectful to adults.

Wamakobe's (2015) observation can be seen in *Madam Chief* (2011) where Mwambia is seen sitting on a bed and his mother on a chair as they talk while maintaining some distance between them (see Figure 4.1; p. 188). The conclusion that is drawn from observing the frame (Figure 4.1) between the two characters (Mwambia and the mother) in *Madam Chief* (2011) is noticeably different from that derived from a frame in *My Faith* (2014) where Siwa is beside his wife (see Figure 4.2). All the focus group discussants who watched the frame (Figure 4.2; p. 189) agreed that the two characters are close, with a good number of the participants rightly concluding that the characters were lovers from their proximity.



Mwambia talking to the mother while maintaining a respectable distance in *Madam Chief* (2011).  
Fig. 4.1

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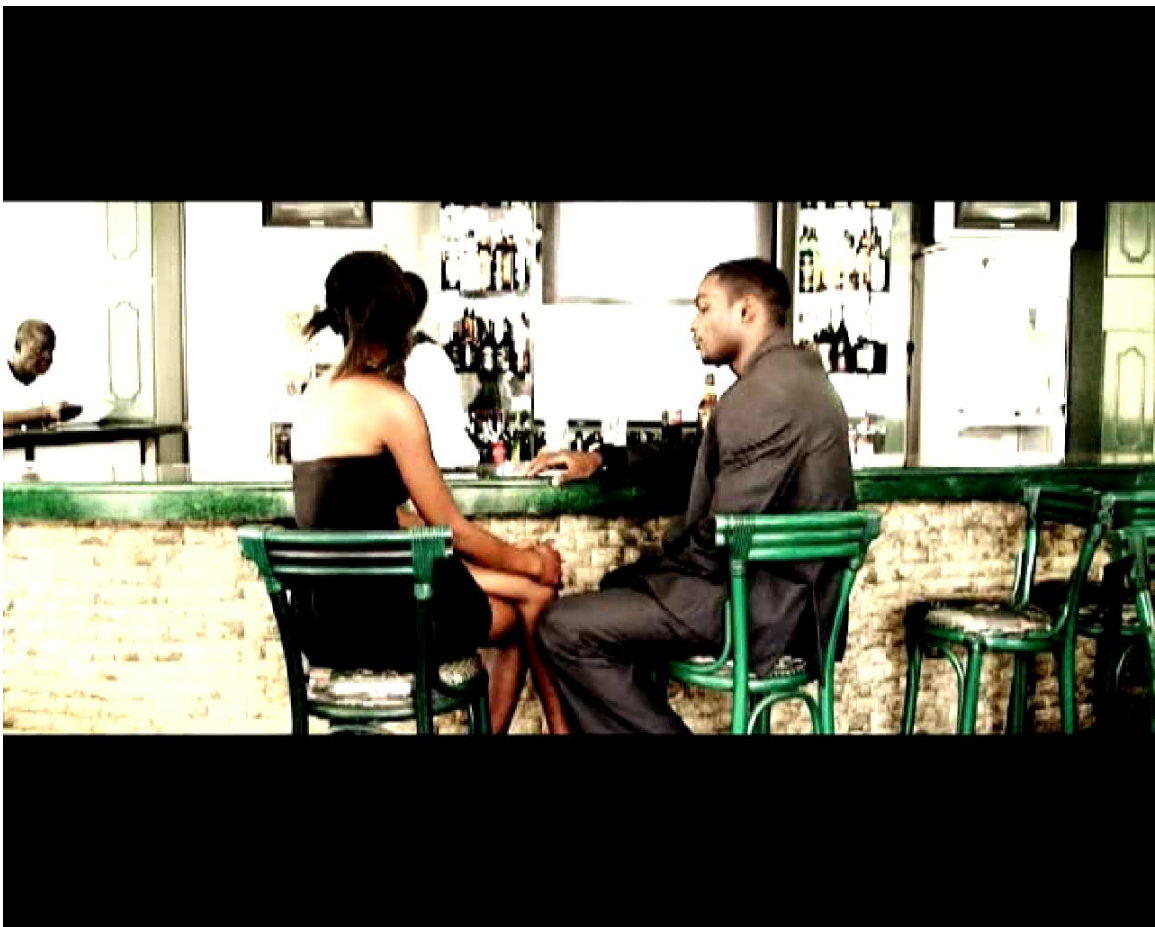


Siwa and the wife in *My Faith* (2014). Focus group discussants who viewed the frame were able to conclude that the two were close. Fig. 4.2.

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Andersen, Gannon and Kalchik (2013) note that through proxemic and haptic behaviour people communicate intimacy, warmth, immediacy, sexuality, nurturance, affection, inclusion, power, and even hostility. The use of proxemics to communicate sexuality can be seen in *Maisha* (2010) in which Tony and Jezebel are seated on high stools next to a bar counter while chatting (see Figure 4.3; p. 190). Focus group discussants noted the proximity and body orientation in Figure 4.3, which led to the conclusion that Tony and Jezebel are in a close relationship.

Although some focus group members felt that Jezebel might not be interested in what Tony is saying because she has her head turned to a different direction from Tony's position, the majority of the discussants held the opinion that the direction of Jezebel's limbs (facing Tony) indicated interest. In Tony's case, all the focus groups agreed that he is interested in Jezebel mainly because of his body orientation (facing Jezebel). Wamakobe (2015), in her study of Abasamia people of Western Kenya, notes that in various functions, romantic partners were found standing close to each other, often touching each other frequently.



Jezebel and Tony chatting at close proximity in a bar in *Maisha* (2010). Fig. 4.3

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At the ending of *Killer Necklace* (2008), Muthoni's employers are seen seating in a comfortable living room with the man reading a newspaper while the wife is taking wine (see Figure 4.4). When the frame (Figure. 4.4) was displayed to the focus groups, they were all able to tell that the characters were husband and wife. The focus group participants were also able to conclude that the two individuals are in a wanting relationship by noting that they were seated in different chairs and that the man had his body oriented away from the lady as he reads a newspaper.

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Muthoni's employers in *Killer Necklace* (2008). Fig. 4.4.

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Remland (2000) notes that our use of personal space, touch and eye contact indicates whether we are connecting with others or rejecting them. Andersen, Gannon and Kalchik (2013) observe that personal space is also employed as a means of communicating about interpersonal feelings and attitudes. In *Maisha* (2010), Jezebel and Christine are framed sitting in the same room but in different chairs and far apart from each other, showing the hostile relationship between the two characters. Focus group discussants were able to conclude that the two characters are antagonistic because of the space between them.

The focus groups viewed a frame from *Taharuki* (2011) which captured Waridi kneeling next to Kevin with her left hand on his back and right hand clasping his hand, and concluded that the two were close (see Figure 4.5; p. 193). Some group members suggested that the two are lovers, but could not support the suggestion as the frame did not demonstrate the fact of a romantic relationship.



Waridi consoling Kevin in *Taharuki* (2011). Fig.4.5.

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Mehrabian (1971) holds that an elected official (like anyone else who works in an office) can increase or decrease immediacy by arrangement of furniture. He can position his desk so that his visitors must sit away from him, or the opposite side of the desk. He notes that this kind of arrangement seems more impersonal than one in which the desk is placed against the wall and both persons can sit facing and fully visible to each other. The formal office setting with a table separating the public servant (the Chief) from members of the public is evident in *Madam Chief* (2011). The Chief sits behind a big desk that separates her from Mwambia. The chair Mwambia is seating on is turned so that if he

wants to look at the Chief he has to turn his body and head to the right (see Fig. 3.7; p. 121).

At the start of the film, the space between Mwambia and the Chief is considerable. The desk also marks the space between them and defines it as formal and official rather than informal and relaxed. At the end of the film, the setting is at the Chief's house with both Mwambia and the Chief sitting on the same chair with her body oriented towards him. The desk that was always present at the office and acted as a tool to decrease immediacy between the two characters is not present. Hence, the single most important barrier (the desk) has been removed, meaning that there is an obvious increase of affinity between them.

Focus group discussants concluded that Figure 4.6 (the Chief and Mwambia; p. 195) depicted two characters in a close relationship. Indeed, in all the eight focus groups held, there were a number of discussants who rightly concluded that the Chief was seducing Mwambia because of the way she was sitting on the sofa (at the edge of the seat and body oriented towards Mwambia) and her smile.



The Chief and Mwambia seating on the same chair at close proximity in *Madam Chief* (2011).  
Fig. 4.6

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In scene 2 of *Blurred Birth* (2011) (see extract in Section 2.3; pp. 74 - 75) the expectant lady increases immediacy by moving from the adjoining kitchen to the living room as she asks for money from Sang. However, even though they are in the same room, they are separated by a small coffee table which stands as an obstacle between them. Sang seated on one side of the table with his newspaper and tea, and the expectant lady on the other side standing with arms akimbo. The use of objects as barriers to decrease immediacy can also be seen in *Malooned* (2007) when Luther and Dee first come into contact in the ladies bathroom. Dee first tries to anxiously open the locked door, then rushes to the

nearest toilet stall and locks the door, which provides a barrier between her and Luther. She however changes her mind and rushes out to the door again while screaming for help. She bangs at the bathrooms main door a few times then turns and use her handbag as a barrier by flinging it around wildly while glaring at Luther who is trying to approach her while reassuring her that he means no harm. A bit later when Luther loses his patience and puts down his bag, Dee rushes to her right and picks up a broom, which she threateningly points at Luther as a warning and at the same time as a barrier.

As the *Blurred Birth* (2011) winds up, Sang, the lady and a neighbour are in a hospital seeking to get her admitted. The formal office setting as in *Madam Chief* (2011) is again seen at play as Sang and the neighbour are seated on one side of a desk and a hospital admissions clerk on the other side, hence, reducing proximity.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

This Chapter looked at the actors’/actress’ use of movements and stage business in the selected drama films. It considered their use of movements and stage business in reference to related review of films that have been acted before under similar conditions. Contributions of the actors/actresses and directors of the target films were also considered in the analysis.

It was noted that all films had some form of movements, whether out of necessity (to perform a task) or due to the characters’ emotions. In *Weakness* (2009), the two main characters (Nicky and Robert) move about the set in a way that conveys meaning to the

audience. Robert has used movement to show irritation at the topic that his brother broaches. Movements have also been used to indicate the turning point of the film with the characters' relations taking a downward spiral after Robert rises from his seat and walks towards the camera direction while contemplating about the information that has been revealed to him by his brother.

Movements in *Killer Necklace* (2008) have been used to reveal unique character traits, with special emphasis given to the conman, who is not only unique in terms of his height but also in behaviour. His eccentric behaviour is revealed by his movements on the set. They also highlight the beginning of the scene (crisis), the middle (climax) and its conclusion. *Madam Chief* (2011) has also used movements to reveal the Chief's character as she gets drunk to the extent that she causes a commotion before staggering out of the pub. Indeed, movements have been used to dramatize the pub scene and show the Chief's bullish character.

*Pulse* (2011), which is set in a small room with a lot of furniture, uses movements out of necessity. The characters have to move about the room so as to create room for others as they make their entrance. However, the strength and weakness of their movements are able to communicate the power relations and mental states of the characters in the film. *Taharuki* (2011) has also employed movements out of technical necessity as the single character who does most of the movement (Waridi) moves about to accomplish various tasks that have to be attended to.

Strong movements have been used in *Maisha* (2010) and in *My Faith* (2014) to show the power relations between the characters in the films. In *Maisha* (2010), Christine shows her antagonistic relationship when she walks past Jezebel who has opened the door to Tony's house. This is also the case in *My Faith* (2014), where Jane dominates the scene through her movements when she walks past Siwa who has to move back as she passes.

Stage business in the target films range from simple acts such as reading a newspaper to complex movements on set. Sang's silence in *Blurred Birth* (2011) is put into context by the act of reading a newspaper and attending to tea rather than looking at the person addressing him. His actions and silence communicate resentment towards the expectant lady.

In *Madam Chief* (2011), the stage business employed by the Chief in Mwambia's presence not only creates a sense of realism but highlights important character traits and themes in the film. Her actions reveal her arrogance and lack of respect for the people she is supposed to serve.

However, in *Maisha* (2010) the bits of actions by Michelle as she talks to Christine on phone do not have meaning and do not advance the theme of the film in any way. The actions are only there to enhance its visual design without aiming to communicate subtext to its audience. *Maisha* (2010) shares this aspect with *Weakness* (2009), where the characters have employed movements in part not because of necessity or communication but simply to give the viewer something more to see than just two individuals conversing

while seated. In *My Faith* (2014), stage business communicates the power relations between Siwa and Jane, as she is seen to be the provider in the household.

Stage business in *Killer Necklace* (2008) is crucial in revealing information that is not given in the dialogue. Indeed, the exact relations between Muthoni and ‘her parents’ can only be deduced through stage business.

Proxemics has been used as a tool in the films to communicate the relationships between different characters. These relations range from lovers in *My Faith* (2014), to enemies in *Maisha* (2009). Indeed, focus group discussants were able to tell that Muthoni’s employers in *Killer Necklace* (2008) were husband and wife in a strained marriage by simply noting how they were sitting and the activities they were engaged in.

In *Madam Chief* (2011), Mwambia’s relationship with the Chief is seen to be gaining closeness as the table that was separating them at the start of the film is absent at the conclusion, and she is angled towards him while talking. In *Blurred Birth* (2011), the expectant lady increases immediacy by walking from the kitchen area where she has been washing utensils to the living room where Sang is seated so that she can confront him more directly about her needs. The next Chapter summarizes the study, gives comprehensive conclusions and recommendations in light of the findings of the research.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

The previous Chapter looked at the actors'/actress' use of movements, stage business and proxemics in the target drama films. This Chapter highlights the main findings of the study and proceeds to make conclusions and recommendations for future studies in screen acting.

This was a qualitative research which examined the given films in depth leading to conclusions arising from the analysis. Textual analysis was employed as the primary means of interpreting data, from where it was collected beginning with the primary texts (the target films) through the observations of acting techniques used. Particular attention was paid to the actors'/actress' voices, postures, eyes, gestures, movements, stage business and facial expressions.

The study also sought the directors', actors' and actress' views and took them into consideration. The directors were believed to be the brains behind the creative endeavours which formulated the selected films. The actors'/actress' views were relevant since there were the physical representations of the characters in the films. It is the actor/actress who communicates the essence of a given film and forms its linchpin. The research used questionnaires to collect the views of the directors, actors and actresses. They contained semi-standardized questions outlining the boundary (topic) to which the interviewee was to restrict him/herself when responding. Actors and actresses were

interviewed with the basic aim of knowing their background in acting and what factors influenced their performances in the selected films. Findings from Focus group discussions were also used to determine likely audience responses to the interpretations of short video clips and frames taken from the sample films. The focus groups were able to show the audiences' understanding of various facial expressions, gestures, postures, movements and proxemics as used in the target films.

## **5.2 Summary of Findings**

The actor's/actress' voice has been used extensively in the target drama films. The techniques employed range from voice-overs, dialogue, silences, pauses and other voice elements which enable the actor/actress to communicate to his/her audience or fellow performers. The voice-over in *Taharuki* (2011) placed the flashback in its context since it gave additional information that the viewer was not privy to. The voice-over indicated the importance of the actor's/actress' voice as it gave information not seen in the visuals but which was crucial in the understanding of the film.

*Killer Necklace* (2008) has used the actor's voice creatively by utilising everyday communication techniques between individuals, which is mundane, and escalates these ordinary techniques to display the actors'/actress' emotions primarily through the use of tempo and pitch. The actors'/actress' use of their voices in the selected scenes in *Killer Necklace* (2008) guides the audience to a more accurate understanding of the precise relationship that they have.

Pauses and silences have been used in *Taharuki* (2011) to enhance suspense in given scenes. They also expand the creative space available to the performers to communicate by giving room for the audience to observe their actions instead of depending on hearing abilities to understand the story. In *Blurred Birth* (2011), the use of silence in the initial scenes when the audience is first being introduced to Sang and the expectant lady communicates the nature of the relationship between the two characters. In *Pulse* (2011), silence represents panic as the main character, Dan, is seen to be in an awkward situation and is perhaps thinking of ways by which to redeem himself. Pauses have been used in *Weakness* (2009) and *My Faith* (2014) to introduce new topics in ongoing conversations.

Hesitation, as a speech element, has been used in *Madam Chief* (2011) to show Mwambia's discomfort in the presence of the Chief because of the hostile reception she gives him when he walks into her office. Emphasis has been used in various scenes of *Killer Necklace* (2008) to dramatize speech (especially Jonah's) and also to show the significance of the topic that is under discussion. In fact, the use of emphasis when talking is one of the characteristics that define Jonah as a distinct character in the film. In *Blurred Birth* (2011), Sang emphasizes his last word (ask) in his speech when talking to the expectant lady to show irritation at the monologue that the expectant lady has been engaged in while addressing him.

The characters in *Maisha's* (2010) could start engage in a confrontation but use a flat tone which lacks accentuated words. The lack of emphasized words diminishes the effectiveness of the scene as the anger that the lead character is supposed to be displaying

is only captured through his facial expression and not through words. In *Pulse* (2011), repetition has been used as a form of emphasis as Trish knocks at the door to the room while calling for Sam to open repetitively. The knocking and calling of Sam's name creates suspense and a sense of urgency.

This study also considered the actor's/actress' use of facial expressions, eyes, gestures and postures in the selected drama films. It was observed that actors/actresses portraying pain in both *Weakness* (2009) and *Taharuki* (2011) expressed it using facial expressions that were similar to those described by LeBrun (1980). The same was observed in the expression of contempt in *Killer Necklace* (2008), *Taharuki* (2011) and Mrs. Mukazi in *My Faith* (2014). Ekman's (1999) conclusion that there were some universal facial expressions was supported by the performance of the actors/actresses in the films.

However, it is not always necessary for an actor/actress to have a facial expression to be able to express him/herself. Sometimes a blank expression is all that he/she may need to be able to communicate creatively to an audience. This can be seen in Jonah's facial expression in the cited scenes in *Killer Necklace* (2008), Kevin's in *Taharuki* (2011), Sang's in *Blurred Birth* (2011), and Mwambia's in *My Faith* (2014).

The actor's/actress' eyes are also an important tool of expression while acting. The direction in which the actor/actress is looking, how many times one blinks (or if they blink at all), how his/her pupils are acting and reacting, all this convey information to the audience. The eyes are a significant mode of expression especially when it comes to

conveying power relations, hostility, disappointment or contempt among individuals in a scene.

Gestures, ranging from simple symbols such as a nod to complex animated antics done by an actor/actress can be used as a means of communication and also as a tool to make a scene more dynamic. It was also noted that gestures conveyed the status of individuals in a scene as it was observed in two cases in *Killer Necklace* (2008), where characters beckon others using their fingers, which is a disrespectful gesture. Although gestures are not universal, a majority of them are shared among cultures and this makes them easily understandable by different societies.

It was observed that postures must be related to the context in which they are used to be able to be comprehended. A simple posture such as a bowed head can have different meanings depending on the context in which it has been used. In *Maisha* (2010) Tony bows his head because of grief, but the man in the first scene of *Madam Chief* (2011) has bowed his head possibly because of shame or cowardice.

Nonetheless, it was observed that audiences are able to accurately tell the mood or state of mind of a character by simply noting the posture that the character had taken. A posture such as a character's head being supported by the hand while resting on the lap was denoted to mean someone who is in deep thought, worried or downcast. More generally, such a posture is associated with negative emotions. This contrasts with 'arms akimbo', which is a sign of defiance or anger.

All the target drama films had some forms of movements, whether out of necessity (to perform a task) or due to the characters' emotions. In *Weakness* (2009), the two main characters (Nicky and Robert) move about the set in a way that conveys meaning to the audience, while in *Killer Necklace* (2008) movements have been used to reveal unique character traits, with a special emphasis being given to the conman, who is not only unique in terms of his height but also in behaviour.

Stage business in the films analysed range from simple acts such as reading a newspaper to complex movements on set. Sang's silence in *Blurred Birth* (2011) is put into context by the act of reading a newspaper and attending to a cup of tea rather than looking at the person addressing him. His actions and silence communicate resentment towards the expectant lady who is washing dishes as she talks to him, which makes the scene more convincing. In *Madam Chief* (2011), the stage business employed by the Chief in Mwambia's presence not only makes the scene more credible but highlights important character traits and themes in the film. Her actions reveal her arrogance and lack of respect for the people she is supposed to serve.

However, in *Maisha* (2010), the bits of actions by Michelle as she talks to Christine on phone do not have meaning and do not advance the theme of the film in any way. But they do enhance its visual design. *Maisha* (2010) shares this aspect with *Weakness* (2009), where the characters have employed movement in part not because of necessity

or communication but simply to give the viewer something more to see than just two individuals conversing while seated.

*My Faith* (2014) uses the act of Jane arranging groceries in Siwa's cupboard as a way of conveying the unequal power relations between them, while in *Killer Necklace* (2008), stage business has been used extensively to give information that has been left out in the dialogue and narration.

Proxemics has been used as a tool to communicate the relationships between characters in the films. For example, the distance between Tony and Jezebel in *Maisha* (2009) led the focus group discussants who viewed the frame of the two seated at a pub counter to deduce that they had some romantic interest towards each other. But in another instance, focus group discussants concluded that Jezebel and Christine seem to be indifferent to each other because of the space between them while they were seated in Tony's living room.

However, it was noted that the discussants used other elements that they saw in the frames to supplement the proxemic characteristics to make conclusions on the relationship between characters. In *Killer Necklace* (2008), the room that the characters occupied, the activities they were engaged in and the body orientation were used to inform the focus groups that the two characters were husband and wife in a strained marriage. In *Taharuki* (2011), the focus groups noted some haptic behaviour, in addition to the space between the two characters to conclude that they were close.

In both *Madam Chief* (2011) and *Blurred Birth* (2011) the characters reduce the distance in some scenes so as to increase immediacy as they attempted to get closer or increase the urgency of the various issues they had to deal with.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

Noticeable patterns of expression were deduced from the selected drama films. The actors/actresses used their voices in specific ways to achieve certain effects. Pauses and silences in speech patterns were to guide the audience to more accurate understanding of the relationships between characters. The said elements not only define these relationships, but they also expand the creative space available for the audience to observe the actions of the actors/actresses instead of depending on their hearing abilities to understand the story.

Silences have been used in *Taharuki* (2011) and *Pulse* (2011) to create suspense, while pauses have been used at various points in the selected films to introduce new topics in ongoing conversations. Hesitations have been used in *Madam Chief* (2011) to show discomfort in the relations between the Chief and Mwambia.

Emphasis as a voice element has been used creatively in *Killer Necklace* (2008) to dramatize speech (especially Jonah's) and also to show the significance of the topic that is under discussion. Indeed, the use of emphasis as a way of speaking defines Jonah as a distinct character in *Killer Necklace* (2008) as it defines his speech and identifies him as

an authoritative character. In *Blurred Birth* (2011) and *My Faith* (2014), emphasis shows irritation when used to utter specific words.

This study shares Ekman's (1999) conclusion that there are some universal facial expressions as demonstrated by the expression of pain in *Taharuki* (2011) and *Weakness* (2009). Contempt was also observed to have the same expression in *Killer Necklace* (2008), *Taharuki* (2011) and *My Faith* (2014). However, it was noted that blank facial expressions were prominent in all the films discussed. Such expressions were able to reveal the respective character's attitude and at times gave room to verbal and nonverbal modes of communication to convey information to the audience.

The eyes were identified as an important means of communicating in film through the direction in which an actor/actress is looking, the frequency of blinking and actions made by the pupils. The eyes were able to convey power relations in *Killer Necklace* (2008), *Taharuki* (2011) and *Madam Chief* (2011). They were also a main factor in conveying hostility in *Maisha* (2010) and *My Faith* (2014).

Gestures were also noted to be prominent in the target films. Nodding was the most common gesture observed in the films and it symbolised acceptance or agreement. It was noted that the holding of one's head using both hands represented disbelief, while holding the head using one hand symbolised confusion or worry.

It was observed that an individual supporting his/her head with his hands and the elbow resting on his/her lap while seated conveyed a mental state of being engaged in deep thoughts. Postures were present in *Maisha* (2010), *Pulse* (2011) and *My Faith* (2014).

'Arms akimbo' as seen in *Weakness* (2009), *Madam Chief* (2011) and *Blurred Birth* (2011) symbolised defiance.

Movements in the selected drama films were made so as to attend to tasks and for dramatic reasons. Stage business as a concept is wide and varied. In most cases, it is meant to add to realism, communicate power relations and enhance aesthetic qualities of a scene. Proxemics was used to reveal relationships and also adjust immediacy of individuals in a particular scene.

The actor's/actress' social environment has a great effect on acting techniques. It was observed that out of the 16 actors, actresses and directors interviewed, only one (1) had in-depth knowledge on acting theories. Although most of the actors and actresses have attended short topical workshops conducted by various directors and academicians on performing, they were not grounded in acting theory and most of the time performed their roles through their understanding and observations of how individuals operated in given society. Hence, this study shares Ayodi's (1997) findings in her research by noting that the actors and actresses, who were interviewed, used Stanislavski's techniques in acting instinctively.

By society informing the performances of the actors/actresses, it means that respective social contexts in which they are located have strong bearings on how they interpret their roles and how they perform them. Although one actor and an actress identified exposure to television as having informed their acting, the two still shared a lot of similar characteristics as the other actors/actresses who identified other social factors as influencing their performances.

Acting techniques have a communicative value and the eight focus groups were able to judge the facial expressions, eye behaviour, gestures, postures, movements and proxemics accurately and in accordance with how the films had intended to have them communicate. Although some frames posed led to extensive debates with a few having inconclusive results, the majority of them and short videos elicited the response that were intended by the films in question.

## **5.4 Recommendations**

### **5.4.1 Recommendations for Policy Makers, Film Makers and other Stakeholders**

1. The acting techniques observed in the drama films studied were high-quality, but there is still need to explore and formulate acting theories that would form the foundation of what African and, specifically, Kenyan acting entails. This means that the government and other stakeholders have to increase the funding for existing institutions that research and teach creative arts so as to enable them to do further research in these creative areas of study in order to formulate strategies by which the techniques can be utilised for career and professional development.

2. Film directors should appreciate the technicalities and difficulties presented by the art of filmmaking, with specific emphasis on acting. Acting is not restricted to the speaking of lines by different characters but the overall communication using verbal and nonverbal cues to communicate a given message. Indeed, the appreciation of a given culture and observation of the social environment plays a big part in the authentic relaying of messages and how these would be understood by the audience. Although foreign films and television serials have played a role in our understanding of what acting entails, the African society that we live in is key in determining the cultural symbols we enact and how they impact on filmmaking as an art of communication.

#### **5.4.2 Recommendations for Further Studies**

1. This study analysed drama film acting in Kenya by considering the motivations behind the techniques. However, it did not deal with Kenyan television serials and straight to television films which tend to employ different acting techniques within very strict time frames and at times, stereotypical characters used. However, the emergence of films in local Kenyan dialects has presented a new arena. Hence, the need to study how the particular cultures and social environments form the basis of the acting and the general making of the films.
2. The study restricted itself to drama films which did not employ specialized aspects of acting such as gymnastics, dance, acrobatics and fencing. Research on

these aspects of acting not only in Kenyan films but also in films from other African, countries will be groundbreaking.

3. Although the study research dealt with acting techniques in selected drama films, the actors'/actress' training was not a priority. Further research in acting and how the training affects performances is crucial in some of the universities and colleges which have curricula for both film and theatre arts. The main objective for any future researcher(s) is to demonstrate how effective such specialized training is for creative/artistic productions.
4. This research did not tackle costuming and appearance of the actor/actress but notes that they are an important component of acting. Future research on acting can incorporate costuming and analyse the meanings that are communicated to the audience by a character's dressing and appearance.
5. This research was restricted to one country (Kenya) with examples for comparative purposes restricted to the target films and minimally alongside other local and international films seem to share some with these. However, there is room for comparative studies in filmmaking/acting among different African countries, taking into consideration the influence of the social environments. Indeed, the techniques in this field might be different in Nigeria as compared to South Africa and elsewhere. These similarities and differences should collaborate to inform how far we, as African nations, have domesticated the techniques of

making films in order to make them unique to our needs and appreciation as distinct societies.

6. This study tackled an actor's/actress' use of voice but did not go into detail on areas that are still being debated on such as intonation and speech fillers. The research has identified that there is room for further research on how actors and actresses use intonation and fillers in African films and how this relates to their societies use of language.

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## APPENDICES

### A1 Film Observation Guide

Sr. No.	STAGE	SCENE NO.	ITEM NOTED	FREQUENCY
1.	1 <sup>st</sup> Screening - looking and feeling.			
2.	1 <sup>st</sup> Re-watching - key scenes noted.			
3.	2 <sup>nd</sup> Re-watching - theories applicable engaged.			
4.	Comparison of Findings with Secondary Data.			

### A2 Interview Guides

#### Interview Guide for Film Directors (4 Directors were interviewed)

1. What is your professional educational background?
2. (a) Had you directed any other feature film before?  
If the answer to 2(a) is yes proceed to 2(b).  
(b) How many films had you directed before the film under consideration?
3. (a) Do you know of any theories that govern acting?  
If the answer to 3(a) is yes proceed to 3(b) and (c).  
(b) Which theory of acting has been the most influential to you as a Director?  
(c) Did you make use of the theories of acting when directing the film under consideration?
4. (a) Did you participate in the casting of actors/actresses?  
If the answer to 4(a) is yes proceed to 4(b).  
(b) What factors did you consider when casting actors/actresses for their given roles in the film?
5. (a) Did you make attempts at guiding your actors/actresses in their performance during the production of the film?  
(b) Did an actor/actress ever approach you for direction on how he/she was supposed to act in any given scene during the production of the film?
6. In your opinion, what determined the nature of your actors'/actress' performance during the making of the film?

#### Interview Guide for Film Actors/Actresses (15 actors and actresses were interviewed)

1. What is your professional educational background?
2. (a) Had you ever attended a professional acting class/seminar/workshop before taking up your acting role in the film under consideration?  
If the answer to 2(a) is yes proceed to 2(b).  
(b) Which acting techniques did the classes/seminar/workshop impart on you?  
(c) Did you use the skills from the classes/seminar/workshop when acting in the film?
3. (a) Had you ever acted in a feature film before?

- If the answer to 3(a) is yes proceed to 3(b).
- (b) How many other feature films had you acted in before?
4. (a) Do you know of any theories that govern acting?  
If the answer to 3(a) is yes proceed to 3(b) and (c).
- (b) Which theories have been most influential to you as an actor/actress?  
(c) Did you use the said theories when acting in the film under consideration?  
If the answer to 2(c) is yes proceed to 2(d).
- (d) In what ways did you use the theory or theories when acting in the film under consideration?
5. Did you ever seek direction on acting techniques from the director during the production of the film under consideration?
6. What influenced you most in the determination of your approach to acting during the production of the film under consideration?

**B1 Interview – Erick Wanyama (Director of *Pulse*)**

1. What is your professional educational background?  
Answer: I studied at the Kenya Institute of Mass Communication. The professional training came after I had directed *Pulse*.
2. (a) Had you directed any other feature film before *Pulse*?  
Answer: No, *Pulse* was the first film I directed. However, I had experience from working with Repacted Kenya which majored in Magnet Theatre. I also had hands on experience at Talent Academy.
3. (a) Do you know of any theories that govern acting?  
Answer: At the time of making *Pulse* I was not aware of any of the theories of acting. However, I was motivated to write something that affected Kenyan youths with drugs being one of the issues.  
(b) Your training at Talent Academy did not introduce you to any theories of acting?  
Answer: No.
4. (a) Did you participate in the casting of actors/actresses?  
Answer: Yes.  
(b) What factors did you consider when casting actors/actresses for their given roles in the film?  
Answer: We considered the previous work done by the actor/actress. I had also worked with the actors/actresses before and knew how to talk and motivate them as they performed. It was easy to tap into the talent of the actors since I knew them. We also considered the character types. They had to be youths and we were also looking for someone who could become a role model.
5. Did you make attempts at guiding your actors/actresses in their performance during the production of *Pulse*?  
Answer: We had rehearsals and the actors/actresses had to go through the script. Most of the performers were doing film acting for the first time. Acting in theatre

is different as it is acting for a big audience instead of acting in front of a camera. In directing I had to imply some things by creating a lot of scenarios that will make him (the actor/actress) perform. Tom (character in the film) was to think about instances he had done mistakes. Once he understood the scenario he was able to pitch his mood in performance. They also had to consider the level of tension. All actors/actresses had to be tense because someone was dead. The main idea was how does an actor react to the situation as the level of tension is maintained. The dynamics can be seen when the lady knocks on the door.

6. In your opinion, what determined the nature of your actors'/actress' performance during the making of *Pulse*?

Answer: Actors act according to how they have been affected by life. They are cast according to natural reactions and upbringing, (pause) what they do in their life. The problem with Kenyan theatre is that it lacks finance so rehearsals are short. The director has to get the right person to act the role and could accept direction. The actor has to be natural as it cuts down on rehearsals. The actor has to be able to relate to the situation.

## **B2 Interview – Judy Kibinge (Director of *Killer Necklace*)**

1. What is your professional educational background?

Answer: I studied design in communication but I have done a lot of advertising having worked for 10 years in the advertising industry.

2. Do you know of any theories that govern acting?

Answer: I have never researched on theories on acting. I believe mentorship is important and I have previously done films with experienced directors, actors/actresses and producers. Every shot in film is a learning experience.

3. (a) Did you participate in the casting of actors/actresses?

Answer: Yes.

(b) What factors did you consider when casting actors/actresses for their given roles in the film?

Answer: We considered whether an actor/actress had acted before or not. We had stars in *Killer Necklace* and also individuals who had never acted before. Through auditions, we looked for people who filled the role and had an idea about the characters. There are characters such as the two main characters who were not experienced in acting. The actress, Noni had not appeared for auditions but was making enquiries at the productions office about a totally different job but got the part because she fit the character. The conman at the tavern was not an actor but I met him while doing something else and thought he fitted the part.

(c) Was it easy to work with non-professional actors/actresses?

Answer: It is how you do it when guiding actors/actresses. Getting them to be in the moment is the most demanding bit. It is important to free the actors/actresses from the lines. You have to give leeway to new ideas at times rewrite to free up the character.

### **B3 Interview – Joan Kabugu (Director of *Madam Chief*)**

1. What is your professional educational background?

Answer: I attended Maisha Film Lab and trained in screenplay writing. I also attended a master class at a film festival that was conducted by Haile Gerima in which the participants were to work together to do a production. In the class it was important to use the support crew to get the film done. The workshop changed my perspective in lighting, the use of shadows and the lighting of dark skin. The cinematographer must understand the story. I have also watched a lot of films.

2. Had you directed any other feature film before *Madam Chief*?

Answer: *Madam Chief* was my first film.

3. Do you know of any theories that govern acting?

Answer: No.

4. (a) Did you participate in the casting of actors/actresses?

Answer: Yes

- (b) What factors did you consider when casting actors/actresses for their given roles in the film?

Answer: When you know the story you are telling, choosing the best actor/actress is important. For the part of the Chief we wanted a strong woman and authoritative. With the requirements for who can fit the part being clear, the experience of the actors/actresses interested was considered and the two most successful candidates were picked with one to play the Chief and the other to play Mwambia's mother. The actors/actresses were required to be cooperative and have good personality. I was referred to the actor who took the role of Mwambia and at that time he had a goatee. On the second audition with him he was not ready to do away with the goatee but later on accepted the role and shaved.

I'm influenced by Richard Linklater, the director of *Boyhood*. The director would sit with the main characters and have them understand the story and create avenues for acting. In *Boyhood*, the director's plan was to film a boy on his development over a few years. This is the path I want to take in my next project. I do not like improvisation, it is cheaper but a script is the best guide. I considered the kind of work the actors had done in the past.

5. In your opinion, what determined the nature of your actors'/actress' performance during the making of the film?

Answer: Passion, research. Acting is about the writing. Separate the personality from acting and taking up the role. Discipline for actors/actresses is very important as the time is being paid for.

### **B4 Interview – Bruce Makau (Director of *My Faith*)**

1. (a) Have you ever taken a professional course in film or acting?

Answer: Ahh, just acting, acting workshop, and I have been acting for theatre, T.V series, like three T.V series.

(b) Which T.V series?

Answer: *Waridi, Saints, Twisted.*

(c) Was this after or before *My Faith*?

Answer: The first two were before and the last one after.

(d) *My Faith* was the first film you directed?

Answer: Yes, it was the first film I directed.

2. (a) What was the essence of the workshop you attended? Did it cover acting theories?

Answer: It was how you look will most likely determine the kind of roles you will get. So if you have a trusting look, you will probably get the teacher, doctor. If you had locks or a bit of raggedy look you would probably get a gangster and drug user, things like that. Imagination and reacting were also covered.

(b) When was the workshop?

Answer: I took it after *My Faith*.

(c) Did the workshop facilitator specify on theories of acting?

Answer: Not really, I don't remember the details of the workshop. They ahh, imagination was one key thing. Playing and interaction, reacting. Acting is reaction to what is there, what you see and even what you don't see.

3. (a) Were you personally involved in the casting of actors and actresses?

Answer: Yes.

(b) How did you conduct the auditions?

Answer: I conducted the auditions. It wasn't much of auditions but more of getting my fellow actors from the theatre who I had worked with before. So, I knew that person can do this role because it is heavy emotionally. That person can carry the emotion as a lead actor. That person, like Alison, can work as a sister to Veronica, who played the lead. So, that sort of thing that the landlady was crazy and I knew Nungo could play that role and would be more easy for her. The same for Psenjen, he is laidback so he played the laidback boyfriend to the crazy landlady. So it was more of who and what they could do and what they have been doing and I chose to work with them. Veronica plays more inside than outside, her performance is more internal than external, compared to Nungo whose performance is more external than internal like Viola Davis kind of performance.

4. (a) When directing *My Faith*, which was the most challenging character that you had to deal with?

Answer: The lady who was paralysed, she had to be paralysed, be there and not do anything, just talk. I knew as an actor it would be challenging, so I had to talk to her first and let her know that her role entailed only using her head. The other one was Nungo, she was a replacement actor to someone else. She came in on that day, so, I felt that I didn't want to play her crazy but play her as somebody who was being pushed to the edge. That she was pushed to that lifestyle that she doesn't want but now she is at a point of that she doesn't care, she is just taking

the day as it comes. That for her was a challenge because she came in that day and I didn't want her to play crazy. For me that was a challenge directing as to how far she should come as a character.

5. In your opinion, what determined the nature of an actors'/actress' performance?

Answer: For Kenya, I would say is experience because we do not have schools, maybe now there are schools, but we haven't had schools, for now the actors we see on T.V. they haven't gone through a training process. So experience that have gotten from theatre or on T.V, and with that experience and doing it, doing it, doing it, and learning and that sort of makes the actor. That makes the actor because the other thing is that you can't be an actor if you don't do it, because you go on set, you get directions, you go for auditions, you get directions. You try, you put yourself out there. You do something you probably hadn't planned to do that day, or something will go very different, so you just have to stay open to that and it enriches you as an actor, it enriches your performance. So, somebody who has had a lot of experience might, and I say, might, be more reliable as an actor. For me I would say experience. Experience in doing, experience in getting your lines, experience in playing the situation, experience in interacting with your fellow actors, experience even off stage or off camera, being sensitive to other people because it is a hard job. I would say discipline has to be there. Again, discipline comes from experience. In this, you got drunk, you get fired. You drink after work, you don't get to set late as you realise that it is costly for the entire production.

#### **B5 Interview – Marion Bosire (Actress in *Pulse*)**

1. What is your professional educational background?

Answer: My professional training did not include acting.

2. Had you ever attended a professional acting class/seminar/workshop before taking up your acting role in *Pulse*?

Answer: No.

3. Had you ever acted in a feature film before *Pulse*?

Answer: *Pulse* was my first film. I had experience from Magnet Theatre

4. Do you know of any theories that govern acting?

Answer: No.

5. Did you ever seek direction on acting techniques from the director during the production of *Pulse*?

Answer: Yes I did talk to the director regarding the reedits to the script and what I was expected to do. During the making of *Pulse* we would always arrive on set to find the writers and director arguing about what is to be changed and how the performance is to be delivered. Later we would be instructed on how to perform.

6. What influenced you most in the determination of your approach to acting during the production of *Pulse*?

Answer; My technique is personal. I was picked to perform because of my personality.

**B6 Interview – Joyce Arigi (Actress in *Madam Chief* and *Blurred Birth*)**

1. What is your professional educational background?

Answer: My training is in Public Relations.

2. (a) Had you ever attended a professional acting class/seminar/workshop before taking up your acting role in either *Madam Chief* or *Blurred Birth*?

Answer: I have done a number of workshops. The most influential one was a two week workshop conducted by the director of *East Enders* a while back on a project he was doing in Africa. That is how my acting career started because they were to do a series for UN and they needed to do the shooting in Kenya. I just went for the audition for fun, apparently they picked me, that is how I started. We met him as actors and crew for the production. Through the workshop I got to know more of acting.

- (b) How was the training conducted?

Answer: It was a while back, but what I learnt that while back is what people are learning. It was conducted in Moforce (Mohammed Amin Foundation). The students were the ones who were going to be directing us and then we were acting, so, it was a workshop with all the directors, the crew and the production team, So we got to know each other and we were taught more on what acting for film entails.

3. (a) Did they instruct you on the theories of acting?

Answer: Yes they did.

- (b) Do you remember any, or one that they emphasised on?

Answer: Ahmm, like being in character, like taking up a role and making it your own. Getting out of a role after you perfect the role and its shot, and generally how to relate yourself with the character you were given or the person you are acting with and some facial expressions and all that.

- (c) Did you use the skills from the classes/seminar/workshop when acting in the film?

Answer: Yes I did.

4. (a) Had you ever acted in a feature film before *Madam Chief* and *Blurred Birth*?

Answer: I have done a lot of stage plays. I started in school. I acted with Heart Strings, and then later on in Mombasa.

- (b) Before *Madam Chief* and *Blurred Birth*, you had already done a lot of television and film.

Answer: A lot. I have been in *Papa Shirandula*, *Wingu la Moto*, *Heart and Soul*, *Catching the Mirage 2*.

5. After the workshop, did you notice a difference between stage acting and screen acting?  
 Answer: A lot of difference, because with stage we have to project, we have to exaggerate our expression. But on screen you need a mild expression, and then your voice. It is all in internalizing and bringing out the role. At the same time, on stage we are blocked to walk, you use everything to just show what you are feeling, but on screen, very small details are blown out to show your character.
6. (a) Did you ever seek direction on acting techniques from the director during the production of *Madam Chief* and *Blurred Birth*?  
 Answer: The director was a very nice person. When she contacted me for the role, I just went because it was a recommendation, most of the time it is a recommendation, so I went did the read-through and audition and she told me she liked it. Before I take up a role I always ask somebody, like the director or the writer what did the person want to bring out. So I went and research, coming on set now I find out what I have researched. If it is too much she tells me no go back a bit, if it is too little get a bit. So she helped me a lot to bring out what I wanted.
- (b) How do you usually do your research on a role?  
 Answer: Like in *Madam Chief* I was told that there is a lady Chief, she loves power but she is lonely and all that. First I start by checking how Chiefs behave and then I just pick on one person, then I study how this person behaves.
- (c) So you spend time with the person or how do you do it?  
 Answer: Not necessarily, because you can't just go to somebody and study him. But in your mind you have to have somebody, like most times you can take even somebody you know. For *Madam Chief*, most of the things were from my elder sister, how she is tough.
- (d) She is in administration?  
 Answer: No she is not, but she has worked there before. I also have an aunt, so I pick a bit from all these people and combine them and bring them in one, because you can't just go to somebody and say I want to study what you do.
7. When preparing for your role in *Madam Chief* and *Blurred Birth*, what were the determinants or motivation behind your performance?  
 Answer: My motivation after everything, I tend to want to know who is the target audience, and then what message does the director want to convey to the viewer. Most of the time I tend to want to know what the director wants the viewer to get from a role. So like *Madam Chief* it was to show how, Madam Chief is really not a bad person per say, but she has a lot and she has brought a lot of bitterness in her because apparently there is a higher person whom she has a thing for and at the same time controlling. So I had to really try as much to let the audience know what makes the person. So most of the time the determining factor to me is the audience, because I have to deliver something that when they watch they will understand and I will make the producer, director and the writer happy.
8. There was that one scene where you were in the pub and your role required that you appear to be drunk. So, did you actually take a bit of alcohol to prepare?

Answer: No, I don't drink, but it is studying people and practice. You use your mirror to practice and then when you go on set and try and then the director likes it you are also happy.

9. How was relationship like with the director of *Blurred Birth*?

Answer: *Blurred Birth* was more challenging because I was to act a doctor, a midwife kinda thing, coz the lady died when I was trying to convince the lady push, be strong, push push push. It was a tough role coz I have not and I have never done such an emotional role. But, with the director, he was a friend and then he just called me and told me I feel you can help me bring out this role more, but at first I refused because I said which role a doctor and I said know. Then he said you can do it. But you know, sometimes when somebody has faith in you you go to an extent of now trying to find that person.

### **B7 Interview – Sam Kihiu (Actor in *Killer Necklace*)**

1. (a) Had you ever attended a professional acting class/seminar/workshop before taking up your acting role in *Killer Necklace*?

Answer: I have attended many workshops and seminars on acting and even conducted some myself. In 2014 I had (conducted) monthly workshops to youth interested in stage and film acting at a minimal fee. It is not money that influences me to do such but passion.

- (b) Can you identify some of the workshops that had a lasting impact on you as an actor?

Answer: The most significant (pauses), were conducted by John Okumu and I've attended some international trainings.

- (c) Which acting techniques did the classes/seminar/workshop impart on you?

Answer: Some techniques influenced my skills but I want to come up with my own way of acting. There are many styles of acting and not all of them work with everyone.

2. (a) Had you ever acted in a feature film before *Killer Necklace*?

Answer: Yes.

- (b) How many other feature films had you acted in before *Killer Necklace*?

Answer: I have acted in over 300 stage acts and over 200 films. It is hard to say how many I had done before *Killer Necklace*.

3. Did you ever seek direction on acting techniques from the director during the production of *Killer Necklace*?

Answer: I understood the role. It needed a witty person and it was comfortable for me to perform.

4. What influenced you most in the determination of your approach to acting during the production of *Killer Necklace*?

Answer: I research on the character by observing people in different situations. In the case of *Killer Necklace*, I had played similar roles before so I knew how to go about my performance.

## **B8 Interview – Elsaphan Njora (Actor in *Madam Chief*)**

1. What is your professional educational background?

Answer: Yes I do have education in acting and film. I've done a couple of workshops I can't really count all of them but notably by Dr Julisa Rowe who has a PhD in drama at Daystar, but a lot of the things that I know I've learnt on the job. Acting has a lot to do with apprenticeship and many times a director is the one who is imparting these pieces of knowledge because they can see you. They have a vision and you are like clear on that and then he is using his fingers or she's using her fingers to kind of direct you and as she or he is doing that you are starting to learn how to access certain emotions, create certain moods or scenarios with your body and the props. But in terms of formal education I've gone to university I've a double major in sociology and communication which now helps me to understand society hence understand myself.

2. (a) Did you start your acting from theatre?

Answer: Theatre in 2006. I mean we were doing skits in church but 2006 is when I did my first play and also I started a spoken word event called Eve of Poetry but now it's called EOP Nation, it was a monthly event, so every month I'll be performing on that stage. Spoken word is like just a monologue so with time I started owning that performance.

- (b) Was the play performed at National Theatre?

Answer: No, in church. It was performed in church. It was at St. Andrews then I did at Nairobi Baptist and then I did my first commercial play with Sterling Quality. It was run by the Oyier's, the likes of Michael Oyier. So, I did my first musical ever. It wasn't great but the experience was good. I did the Mavuno plays, and all this time I'm still doing spoken word. From there is when I was cast to work at *Briefcase Inc*. I remember it was an Easter play, George and I had a scene together and the writers and creator of *Briefcase Inc* were like those two work. That is how we got the roles. So, my first series I started as a lead.

3. When it comes to *Madam Chief*, you had already done a few television series and films?

Answer: Yes, I had already done a few.

4. Did you tackle acting theories in the workshops you have attended?

Answer: Yes we did. Theories, ahh, stage positions. We were learning about theatre in one of the classes, the names like backstage, front stage, all those things, over acting, under acting. Getting into character, defining your character, we were even taken through the process of writing. So, we were given all those theories. Not all of them, but some of them because it was just a workshop for maybe like a week or two weeks. It was just touched on but not in-depth.

5. Did the director in *Madam Chief* offer you guidance or outlined how she expected you to perform?

Answer: I feel like there are different kinds of directors and yes I was given guidance but just as there are different types of directors, there are different types of actors. So, I like a director who can pinpoint things, that can direct me to go deeper. Some of us if you don't challenge us we don't really feel like we have acted, we feel like well it was just a walk in the park. So, for me I prefer a director who challenges me, challenges how I think about the character. Not even necessarily about how I play the character because if you think it, then it shows on your face. Like all the thoughts that are going through your face are the ones that are informing your facial expression, so it has to go deeper. So, I like those directors who challenge what I am thinking. I can't really remember my process with *Madam Chief*, but I know I didn't enjoy it because at that time there was lack of indiscipline on the set. The director has the final say, so when other people who are not directors are giving you instructions as the actor you become frustrated. All you need to hear is from the director. So, for that I didn't enjoy the experience and I felt that they hindered her from communicating and creating that rapport with the actor.

6. How do you usually prepare for your role?

Answer: You just absorb everything that you can. Whatever it is that you can get about the role, you take everything that you can. It's a patience thing, it's a work of art. Sketches first, you read the lines, you think about what they are trying to say, what they are not saying. Because of how I have been preparing for poetry, where I read the lines over and over again and every time you read them especially if you are keen, there is always something that is going to pop up, like ohh this line means this person is insecure. The more you do that, the more you start to pick those nuances that would help you to create the character.

7. What influences you in your acting?

Answer: Everything. You have to pick everything, to be a magnet, and then when you have everything you have to siphon out what you don't need especially for the character or even for you as a person because we are playing other characters and yes it would affect us as human beings. So, you have to be very careful with what you take in or what you retain. Amm, I am influenced by the need to have a good performance. I am influenced by everything that I have been taught so far. Influenced by how I felt every time I saw a good performance and I want people to have the same feeling that I had like when I was watching Russell Crowe in *Gladiator*. I want that or something more vivid. Such performances that capture you completely, that is what I want people to experience whenever they see me perform. And also the fear of not performing. The fear is a big thing, you can never let it go. That fear is a good thing, you have to keep it in check but it is a good thing.

**B9 Interview – Abubakar Mwendwa (Actor in *Killer Necklace*)**

1. (a) How did you start acting?

Answer: Ok, basically, I started acting way back in primary, high school as most people do. In fact I remember my literature teacher back in high school, I wanted to pursue serious acting and she told me, ahh, Abu there is no money, there is nothing, there is no. I mean acting, probably you can be doing it as a part time job but not a full time job, mainly because at that time the industry was like totally dead because her husband was in the theatre and she was a teacher, so she knew the hustle and bustle that most of the people had to go through. So, that is why she was very discouraging. Well encouraging yes, but also discouraging by telling you this are the facts that there is no life there. She said you can do something else, but saying that you are acting, well basically because I was interested in theatre. After I cleared school at Moi Forces Academy, she gave me a contact and well after high school I managed to get the person that she had given me the contact to, but we got to hook up like 5, 6 years down the line after I had cleared school. I think that there is a lot in life. Apart from that, I continued in college and there was Nairobi Theatre School at that time, which was basically not a school, it was sponsored by Alliance. Then I started acting in theatre with the like of Miujiza Players, Phoenix, Mbalamwezi Players, Heartstrings. That is where we started theatre, well theatre slash acting and from there on that has been my life until now. We still hope to go far because things are really changing for the better.

(b) So you did not study acting in college?

Answer: No, not really.

2. (a) When working for the theatre groups, did you attend workshops and seminars on acting?

Answer: Yes, I mean there are workshops, seminars and basically you find most actors, I mean that is where guys get to learn about serious acting. Well through the workshops and the seminars, because acting is more practical, there is no way you will be told now Ok fine this is the scene, write this notes, this is what you are going to do. It is basically what you feel, its practical, that is why it is performing arts. You have to perform it, so it is more practical and as time goes by, you get to feel more, you get to the grip of the strings of the skill.

(b) In the seminars and workshops, can you remember one that was the most influential in your career?

Answer: There was a production, I mean it was a production but we used to do workshops on it, on the production, and it was a long term project because we went for like a year. It was called *Winds of Change*, which was, ahh, we used to perform it at the Carnivore. It was the story of Kenya, Ok, the characters were Kenya post-independence and things to do with the slave trade and such, coming to independence, post-independence. And the lady was called Daniel Hartford and her approach. I like her approach and it has really taught me stuff. It was a sharpening point in my life. That is one I can remember, the other one was at Phoenix, Phoenix players because there we used to have short term courses, acting, stage, I mean as an actor I did acting in short films by the late James Folklands and there was George Mungai. At least we were able to know acting skills, stage management, lighting, set lighting and stuff. Ok, the other one what can I remember

3. (a) In the seminars, did you ever learn acting theories?

Answer: True. No, but Ok, are there any acting theories?

(b) Most of the ones you will find are from places like Russia or Germany by people like Stanislavski, Grotowsky, Brecht and such.

Answer: Ok, like in Phoenix, you find more concentration is on Brecht kind of thing, but I wouldn't say that is the Brecht theory. Ahh (pause), I don't know, ahh. In a way they are pickable, but you will find in a way ahh. I will say most people who have been acting in theatre, when you see their delivery on let's say film, I mean they have got, there is something different about them as actors. I mean somebody who has just, I mean who has never been on theatre. So, it is actually true in a way that if somebody has been, Ok, they work from the theories in the sense of, most of the time in the sense of theatre, which brings life to them. Ahh, Ok, how do I put this. Because there is a sense of theatre in the sense that, I mean, there is no second take, it is there and then. The audience are right there and it is that view that keeps you on your toes and you know you have got to do it right the first time. That first time you have got to do it right. There is no time to dilly dally that there is a second take. That no, they'll say cut. That thing, do it bam if you can deliver your first time.

4. Had you done other films before *Killer Necklace*?

Answer: I had done several other films. I had done *From a Whisper*, a full feature film. There was *Backlash*. T.V series at that time there was *Makutano Junction*.

5. Did the director of *Killer Necklace* contribute to your skill in acting? Did she advice you on how to do certain scenes or develop your emotions for your role?

Answer: First of all, what I would say is that the actor has to give the director something to work on. But for *Killer Necklace* we, I mean at some point we had to, the director and the actor had to work hand in hand. If something doesn't work for the actor, the director can never force you to deliver it. But always, the director has to give the actor something to work on. So it is basically up to the actors to go do their homework, understand the role, which, Ok, understanding the role in the sense that the director has to give them a brief, basically what he or she expects or is visualizing about this character, and then now the actor can build on that and you know, basically just run with it.

6. (a) Did *Killer Necklace* contain a challenging scene that you had to consult the director on how to go about acting it?

Answer: Challenging, yes, ahh (long pause). As an actor every scene is challenging in itself, always. Ok, that is my opinion, I never say that this is an easy scene, never. Because you find sometimes, the day that you say this is an easy scene, we will be done here in like what, half an hour, man you will find yourself there for two hours. Nothing is moving. So there were scenes which were challenging, especially, there is a scene which I am in a room with some ladies getting high and stuff. I mean it is crazy because, I mean personally because I have never experienced or done stuff like that in my real life but then I have got to

do it like man, this is the order of the day, this is how I live. So, it was a big challenge but well, thank god we delivered, yes.

(b) So, how did you prepare for that scene?

Answer: What I did, Ok, I have some friends, a few friends who visit such places and stuff and yeah, I mean I went there and sat, looked at them, walked in town. Ahh, you know they meet, ahh, you know clubs, walked around, you know the dirty streets, just watching, looking, taking it all in and picking stuff that, ohh that is how they behave, that is how the ladies behave, that is what they do, this is how guys do things. Basically just feeling it.

7. What do you think determines how you perform in a film or stage play? Where do you get your inspiration from?

Answer: I don't know, I have my own technique. Whenever I have to do something new, basically, I sit alone and try to crack this nut, prepare for it and see how am I going to play it right. How am I going to play it like it's never been played before. Basically it's research and looking at some, Ok, I mean it's been done before, how are we going to do it differently. Because you see like, for instance in *Killer Necklace* I am a thug, I mean there are so many movies which have thugs or we can call them the masters, the ghetto masters, you know. How do you play it differently, what has not been seen. They have seen everything, what hasn't the audience seen. Basically it is taking time to analyze, this is the character, this is the scene, this has been done every day but how is it going to be different, how do we do it differently.

### **B10 Interview – Steve Mwangi (Actor in *Killer Necklace*)**

1. (a) What is your professional education background?

Answer: I've attended college twice and dropped out, first I studied IT, I dropped before I even finished the Diploma. Basically I would say I cleared form four successfully after a long struggle but I have never been able to finish any professional course. What I know I taught myself or I learnt online.

(b) Have you ever attended seminars, workshops and such in regards to acting?

Answer: Yes, I have done a lot of those. A lot of them online like researching information and reading and stuff like watching videos. But I have attended two significant ones like I can mention, one conducted by a very prominent actor called Mini Wachera. It was an amazing experience attending her class. Then I also attended another one by Anil Sharma who is another fantastic guy from Canada but is in the country a lot of times doing workshops and projects.

(c) You did the workshops after *Killer Necklace* or before?

Answer: After. Before that I had not done a lot of acting training per say. I had been trained to like watch and emulate, like to copy what people were doing on T.V but never really attended a workshop.

(d) Do you remember any acting technique or theory that the workshops specified on?

Answer: Yes, ahh, Mini's class was about becoming the character. Neil's class was about character development for acting, like, how you curve out your

brand. Mini's class about becoming the character like things to do when preparing for a scene, things to do when breaking down the script. The methods of acting, they just touched on the various methods of acting but for the most part, I think what I got from Mini's class was how to become the character, how to become that person in the script.

(e) Did you find the workshops useful?

Answer: Yes it was useful. Some people think acting is just go and pretend to be someone else. No, there is a lot that is going into it. You are actually operating another individual with your emotions, with your actions, gestures and everything. Ahhm, Mini's class helped me to be confident, to carry out that operation. Anil's class helped me to be able to understand myself and what I am doing. Understand the business and how I need to come across, how my brand needs to look like.

2. (a) Before *Killer Necklace*, had you acted in any other film or television series?

Answer: No, that was the very first time. It was a very interesting experience.

(b) What about acting on stage?

Answer: Um um, however, before *Killer Necklace* and before I even went to Nairobi in 2004 I had done a lot of street comedy here in Murang'a, in the market places, town centre, doing flash mobs for activations, for like PSI, I think they have now changed their name. Activations for Supernet. We used to use theatre to kind of entertain people and bring them to a gathering then some message will be shared. I have done for Supernet, for malaria, for HIV and Aids. Through it I learnt puppetry during that time. We learnt how to make puppets and operate them.

(c) How did you learn how to stage street performances and flash mobs?

Answer: I had started way earlier, from as far back as I can remember I was always very dramatic and I used to love T.V and movies. I loved movies as a little kid and me and my friends sometimes would reenact chasing each other in the woods and stuff, playing commando and stuff. Ahh, so, it is something I imagined in my head for a very long time and of course at school we had an opportunity to play Christian skits for Christmas, Easter and other holidays. Even in school I participated in music festivals but never really like followed in a formal way, like going for workshops like a little kid. My parents didn't, ahh, I was a very mischievous kid. I was always in trouble and things like that. So, acting appeared even as more fun. So, I did it either at school or at church but never really as an initiative from home while joining a local group. So, when I finished high school I told my friends, you know what, I am going to be a movie star, I want to go out and make movies. So when I came to Murang'a I joined an acting group, it was like 6 kilometer away from home. I would walk there every day to participate in meetings and rehearsals, get roles, get tried out for different roles and we would get hired to do entertainment during public ceremonies, occasions and stuff like that. So, its combination of a little bit of exposure and also an inbuilt capacity to have that interest. Although now, when for instance people like PSI and I also worked

for Afya Plus, funded by US Aide, they would take us workshops, for instance if they wanted to do HIV or they wanted to do malaria they would take us for a workshop so that we can learn the material, the subject, and then get some assistance in terms of how to craft performances to be able to deliver that message. It took a bit of preparation.

3. In the workshops, did you tackle any acting theory?

Answer: Yeah, I remember that. I remember, I can't remember how many, but I remember Mini Wachera actually tackling that. Ahhm, but I felt like I didn't need. The reason why it never stuck with me is because I would have stuck with one and say this is my theory, this is my approach. I think everybody has a different way of looking at it. Ahhm, I appreciated theories but I was like as long as you just need to understand the story, those are very practical like I want to follow a theory that doesn't seem necessary, it's not religious. You don't have to follow it religiously. It is not law, but it's just a guide, but we can delve into that because it is something that has helped and it is important, though it has never been something that I have been keen on.

4. In the acting in *Killer Necklace*, did you ever seek direction from the director in a scene that you found challenging?

Answer: Yes. A lot of times. Let me tell you something interesting about *Killer Necklace*. When I got that role, I played a character called Boo. That is not what I wanted. That is not what I was going for, because when I saw the poster at the Kenya National Theatre and I read the character bible, I figured Boo must be a very competitive character, there must be a lot of people wanting that and because he was the main character, definitely they are going to give it to a star. I wasn't very keen on Boo, I wanted to play the hawkler guy, scout, his name was scout. So, when I went for the auditions Judy told me have you tried Boo, I was like ohh my god but no. She said go tell Derrick to give you the script for Boo and I give it shot. Ahhm, so that's the background and then she was like that's amazing, come tomorrow for the shot list, and then I went and they were like you know what it's like they had gotten almost everybody else apart from Boo. So they said let's give it to this kid, and I was new, it was like the first time. So, that is the background story. Inside, now when I got into the movie, ahh, one of the things that stood out for me is the kissing scene in the movie, and so, before I even talked to Judy, I talked to my then girlfriend, and I told her hey I just got into a movie and there is a kissing scene, ahh, you know I hope you don't have a problem, she had a problem with it. But now coming into the movie if there were certain reactions or certain scenes that you don't know how to come across, you know, like you need to understand from Judy what is Boo thinking here, what is his motivation here. That is some of the places that I found myself talking to Judy, like is he coming from a strong point here or is it from a point weakness. Is it a point of desperation or is it an upper hand, so that I can be able to fully bring out what is required of the character. But Judy is a very nice person, she

made me feel confident in the filming, even though it was my first time, and she knew that but she chose to give me a chance and that was really cool.

### **B11 Interview – Alison Nyawira (Actress in *My Faith*)**

1. (a) Had you ever attended a professional acting class/seminar/workshop before taking up your acting role in *My Faith*?

Answer: No, but does a master class count? I have done one in my acting years. I enrolled to do a certificate course offered by Nairobi Performing Arts Studio. I plan on doing that from May (2017) till next year (2018).

- (b) When was the master class conducted?

Answer: Last year (2016), by a Bollywood/Hollywood actor called Anupam Kher. He is Indian, but he has done both sectors. He has done both Indian and American films. So! He was here for a week and he gave us a few tips.

- (c) Which acting techniques did he emphasize on?

Answer: He emphasized on the need to be as real as possible. Just don't think that acting is this amazing thing that has these complicated techniques, it's just being you. He used the example of a child. He made us do a task where he told us I want you to imagine you are in a class, to come in, it was raining outside, to come in and realize you had left your pen. That master class had a shosho (old lady) who was 76 and children as young as 8. So we were all asked to do the sequence of actions. He kept saying, no, no, no. All of us adults failed. Then he asked a child to do it, and she came in, you know it's raining, she took off her jacket, like imaginary things. She took off her bag, then she opened it, removed some books, like just what we do when we go to a class. He said this is how it is done, you should think like a child, don't think like you were in an astronomical science class. It's just what you do.

2. (a) Had you ever acted in a feature film before *My Faith*?

Answer: *My Faith* was the first short film. So, I was just using what I had learnt on stage. What I had been taught at Phoenix, just what I had learnt on the job.

- (b) When did you start acting?

Answer: 2011 I did my first musical, *Pirates of Penzance*. We did it as *Pirates of Nairobi Dam*. I did *A Raisin in the Sun*, and *12 Angry Men*, but we called it the *Jury*. And I have done the *Lion King*, but it was called *Simba*, here at Oshwal Centre. And then I did *The Jungle Book* musical, that was last year. And then in 2012 there was a Europe tour we did called *Out of Africa*, adapted from *Lion King*, *Jungle Book* musical that was adapted from *Out of Africa-Magical Safari through Kenya*. It was just telling the Kenyan Story to the people out there on our cultures and later got to tour Europe.

- (c) Have you acted in other movies after *My Faith*?

Answer: I have done 1 last year called *Muzi ya Manzi*, which in Luhya means the one who fetches water. At least in this one I was the main female character called Gathoroko.

3. In your master class or even in your experience, have you come across any theories that govern acting?

Answer: Film theories, no. Acting theories, maybe just the basic skills that are required on stage. Ahh, facial expressions, stage blocking, voice projection, characterization.

4. How was your experience in *My Faith* as an actress?

Answer: It was quite nice because I was working with friends, actors I have worked with before, so it wasn't an awkward space. Ahhm, I ask a lot of questions so that makes it a bit easier, because I seek to understand what the director, the playwright had in mind and then I do my best to deliver the scene. So, I didn't face any challenges. Okay, I'm easily a mean person like you saw. So, coming back to this other soft side I struggle. I get a lot of those roles. The angry woman, authoritative, policing people around. So flipping to the other side is not easy, I really have to gather myself.

5. You did not have to seek direction when acting in *My Faith*?

Answer: Yes, I did.

6. What influenced you most in the determination of your approach to acting during the production of *My Faith*?

Answer: For me, I can say the shows I used to watch while I was young. They are the foundation of what acting is supposed to be. I used to watch a lot of comedies and real life dramas and I think it really shaped me. The likes of *Fresh Prince*, all those shows that started when KTN started. Ahh, those really shaped me. Ahhm, and also I think the personality of an actor I think carries the foundation of who you can be. It doesn't limit you but it has to count in some way.

7. When did you know you wanted to become an actress?

Answer; I didn't know. I love singing. Singing is my first love. So, we had gone for Karaoke with my husband, then we met a lady who is a singer and an actress, and they grew up together. Their estate is just an estate of actors and singers. So, I sang a song and she was like, wow I really like your voice, give me your number. So, I gave it to her, and she contacted me a few days later and she asked me, are you free for the next two months. So, I was like ahh, ohh yes I am. Come I have a role for you at Phoenix. I had never ever stepped on a stage before and it was a lead female role in *Pirates of Nairobi Dam* and I was. That is how it started, I had not planned anything it just yea, the ball just started rolling.

### **B12 Interview – Maqbul Mohammed (Actor in *Weakness*)**

1. When did you start acting?

Answer: I started in class 8. The arts and crafts teacher put together a play for parents day and I was given a role in the comedy. I started acting for T.V in 2003. Before T.V I acted for two years for Phoenix Players. The show was about young girls and how they are influenced by the world, it was titled *Reflections*.

2. (a) Had you ever attended a professional acting class/seminar/workshop before taking up your acting role in *Weakness*?  
 Answer: I have attended a few workshops, but I have mostly learnt acting from watching people and television. However, I have always tried to attend workshops whenever possible.
- (b) Which acting techniques did the classes/seminar/workshop impart on you?  
 Answer: I attended Mini Wachera's workshop and she stressed on the need to be honest as a character and a person as you cannot separate the two.
3. (a) Do you know of any theories that govern acting?  
 Answer: Most workshops did not cover acting theories. Most actors are on a skill and learning basis and not theory. Those who have gone abroad have learned theories, but acting is when you are in front of an audience. You cannot act for T.V if you have not tried theatre. Theatre enables you to embody the character. People are watching and expect you to tell the story there and then. In theatre we do not have acting schools as such. Acting feeds of the audience and the applause, but if you watch a lot of yourself you will think there is no need for improvement.
4. Did you ever seek direction on acting techniques from the director during the production of *Weakness*?  
 Answer: *Weakness* was one of the best productions I was involved in. The cast and the crew were very experienced. As an actor you go with what you have. I considered myself a student for the week in which they prepared the production.
5. What influenced you most in the determination of your approach to acting during the production of *Weakness*?  
 Answer: People influence me in acting as everyone has a story. I always try to make friends and interact with people.

**B13 Interview – Melvin Alusa (Actor in *Weakness*)**

1. What is your professional educational background?  
 Answer: I have no professional education in film. I have done stage plays and started with set books and musicals
2. (a) Had you ever acted in a feature film before *Weakness*?  
 Answer: Yes, I had done a good number of films
- (b) How many other feature films had you acted in before?  
 Answer: I cannot recall but I know of *Benta*, which was my first film. Followed by *Formula X*.
3. (a) Had you ever attended a professional acting class/seminar/workshop before taking up your acting role in *Weakness*?  
 Answer: I have done performance training workshops and also watched videos on youtube on acting. I have also been talking to directors and other actors on acting.

4. (a) Do you know of any theories that govern acting?  
Answer: We covered a few theories during a training I attended but only scratched the surface  
(b) Can you recall any of the theories covered?  
Answer: Method and Character acting.
5. Did you ever seek direction on acting techniques from the director during the production of *Weakness*?  
Answer: The director was a friend and as an actor and director we had to have a good rapport.
6. What influenced you most in the determination of your approach to acting during the production of *Weakness*?  
Answer: I do not have a technique but vary depending on the project. I prepare for my role by looking at the character bible then I go through the script once. After I usually hold a meeting with the director to discuss the role I have been given. I then go through the script again while saying out the lines loud. When rehearsing I make it a point to listen to other characters even in scenes I am not in. I then develop mannerisms, since this are not given to you but developed. The less you act the better. Doing less is the hardest part of acting.

**B14 Interview – Joy Karambu (Actress in *Madam Chief*)**

1. What is your professional educational background?  
Answer: I have a Diploma in Journalism from the Kenya Institute of Mass Communication. I have not done any theatre or film training. I started acting as a film actor after college but now I'm also venturing into theatre.
2. Had you ever attended a professional acting class/seminar/workshop before taking up your acting role in *Madam Chief*?  
Answer: No.
3. Had you ever acted in a feature film before *Madam Chief*?  
Answer: I had done 1 film and a few T.V series.
4. Do you know of any theories that govern acting?  
Answer: No.
5. Did you ever seek direction on acting techniques from the director during the production of *Madam Chief*?  
Answer: The director was very helpful and understanding. There were a number of actors who were not that good but the director was patient with them. The part I had was not difficult for me and the role suited me well.
6. What influenced you most in the determination of your approach to acting during the production of *Madam Chief*?

Answer: The society influences my performance. By observing the people in the society I get inspired by their behaviour and use it when doing a role.

**B15 Interview – Mirriam Chemmoss (Actress in *Taharuki*)**

1. What is your professional educational background?

Answer: I had my early, formal schooling in Kenya and Tanzania. After completing high school at The Kenya High School, I received a full, academic scholarship from an American Liberal Arts School, Waldorf University, via their Campus in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. I graduated from Waldorf University in Iowa in 2001 with a B.A in Media/Communications & and an A.A in Theater/Music.

2. (a) Had you ever attended a professional acting class/seminar/workshop before taking up your acting role in the film under consideration?

Answer: I studied Acting, Theater and Musical performance at Waldorf University and have taken numerous acting workshops for film after graduation. When I moved to New York City, I belonged to several theater companies where we received formal training in different techniques.

- (b) Which acting techniques did the classes/seminar/workshop impart on you?

Answer: In college, we learned a lot of teachings by Constantin Stanislavski, Lee Strasberg, Sanford Meisner and many of the workshops I attended in New York City focused on techniques by Michael Chekhov. I particularly still remember and resonate with the Meisner approach, which is based on the fact that all good acting comes from the heart, as it were, and that there's no mentality to it. I love improv and so I tend to rely on my knowledge of spontaneous human reactions. I also love some of the more practical teachings of Stanislavsky that I learned in school. His approach incorporates spiritual realism, emotional memory, dramatic and self-analysis, and disciplined practice.

- (c) Did you use the skills from the classes/seminar/workshop when acting in the film under consideration?

Answer: Yes, the Meisner approach is always helpful to me when I'm acting for film; to stay as true and spontaneous as possible. Also, Strasberg's teachings on how to magnify and intensify one's connection to the material by creating one's characters' emotional experiences in their own lives. It was easy to relate to my character because I am an immigrant and know what it's like to live under the cloud of uncertainty.

3. (a) Had you ever acted in a feature film before?

Answer: Yes, I had done several film projects prior to "*Amnesty*". I had also starred in "*Taharuki*", by Ekwa Msangi, "*To Sleep With Anger*", by Gregory McCampbell, "*Refuge*", by Khari Ajene...among others.

- (b) How many other feature/short films have you acted in before?

Answer: In total, I'd say, about 15 films, including some student films.

4. (a) Do you know of any theories that govern acting?

Answer: Sure, I think it's important to remember that imagination is the most important ingredient in acting, followed by emotional connection and memory. With both, you can recreate scenes that one may not have experienced, but equate them to memories of other similar experiences.

If the answer to 3(a) is yes proceed to 3(b) and (c).

(b) Which theories have been most influential to you as an actor/actress?

Answer: I think I spent a lot of time studying Michael Chekhov's approach while I was in New York City between 2004 - 2005 so much, with an acting company, that I find myself using his holistic approach to acting by focusing on mind, body, and a conscious awareness of the senses. I like the idea of disappearing into a character completely, to a point where anyone who knows me doesn't recognize me at all.

(c) Did you use the said theories when acting in the film under consideration?

Answer: Yes, for sure.

(d) In what ways did you use the theory or theories when acting in the film under consideration?

Answer: When internalizing on what I thought the character was going through, I studied a lot of people and their natural reactions to dilemma (which is where my character was), having build her life here and finding herself at a point where she had to walk away from it all. I used a lot of my own emotional recall of situations in which were similar, like walking away from jobs and relationships etc.

5. Did you ever seek direction on acting techniques from the director during the production of the film under consideration?

Answer: Yes, of course. Turns out, the director knew the story well (based on a true story) and she was able to point me in the right direction in terms of how my character would stay authentic. In a lot of the indoor scenes, where my character was losing it, I found the directors' notes and technique suggestions very helpful.

6. What influenced you most in the determination of your approach to acting during the production of the film under consideration?

Answer: I was at first moved by the story. The script gave a very realistic picture, considering it was a short film. Everything had to be precise and short and to the point. My character had a lot to draw from a pool of emotions that were easy to relate to and also, knowing the fear of most immigrants here, it was easy for me to tap into what was required to bring the character alive.

### **B16 Interview – Marianne Nungo (Actress in *My Faith*)**

1. What is your professional educational background?

Answer: Hahaha! Allow me to laugh coz wololo! I have no professional education as regards this craft I love dearly. Personal studies I've done maybe but nothing professionally pursued or imparted by a particular institution. I dearly dream of acquiring the skill but thou, the day will come.

2. (a) Had you ever attended a professional acting class/seminar/workshop before taking up your acting role *My Faith*?

Answer: No. I attended a workshop a couple of years after.

3. (a) Had you ever acted in a feature film before *My Faith*?

Answer: Yes, although quite honestly I'm not entirely sure whether it passed as a feature or short film. It wasn't the usual short neither was it extensively long. It's called *Catching the Mirage*. I played a tiny role, a teacher. It was the first feature, I featured in.

- (b) How many other feature films had you acted in before?

Answer: *Supa Modo, Nairobi Half Life, Clandestine, Mama Soko, Project Revenge, A Room with a View, She was a Good Woman, Sweet Taboo, Before and After.*

4. Did you ever seek direction on acting techniques from the director during the production of *My Faith*?

Answer: As regard techniques, well I always consult the director to try seek out his/her vision regarding my character in the piece I'm participation in, and what role it plays in the outlook of the entire piece. This greatly helps me formulate an idea of what I already imagined for my character. As regards *My Faith*, I was fortunate enough to find a director who let me loose. He didn't have me chained to any particular leash. This for me was freeing considering the role was an almost crazy junkie yet also quite reasonable. There was a delicate balance there to be observed thou.

5. What influenced you most in the determination of your approach to acting during the production of *My Faith*?

Answer: To be honest, I'm not sure I can accurately answer this question seeing I may have forgotten a few details about it. I remember throwing myself out there thou saying 'I really have nothing to lose on this one. Just have fun,' which I did with the role. Whatever I felt like doing however insane looking I did. I went with the flow to its completion. They say 'there's a very thin line between acting and insanity.' Well, this role had and was that very saying in its entirety. Its truth was in extremes which fell on either side of the balance. A bit of sane with tonnes of insanity or a ting of insanity with a spread of sanity. All in all it was fun to do.

### **B17 Interview – Veronica Waceke (Actress in *My Faith*)**

1. What is your professional educational background?

Answer: I have a Diploma in Mass Communication from the East African School of Media Studies.

2. (a) Had you ever attended a professional acting class/seminar/workshop before taking up your acting role in *My Faith*?

Answer: I have attended a number of workshop with most notable being conducted by Neil Schell, a director. However, this was after *My Faith*. The workshop was about the ABCs of acting, how to breakdown a script and how to get into character.

3. (a) Had you ever acted in a feature film before *My Faith*?  
Answer: I had acted in some films, *Captain of Nakaru* being one of them.  
(b) How many other feature films had you acted in before *My Faith*?  
Answer: I had done about four films in total.
4. (a) Do you know of any theories that govern acting?  
Answer: I know Method Acting and Classic Acting. But these were from another workshop.  
(b) Did you know of the theories before or after *My Faith*?  
Answer: I knew them after *My Faith* but I realised that I had been using method acting even before I got to be instructed on what it was about. However, the workshop was about warming up, concentration games and had informal round tables. The facilitators asked about our experiences and we gave examples on the way we did things in practice. Personal experiences were shared and it is then that I realised that I used method acting without knowing.
5. (a) Did you ever seek direction on acting techniques from the director during the production of *My Faith*?  
Answer: I asked the director for guidance a lot of times.  
(b) Can you recall a scene that was challenging to you and you had to seek guidance from the director on how to perform?  
Answer: The last scene was a challenge and we had to shot it three times so as to satisfy the director. It was basically a scene that I had to use my hand to shield my face from light and the director was not comfortable with how I was doing it.
6. What influenced you most in the determination of your approach to acting during the production of the film under consideration?  
Answer: I have to empathise with the character. I have to execute the story and have to enjoy reading the script. The script has to move me so that I can be able to perform the role. I have to be captured by the role. I was once required to play the role of a drunk and wasted person and I used method acting to perform. I got familiar with the role and joined my friends in a drinking spree where one of us recorded me as I got drunk. I was able to know how I behaved while drunk and use the material to guide my performance on stage.

**B18 Interview – Joe Kinyua (Actor in *My Faith*)**

1. What is your professional educational background?  
Answer: I did accounts, CPA up to section six and started working as an accountant. I, however, always wanted to be an actor and acted in church groups. In 2008 I decided to look for auditions while thinking that I could do acting in the evening after work. Even as an accountant I used to watch a lot of plays that maintained my drive for acting. In 2008 I got my first role in a travelling theatre group that used to enact set-books called Planets. In high school I participated in drama festivals, both nationally and school based drama within the institution.

2. (a) Had you ever attended a professional acting class/seminar/workshop before taking up your acting role in *My Faith*?  
Answer: I have attended 2 workshops by Gilbert Lukalia who was chair of Actors Guild. I have also done workshop on character development at the Aroji Drama Academy. Both trainings were conducted after *My Faith*.
3. (a) Had you ever acted in a feature film before *My Faith*?  
Answer: I had already done a number of films. Most of them were sponsored by M-net's Maisha Magic Channel.
4. (a) Do you know of any theories that govern acting?  
Answer: I have never studied acting theories or methods but I have applied them in my acting subconsciously. While acting in *Sue na Jonnie* the director asked me when I started using method acting. I was not using method acting but was applying it subconsciously.
5. What influenced you most in the determination of your approach to acting during the production of *My Faith*?  
Answer: I like to be real when performing any role. When I believe in what I am saying, the audience also believes. I try to get the truth of the character. If I don't believe in what I am doing or saying it lacks truth.
6. Did you ever seek direction on acting techniques from the director during the production of *My Faith*?  
Answer: The scene where I was breaking down at the rooftop was very intense. I had to breakdown at the door and maintain my emotions as I climbed to the roof. The door was tricky as there were no stable places to hold on to as I climbed to the roof and we had to do several takes to maintain the emotion. I had worked with Makau before and loved his approach to directing. We shot the film in one, maybe two days. Instead of having read-throughs, we had one to one discussions with the director on what was expected of the actor. On set, most directors look at shots and do not work with the actor. Bruce spent time with the actor. Sometimes as an actor, you have to talk to the director. In the final scene I needed to know my reaction, whether I was to be shocked or happy. On the particular morning in the film I had given up. The hand movement meant a lot of things. I was not sure whether it was to be a fragment of my imagination or I was to look at it at face value.