Linguistic Diversity in Italian Migration Films: A Case Study of Segre's *Io Sono Li*

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1. Introduction

Over the past century, various waves of immigration to Europe have been driven, as Bergfelder (2005: 320) notes, by "the two world wars, national policies of ethnic exclusion, and the post-war legacy of colonialism and economic discrepancy between Europe and its others". In particular, migration flows to European countries increased significantly in the late 1980s and early 1990s, especially in the Mediterranean region. As a consequence of accelerated migration, and to counteract the recent surge in anti-migrant rhetoric, "migrant and diasporic experiences and cross-cultural encounters have assumed a prominent position in cinematic narratives" (Berghahn and Sternberg 2014: 2).

Wahl classifies migration films as one of the five subgenres of polyglot cinema; their aim is to "emphasise the process of adaptation or integration, whether successful or not, to a foreign society and language" (Wahl 2008: 340). Since language is one of the clearest markers of identity and cultural difference (Roth 2009: 289), linguistic diversity has always been a powerful means of representing migrants on screen.

A characteristic feature of migrant cinema is the use of Sternberg's (1981: 223) notion of "vehicular matching", whereby the languages spoken by the characters in the story world are represented as different rather than homogenised. By articulating "difference" and "otherness", migration films thus use linguistic diversity as a way to faithfully and authentically represent migrant

identities. Attention to this phenomenon affects different layers of the cinematic experience. In addition to the horizontal dimension of language and cultural diversity (i.e. among the film characters), there is of course the vertical dimension, that is the proximity or distance between the characters and viewers. As Vanoye (1985: 116) points out, "tandis qu'une conversation entre des gens se tient à l'écran, une histoire est racontée à (ou bien un discours est tenu à) des spectateurs potentiels"[1]. In fact, audiences are not a homogeneous and uniform entity; the extent to which viewers master each of the languages involved, and their familiarity with the cultures depicted on screen, may vary and will inevitably have a considerable impact on the reception of dialogues, images, sounds, the narrative, and migrant characters, in other words "the way/s in which individuals and groups interact with media content, how a text is interpreted, appreciated, remembered" (Di Giovanni 2018: 161).

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to examine the representation of linguistic diversity in migration films and discuss the difficulties in making these pictures accessible to their heterogeneous audience, without altering the representation of migrants' identities and negatively affecting audience engagement. This may depend on viewers' knowledge of the foreign language/s and language proximity, or whether or not languages are closely neighboured (O'Sullivan 2011: 72-73). After describing the translation options available for treating multilingualism on screen (section 2), a diachronic overview of Italian migration cinema is presented, spanning the period between the 1920s and the 2010s, during which the country has seen a shift from emigration to immigration, as reflected on the big screen (section 3). This leads us to a case study on the film *Io sono Li* (2011) by Andrea Segre and its translation for American viewers (section 4), based on two levels of analysis: lexical and grammatical/morphological (Rizzo 2018). Finally, some conclusions are drawn (section 5).

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[1] "While a conversation is held between people on the screen, a story is told to (or a discourse is addressed at) potential viewers" (translation mine).

2. Translating multilingualism on screen

The decision on whether or not to translate multilingualism on screen depends on both quantitative and qualitative factors. From a quantitative perspective, if prominence is given to what is called L3 (using the terminology coined by Corrius 2008 and Corrius and Zabalbeascoa 2011), or the third language, this will influence the way this language is transferred (or not) to the target audience; and translation may not be incorporated if the dialogue in the foreign language does not move the narrative forward. However, even languages which occur only occasionally may play a key role in the film narrative. Thus, the qualitative aspect must also be taken into account, notably the function of L3 and the role it plays in the plurality of the film.

The expectations of the viewer also carry weight. Indeed, the linguistic background of the target audience and the extent to which it masters the languages involved may influence the decision about whether or not to translate L3 (Díaz Cintas 2011; Vermeulen 2012).

It is important to consider the context in which L3 occurs, and translation is not always the most obvious choice. Other semiotic codes may help the audience understand what is going on in a particular scene (Baldo 2009; Díaz Cintas 2011). De Bonis (2014: 171), following Baldo (2009), uses the label "contextual translation": the overall context of the scene and the non-verbal information (images, sounds, etc.) enable viewers to extract the meaning from what they see on screen, thus relying on the polysemiotic nature of audiovisual texts.

Sometimes the decision is taken not to translate L3 at all. The absence of translation can help to capture a sense of alienation and reflect the immigrants' own incomprehension of their environment (i.e. the host country), thus placing the audience at the same level as the characters. At the same time, untranslated dialogue may also suggest mutual understanding between characters, thus reducing the cultural distance between them, even though they speak different native languages.

As further discussed in section 3, one of the most frequent methods for making multilingualism accessible is the adoption of intradiegetic translation strategies,

namely "forms of translation contained within the narrative structure of the film" (Cronin 2009: 116), which enhance the visibility of translation itself. These strategies involve characters from the fictional world who serve as interpreters, whether professional or not (Kozloff 2000: 80), to translate the interventions of other characters[2] and sometimes play the role of cultural mediators. A further intradiegetic translation technique is "self-translation" (Martínez Sierra *et al.* 2010: 22), which occurs when characters translate their own contributions into another language to facilitate communication or rely on machine translation systems to translate written texts.

As well as intradiegetic translation, there are of course extradiegetic translation techniques. While some authors have discussed the combination of dubbing and subtitling as a successful translation solution for multilingual films (Agost 2000; Heiss 2004; Corrius and Zabalbeascoa 2011; O'Sullivan 2011; De Higes Andino 2014, among others), generally leaving aside the voice-over transfer mode (Chaume 2004; Skuggevik 2009), others have favoured subtitling over dubbing. In particular, according to Naficy (2001) and Wahl (2005), subtitles seem to better preserve the complex relationship between the characters and their individual voices in different languages. Szarkowska (2005) stresses that, since subtitles supplement rather than substitute, "the audience is not allowed to forget about the foreignness of a translated film", thus helping to retain authenticity. Moreover, Baldo (2009) and Cronin (2009) have discussed the potential of subtitles to create an effect of alienation, because they highlight an "otherness" that contrasts with the original dialogue preserved in aural form, which in turn serves to amplify the linguistic diversity of the film. Similarly, Rizzo (2018) points out that in the subtitled version of multilingual films more attention is generally given to the reproduction of SL language and culture and to the maintenance of difference on screen.

However, to allow the audience to make use of the so-called "suspension of disbelief" (Coleridge 1817/1985: 314), subtitling needs to achieve "immediate intelligibility" (Pedersen 2011: 23) in order to facilitate reception. This often means eliminating the marked features of a whole range of dimensions, such as

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[2] This form of translation is also referred to as liaison interpreting (Martínez Sierra *et al.* 2010: 20) or intratextual translation (Corrius and Zabalbeascoa 2011: 114).

syntax, levels of speech, social or geographical origin, and style (Mailhac 2000: 131), thus losing the linguistic characterisation of the speakers. Therefore, since the audience is presented with "single-language subtitles" (Heiss 2004: 215), subtitling may function as a "levelling agent" (Dwyer 2017: 32), thus creating a homogenising effect.

However, as further discussed in section 4, this general tendency may be reversed. Subtitles may not only reproduce the polyphony of voices that this genre of film tries to represent, but they can also exaggerate (on different levels, as shown in section 4) peculiarities of a character's way of speaking, perhaps in an attempt to heighten the viewers' engagement with the L3(s). This might bring us a step closer towards a more realistic depiction of migrants' linguistic identities on screen. The following sections will expand on these ideas.

3. Italian migration cinema

Since the 1990s films have dominated the cinematographic representation of "migratory and diasporic experiences" (Berghahan and Sternberg 2010: 16), but migration has always been a significant element in the production, distribution, and exhibition of films. It has been largely documented (Dwyer 2005: 304) that the success of Hollywood films in cinema's silent era depended in fact on the exoticism of their narratives, with films often depicting popular attitudes towards migrants, their aspirations, and the obstacles they encountered in their host countries, as shown in the following sections.

3.1. Italians as migrants

One of the very first films to represent migration on screen was *L'Emigrante* (1915) by director Febo Mari (Sanfilippo 2009: 9). It tells the story of an Italian man, Antonio, who leaves his country hoping to try his luck in South America. In the film, it is possible to observe the translation of a diegetic text – a text located within the story world and used to convey key plot points – as shown in Figure 1:

Figure 1. *L'Emigrante* (1915): substitution technique

While looking for an employment agency in Brazil, Antonio encounters a man in the street, who shows him a sign in Portuguese, which displays the words "Agencia de colloçaõ". Pointing gestures were particularly relevant in silent films due to the absence of spoken dialogue; and here the attention of the Italian audience is explicitly drawn to the text written in a foreign language. Subsequently, the sign is translated into Italian, the target language of the film, and integrated into the original image track with a close-up shot; however, the effect is momentary because the Italian sign is replaced, in the following scene, with the original text in Portuguese (Figure 1). This substitution technique[3] fulfils the same function as a subtitle or even a voiceover translation in a dubbed film, and the reshot insert carries the narration visually, using the same typographical and spatial format as the Portuguese sign. However, without the insertion of the translated text, the audience would have seamlessly shared the point of view of Antonio as an Italian-speaking immigrant confronted with an unfamiliar world.

In the 1920s, no attention was given in Italian films to Italian migrants. However, many Italian migration films were produced in the 1930s, such as Giovacchino Forzano's *Camicia Nera* (1933), a propaganda film produced and distributed by Istituto Luce. Through the story of an Italian blacksmith who emigrates to France, the film celebrates the tenth anniversary of Mussolini's fascist regime. In the film, during the popular assemblies held in some of the countries affected by World War One, political representatives of different nationalities take the floor. The first political speech is given in Italian, but the speeches that follow are delivered in French and Russian, and left untranslated for the primary target

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[3] A similar technique, known as the "translating dissolve", was employed between the silent period and the early 1960s (see O'Sullivan 2011: 45-50).

audience. Moreover, the substitution strategy adopted in *L'Emigrante* (Figure 1) is not employed here: the diegetic text that appears behind each speaker remains untranslated, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. *Camicia Nera* (1933): untranslated diegetic texts

Clearly, the foreignness of the untranslated scenes is of paramount importance, partly due to the nature and scope of the film itself (Brunetta 2009: 91), whereas in Febo Mari's film priority is given to facilitating the audience's comprehension of the plot.

From the end of the 1940s onwards, the use of at least one foreign language in Italian migration films became increasingly common, although not widespread. In Raffaello Matarazzo's *Catene* (1949), the protagonist, Guglielmo, flees to the USA after killing his wife's ex-boyfriend. Guglielmo is stopped by two American policemen who ask him to show them his passport. A bilingual dialogue begins: the policemen pose questions in English and Guglielmo answers in Italian, with the English lines left untranslated for the Italian audience. On the one hand, the decision not to translate the words spoken in English is a gesture that enables the audience to more fully appreciate the linguistic clash. On the other hand, the idea of mutual understanding is conveyed, thanks to the characters' passive knowledge of the foreign language (Gugliemo's understanding of English and the American policemen's comprehension of Italian). Moreover, the absence of any form of mediation (on the part of an interpreter, for instance) creates an immediate bridge between the two languages and cultures, thus reducing their linguistic and cultural distance.

In contrast, in Pietro Germi's *Il Cammino della Speranza* (1950) a bilingual dialogue is mediated by an interpreter, albeit a random one. The film follows the journey of a group of Italian miners migrating to France. When they are about to cross the frontier, in the final scene, they are stopped by a group of French soldiers. When an official asks them in French where they come from, one of the soldiers acts as an interpreter, translating the question into Italian and the migrants reply in French. The fact that the exchange is mediated here not only emphasises the linguistic and cultural distance between the two groups involved, but it also illustrates the more powerful position of "the host" over "the migrant".

The presence of foreign languages in Italian films increased in the 1960s. For example, Dino Risi's *Il Gaucho* (1964) centres on the experiences of an Italian film producer, Mario Ravicchio, who travels to Argentina for a film festival contest. The main language is Italian but, when addressing Spanish speakers, the protagonist frequently uses a mix of Italian and Spanish (e.g. "Pronto! Por favor, puede despiertarme en una hora y entregarm... portame 'na bottiglia di wiskey e mettila sul conto del Festival?"[4]). This achieves a comic effect, but it also shows that character's cultural and linguistic integration in the host country is partial. No translation is provided for the primary audience; the fact that Italian has been mixed with another language is clear to native Italian speakers and members of the audience with some knowledge of the Italian language. Moreover, the Spanish elements are intelligible, given the proximity between Spanish and Italian.

A higher degree of linguistic diversity is present in Franco Brusati's award-winning film *Pane e Cioccolata* (1973), which recounts the story of an Italian man, Giovanni Garofoli, who emigrates to Switzerland. In addition to Italian, the German, Greek, English, and Spanish languages are also frequently spoken but never translated for the primary target audience. The director's main objective was to convey the difficult struggle to integrate into German multilingual society at that time (Cavallaro 2006: 31); both the Italian migrants on screen and Italian viewers somehow feel lost.

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[4] "Hello? Could you please wake me up in an hour and bring me a bottle of whiskey and charge it to the festival?" (translation mine).

Moving from Germany to the USA, the film *Good Morning Babilonia* (1987) directed by Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, follows two brothers (Nicola and Andrea Bonanno) who migrate from Italy to the United States in 1911. The film includes a little dialogue in English, which does not move the narrative forward, and a diegetic text. Only the latter is translated into Italian with subtitles, as shown in Figure 3:

Figure 3. *Good Morning Babilonia* (1987): translated diegetic text

The title of the newspaper article (from *The Times*) refers to *Intolerance*, an epic silent film on which Nicola and Andrea are working as set designers. Protests are feared for the premiere because the film strongly condemns any form of violence and coincides with the American entry into World War I. The substitution technique adopted in the 1920s (Figure 1) to translate diegetic texts has been replaced by the more modern subtitles which transfer the meaning of the title succinctly ("Film opposed to all wars" has not been translated).

In the years that followed, the production of Italian films dealing with Italian migrants dropped dramatically, and more attention was given to Italy as a host country, as discussed in the following section.

3.2. Italians as hosts

The very first Italian film dealing with immigrants was Roberto Rossellini's *Stromboli, Terra di Dio* (1949). The protagonist is Karin, a Lithuanian refugee

who agrees to marry Antonio and move to Stromboli (a Sicilian island). The film revolves around the conflict between two cultures which are difficult to reconcile. In the Italian version of the film[5], Karin struggles to communicate in a language which is not her own (i.e. Italian), and almost the entire film is in Italian. This accentuates the sense of conflict and reflects the barriers to communication, thus faithfully representing the difficulties experienced by a migrant in an Italian host community.

Yet it was not until the 1990s that immigration became an important cinematic theme for Italian directors, and Italy came to be represented as a host country on the big screen. In 1994, Gianni Amelio directed his first migration film, *Lamerica*, about Albanians desperately trying to find a way of emigrating to Italy by boat. The main language of the film is Italian and almost all the Albanian interlocutors with whom the Italian businessmen, Gino and Fiore, interact speak Italian, with some grammatical errors. On the few occasions on which the Albanian language is used, this is mediated through amateur and professional interpreters, who facilitate communication between the characters on screen and between the characters and the film's primary audience (i.e. Italian viewers). All interpreters in the film are Albanian, thus reversing the "migrant-host" power relation that can be found in Pietro Germi's *Il Cammino della Speranza* (section 2.1).

Two years later, director Matteo Garrone made his debut with *Terra Di Mezzo* (1996), focussing on the marginalisation and labour exploitation of immigrants. The main language of the film is Italian, with the exception of very short scenes in which migrants speak their native languages (Albanian and Hausa) among themselves. These are not translated for the benefit of the primary target audience, since these exchanges do not steer the development of the plot. The same director released another migration film, *Ospiti*, in 1998. Unlike *Terra Di Mezzo*, the film contains no foreign dialogue. It portrays two young Albanians

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[5] There are three versions of the film. One is an American-English version distributed by RKO in February 1950 with several additions (Marcarini 2011: 136-137), including a voice-over narrator intended to make the story easier to follow. Two further versions were produced: an international one, with mainly English dialogue (Gallagher 1998: 332-335), presented in August 1950 at the International Venice Film Festival (out of competition); and another mainly in Italian (*ibid.*), which circulated on the Italian market and was six minutes shorter than the international one.

living and working in Rome who are completely integrated, and therefore Italian is the exclusive language of the film.

With the exception of Gianni Amelio's *Lamerica*, most of the Italian films featuring immigration in the 1990s are spoken almost entirely in Italian. The immigrant is depicted as an integrated figure, at least from a linguistic point of view, able to communicate in Italian, with a slight foreign accent and a few grammar mistakes.

However, from the 2000s onwards, a migratory wave towards Italy of unprecedented proportions (see, among others, Macioti and Pugliese 2010) put the issue of immigration at the centre of both the Italian political scene and Italian cinema production. This resulted in an increased number of Italian films dealing with migration and a greater awareness of linguistic diversity, in an attempt to more faithfully represent migrants and their difficulties. For example, *Quando Sei Nato Non Puoi Più Nasconderti* by Marco Tullio Giordana (2005) centres on the character of thirteen-year-old Sandro, who is rescued by a fishing boat carrying illegal immigrants to Italian shores. In addition to Italian, the film includes Romanian and some unidentified African languages. These are translated for the film's primary audience by amateur and professional interpreters at the temporary migrants' centre. Interpretation is the only form of translation throughout the whole film and, as in *Lamerica*, the translating is always done by non-Italians.

Marco Tullio Giordana's film was followed by a series of titles by Andrea Segre, an Italian director who has prolifically represented the migrant experience on screen. While *Io sono Li* (2011) tells the story of Shun Li, a Chinese woman who moves to Chioggia (discussed in section 4), the main character of *La Prima Neve* (2013) is a young refugee from Togo, Dani, who migrates to a small village located in the Italian Alps region; here, he develops a friendship with Michele, an 11-year-old Italian boy. In addition to Italian, which is the main language of the film, French can be heard, as well as Ewe (a language spoken in Ghana and Togo), and *mòchena*, an Italian dialect closely related to Bavarian. Segre provides the Italian audience with subtitles (as he does in *Io sono Li*) for all of the foreign content. Interestingly, while the Togolese Dani

speaks Italian and is perfectly understood by the target audience, subtitles have been added to translate Michele's lines in the *mòchena* dialect, thus reversing the expected dualism "hosts-no subtitles vs. migrants-subtitles".

Andrea Segre also directed *L'Ordine Delle Cose* (2017), where Corrado, a policeman for the European task force in charge of immigration control, is forced to choose between respecting the law or saving the life of Swada, a young Somali woman. From a linguistic point of view, it is a very rich and complex film. There are three main languages: Italian, Arabic, and English, which is used as a lingua franca. French is also present but less relevant from a quantitative point of view. As well as amateur and professional interpreters, the film incorporates a more recent addition, Google Translate, which Corrado uses to translate some of Swada's documents from Somalian to Italian.

The fact that Italian films have become linguistically more diverse since the beginning of the 1990s reflects a greater awareness among Italian directors of the cultural and linguistic complexities experienced by migrants arriving in the country. In Wahl's words (2005: 2), "languages are used in the way they would be used in reality […] to define geographical or political borders, 'visualise' the different social, personal or cultural levels of the characters and enrich their aura in conjunction with the voice".

This section has shown that Andrea Segre stands out among Italian directors who have represented immigration on screen. He has successfully reflected on the real-life linguistic diversity experienced not only by migrants (who are unfamiliar with the language of their host country) but also by Italians themselves, who are confronted with a "defamiliarisation of the familiar". Standard Italian is signalled as the national language, while Italian dialects are treated as "other languages" and translated with subtitles. This amplifies the polyphony of voices that characterises migration films post-1990s and may add to the difficulty of distributing these pictures abroad, as shown in the following section.

4. Analysis: *Io Sono Li* in Italy and in the USA

Andrea Segre's first fiction film, *Io sono Li,* recounts the experiences of a young Chinese woman, Shun Li, who works in a textile factory on the outskirts of Rome. She is suddenly transferred to Chioggia, a small city in the north of Italy with a strong "social and territorial identity"[6], to work as a bartender in a local bar where fishermen have been going for generations. Bepi, a Slavic and gentle fisherman, is one of the regular customers; the two strike up a friendship, which has the potential to become something more.

The space in which Shun Li is dislocated represents a closed and male space where dialect is used to communicate and be accepted. Although the female protagonist understands and speaks Italian, she has to learn the local dialect in order to gain acceptance, assert her position in the bar, and communicate with the clientele. The main languages of the film are Mandarin Chinese and *chioggiano*, the Italian dialect spoken in Chioggia, while standard Italian is significantly less relevant in terms of quantity. Consequently, the film's primary audience (i.e. Italian viewers) is familiar with neither of the two primary languages, which have both been translated with Italian subtitles. These has been planned at an early stage in the film's production and O'Sullivan (2007: 81) calls them "part-subtitles"; as the director Segre himself states "Tutti i miei documentari e film hanno sottotitoli perché lavoro sempre con più lingue contemporaneamente" (A. Segre, personal communication, May 16, 2017)[7]. Even so, the difference between the use of standard Italian and the *chioggiano* dialect can be easily recognised by native Italian viewers and by members of the audience with some knowledge of the Italian language who engage in "semantic listening", that is listening for words and meaning (Chion 1994: 28). Similarly, it is clear when characters are using Chinese (a Sinitic language), which obviously differs greatly from Italian. In this case, the Chinese language provokes "reduced listening" (*ibid.*: 29), because the Italian audience recognises it only as sound.

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[6] *Director's Notes: Io Sono Li.* Available online: http://www.iosonoli.com/en/note-di-regia/ (visited 22/10/19).

[7] "All my documentaries and films have subtitles because I always work with multiple languages at the same time" (translation mine).

After receiving the European Parliament's LUX Prize in 2012, the film was successfully distributed throughout thirty countries. In the US, it was distributed in 2013 in DVD format by Film Movement, a North American distributor of award-winning independent and foreign films founded in 2003 and based in New York City. At the post-production stage, Italian subtitles were eliminated and English subtitles added to translate all three languages of the film (Mandarin Chinese, *chioggiano*, and standard Italian)[8], all of which provoke "reduced listening" (*ibid.*: 29), because the American audience recognise them only as sound (this applies to Italian viewers too, but only with regard to Chinese).

Given that subtitles should be grammatically correct so as to avoid problems of comprehension and remain "invisible" (Díaz Cintas and Remael, 2007: 192), this may have incurred the risk of homogenisation and neutralisation: in the passage to standard English, are the retranslated subtitles "diluted" and deprived of the richness of the linguistic components of the different cultural identities? In what follows, a comparative study is carried out to see how the English subtitles (target text 2) represent the polyphony of voices of the original dialogue and to observe how the linguistic identity of the Chinese migrant, Li, changes in the passage to English. As a reference point, the Italian subtitles (i.e. target text 1) are also taken into account. The study focuses on the strategies applied on two levels of analysis: lexical level (e.g. the maintenance of foreign words as signs of exoticism), and grammatical/morphological level (e.g. mistakes in the subtitled language) (Rizzo 2018: 105).

In the first example, on arrival in Chioggia, Shun Li is confronted with the difficulties of both understanding the local dialect and correctly speaking Italian, in the context of her new job in a local bar, as shown in Table 1 below. At this point in the film, the new bar owner, Zhang, is telling Shun Li where to note down the customers' debts, or *ciodi*, which is the equivalent in the *chioggiano* dialect. In this way, Shun Li learns a key term for her new job as bartender, which will be useful for communicating with the local clientele.

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[8] Presumably, the Italian subtitles were used as the source text and translated into the English subtitles.

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT 1	TARGET TEXT 2
ZHANG: [*in Chinese*]	Qui i debiti li chiamano "ciodi".	Debts here are called "ciodi".
ZHANG: [*in Chinese*]	Prima volta in un bar?	Is this your first time in a bar?
SHUN LI: Sì, prima cucivo.	∅	Yes, before sewing.

Table 1. Chinese/*chioggiano*/Shun Li's Italian (00:11:34 - 00:11:39)

The word *ciodi* is framed by quotation marks in the Italian subtitles to indicate that this is not standard Italian. This choice is in line with the majority of subtitling guidelines, which advise translators to use inverted commas or italics, depending on the company, when dealing with lexical borrowings and neologisms that have not been adopted by the target community, especially regarding lesser-known languages (Díaz-Cintas and Remael 2007: 119). The quotation marks have been transferred to the English subtitles and the *chioggiano* term has been retained in the translation as a sign of exoticism, perhaps in a similar attempt to signal the passage between Chinese and the local dialect in the subtitles.

Having noticed Shun Li's struggle to understand the way the bar functions, including aspects such as debt collection, Zhang asks her if she has ever worked as a bartender before. His question in Chinese is correctly rendered in the English subtitles from a grammatical point of view ("is this your first time in a bar", meaning "is this your first time as bartender?"), but Shun Li's response in Italian (*sì, prima cucivo*) is not a correct response in English. "Yes, before sewing" is meant to convey that, before coming to Chioggia, she worked in a textile factory; but the gerund "sewing" is employed, instead of the subject + verb construction "I sewed". Although Shun Li's Italian is particularly weak during the first part of the film, in this case the English subtitles give the impression that it is even worse than it really is.

Then, Zhang asks Shun Li where Maria (the former Italian bar owner), and Lian (the other Chinese bartender) are:

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT 1	TARGET TEXT 2
ZHANG: [*in Chinese*]	Dove sono?	Where are they?
SHUN LI: Usciti.	∅	They go out.

Table 2. Chinese/Shun Li's Italian (00:11:39 - 00:11:40)

Since Italian is Shun Li's second language (as previously shown in Table 1), it often deviates from standard norms and is characterised by syntactic simplifications, such as the omission of *sono* in *sono usciti*. Obviously, the Italian version does not provide the audience with a subtitle in this instance, since the sentence is perfectly intelligible for the film's primary audience, despite its incomplete syntactic structure. Interestingly, the English subtitle tries to render the same incompleteness and incorrectness of the original by using the present tense of the phrasal verb "go out" instead of the present perfect form "have gone out", which would be the natural choice in English to describe a recent past event. This contrasts with the translation of Zhang's line in Chinese, which correctly follows the English grammar rules for forming questions ("Where are they?") and appropriately uses the present verb form "are" (the bar owner wants to know where they are "now").

Similarly, in the following example, the English subtitles seem to reproduce the contrast between Shun Li's weak competence in Italian and Bepi's more accurate use of the language:

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT 1	TARGET TEXT 2
BEPI: Anche noi siamo pescatori. Mio padre, mio nonno, il nonno di mio nonno…	∅	We also are fishermen. My father, my grandfather,
SHUN LI: Mio padre era pescatore. Io no, io fabbrica.	∅	- the grandfather of my grandfather… - My father fishermen. I do not, I factory.
BEPI: Tuo padre è vivo?	∅	Is your father living?
SHUN LI: Sì, è come voi. In pensione, giusto?	∅	Yes, he is like you... He has pension, right?
BEPI: Giusto.	∅	Right.

Table 3. Standard Italian/Shun Li's Italian (00:31:18 - 00:32:00)

Bepi shares some of his life history with Shun Li, referring to the tradition of fishing in his family. Even if in English Bepi's language is not perfect (e.g. he says "we *also are* fishermen" instead of "we *are also* fishermen", emphasis mine), the English subtitles reproduce as faithfully as possible his correct usage of standard Italian. On the other hand, Shun Li's subtitles once again refrain from "correcting" the non-accurate Italian spoken by the Chinese woman and, what is more, the translation adds grammatical errors which are absent from the original. Firstly, in Italian she correctly uses the verb *era* in *mio padre era pescatore* (i.e. my father was a fishermen), but the English subtitle omits the past form of the verb to be ("my father fishermen") and incorrectly chooses the plural form, "fisherm*en*" (emphasis mine) instead of "fisherm*an*" (emphasis mine). Secondly, while the Italian construction *io no* is syntactically correct as a continuation of *mio padre era pescatore* (meaning that her father was a fisherman but she was not), the English subtitle opts for "I do not", where the verb "to be" can be expected, making the utterance incorrect because it does not refer back to the previous sentence using a conventional norm ("I am not"). Moreover, both the original and the English translation present the same linguistic inaccuracies: the omission of the verb *lavoravo* ("worked"), the preposition of place "in" and the indefinite article "a" (I worked in a factory). However, while the Italian collocation *[essere] in pensione* (to be retired) is correct, the English translation "to have pension" is not.

In the original version of the film, at least, Shun Li's use of Italian is seen to slowly improve and this allows her to gain acceptance in the bar milieu. Interestingly, the English subtitles seem once again to signal the passage between one language of the film to another, in this case the difference between standard Italian and local dialect, as shown in Table 4:

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT 1	TARGET TEXT 2
SHUN LI: Sei Devis? Hai un ciodo di diciotto euro.	∅	You are Devis? You have a "ciodo" of 18 euros.
DEVIS: [*Dialetto*]	Questa è fuori di testa, non lo vedi che è matta!	She's off her rocker, she's nuts!

Table 4. *Chioggiano*/Shun Li's Italian (00:16:34 - 00:16:48)

The customer, Devis, has a debt of 18 euros to settle and Shung Li correctly uses the dialect term *ciodo*, which is again maintained in its original form in the English subtitles and signalled by quotation marks (see Table 1). Once again, the English translation reflects poorly on Shung Li's use of Italian and wrongly renders the Italian question *sei Devis?* (i.e. are you Devis?) as "You are Devis?", thus not following the English rule for forming questions (in this case, the inversion of subject and verb). Afterwards, the customer is shown to master the local dialect, in contrast with the bartender: this is reflected in the English subtitles containing colourful idiomatic expressions ("off one's rocker" and "she's nuts") which are widely used in American slang. Likewise, the character's superior level of competence in using the dialect is portrayed in the standard Italian subtitle: *questa è fuori di testa, non lo vedi che è matta!*, which is again idiomatic (and could be rendered in English as "This one is out of her mind, you can't see that she's crazy!") in English.

5. Final remarks

Migration has been one of the most popular cinematic themes since cinema's silent era, with an increasing number of Italian films dramatising and personalising the migrant experience. Thus, the translation of audiovisual texts – because of their enormous social impact and high visibility as a site of intercultural exchange (Ramière 2006) – has played a crucial role in creating, spreading, and renegotiating the representations and identities of migrants depicted on the big screen by Italian directors over the years (section 2). A vast array of translation practices has been used to either mediate or accentuate linguistic diversity, from substitution and dissolving techniques (section 2.1) to the more modern use of machine translation systems, such as Google Translate (section 2.2).

Migrants can be defined as "translated beings" who are constantly engaged in "translating and explaining themselves" (Rushdie 1983: 49) while at the same time translated by others, either intradiegetically or extradiegetically. Thus, films on migration and their polyphony of voices make communication and translation issues more visible (Cronin 2009; Şerban 2012), requiring an extra effort on the

part of the audience, depending on the chosen translation modality (section 3). In fact, in migration films translation affects both the horizontal (i.e. the interaction between the film's characters) and the vertical level of communication (i.e. the interaction between the film's characters and the viewers), shaping both the representation and the perception of migrants' identities.

In this context, audience expectations surrounding the representation of multilingualism in migration films have changed over the years, partly because of greater exposure to communication across languages (Takeda 2014: 107). Moreover, human migration is one of the defining issues of this century, and therefore Italian films have been increasingly shaped by multicultural and multiethnic themes and influences. This has led to a more realistic approach to multilingualism on screen. First, the binary opposition between marginalised (migrants) and dominant (hosts) cultures has been reversed, with dialogues frequently mediated by migrants and not by hosts (section 2.2), as in real-life interpreter-mediated interactions in Italy, especially when "minority" languages are involved.

Secondly, a more realistic approach to multilingualism on screen has resulted in a departure from more traditional subtitling norms (section 3). From Ivarsson and Carroll's *Code of Good Subtitling Practice* (1998) to the guidelines offered by Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007), subtitling norms state that the language of subtitles should be grammatically correct. Perhaps this is linked to the idea that grammatical mistakes in writing tend to "shock" the audience more than incorrect oral speech. There is also the commonly shared belief that subtitling has to be as invisible as possible and that "the focus must remain on the puppet, not the puppeteer" (Béhar 2004: 85) in order to help the audience achieve the suspension of disbelief. The invisibility of subtitling is a frequently reiterated theme not only in academia but also in the subtitling profession itself. This was recently confirmed by Szarkowska (2016), who investigated current market practices on subtitle presentation through an online survey among professional subtitlers.

However, more recent guidelines, such as the latest version of Netflix's style guide issued in 2018, state that "deliberate misspellings and mispronunciations should not be reproduced in the translation *unless plot-pertinent*" (emphasis mine)[9] and the English DVD subtitles of *Io Sono Li* distributed by Film Movement seem to follow this tendency. Not only are the subtitles characterised by grammatical/morphological mistakes (section 4), thus reproducing *Li's* hesitant and broken Italian, but they are also able to exaggerate the peculiarities of the female protagonist's way of speaking, perhaps in an attempt to heighten the viewers' engagement with the film's L3(s).

On the one hand, this slightly changes the linguistic characterisation of the protagonist. Her Italian is certainly not perfect but her level is better than it appears in English. On the other hand, the strategy of not correcting and even exaggerating Li's broken Italian in the English subtitles could be seen as a way of rendering the polyphony of voices of the original, which is something that the film's primary audience (i.e. Italian viewers) can readily appreciate.

To conclude, in the case under study, the layers and nuances of linguistic diversity seem not to lose their complexity in the passage to English, thus having a positive effect on audience engagement among Anglophone viewers.

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