The Subtitling of French Contemporary Accented Polyglot Films: *Le Grand Voyage*

Marie Biscio
Université de Nice/Sophia-Antipolis, France
National University of Ireland, Galway, Ireland

ABSTRACT
The aim of this article is to introduce the reader to the genre of polyglot films and translation in the special context of accented and migration cinema in contemporary France, through the study of a particular film, *Le Grand Voyage*.
This paper focuses on the analysis of the 'other' language in French polyglot contemporary cinema. Following a consideration of the term multilingualism, the paper provides an overview of the area of French contemporary cinema which foregrounds a voice other than that of the majority ethnic population, before finally considering the example of the film *Le Grand Voyage*. In relation to this example, the subtitling of the other language (in this case Arabic) in the French original version is examined closely with a view to determining whether the presence or absence of subtitling has an impact on the representation of another population and culture in French cinema. Through the narrative analysis of the English subtitled version of the film, I reflect on whether an Anglophone audience, when confronted with a polyglot film, can experience it in a way similar to the French audience.

KEYWORDS: accented French cinema, multilingual discourse, polyglot cinema, subtitling.

Introduction

Multilingualism, as a translation-related concept, has been the subject of extensive scholarly research, most notably within the field of literature. Though eminently relevant to the spheres of film studies and Audio-Visual Translation (AVT), however, its applicability to this respective discipline and practice remains unexplored. The relative absence of material is particularly conspicuous given the ever-increasing integration of multilingualism within modern cinema, a phenomenon which renders the former's consideration fundamental to a complete understanding of the latter. The significant increase in polyglot film production in recent years (Wahl 2008:348; Gambier 2009:184) reflects global societal change, and the impact of this change on popular media – such as cinema – merits scholarly attention.

Immigration, together with a growth in multi-ethnic societies, underpins the new social reality. Meylaerts observes that "[m]onolingual cultures are increasingly recognized as idealized constructions and the 'new' nomadic citizens are characterized as polyglots travelling in between languages, in a permanent state of (self-)translation" (2006:1). The condition of the migrant came to enjoy increased cinematic visibility in the 1990s with the emergence of what Wahl describes as a "New Wave" of polyglot films. In these, issues of immigration manifest themselves predominantly in depictions of migrant characters living in a host society, and practising the language of that society together with their own native tongue (see for example Fatih Akin's films in Germany or Ken Loach's in Great Britain).

Despite the proliferation of polyglot cinema, films which offer equal space to the two relevant languages remain rare; the language of the host country generally predominates (Planchenault 2010:108). Several reasons can justify this disparity. For example, some filmmakers are

reluctant to overly 'disturb' the audience in its pursuit of a leisure activity. Although globalization has led to a wider circulation and distribution of languages, the vast majority of people are still unwilling to read subtitles when at the cinema. Moreover, filmmakers often suffer pressure from distribution companies to shoot films mainly in the language of the country to increase their chances of achieving high revenues. It is also foreseeable that dealing with a foreign cast and crew would require extra skill and effort from the filmmaker in order to direct them effectively. Ismael Ferroukhi's 2004 film *Le Grand Voyage* has been selected for the purposes of this paper primarily on account of the equal prevalence of Arabic and French spoken throughout. This equivalence is important as it facilitates a substantive analysis. Ferroukhi's film – which depicts the restoration of sentiment between a father and son as they undertake a journey together to Mecca by car – is also of particular interest as it provides a perspective on first and second generation Maghrebis in France, and the difficulties encountered by both.

Classification of films concerned with immigration presents a challenge, as directors often actively resist conventional labelling. *Le Grand Voyage* could reasonably be referred to as an exemplar of "migrant" or "post-migrant" cinema. Such terms are problematic, however, as they do not apply to films which, though ostensibly similar, are produced by directors born in France to French parents. Such designations are, furthermore, explicitly rejected by Ferroukhi, who denies the potential for ambiguity: *Le Grand Voyage*, for him, is a French film which tells the story of French people, albeit of foreign origin (2012).[1] The more encompassing term "accented cinema" (Naficy 2001) has thus been selected for the purposes of this paper, as it denotes a cinema which is "different from the standard, neutral, and value-free dominant cinema produced by the society's reigning mode of production" (Berghahn (28 September 2006); Migrant and Diasporic Cinema in Contemporary Europe). Naficy's concept of accented cinema is integral to this paper, and will thus be discussed in detail at a later stage.

This paper will provide a brief discussion of the terminology relevant to polyglot translation and its applicability to cinema, before considering the prominence of "accented cinema" in French culture. It will then draw on these considerations in its analysis of the use of the 'other' language in Ferroukhi's film. The extent and context of its use will be examined, and hypotheses offered on its intended purpose. The question of whether the 'other' language is translated in the Source Text (ST) will also be considered, as will the impact of the decision as to whether or not to translate. This paper will focus exclusively on the use of subtitles, as this mode of AVT draws most attention to the foreign language – by virtue of the visual appearance of the written translation on the screen – and thus arguably grants increased visibility to the immigrant language and culture when screened in the original language (though some viewers may also discern the change from one language to another). Though the analysis undertaken here will focus predominantly on language, other signifying codes (for example, musical and photographic codes) relevant to cinematic language will also be considered due to their applicability within the context of a filmic text. The individual scenes selected for analysis in this essay have been chosen because they are representative of Réda's evolving relationship both with his father and with the Arabic language. Finally, the complexities introduced by the further translation of a polyglot film for a foreign audience will be briefly discussed. This discussion will focus on the adaptation of the film into English.

[1] Cf. Ferroukhi «Je considère ce film comme un film français qui parle d'une partie de la population française d'origine étrangère» [I consider this film a French film, talking about a part of the French population of foreign origin.]. (Sourced from email correspondence between the author and Ferroukhi.) Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own.

It is hoped that the approach employed in this paper may have the potential for broader application in order to provide insight into the role cinema in translation plays in the (in)visibility of the other culture in society.

Polyglot translation – terminology

Multilingualism refers to the "co-presence of two or more languages (in a society, text or individual)" (Grutman 1998:185). The focus of this paper is on multilingual discourse "defined as the use of more than one language within a given spoken or written text" (Adams, quoted in Bleichenbacher 2008:7). The 'text' analysed here is the cinematic product as a whole, the film text having a specific multimodal nature. The adjective 'multilingual' coexists with the term 'polyglot' within the context of cinema. Wahl defined polyglot cinema as a distinct genre, presenting a persuasive argument for why such films should be considered separately:

> Most of those films aren't classical genre movies, rather hybrid constructions, difficult to interpret, impossible to compare. Looking at them from the point of view of language and its representational values supplies the recipient with an important key for a better understanding of the structure and the meaning of those films as well as of their actually existing interrelations (2005:1).

This paper's concern with the role played by language in film, and consideration of the cultural and societal differences it highlights, resonates clearly with Wahl's definition.

The well-established term *hétérolinguisme* [heterolingualism], meanwhile – coined within the literary sphere by Grutman and drawing on Bakhtin's theories of *heteroglossia* – describes the presence of multilingual voices in texts. Though these terms by definition relate exclusively to literature, the relevant criterion of 'non-real-life-material' is potentially equally applicable to cinema. Indeed, a great deal of theoretical knowledge can be appropriated from literary research. Grutman's term will not, however, be employed here, for two reasons. Firstly, his definition includes language varieties, such as dialects and registers, whereas this paper will focus exclusively on foreign languages. Secondly, Grutman attributes the term "heterolingual" to all texts which contain even a single foreign word (Corrius and Zabalbeascoa 2011:116). Though Grutman's assertion that "[i]n principle, texts can either give equal prominence to two (or more) languages or add a liberal sprinkling of other languages to a dominant language clearly identified as their central axis" (2006:19) is generally persuasive, it is worth considering whether this "sprinkling" should not be of a certain volume to merit consideration. That is not to suggest that a strict percentage of language use should be established, below which its presence should be disregarded. What appears as more relevant here is Wahl's definition of this practice as "audio-postcarding" to be more persuasive (2008:337). As Wahl argues, the depiction of a man uttering the word "*bonjour*" to establish the setting of a film in Paris offers little scope for reflection on multilingualism and its effects in the film. Although, as Delabatista and Grutman have argued, nature (i.e. the emotive, expressive and phatic functions of the utterance) and quality are far more significant within a multilingual text than quantity (in O'Sullivan 2011:70), it is nonetheless the case that:

> […] the markedness of the use of a foreign language on screen is also a function of its quantity in that sustained use contributes towards the constitution of the foreign dialogue as a text demanding hermeneutic engagement rather than simply as a musical feature of the acoustic landscape (O'Sullivan 2011:70).

For the purpose of this study, then, it is believed that a few foreign words scattered throughout a film do not provide material for the consideration of the role and importance of the foreign in the film; instead they constitute unusual sounds, immediately forgotten. The audio-visual nature of film dictates also that the visual and oral transmission of signifying codes other than words should not be overlooked. The audience benefits from these other codes which influence their understanding of the languages spoken, whether they are listening to their mother tongue or reading subtitles.

Madeleine Stratford, meanwhile, has observed that:

> Peu importe s'ils qualifient cette littérature de "bilingue" (Sarkonak et Hodgson 1993:13), de "multilingue" (Grutman 2004:157) ou de "plurilingue" (Mackey 1993:46; Elwert 1960:410), les théoriciens se réfèrent presque toujours aux textes comprenant ce que Lewis appelle "interpénétration horizontale" des langues (Lewis 2003:411), synonyme inédit de l'expression plus courante "alternance des codes" (Kürtösi 1993:107) (2008:458).[2]

The concept of "code-switching" – and in particular the question of why code-switching occurs – is fundamental to the analysis of film of this kind; cinematic text is not real, after all, but rather constitutes the product of a script written and subsequently acted. The film to which this article relates seeks to represent reality. It corresponds to the principle of "vehicular matching", a phrase coined by Meir Sternberg (1981:223), signifying an intention for the languages spoken by the various characters to be "in accordance with the historical language depicted" (Delabastita 2010:205). In other words, language plays a diegetic role in the film, rather than simply being a vehicle of content (Sanz Ortega 2011:22), as the languages spoken by the individuals provide information on their cultural backgrounds.

Accented cinema in France

France has a well-established history as an immigration destination, dating back to its colonial past, and, as a consequence, has produced a significant body of films concerned with or made by immigrants. Of the plethora of such films released since the 1980s, however, most represent linguistic 'otherness' by way of either a smattering of Arabic words, or speech characterized by expressions and structures typical of the French spoken by members of North African communities (such as *La Haine* (Kassovitz 1995), the most famous example). Such films do not therefore offer enough linguistic material for them to fall within the definition of polyglot as offered in this paper.

Such cinema has come to be described as *cinéma beur* (second generation North African cinema) or *cinéma de banlieue* (cinema of the suburbs). The former corresponds to cinema made by and about the second generation immigrants of Maghrebi descent in the 1980s, while the latter deals with films made and released independently in the 1990s in the "multi-ethnic working class estates" (Tarr 2005:2). These terms have been criticized as controversial on the grounds that they confine and reduce people. Consequently, the term *beur* is less frequently used today, and has been replaced by terms such as Maghrebi French or Franco-Arab (with or without the hyphen) (Hargreaves 2008; Tarr 2009). Though Abecassis has claimed that "reference to plurilingualism in French cinema immediately brings to mind the 'cinema of the

[2] "No matter whether they describe […] literature as 'bilingual', 'multilingual' or 'plurilingual', theorists nearly always refer to texts including what Lewis terms 'horizontal permeation' of languages, a relatively unheard of synonym for the more common expression 'code switching'."

banlieue'" (2010:34), multilingualism is not a compulsory characteristic of these films; the majority are, in fact, not multilingual. The monolingual nature of such films may reflect the position occupied by these immigrants in France. Indeed, a notable disparity exists between the presence of Maghrebi immigrants in French society, and their early representation in cinematic culture. Second generation Maghrebi immigrants have been considered as "the most visible, the most stigmatized and the most dynamic ethnic minority in postcolonial France" (Tarr 2005:3), yet in pre-1980s cinema they emerged as voiceless, invisible, marginalized objects. French cinema was slow to relinquish its superior gaze when confronted with the postcolonial other, as to do so would require criticism of the role played by the country in the respective colonies and of the neo-colonial power relationships (Tarr 1997:59; 2005:10).

In the 1980s, second-generation Maghrebis began producing films. These projects were invariably unfunded and produced in artisanal conditions. Furthermore, with the exception of the occasional new recruit – most recently the actor Tahar Rahim, who became famous with *Un Prophète* (2009) – the same actors were employed in all films. Though this group of actors features a number of young women, it is predominantly masculine (Tarr 1997:13), and has never achieved the box office success enjoyed by mainstream white filmmakers (Tarr 2005:12). This mould was broken by the major success of Rachid Bouchareb's *Indigènes* in 2006. Bouchareb was among this early generation of Maghrebi filmmakers in the 1980s, and it took him 26 years to achieve success as a director. *Indigènes* relates the story of the defence of France by Maghrebi soldiers during the Second World War, and stars four famous French actors of Maghrebi descent (Sami Bouajila, Jamel Debbouze, Samy Naceri and Roschdy Zem). A series of what might be referred to as 'historical films' – concerned with the period from WWII to the Algerian War of Independence – has emerged in the wake of this initial success. These include another offering by Bouchareb, entitled *Hors la loi* (2010), which focuses on the Algerian struggle for independence, and Ismael Ferroukhi's *Les Hommes Libres* (2011), which is concerned with an Algerian immigrant during WWII. This phenomenon concerns what Hargreaves and Kealhofer have referred to as "shifting the spotlight to the first generation" (2010:78). Second generation directors are no longer interested in describing the youth and their problems in the *banlieue*; rather, they turn their attention to the silent suffering of their parents' generation. This shift is "accompanied by a new audibility of Arabic" (ibid.), an interesting development from a translation perspective. The first generation's use of Arabic is "[l]iable to mark them as alien in the eyes of majority ethnic viewers, [but] it also gives them a certain dignity because they are not placed in the position of speaking an imperfectly acquired language to interlocutors occupying positions of strength in the majority ethnic culture" (Hargreaves and Kealhofer 2010:78-9). This point is of paramount significance, as it demonstrates the fundamental role of language in the perception of character.

While first generation Maghrebi characters have become more prevalent, there has also been a "growing number of films focusing on the daily lives of migrants from Maghreb, their sense of identity and nostalgia for the country they have left, and their difficulties of integration" (Abecassis 2010:34). Indeed, *pied-noir*[3] director Philippe Faucon's *La Désintégration* (2012) – which focuses on members of the *banlieue* youth turning to radical Islam – was screened in cinemas in February 2012. Although this paper focuses exclusively on cinematic representations, it is worth noting that there has been a similar trend towards foregrounding themes relating to ethnic minorities in television films and on radio programmes in France.

[3] The term *pied-noir* is used to refer to a person of French descent born in Algeria.

It would appear then, that some significant changes have occurred since Carrie Tarr published her pivotal monograph on *beur* and *banlieue* cinema in 2005. It has taken twenty years for these films to reach a wide audience and achieve notable success, but films made by or about second generation Maghrebis today form an integral part of French cinema. They may not, however, constitute a distinct genre; the actors involved in these projects may also participate in films which are in no way associated with their cultural origins, and several directors consider their work to be simply French. They resist categorisation as *beur* filmmakers, preferring not to be "labelled in terms of their ethnic origins" (Tarr 2005:13). Moreover, some white directors also foreground *beur* characters and demonstrate a sympathetic understanding of the experiences of displacement and exile (ibid.).

Although *beur* filmmaking is now firmly established within French cinema, the resultant films do not meet with major success at the box-office and are rarely distributed abroad (Tarr 2005:213). Though cinema transcends borders, it is also completely dependent on economic success, "determined by both geopolitical and financial pedigree" (Ezra and Rowden 2006:5). This concept leads Tarr to assert that these films are "by, for and about the French, understood as a plural, multi-ethnic society" (2005:213). It is thus ultimately desirable to analyse the reception of these films in other countries – for example Anglophone countries – with a similarly established history of immigration, in order to interrogate the concept that complete understanding and anchoring outside the original target country is not possible. Ferroukhi's *Le Grand Voyage*, which will be analysed in the next section, is perfectly representative of Naficy's definition of "accented cinema". Its focus is a journey between two geographical realities, and means of transport is central to the story. This low-budget film affords much space to the foreign language, and focuses on language, adapting to foreign society and the challenge of the generation gap as central themes. Such elements align the film with Wahl's definition of polyglot film (2008). These considerations will inform the discussion in the following section, which will consist of a close analysis of Ferroukhi's film. It will focus specifically on the generation gap, the reasons behind the film's accentedness and the language combinations: first French-Arabic, and then the adaptation from French-Arabic into English.

Le Grand Voyage

Ismael Ferroukhi's *Le Grand Voyage* was released in France in 2004. Although it was named "Best First Film" at the Venice Film Festival of the same year, it has not encountered great success in France. It sold 77,413 tickets, placing it in 93rd position amongst French films released that year, far behind *Les Choristes*, *Un Long Dimanche de Fiancailles* and *Podium*.[4] This ambiguous reception reflects the still-tentative success of films of this kind in France. As stated earlier, *Le Grand Voyage* is representative of the new tendency towards focusing on first-generation immigrants from the Maghreb, and is therefore included in my analysis on account of the large quantity of foreign language spoken. The issue of language indeed permeates all aspects of this film, which focuses on the complex – and initially fractious – relationship between Réda, a French-Moroccan teenager, and his devout father. Persuaded to accompany him by car on a pilgrimage to Mecca, Réda addresses his father exclusively in French, and invariably receives responses in Arabic. It is only as the tension between them dissipates over the course of the journey that it becomes apparent that the father's insistence on speaking Arabic to his son is a deliberate choice (since his spoken French is impeccable). Language is also foregrounded by way of the characters encountered along the journey, all of

[4] Figures taken from the CBO Box Office website (2004).

whom express themselves in their own languages, these being neither understood by the two main protagonists, nor subtitled (in contrast to the Arabic).

Over the course of the film, the two generations confront one another within the context of forced cohabitation in a small space – the car – and across thousands of kilometres through France, Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Turkey, Syria and Jordan, before reaching Saudi Arabia. The visibility of the immigrant is, however, taken further than in most representative films, as the only person who interacts significantly with the son, and shares half of the space of the film with him, is his father. Consequently, this is a rare example of a film which dedicates a large amount of space to a single first generation immigrant. The significance of the decision to do so through the disturbing figure of the father, furthermore, should not be overlooked. The film provides a consummate example of the phenomenon referred to by Hargreaves as "resuscitating the father" (2008:343). Having been virtually ignored in early films, which tended to focus exclusively on the experience of the younger (second) generation in France, the first generation now occupies the centre of attention: it is given a voice, and the historical period is often adjusted accordingly in order to focus on its experience. In *Le Grand Voyage*, though he shares the spotlight with his son, the father is given ample physical space, and also, crucially, a full voice, as he is depicted speaking in Arabic for half of the film. On a story-level, he is initially presented as enigmatic, and a source of discomfort and anger for his son, before being re-established as a respectful and wise man who is completely 'resuscitated' through his son's behaviour in the wake of his death.

This film is perfectly representative of "accented cinema" for a variety of reasons. Ferroukhi, who was born in Morocco and arrived in France at the age of three, was obstructed in his efforts to produce this film by economic constraints. He wrote the screenplay in 1998, but did not secure the budget for a further five years. He eventually achieved his objective with only 1 million euro, a third of the target capital, "one super 16 camera and no lights" (Jaggi 2005). These elements contribute to the 'accentedness' of the film, as defined by Naficy. Furthermore, "the important transitional and transnational places and spaces, such as borders, tunnels, seaports, airports, and hotels and vehicles of mobility, such as trains, buses, and suitcases, that are frequently inscribed in the accented films" (Naficy 2001:5) are all integral to *Le Grand Voyage*. This is a polyglot film *par excellence*. The audience shares the main characters' sense of alienation as, in each country they pass through, the spectator hears the corresponding language. The filmmaker explains this device in an interview:

> I was very interested in language while making this film. The question of language is very important to me, and I respect the languages used in the film. When in Serbia, one hears the Serbian language; when in Slovenia, one hears the Slovenian language. When in Turkey, etc. I wanted the languages used to be the authentic language of the country, not nonsense. I wanted it to be so that if a Serb or a Turk saw the film, he would recognise his country. (Toler 2007)

The purpose is thus clear; the film strives for realism and authenticity in its approach to languages, corresponding to the "vehicular matching" approach introduced previously. The foreign languages referred to above are not subtitled, an omission which is probably designed to reflect the identification of the viewers with the two main characters, who do not understand these languages either. The belief that English is a universal language is also challenged in scenes which depict Réda attempting to use this as a communication tool with no success (these turns are not subtitled in the French version). Ferroukhi explains this

decision, stating that "[i]t shows that it is not as simple as it seems. Everybody doesn't necessarily speak English. English is an international language for an elite, but not for everyone" (ibid.). As effective as the use of multiple languages is, however, it is more representative of Wahl's "postcard effect" than genuine polyglot film, as language is used primarily to indicate the location of the scene (2005:2).

The language combination of most interest for the purpose of this article is the one at the heart of the relationship between father and son, which could be considered to be a perfect example of "bilingual intergenerational exchange" (Johnston 2010:92). The cultural context within which this combination exists is clearly represented in the first section of film analysed here. In an early scene, Réda arrives home to find three of his siblings eating silently at the table while his father prays in a corner. In the kitchen, his mother prepares food. This provides the viewer with a wordless introduction to a traditional Muslim family situation which is subsequently reinforced by the father addressing his son in Arabic (which is translated into French by using subtitles). The nature of the address is telling; Réda is required to drive his father to Saudi Arabia, as a replacement for his older brother who has lost his licence in a drink-driving incident. The father's absolute authority is clear; he has already applied for his son's visa, and though Réda's body language conveys displeasure at the proposal, he does not respond to his father, who then leaves the room. Réda's desire for autonomy and authority manifests itself in his violent attitude towards his mother in the absence of his father, but the audience may infer from her silence that her husband is the only figure of authority in the household. Arabic is experienced by Réda in this sequence as a vehicle for aggression. Though Réda understands his father's speech perfectly, the presence of subtitles represents here a concrete barrier between the two men, two generations, and two cultures. Réda's appeal to his mother, that he cannot undertake this journey as he is preparing for his *baccalauréat* – the examination which marks the end of his schooling and which will have major implications with regard to his further education and employment prospects – is clearly of little consequence to his father, reinforcing the divide.

Speaking on the subject of the film *Raï*, Christina Johnston poses and addresses a number of fundamental questions relating to the subtitling of Arabic which may usefully be reproduced here. She considers how the audience experiences the multilingual nature of exchanges in which Arabic is subtitled while French is not (2010:92). She concludes that:

> by subtitling only one character's words here, it immediately ensures that these words are doubly marked as other, first aurally to the non-Arabophone viewer, and secondly visually by their onscreen translation. In this way, Arabic is marked symbolically, not as a language spoken by portions of the French population, and understood by (at least some) French citizens with no apparent difficulty, but rather as a foreign language, thus perhaps controversially, constructing standard French, and standard French alone, as the language of the republic (2010:93).

This interpretation is shared by Shohat, who states that "[t]he caricatural representation of Arabic in the cinema prolongs the Eurocentric 'Orientalist' tradition in both linguistics and literature" (2006:130).

While such reflections are pertinent to *Le Grand Voyage,* the decision to subtitle the 'other' language is justified by the centrality of the son's perspective: ignorant of his culture and religion, Réda demonstrates no interest in seeking to understand his father – culturally or linguistically – for the first half of the film. Ferroukhi (2012) explains that "[c]e qui

m'intéressait dans ce film, c'est que le spectateur puisse s'identifier à Réda (le personnage principal) et vivre le voyage à travers lui. Pour cela, je ne voulais traduire que les langues comprises par Réda".[5] The father is thus established as a secondary character, and we as spectators are encouraged to identify with Réda, who is representative of France and its lack of genuine understanding of the Muslim religion. Despite its apparent focus on previously marginalized first-generation Maghrebis, then, the film fails to fully accomplish this foregrounding as it seeks to avoid excessively disturbing the French audience. As Hargreaves has observed, second-generation Maghrebi directors are compelled by commercial rules of film distribution to target the majority ethnic audience (2008:344).

While Réda's perspective is privileged, however, it is his father who is established as the dominant figure within the diegetic space. The hegemonic power of the latter is definitively demonstrated in a number of key episodes. When a dispute arises in which Réda refuses to comply with his father's order to stop driving, his father reaches out and pulls up the handbrake. Réda's observation that this act could have killed them both is met with the simple response (in Arabic) that "You're stubborn. But I'm the one who decides here". Later, while Réda is sleeping, his father disposes of his mobile phone in a bin. Finally, in spite of Réda's repeated requests, his father refuses to concede to his wishes to visit Milan and Venice. Dialogue is presented as insufficient in these episodes and the father resorts to action, as if to show that his son's stubbornness cannot be tempered by simple recourse to 'harsh' Arabic articulations. In these episodes, actions speak louder than words, leaving no need for the spectator to understand Arabic and rendering the subtitles unnecessary to facilitate understanding.

Though language constitutes a divisive element for the majority of the film, this pattern is broken in a number of pivotal moments: in one such moment the father reveals his accomplished command of the French language, while in the others it is Réda who concedes to speak Arabic. In reference to the former, Ferroukhi explains that:

> Of course they understand each other. But during the film, it is true that for an hour of the movie the father doesn't speak in French. At first people find this bizarre. He has lived in France. Why doesn't he speak French? The audience believes it is because he doesn't know how. But eventually they discover that he speaks French very well. At that moment, we understand why he speaks in Arabic – that it is intentional, that he wants to teach his son the language. Because he feels that his son has kept his distance and that he has lost his connection with the family. So he tries to reconnect with him. In effect, he speaks in Arabic in hopes of passing the language on to his son (Toler 2007).[6]

The latter, two scenes in which Réda is heard to speak Arabic, have a common symbolic significance. In the first, father and son are depicted sharing a hot drink, wrapped in blankets and sheltering from the cold in what appears to be an old bus stop. In the second, they are seen in the middle of the desert, this time seeking shelter from the sun under material taken from the car. In both cases, Réda's asking questions of his father which allude to an interest in Islam allow a rare moment of closeness between father and son to emerge. In the first, he asks

[5] "What I was interested in with this film is that the spectator could identify with Réda (the main character) and experience the trip through him. That is why I wanted only the languages understood by Réda to be translated."
[6] It should be noted that the character's mastery of French goes beyond basic technical capability. The presentation of his language skills is not condescending as is often the case in the depiction of immigrants unable to master the country's dominant language; he does not speak with a markedly foreign accent.

his father why he did not opt to fly to Mecca; his father responds by quoting religious texts and then shares a single memory from his childhood. It is probable that this represents the first time that Réda's father has spoken to him of his past. When Réda does not understand, he seeks clarification by uttering the word "what?" in Arabic (this utterance is subtitled in French). Despite the apparently incidental nature of the exchange, however, this moment more than any other implies a growing bond between them. Indeed, for the first time in the film, they are seen to smile at each other. On the second occasion, Réda asks his father why it was so important for him to make the pilgrimage. After offering an explanation, the father thanks his son – without whom the trip would not have been possible – and they exchange some rare words of tenderness, albeit in a very reserved manner. The father's declaration – in Arabic – that he "learned a lot on this trip" is met simply by the words "so did I"; however, as Réda's response is also spoken in Arabic, it expresses much more than a long discourse in French could. These moments confirm to the audience that Réda's insistence on speaking French constituted a reaction against his father; as the bond between them grows, he switches naturally to his father's first language.

By virtue of the presence of the two languages, the audience gains insight into the inner feelings of father and son. The rapprochement reached between them is disclosed subtly, as is the huge gap that had previously separated them. Discussing the distance, Ferroukhi (Jaggi 2005) comments that "[t]here are differences between generations everywhere in the world, but when you live in another country, the gap widens". This film is thus established as a story about language and communication across gulfs of faith, culture and generation between migrant and second-generation *beurs*, orthodox and non-believer. Drawing on Wahl's theories, it may indeed be legitimate to claim that language is another character in the film, or in fact the only character (2005:1). The language – initially a barrier – becomes a vehicle of unification, a vehicle for plot development. Language becomes more than a vehicle of content: it is a consummate character, part of the message of the film (ibid.). For Réda, this journey is synonymous with self-discovery. Growing up in France, surrounded by French-speakers, he had lost touch with his parents' language and culture to which he ultimately also lays claim. He is disconnected, and the trip is about him rediscovering not only his roots, but himself (Ferroukhi 2012). The most concrete expression of this rediscovery is manifested through language use.

Little code-switching occurs in this film (with the exception of the few words spoken in Arabic by Réda). The two protagonists, for the majority of the film, adhere to the single languages spoken respectively by them. It is worth considering the impact of the linguistic heterogeneity on the audience. In terms of the disparity of the two languages, Arabic can be considered as being distant from French; its presence thus provokes what O'Sullivan, echoing Chion, has called "reduced listening" (2011:72). The audience will recognize the second language as markedly dissimilar to its own, and will quickly cease trying to decipher what they hear, tending instead to 'reduce' their active listening and accept what they hear simply as sound. The Moroccan dialect spoken in this film, however, together with the Algerian and Tunisian dialects, borrows French words which are recognizable to a French audience (*consulat* [consulate] and *enquête* [investigation] for example). This exposure to familiar sounds, arguably, reinstates active listening. If French terms can be distinguished amidst the Arabic, the viewer will unconsciously seek out the recognisable French words, and so his/her listening will remain active.

The converse phenomenon is not present in this film, a point which is neatly illustrated by the following example. At 01.09.33 the father utters the words ولاّت فـ راد سا ديـ ال قنصليّة

والو؟ بلا أوند كات بلا الـ فلوس تعطيلك (Kounsouliyat diyal firansa wellat taatilek el filous blé ounket blé wélou?) ["So the French Consulate gave you money just like that, without an inquiry?"]. This is rendered in the French subtitles as "le consulat de France t'a donné de l'argent, sans enquête, sans rien?" The use of *consulat* (kounsouliyat) and *enquête* (ounket) in the original Arabic are an example of the phenomenon discussed in the previous paragraph. Conversely, however, the Arabic word *flouze* (filous) – which has entered the French language – is domesticated in the French subtitles, a decision which is arguably regrettable for its imparity. Venuti refers to this 'fluency' as "assimilationist" (1996:94). Had this term been presented in its original form in the French subtitles, it may have served to draw attention to the integration/familiarity of some aspects of Arabic culture in France and reinforced the Arabic flavour of the dialogue.

Let us now consider the operation of subtitles in the original French film in comparison with versions translated for other audiences. The original French audience can easily distinguish the speech of father and son as the subtitles only appear for the father's speech. This establishes him most definitively as traditional, and encourages the viewer to identify with his son, with whom they share a language. In this case, the subtitles 'other' the father and construct him as more consummately distant, thus constituting a barrier between the father and the viewer. Simultaneously and conversely, the father's use of his own language confers a certain sense of dignity upon him. The viewer, meanwhile, has the impression of effortlessly understanding the foreign. S/he does not need to engage actively with the foreign language, since it is subtitled. The subtitles render everything directly accessible to the viewer (O'Sullivan 2011:130). In this sense subtitling is sometimes regarded as a violent act, as:

> [t]o graft one language, with its own system of linking sound and gesture onto the visible behaviour associated with another, then, is to foster a kind of cultural violence and dislocation. Relatively slight when the languages and cultures closely neighbour, this dislocation becomes major when they are more distant, resulting in a clash of cultural repertoires (Shohat 2006:121).

The operation of subtitles in the English version is different. The Anglophone audience is presented with both languages – French and Arabic – in the same way; no differentiation is made between them in the subtitles. As Shohat affirms, "[i]n cases where the films themselves are multilingual, subtitles have an effect of homogenization for the foreign spectator" (ibid.). The French audience's tendency towards identification with Réda cannot be mapped onto an Anglophone audience, as they do not share a common language with him. Both Réda and the father are strangers. The impact of Réda's fleeting concession to Arabic, in moments which are fundamental to establishing the rapprochement between father and son, may also be lost to the Anglophone viewer. There is nothing in the choice of translation strategy that attempts to indicate or represent this rapprochement.

In this case, however, the importance of other cinematic signifying codes should not be disregarded. The two pivotal moments in the restoration of the father-son relationship occur against the backdrop of splendid wild landscapes; the music is grandiose and the melody – with which viewers have already become familiar – is repeated loudly and simply. The protagonists are seen to smile at each other for the first time. The power of images and sound should not, therefore, be underestimated, despite this study's focus on verbal language. Chaume reminds us of the "multiple signifying codes operating simultaneously" (2004:12-3) in a film, and his list of ten codes which should be borne in mind when analysing a scene are of capital importance. In this scene, the musical, photographic, planning and mobility codes

are particularly significant. *Le Grand Voyage* was distributed in England with little concern for the translation issue, and Ferroukhi does not believe that the Anglophone audience had difficulty understanding the complexities of the film (2012). It is also essential that the vastness and diversity of the audience is not overlooked; as Ezra and Rowden remind us, "[t]ransnational cinema imagines its audiences as consisting of viewers who have expectations and types of cinematic literacy that go beyond the desire for and mindlessly appreciative consumption of national narratives that audiences can identify as their 'own'" (2006:3). Typical viewers of foreign film are already interested in the Other. They will often access information relating to the film before or after watching it, which can facilitate further comprehension.

It is, nevertheless, difficult to quantify the role of each such component of a film separately without a survey of the audience. It is the author's belief that, regardless of the effectiveness of other signifying codes, certain devices could, and perhaps should, be employed to counter the loss of significance when subtitling polyglot films for a foreign audience. Particularly in cases such as that discussed in this article, where the multiplicity of languages plays an important role in conveying the film's message, special attention should be paid to the aesthetic representation of subtitles. The use of colours and italics – among other techniques – could be applied to differentiate the two languages on screen. These solutions, however, are themselves problematic: the use of colours is already a convention in subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing, and italics are already used for extra-diegetic narration and may confuse some viewers. As an alternative, quotation marks could be used when subtitling the utterances of "foreigners". This may alert readers to the markedness of their speech, but may initially require a greater degree of cognitive effort. Furthermore it would potentially interfere with the subtitling process by reducing the number of characters conventionally available to the subtitler. The use of speaker-positioned subtitles might also be considered; this would involve iconical representation of difference as subtitles would be slightly raised and justified according to the on-screen position of the speakers. Time cueing would be consequently affected: this could be addressed by replacing the conventional two-line dashes that signal turn taking with two individual subtitles, each of which could coincide with the original utterance. Alternatively, the language could be identified in brackets before important statements, though to do so would exacerbate the problems already faced by subtitlers regarding the number of readable words per line. The result, however, would be to indicate to the audience the importance of information which they might otherwise disregard.

Conclusion

This article has sought to offer an initial reflection on polyglot films in translation in order to consider the operation of subtitles within various cultural and linguistic contexts. It has done so through a discussion on *Le Grand Voyage*, which is an excellent example of both an accented and a polyglot film. Although the intended audience is the majority ethnic group, the director made little compromise, and exceeded the tendency of presenting a mere few lines in the foreign language. The operation of language in this film is complex, and determining the role and impact of subtitles in the original version is not an easy task. On the one hand, subtitles enable the audience to be exposed to another culture, without which the foreign language would be but a strange music to their ears. On the other, as has been discussed by authors such as Johnston (2010) and Shohat (2006), subtitling may be considered as a form of neo-colonialism. Though the latter interpretation is at the extreme end of the scale, it is certainly arguable that subtitles contribute to creating a sense of distance – a barrier – between the audience and the single character being translated, and inevitably impacts upon the representation in French cinema of a non-indigenous population and culture. The effective

impact of subtitling on the audience probably lies somewhere between the two extremes; subtitling may serve alternatively or simultaneously as an alienating force and as a rapprochement tool.

The complexity is compounded when the film is further translated for a foreign audience. Greater care and reflection should therefore be taken when producing subtitles for the latter. This article has referred briefly to some potential approaches which may be taken to facilitate this process, and these may provide interesting material for a future reception, preference and audience expectation management study. The translation of films such as *Le Grand Voyage* into English can present additional complications, for example, in the event that members of the Anglophone audience understand Arabic and not French. The impact of the subtitles in such scenarios could form the basis of stimulating future research. The key contributing factor to the reception of film, regardless of the country in which it is distributed, is audience. As Shohat and Stam assert, "[d]iscourse is always shaped by an audience, by what Tzvetan Todorov calls the *allocutaire* – those to whom the discourse is addressed – whose potential reaction must be taken into account" (2006:11). Our current understanding is limited by the lack of extensive research into audience reception. Potential future studies which consider the interaction of all cinematic codes would greatly aid research of this kind, as any attempt to gauge the impact of subtitles alone on the viewer will inevitably prove difficult. In a world where the production of polyglot films is on the increase, it is imperative that we consider the impact of translation – both on the translated populations and on the population for which the translation is produced – in order to confront increased complexity surrounding issues of identity and knowledge, because as Ezra and Rowden have pointed out "[f]ilm is rapidly displacing literature (in particular the novel) as the textual emblematization of cosmopolitan knowing and identity" (2006:3). Our engagement with subtitling issues therefore becomes evermore significant.

References

Abecassis, Michaël (2010) 'The voices of pre-war French cinema: From polyphony towards plurilingualism', in Verena Berger and Miya Komori (eds) *Polyglot Cinema: Migration and Transcultural Narration in France, Italy, Portugal and Spain*, Berlin: Lit Verlag, 33-47.

Berghahn, Daniela (2006) 'Glossary: Accented Cinema', *Migrant and Diasporic Cinema in Contemporary Europe*. Available online at [www.migrantcinema.net/glossary/term/accented_cinema/] (accessed 7 April 2012).

Bleichenbacher, Lukas (2008) *Multilingualism in the Movies: Hollywood Characters and their Languages Choices*, Schweiser Anglistische Arbeiten, Tübingen: Francke Verlag.

CBO Box-Office (2004) 'Annual Box Office Data'. Available online at [http://www.cbo-boxoffice.com/v3/pageraw.php3?raw=1&inc=topan] (accessed 20 April 2012).

Chaume, Frederic (2004) 'Film Studies and Translation Studies: Two Disciplines at Stake in Audiovisual Translation', *Meta: Translators' Journal*, 49(1): 12-24.

Corrius, Montse (2008) *Translating Multilingual Audiovisual Texts. Priorities and Restrictions. Applications and Implications*, unpublished PhD thesis, Barcelona.

Corrius, Montse and Patrick Zabalbeascoa (2011) 'Language Variation in Source Texts and their Translations', *Target*, 23(1): 113-130.

Delabastista, Dirk (2010) 'Language, comedy and translation in the BBC sitcom '*Allo, 'Allo*!', in Delia Chiaro (ed) *Translation, Humour and the Media*, London/New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 193-221.

Ezra, Elisabeth and Terry Rowden (2006) *Transnational Cinema: The Film Reader*, London/New York: Routledge.

Ferroukhi (2012) 'Questionnaire'. E-mail correspondence with the author (8 March 2012). Reprinted by permission.

Gambier, Yves (2009) 'Créativité et décision: le traducteur audiovisuel n'est pas une roue de secours', in Federico M. Federici (ed) *Translating Regionalised Voices in Audiovisuals*, Aracne: Roma, 179-195.

Grutman, Rainier (1998) 'Multilingualism', in Mona Baker and Gabriella Saldanha (eds) (2009) *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Translation Studies*, Abingdon: Routledge, 182-185.

Grutman, Rainier (2006) 'Refraction and recognition: Literary multilingualism in translation', in Reine Meylaerts (guest ed) Heterolingualism in/and Translation, Special Issue of *Target* 18(1): 17-47.

Hargreaves, Alec G. (2007) '*Indigènes*: A sign of the Times', *Research in African Literatures*, 38(4): 204-216. Available online at [http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/ral/summary/v038/38.4hargreaves.html] (accessed 18 March 2012).

Hargreaves, Alec G. (2008) 'Resuscitating the father: New cinematic representations of the Maghrebi minority in France', *Sites: The Journal of Twentieth-Century/Contemporary French Studies*, 4(2): 343-351. Available online at [http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10260210008456036] (accessed 18 April 2012).

Hargreaves, Alec G. and Leslie Kealhofer (2010) 'Back to the future? Language use in films by second-generation North Africans in France', in Verena Berger and Miya Komori (eds), *Polyglot Cinema: Migration and Transcultural Narration in France, Italy, Portugal and Spain*, Berlin: Lit Verlag, 75-87.

Jaggi, Maya (2005) 'The long and winding road', *The Guardian*, 7 October 2005. Available online at [http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2005/oct/07/1] (accessed 27 October 2011).

Johnston, Christina (2010) 'Intergenerational verbal conflicts, plurilingualism and *banlieue* cinema', in Verena Berger and Miya Komori (eds) *Polyglot Cinema: Migration and Transcultural Narration in France, Italy, Portugal and Spain*, Berlin: Lit Verlag, 89-98.

Meylaerts, Reine (2006) 'Heterolingualism in/and translation. How legitimate are the other and his/her language? An introduction', in Reine Meylaerts (ed) Heterolingualism in/and Translation, *Target* 18(1) Special Issue, 1-15.

Naficy, Hamid (2001) *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

O'Sullivan, Carol (2011) *Translating Popular Film*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Planchenault, Gaëlle (2010) 'Displacement and plurilingualism in *Inch'Allah Dimanche*: Appropriating the other's language in order to find one's place', in Verena Berger and Miya Komori (eds) *Polyglot Cinema: Migration and Transcultural Narration in France, Italy, Portugal and Spain*, Berlin: Lit Verlag, 99-110.

Sanz Ortega, Elena (2011) 'Subtitling and the Relevance of Non-verbal Information in Polyglot Films', *New Voices in Translation Studies* (7): 19-34. Available online at [http://www.iatis.org/images/stories/publications/new-voices/Issue7-2011/article-sanz-2011.pdf] (accessed 3 September 2011).

Shohat, Ella (2006) *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices*, Durham: Duke University Press.

Sternberg, Meir (1981) 'Polylingualism as Reality and Translation as Mimesis', *Poetics Today* 2 (4) Translation Theory and Intercultural Relations (Summer-Autumn 1981): 221-239.

Stratford, Madeleine (2008) 'Au tour de Babel! Les défis multiples du multilinguisme', *Meta: Translators' Journal*, 53(3): 457-470. Available online at [http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/019234ar] (accessed 30 April 2011).

Tarr, Carrie (1997) 'French cinema and post-colonial minorities', in Alec G. Hargreaves and Mark McKinney (eds) *Postcolonial Cultures in France*, London/New York: Routledge, 59-83.

Tarr, Carrie (2005) *Reframing Difference – Beur and Banlieue filmmaking in France*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Tarr, Carrie (2009) 'Franco-Arab Dialogues in/between French, Maghrebi-French, and Maghrebi Cinema(s)', *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, 13(3): 291-302. Available online at [http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17409290902938677] (accessed 18 April 2012).

Toler, Michael (2007) 'An interview with filmmaker: Ismael Ferroukhi.', 1 January 2007. Available online at [http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-174973104.html] (accessed 28 October 2011).

Venuti, Lawrence (1996) 'Translation, Heterogeneity, Linguistics', *TTR: traduction, terminologie, redaction*, 9(1): 91-115.

Wahl, Chris (2005) 'Discovering a genre: the polyglot film', *Cinemascope* (1). Available online at [http://cinemiz.net/cifj/?page_id=55] (accessed 17 September 2011).

Wahl, Chris (2008) 'Du Deutscher, toi français, you English: beautiful!' – The polyglot film as a genre', in Miyase Christensen and Nezih Erdŏgan (eds) *Shifting Landscapes. Film and Media in European Context*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 334-350.

Film References

Hors la loi [Outside the Law] (2010) Directed by Rachid Bouchareb, France, Algeria, Belgium, Tunisia, Italy: Tessalit Productions.

Indigènes [Days of Glory] (2006) Directed by Rachid Bouchareb, Algeria, France, Morocco, Belgium: Tessalit Productions.

La désintégration (2012) Directed by Philippe Faucon, France, Belgium: Screen Runner.

La haine [Hate] (1995) Directed by Matthieu Kassovitz, France: Canal +.

Le grand voyage (2004) Directed by Ismaël Ferroukhi, France, Morocco, Bulgaria, Turkey: Ognon Pictures, Arte France Cinéma.

Les choristes [The Chorus] (2004) Directed by Christophe Barratier, France, Switzerland, Germany: Vega Film, Banque Populaire Images 4.

Les hommes libres [Free Men] (2011) Directed by Ismaël Ferroukhi, France: Pyramide Productions.

Podium (2004) Directed by Yann Moix, Belgium, France: Fidélité Productions.

Raï (1995) Directed by Thomas Gilou, France: M6 Films, Vertigo.

Un long dimanche de fiançailles [A Very Long Engagement] (2004) Directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet, France, USA: 2003 Productions, Warner Bros.

Un prophète [A Prophet] (2009) Directed by Jacques Audiard, France, Italy: Why Not Productions.