

Somers Town.
Multilingual settings explored
in audiovisual translation contexts

Alessandra Rizzi

University of Palermo

Abstract

In the last decades advances in digital communication and audiovisual translation studies have significantly transformed the ways by which texts and people travel across linguistic, spatial and temporal boundaries. This is particularly evident in the everchanging landscape of audiovisual translation as a consequence of the digital revolution that has contributed to the creation of new forms of adaptation and proliferation of mediated and non-mediated products.

The case of multilingual discourse applied to contemporary diasporic and migrant films, in which sociolinguistics intervenes as a methodological approach to the translation of marginal voices, has gained scholarly attention as a result of the unprecedented number of migratory influxes within European countries, as well as of the effects of globalisation that have stimulated the growth of new perspectives on multilingual societies. These phenomena have had an impact on the interpretation and valorization of multilingualism as a resource for the understanding of crucial contemporary issues in the areas of intercultural communication, migration, multiculturalism and bilingualism within and outside European borders.

One aspect that makes multilingualism in films particularly interesting is that it is based on language diversity and difference, which make translation visible. Translation therefore becomes part of the migrant stories and serves as a communication device among characters.

Drawing on studies on multilingualism in films and audiovisual translation studies within the field of language variation and difference, this survey depicts the multilingual setting of British filmmaker Shane Meadows's Somers Town (2008) and aims to reflect, on the one hand, upon the development of European cinema in motion within a contemporary political framework of migrations and crossings and, on the other hand, upon the difficulties, challenges and constraints posed by the translation of language variation in multilingual films within procedures of audiovisual translation strategies and techniques. The investigation presents the different levels of language variation that intermingle in the film taken as a case in point, and also scrutinises alternative tools for the translation of multilingual speech (such as creative subtitling) in the attempt not to sacrifice the socio-cultural dimension of multilingual films, as well as the concepts of difference and realism which are the basis of multilingualism in cinema. Once the importance of multilingualism is determined, the subtitler will be able to decide which translation strategy can be used in order to disseminate the various multilingual levels that form the multilingual film in question.

Keywords: language variation, creative subtitling, migration cinema, audiovisual translation

1. Introduction

Audiovisual translation studies is a recent active field, though intertitles appeared in the early 1900s. Subtitling, dubbing and voice-over have been a blessing for the film industry, since they have permitted films to travel abroad, occupy international spaces and also have digital dissemination. Given its hybrid nature, audiovisual translation today attracts attention from scholars in translation studies, film studies, media studies, sociolinguistics and the sociology of cinema. Research in multilingualism in films has also increased within the creative cultural industries due to the main focus of this film genre on themes such as multiculturalism, immigration, cultural identity issues and war. Against a backdrop that testifies to the increasing popularity of multilingual films across platforms of niche audiences, translation issues referring to the constraints imposed on the translator/subtitler of multilingual films have received scholarly attention and have been measured according to the degree of multilingualism in polyglot films.

Moving from the concept that a multilingual film is by definition a multilingual object composed of image and sound - as forms of language in their own right, multilingual films can be regarded as films involved in more than one 'natural' language in their dialogue and narration. Multilingual films are therefore characterised by the presence of various languages or forms of languages within one film, including regional variation, accent and slang. Such a variety of multilingual films calls for equally diverse translation strategies ranging from total respect of multilingualism to imposed monolingualism.

Drawing on studies on multilingualism in films and audiovisual translation studies within the areas of language variation and difference, this study depicts the multilingual setting of a 2008 film entitled *Somers Town* and aims to reflect, on the one hand, upon the growth of European cinema in motion within a contemporary political framework of migrations and crossings and, on the other hand, upon the difficulties, challenges and constraints posed by the translation of language variation in multilingual films within mechanisms of audiovisual translation strategies and techniques. The investigation presents the different levels of language variation that intermingle in the film taken as a case in point, and also scrutinises alternative tools for the translation of multilingual speech (such as creative subtitling) in the attempt not to sacrifice the socio-cultural dimension of multilingual films, as well as the concepts of difference and realism, which are implicitly the basis of multilingualism in cinema. Multilingualism in films becomes a challenging category, if it is viewed from the perspective of the audiovisual translation challenges and constraints which arise from the creation of subtitled versions.

British films centred on migration are usually multilingual, since their objective is to depict linguistic diversity in today's British society. This is also the principal aim in the film *Somers Town*. If multilingualism characterises this typology of film, then what "happens when multilingual films are translated into other languages for

distribution abroad? Is multilingualism maintained in the target versions of the film? And when multilingualism is omitted or substituted, is filmic manipulation technically or ideologically bounded?” (de Higes-Andino, 2014: 211).

This study tries to establish a relationship between multilingualism/language variety in films and the different facets of translation—from its modes and techniques to its constraints—in the attempt to shed light on useful methods for the translation of multilingual films in any L2 and L3. Creative subtitling, with its peculiarities, provides useful alternative forms of translation and, more importantly, strategies for signalling the multilingual effect in translated versions—where it is possible to do it without compromising the final rendering of the subtitled version.

2. On migration films or diasporic films in motion

Despite global societies having been transformed into multilingual realities, films have been largely monolingual throughout history, and very little research was done in the past on multilingualism. Today the new policies in the field of the creative industries, the evolution of the European Union’s political and socio-cultural strategies, and the significant twentieth- and early twenty-first- century migratory movements, have brought about an interest in multilingualism in films. Indeed, the unprecedented number of migratory influxes and the effects of globalisation have stimulated the growth of new perspectives on multilingual societies and have also had an impact on the interpretation and valorization of multilingualism as a resource for the understanding of crucial contemporary issues in the areas of intercultural communication (Katan, 2009), migration, multiculturalism and bilingualism within and outside European borders.

Ongoing social and cultural changes, and the new interests in the spread of aesthetic audiovisual products that are able to testify the political and social transformations occurring in current times, have shifted the attention of filmmakers and producers to the dissemination of films and documentaries where the phenomenon of migration in all its connotations and implications could be represented and could also be used as a stimulus for future intercultural approaches within multilingual cinema.

Countless multilingual films on the topic of migration have been produced since the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century in order to contribute to the diffusion of the historical and political conditions of the migratory crossings over seas, borders and barbed wire (Demos, 2013; Moslund, Petersen and Schramm, 2015; Bond, Bonsaver and Faloppa, 2015; Mazzara, 2015; 2016). Indeed, over the past thirty years, European multilingual films have been transformed as a result of the increased visibility of filmmakers with a “migratory background” and a “growing interest in the facets and dynamics of postmodern multiculturalism” (Berghahn and Sternberg, 2014: 2). Modalities of

representations of “migrant and diasporic experiences and cross-cultural encounters have assumed a prominent position in cinematic narratives. As a consequence of these proliferating migrations, European cultures and societies have witnessed an inconceivable diversification, fragmentation and hybridization” (ibid.).

Multilingualism has turned into a central element for some sectors in the film industry, where multilingual settings, characterised by the switching from a standard language to varieties of non-standard language, uncover linguistic diversity and cultural difference. Multilingualism in films thus includes issues such as cross-cultural communication, individual and societal multilingual contexts, language politics and ideology, language and narration, translation and authenticity, and language contact. Language contact is a common phenomenon in today’s globalised world and filmmakers interested in migration and minorities tend to incorporate the contemporary context of cultural exchanges into the story of their films.

3. Somers Town

3.1 The film

Derived from the forgotten Somers landowning family, *Somers Town* is British director Shane Meadows’s dramatic film in black and white, which portrays a micro-community in a quarter between King’s Cross and Euston Road. The events take place in that area of London and have as protagonist, Tomo, a young boy from Nottingham (the broken home he runs away from), who attempts to escape from the sense of solitude and frustration he has experienced in his native Midlands. He gets off the train in London with no clue about what to do or where to stay. He meets Marek, a lonely Polish boy, whose father, Mariusz is a construction worker on the Eurostar terminal. Marek loves photography but has to cope with the existence of an alcoholic father. Sentiments of loneliness pervade Marek’s soul and his solitude becomes the landmark of the micro-community the Polish boy belongs to, as well as of the London metropolis in a broader sense. When he meets Tomo, he invites the homeless boy to move to his place. Marek and Tom become good friends and share a reciprocal love for a French waitress, Maria, who is apparently happy to keep the friendship of her two suitors. When the girl decides to go back to Paris, the two boys would like to do their best to find her.

The three characters, Tomo, Marek and Maria, occupy the multilingual setting in a multicultural London. Marek’s father works too many hours per day and this makes him drink and his son unhappy. Maria, the French immigrant girl who attempts to experience a new life in the British metropolis, is very lonely, and Tomo, who is an immigrant within his own country, abandons his native industrial

Midlands, which he sees as unfamiliar and distant to him. Within a varied multilingual and sociocultural framework, Tomo signals a regional linguistic variety within Standard English, the Polish father and son represent multiculturalism in London as a consequence of voluntary immigration from Poland, and the French girl reinforces the ambitious construction of multilingualism in the film within a globalised scenario. The black and white aesthetics in *Somers Town* provides the film with a sense of “lyrical evocation of mood – loneliness, dislocation, the sickening potency of first love” (Fradley, 2011: 286).

3.2 Language variation in Somers Town

The stories of the characters living in Somers Town are set within the context of a young working-class generation of immigrants. Their belonging to working class systems and to a young generation of immigrants categorises them from a sociolinguistic perspective. They are all immigrants who live in a cosmopolitan London, and have different geographical roots and linguistic origins. The multilingual setting is thus varied and determined by the presence of a mixed linguistic background, where Polish, French and Nottinghamshire dialect varieties coexist against a backdrop of English that is never the standard one. Drawing on sociolinguistic parameters, the origins of the *Somers Town*'s characters are marked in terms of diatopic variation (a variation according to geographical origins: i.e. Poland, France, the Midlands), diastratic variation (a variation according to social class or the social group to which the speaker feels he belongs to: i.e. working class) and diaphasic variation (a variation according to different communicative settings, different levels of style/register, such as oral vs. written language, foreigner talk, vulgar style: i.e. young generations of speakers). Table 1 contains some examples from the film representing the three types of language variations:

Diatopic variation	Diastratic variation	Diaphasic variation
<p>MARIA</p> <p>- <i>Parlez-vous français?</i></p> <p>- <i>Avez-vous des problèmes de l'intestin?</i></p> <p>(Back translation: - Do you speak English? - Do you have stomach problems?)</p> <p>MARIUSZ</p> <p>- <i>Ty brudna świnio.</i></p> <p>- <i>Oddaj mi je.</i></p> <p>- <i>Nigdy już nie zobaczysz tych zdjęć.</i></p> <p>(Back translation: - You dirty pig.</p>	<p>MARIUSZ</p> <p>- <i>Yeab, it's late. See you mate.</i></p> <p>MARIUSZ</p> <p>- <i>Endowed. Basically, that means...He has a really big willy!</i></p>	<p>BOY 1</p> <p>- <i>Cheers, you ain't got another one, have you? So what brings you down 'ere?</i></p> <p>GRAHAM</p> <p>- <i>He's a joker, in't be? No, five pounds, that's it. And you gotta prove yourself to me first, do you understand?</i></p>

- Give them to me.)		
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Table 1: Examples of diatopic, diastratic and diaphasic variations in *Somers Town*.

The film is highly controversial, both socially and linguistically. Youth culture, poor integration of young people and ethnic minorities and urban violence are expressed through multilingual frameworks where non-standard linguistic forms, a wealth of slang, insults and vulgar uses, colloquialisms and, sometimes, bad grammar, occupy the linguistic space where English acts as the main language, and Polish, French and the Nottinghamshire dialect/slang turn around the principal idiom in a dialogic mechanism. Multilingualism thus provides information about the socio-cultural contexts of each character and “establishes the characters who belong to particular social or ethnical groups in relation to each other, assists in constructing the narrative and, fundamentally, helps the film to ‘make sense’” (Ellender, 2015: 4).

The multilingual equilibrium existing in *Somers Town*, where everybody speaks when he feels it is necessary to do it, reflects the Bakhtin’s Circle (Brandist, online) and its theory of dialogism, where dialogue and interactivity are central issues. According to the principles of interrelationship and coexistence of one national language and its internal strata, and of one national language and varieties of other national languages (i.e. Polish and French spoken in the UK by specific communities – which is the case in point in *Somers Town*), internal differentiations and subversive or non-standard uses of the language varieties present in the film take the form of registers and epitomise social variety. As a result, language varieties in multilingual films reflect the ways of experiencing and conceptualising the world through words, while also being markers of belonging to a social group.

Somers Town contains and is rooted in linguistic variation, which means that, as a multilingual film, it functions within “the co-presence of two or more languages (in a society, text or individual)” (Grutman, 2009: 182) and, more broadly, testifies to “the ability of an individual” (Díaz Cintas, 2011: 215) to speak “several languages, usually three or more” (ibid.). In a broader sense, “official languages, dialects, sociolects, slang, pidgin and invented languages” (de Higes-Andino, 2014: 211; Delabastita 2009) are all forms of language varieties that scholarly research in audiovisual translation has incorporated within the concept of ‘multilingual’. In the film under scrutiny, multilingualism is also very much connected with the concept of film genre. *Somers Town* can be located within contemporary European cinema in motion, which includes migrant and diasporic films in contemporary Europe. To put it in De Bonis’s words: “Multilingualism aims at realism: a more realistic rendering of the situations represented in the film in which each character speaks the language of the country he or she comes from” (De Bonis, 2015: 50).

Marek and his father, and Mariusz and his Polish friends, speak Polish, Maria speaks French with some of her clients, whereas Tomo mostly speaks colloquial English, a linguistic variant that is typical of his generation with occasional utterances in slang or dialectal expressions from Nottingham. The film provides subtitles in Standard English for the Polish dialogues (Figure 1), but not for the

French ones. The choice of foreignizing French within the film has probably the aim of creating a distance between Maria and the public, which is the same distance existing between the boys and Maria (when she speaks French with other people in front of them). In a scene, while she is talking French to one of her clients in the bar, Tomo asks Marek: “What do you think they’re talkin about?”.



Figure 1: A conversion in Polish between Maurisz and Marek.

4. Subtitling multilingual films: the case of *Somers Town*

Subtitles are presented in several forms and are applied to a variety of audiovisual genres and media, which demonstrates that there has been a recent and fluid dissemination of this type of technologically advanced translational activity all over the globe. Different factors have contributed to the spreading of subtitling across mediated and non-mediated platforms, such as “the proliferation of audiovisual media, the need to access original versions of AV products as soon as possible and the newly-acquired flexibility of dubbing countries [that] have recently led to an increase in the volume and the nature of such activity” (Perego and Bruti, 2015: 1). The process of subtitling¹ foreign-language films – which consists in providing the viewer with a synchronised written translation of the films’ oral dialogues, which is usually put at the bottom of the screen – is notoriously recognised as a challenge due to the fact that the final achievement can also imply the perfect combination of Roman Jakobson’s three forms of translation (1959/2000: 114). Indeed, subtitling foreign films involves *intra-lingual translation* as the source language (SL) rewording in any standard language (i.e. Tomo’s Nottinghamshire dialect transferred to Standard English), *inter-lingual translation* as the SL transfer to any target language (TL) (i.e. the English dialogues in *Somers Town* translated into any TL) and *inter-semiotic translation* as the passage from one language system sign to another language system sign (e.g. dialogues become

¹ The audiovisual translation mode of subtitling has been extensively scrutinised in scholarly research. For definitions, methodologies, strategies and techniques, see Jorge Díaz Cintas and Aline Remael (2007); Delia Chiaro (2009); Elisa Perego and Silvia Bruti (2015).

written words, spoken language becomes written language and changes in the register occur according to dichotomies existing between spoken and written discourse).

When transformations take place in the process of subtitling as an intersemiotic translation, these involve specifically three main areas of change: medium, SL original and code. Alexandra Assis-Rosa (2011) discusses these different levels of transformation by referring to changes in terms of speech (audible) and gestures (visible) turning into writing, changes in terms of phonetic categories turning into graphic ones and changes in terms of code, where both spoken verbal language and non-verbal language (e.g. signs, images) are turned into written verbal language. The number of variations in the process of subtitling makes it a very challenging mechanism from a cultural, linguistic and technological dimension, implying that subtitlers are “vulnerable” professionals, to quote Jorge Díaz Cintas’s well-know expression (2003: 43-4; Díaz Cintas and Remael, 2007).

Translation into subtitling has generally been categorised as a form of adaptation from a variety of standard language to another variety of standard language. Despite translating difficulties emerging from this transfer involve a default situation (Berruto 2010), when sociolinguistically marked elements and varieties are determinant in the comprehension of the film, the default situation may be considered arguable and questionable in the domain of audiovisual translation (Pavesi, 2005, Perego, 2005, Díaz Cintas, 2009, Perego and Taylor, 2012, Federici, 2011; Ellender, 2015). In the specific case of *Somers Town*, language variety is distinguished by three levels: on the one hand, Polish spoken language put into the mouths of Mariusz and Marek and, on the other hand, Tomo’s linguistic variation from Nottingham. The level of French exists but is almost absent in comparison with the other two linguistic levels. This multilingual framework therefore involves high degrees of diastratic and diaphasic markedness, which, from the perspective of translation, is not a simple issue. From a translational perspective, the dialogues in *Somers Town* should be scrutinised by taking into account the concept of sociolinguistic adequacy of translation, which, in the case of Polish, would imply the transfer of that particular variety of Polish spoken by Marek and his father to a TL equivalent language variety of standard language according to diastratic and diaphasic criteria. In light of Gaetano Berruto’s considerations on sociolinguistic adequacy as the rendering of social meanings of a linguistic sign, translation applied to language variation is a difficult enterprise:

Guardando alla traduzione dalla prospettiva sociolinguistica, il problema centrale è appunto quello dei testi sociolinguisticamente marcati per la compresenza di più varietà di lingua, ciascuna delle quali per definizione è portatrice di significati sociali intrinseci alla comunità linguistica della lingua di partenza. Si tratta quindi della traduzione del significato sociale associato agli elementi (forme, parole, costrutti) di una lingua che lo veicolano.” (Berruto, 2010: 900).

In translation, the rendering of social meanings becomes a very ambitious procedure due to the numerous strategies that involve sociolinguistic equivalence, which may be hardly achieved considering that source and target languages have different morpho-syntactical structures (Berruto, 1987). As argued by Gian Luigi De Rosa,

a sociolinguistically equivalent rendering of marked elements would imply the identification of a similarly marked translation equivalent along the diaphasic or diastratic continuum or in the dimension of diatopic variation. This process which should tend towards the naturalization of the language of the sociolinguistically marked varieties—and not towards the neutralization—may lead, on the other hand, to the total neutralization of the degree and type of markedness of translation equivalents, which in this way, will result standardized in the target text. (2015: 19).

From an intersemiotic translation perspective, the translation of *Somers Town* in any TL language will always pose challenges regarding register. The film contains segments of language that deviate from standard oral language, and this makes subtitling it even more challenging but difficult at the same time. On some occasions, the characters use non-standard pronunciation (or accent), dialect (with a specific emphasis on accent, grammar and lexis) and varieties of language (including slang, specific jargon, swearing, excessive use of vulgar expressions), which clearly signal the fact that the participants in the fictional event belong to a particular social and generational group. Tomo, the protagonist from the Midlands, never talks in Standard English. When he speaks to Marek or Maria, he always uses short informal or colloquial syntactical sentences or dialectal terms. Colloquialism and informality also characterise Tomo's short conversations with the boys he meets in the street, which implies that the film is marked from both diastratic and diaphasic perspectives. The following examples present cases of northern dialect from the English Midlands and also numerous colloquial or informal expressions from the mouths of generations of teenagers. There are also abundant cases of contractions, swearwords and interjections, typical of the register of young generations belonging to non-bourgeois social classes (Table 2).

TOMO: <i>Please, I'm not gonna nick owt.</i>	Owt (northern English dialect staying for "anything"); Nick (informal British English for "steal").
TOMO: <i>I got beat up last night by three lads.</i>	Lads (informal British English for "boys").
TOMO: <i>I can't, cos they won't believe I'm 18. I ain't got no ID.</i>	Contractions and abbreviations: cos used for 'because'; ain't used as a dialectal grammatical substitution of hain't , also representing London dialect.

TOMO: <i>Just to, I dunno, see the sights.</i>	Dunno (don't know).
BOY2: <i>Ain't't to start trouble, is it?</i>	Dialectal grammatical substitution: ain't (it ain't: it isn't).
BOY1: <i>That's a nice jacket, man, where'd you get that from?</i>	Contraction: where'd (where did).
MARIUSZ: <i>He has a really big willy!</i>	Slang: willy (informal for penis).

Table 2: Specific examples of language variety in *Somers Town* within Standard English.

As a teenage boy, Tomo makes use of numerous informal or colloquial English expressions, slang and vulgar terms. His conversations are thus often marked by what Díaz Cintas and Aline Remael have identified as the “anti-language”, which is the replacement of standard lexicon with informal language in order to create forms of informal “re-lexicalisations” (2007: 191). As linguistic elements used in the generationally marked settings which Tomo belongs to, swearwords and interjections are also employed in terms of social refusal of norms and stereotypes in developed societies.

The second level of language variety is determined by the use of Polish, which is as much frequent as Tomo’s informal use of English. Polish is frequent in the conversions between Marek and his father, who never speaks English to his son, unless Tomo is in front of them. Polish is also the only language that Mariusz speaks with his Polish friends. In short, though Polish characters speak English when they interact with non-Polish people, their accent is markedly Polish, and they often make use of informal spoken English, where abbreviations, contractions and slang are very frequent, as the transcription in Table 3 shows:

POLISH MAN 2: <i>Marek, c'mon, how about your love life?</i> (Contracted form of “come on”.)	POLISH MAN 3: <i>Marek, stay with us!</i> <i>Marek c'mon!</i> (Contracted form of “come on”.)
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Table 3: Examples of contractions from the mouths of Polish speakers.

Slang and vulgar slang, which is often present in the film under scrutiny, are used according to the socio-cultural meaning which is implicit in the conversation. According to the level of familiarity or unfamiliarity with specific meanings, or if an action or a dialogue represents a taboo or an excess of vulgarity in Polish culture, Marek, while he is conversing in English with Tomo, deliberately switches into Polish. Marek’s intentional switching from a kind of standard variety of English to his native language can be viewed as a rejection of Tomo’s way of acting. Marek speaks Polish in order to create a communicative gap with his English friend, who will be unfamiliar with Marek’s utterance. Thus, if the dialogues between the two friends begin in English, on certain occasions, they turn into Polish, as the example in Table 4 demonstrates:

MAREK: <i>Tomo, what are you doing?</i>
TOMO: <i>I am lonely.</i>
MAREK: <i>You dirt pig.</i> (Subtitled version)
MAREK: <i>Give them to me.</i> (Subtitled version)
MAREK: <i>You will never see these pictures again.</i> (Subtitled version)

Table 4: Examples of Polish language as L2 subtitled into English.

Slang and vulgarity, swearwords and taboos are socio-culturally contextualised terms, “multifunctional, pragmatic units which assume, in addition to the expression of emotional attitudes, various discourse functions” (Dewaele, 2004: 205).

Multilingual films are migrant and diasporic films in which sociolinguistics intervenes as a methodological approach within the translation of marginal voices. As remarked by Chris Wahl, the polyglot element is a characteristic of the following film genres: “episode films, alliance films, globalisation films, immigrant films, colonial films and existential films. In all of them, the use of linguistic polyphony is paramount” (2005: 3). The depiction of specific identities marked by the use of sociolects, idiolects, dialects, national languages and foreign languages is determinant in providing a multilingual setting from a socio-cultural perspective that can limit “the translator’s room for manoeuvre while at the same time they open up possibilities for creative solutions” (Federici, 2011: 11). Subtitling linguistic variation, including foreign languages within a national language, can be a challenge, and scholarly research has demonstrated that it can be a failure if equivalences are not connected with a TL cultural framework of reference that does not cause the displacement of the SL characters (i.e. in the film *La Haine* translated into African-American Vernacular English [Whitelaw and O’Shea, 1996], the characters have been asked to talk a linguistic variety which has implied a relocation of their identities and, therefore, a displacement from the original setting).

Language varieties are essential to the full functioning of multilingual films and if the subtitles can transfer the SL varieties of the film, the TL audience will probably catch more the significance of the film on a cultural and social level. Nevertheless, as observed by a number of scholars (Bartoll, 2006; Assis-Rosa, 2001; Díaz Cintas and Remael, 2007), linguistic variation (including multilingualism) is hardly preserved in TL subtitles, and non-standard expressions or slang and dialectal varieties of language are often omitted, thus, creating standardised and flattened translations in terms of social, cultural and geographical transmission of source language connotations and difference. Considering that the translation of dialect is already difficult within the same standard language, this task becomes even more complex when the transfer has to occur within the syntactical, lexical and cultural constraints of another language (Díaz Cintas and Remael, 2007: 191-192).

Difference is rooted in multilingual films – such as in the case of *Somers Town* –

and the complete domestication of these audiovisual products would imply an enormous loss at the level of the transmission of socio-cultural meanings. Drawing on recent studies on multilingualism (de Higes-Andino, 2014) and creative subtitling (McClarty, 2012), multilingualism in films can serve multiple purposes and several functions, such as showing the “visibility of translation in films which depict language diversity” (de Higes-Andino, 2014: 211), enhancing “the audience’s comprehension” and projecting “different ideas of the director and writers” (ibid.: 212).

According to the set of questions below, a translator/subtitler can evaluate the degree of importance of difference and language variation in the multilingual film he has to translate:

1. To what extent is linguistic variation fundamental to the context of the film in question?
2. To what extent does linguistic variation appear in the film?
3. What challenges does translation pose, and what are the solutions offered?
4. By means of which strategies and techniques, can linguistic variation be kept and transferred to TL subtitles?

In addition to this set of questions, a useful resource for the analysis of audiovisual translation applied to multilingual films is de Higes-Andino’s classification *Audiovisual translation modes in translated multilingual films*, which she divides into two sections: “Audiovisual translation modes” and “Characteristics”. In this taxonomy, de Higes-Andino includes the most used audiovisual translation modes for multilingual films and distinguishes the main characteristics that feature in subtitled captions in order to signal an L3 in dialogues (Figure 2):

Audiovisual translation modes	Characteristics
Dubbing: replacement of “the original track of a film’s (or any audiovisual text’s) source language dialogues with another track on which translated dialogues have been recorded in the target language” (Chaume, 2012, p.1)	Target language (TL): L1 L2 L3 Interlanguage
Subtitling: “[A] translation practice that consists of presenting a written text, generally on the lower part of the screen, that endeavours to recount the original dialogue of the speakers, as well as the discursive elements that appear in the image (letters, inserts, graffiti, inscriptions, placards and the like), and the information that is contained on the soundtrack (songs, voices off)” (Diaz Cintas & Remael, 2007, p. 8).	Typographical syntax (typographical signs used in subtitles to call attention to the presence of an L3 in dialogues): Brackets Colour Inverted commas Italics Normal (not typographically signed) Opaque box Square brackets Tags
	Position on the screen:

	Position 2 (centre-aligned subtitles at the bottom of the screen) Position 8 (centre-aligned subtitles at the top of the screen)
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Figure 2: Adapted from Irene de Higes-Andino (2014). *Audiovisual translation modes in translated multilingual films*.

She also refers to a non-translation method for multilingual cinema, where L2 translation does not occur, and to a double translation process, where two translations take place, both included in her second taxonomy *Other strategies applied to the translation of multilingual films* (Figure 3):

Non-translation: the absence of translation mode (dialogue is left untranslated- Martinez-Sierra et al., 2010).
Double translation: the combination of translation modes (the message is translated twice, combining any of the translation modes presented above – de Higes Andino, 2009).

Figure 3: Adapted from Irene de Higes-Andino (2014). *Other strategies applied to the translation of multilingual films*.

Strategies and devices that may transfer linguistic variety, which is present in multilingual films (in particular on immigration), are varied and can be applied on different levels: on a typographical level (i.e. the use of different colours, capital letters, Italics), on a technical level (the use of non-standard position of subtitles on screen), on a lexical level (the use of a non-standard terminology, the maintenance of foreign words, phrases and sentences, signs of exoticism), on a grammatical and morphological level (mistakes in the subtitled language, mislearned expressions and vocabulary and misunderstanding of culture-bound terms, mispronunciation in the written text).

Important shifts towards new forms of subtitling and relevant to the attempt to transfer linguistic variation and difference through subtitling have included the concept of abusive subtitling, which Mark Nornes has described as a form of “experimentation with language and its grammatical, morphological and visual qualities”, and which has brought “the fact of translation from its position of obscurity [...] to critique the imperial politics that ground corrupt practices while ultimately leading the viewer to the foreign original being reproduced in the darkness of the theatre [...] turning the film in an experience of translation (Nornes, 2007: 177).

Rebecca McClarty opts for the adjective “creative”, instead of “abusive”, and refers to the creative subtitler as someone who has to keep a “trilateral gaze: backwards to the source culture and the aesthetic qualities and semiotic codes of the source text; sideways to the influences to be gained from related disciplines; and forwards to the target culture and the aesthetic qualities and semiotic codes of the subtitles” (McClarty, 2012: 139). In brief, rather than defining subtitling by its

constraints, creative subtitling is interested in recreating “an aesthetics that matches that of the source text, instead of being bound by standard font types, sizes and positions”. Thus, creative subtitles, aim “to achieve difference rather than sameness” (ibid., 140). However, contrasting opinions exist on the act of subtitling multilingual films, especially from a creative viewpoint. If Carol O’Sullivan maintains that subtitling a multilingual product results in a reduction rather than in the exaltation of multilingualism (O’Sullivan, 2011), since the subtitled film presents one language instead of the multiple languages of the ST film, de Higes-Andino essentially distinguishes two different strategies for the translation of multilingual films: “there are two strategies available to translators: either to mark multilingualism or not to mark multilingualism” (2014: 222). Therefore, from de Higes-Andino’s perspective, the translator can decide to omit multilingual effects by leaving “conversations in L3” (de Higes-Andino, 2014: 222). On the other hand, if a translator chooses to mark multilingualism, a decision on which convention to apply must be taken. De Higes-Andino adds that though “no clear trend is generally observed” (2016), some of the conventions for a creative subtitling of multilingual films may include “box, brackets, capital letters, change of positioning, colours, italics, label, quotation marks, and square brackets”. (These conventions are included in her first taxonomy *Audiovisual translation modes in translated multilingual films* – “Characteristics”, Figure 2.)

Among the various strategies that can be used in order to produce a creative subtitling which is able to signal language diversities in the subtitled version, the position of subtitles on screen is one of the technical devices that has been taken into account. Even though the “standard position for subtitles is horizontal at the bottom of the screen since this limits the obstruction of the image, and this part of the screen is usually of lesser importance to the action” (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2007: 82), *Somers Town* as a multilingual film contains English subtitles when Marek and his father, and Maurisz and his friends talk in Polish. Thus, when the Polish conversation appears at the bottom of the screen in English subtitles, a hypothetical second caption contained L3 could be moved to the top of the screen. This signifies that when L2 subtitles appear at the bottom of the screen, L3 subtitles can be displayed both on the lateral side of the screen, or more canonically, at the top of the screen. Díaz Cintas and Remael account for the special position of subtitles when “some essential data are displayed at the bottom of the screen” (2007: 83).

In multilingual films, where language variation and/or the coexistence of more than one language are determinant in the comprehension and transmission of the alterity and otherness of the film, creative subtitling is the expedient that can allow these films to be disseminated in other languages. The respect for the norms in standard subtitling would not make the subtitling of multilingual films possible due to the numerous constraints, not simply in terms of temporal and spatial settings, but also from an aesthetic perspective. Thus, creative subtitling, which “leads us to the need for multidisciplinary research between film studies and audiovisual

translation,” (McClarty, 2012, 150), encourages the experimentation of subtitling not by following norms, rules and conventions, but through the application of creative subtitling practices and techniques that include the use of “varying colours, typefaces, styles, special effects and positions” (ibid.), as de Higes-Andino has already highlighted. Similarly, Eduard Bartoll (2006) stresses the importance of using Italics to mark unlikeness between languages and de Higes-Andino (2014) proposes further visual and conceptual solutions for the dissemination of difference and linguistic variety in multilingual films, such as expansions (i.e. the addition of information about the content of the spoken L2 within brackets), the adoption of different colours, inverted commas, capital letters, new positions on screen and even putting labels when the idiom changes in the scene, as partially stated above (Figure 2).

By putting it in Irene Ranzato’s terms, an interesting case which relates to the diastratic phase in language variation and poses challenges in the translation process is teenage speech: “Some of the most interesting communities are those of teenagers in a given place and at a given moment in time as their way of speaking often reflects a specifically local reality which is difficult to render in translation, as virtually nothing like teenage slang becomes dated and old-fashioned so rapidly” (2015: 159-160). Marek and Tomo repetitively make use of “like” as a pragmatic marker, which is typically used in speech communities among London teenagers. In the opinion of Gisle Andersen (2001), “like” as a pragmatic marker, has always been used in British dialects and its current use among teenage communities in London depends on American English influence. Andersen and Fretheim add that “the pragmatic marker *like* is a highly noticeable and very frequent feature of many varieties of present-day English” (2000: 18). Furthermore, the author maintains that “like” as a linguistic marker can be used both to loosen or enrich the content of an utterance. In Italian, for example, this type of marker could be replaced with the term “*tipo*”, which is very informal and very common in colloquial speech of young generations, or with the remark “*mica*”, as in the example in Table 5. This could also be signalled with visual effects, as the proposal of translation shows below:

ORIGINAL	ITALIAN SUBTITLE	BACK TRANSLATION
TOMO <i>Look, mate, in England, it's sort of like a tradition for like a... girlfriend to kiss her boyfriend, so, it sounds to me like you're not actually with her, you just like her.</i>	TOMO Amico mio ... In Inghilterra è tipo tradizione che la ragazza si baci con il suo ragazzo. A me pare, tipo , che a te piaccia, ma non state mica insieme.	TOMO My friend ... In England it is a kind of tradition for a girlfriend to kiss her boyfriend. I think you like her but you are not really together.

Table 5: Tomo who talks to Marek about Maria.

The Polish accent in English spoken language is part of the multilingual dimension in *Somers Town*. Marek talks in English to Tomo but he keeps a strong Polish accent and, on some occasions, he also introduces terms in Polish, such as in the cases in which food is involved in the speech. This implies that the teenage Polish boy deliberately wants to mention Polish traditions and cultural features. In a conversation on food with Tomo, he refers to Polish sausage, which he indicates with the Polish term “Kielbasa”. A linguistic strategy that can allow the subtitler to keep the traits of foreignness and difference in the subtitled version is to maintain realia in the original language or to expand its meaning by adding information about that specific cultural-bound item. In the scene in which Marek addresses Tomo to bring him his breakfast, the Polish word is used. The realism of the film and the sense of difference that characterise it can be maintained if the term referring to Polish food is kept in Polish, as the proposal of translation shows in Table 6:

ORIGINAL TEXT	ITALIAN SUBTITLE	BACK TRANSLATION
MAREK: <i>Are you hungry?</i> Eat.	MAREK: Hai fame? Mangia.	MAREK: Hai fame? Mangia.
TOMO: <i>What's that?</i>	TOMO: Che roba è?	TOMO: Che roba è?
MAREK: <i>Sausage, Polish.</i> Kielbasa.	MAREK: Salsiccia, è polacca. <i>Kielbasa.</i>	MAREK: <i>Sausage.</i> It is Polish. Kielbasa.
TOMO: Mate, I can't eat no more foreign food.	TOMO: Amico mio. Basta con questo cibo straniero.	TOMO: My friend. I have had enough foreign food.

Table 6: A dialogue between Tomo and Marek on food.

5. Concluding remarks

When dubbing is applied to multilingual films, the distributors are not in favour of reproducing the original soundtrack to mark multilingualism. This happens for economic reasons considering that partial subtitling increases the costs of production. Besides, multilingual films have generally a different audience with respect to monolingual films. The multilingual film audience is more a niche public, who usually prefers the multilingual film he is watching to be marked by original soundtrack. The multilingual film amateur is thus more oriented toward the vision of subtitled versions of multilingual films than of its dubbed versions. However, the strategy of marking or not marking multilingual issues will depend on the rigid or soft requirements established in the translation brief. In some way, multilingual films in their dubbed versions are subject to a higher level of ideological manipulation with respect to multilingual films in their subtitled versions, where more attention is generally given to the reproduction of SL language and culture and to the maintenance of difference on screen.

By choosing *Somers Town* as the case in point for the exploration of multilingualism in films, this scrutiny has had the objective of outlining a model for the analysis of language variation and the different levels of multilingualism in cinema on migration and diasporic issues regarding the challenges and constraints that audiovisual translation modes pose in the translation of multilingualism. Multilingualism can be marked or unmarked according to ideological bounded criteria, the expectation of the public and the role that a translator of diasporic films has in relation to the filmic representation of migration and displacement in the country of arrival. In the subtitled version, not marking multilingualism and expecting the audience to detect multilingual exchanges from the soundtrack, may affect the spectators' perception of the film as multilingual.

Despite the numerous difficulties in the process of translation and subtitling language variation as a consequence of diatopic, diastratic and diaphasic variants, multilingual films should maintain their multilingual dimension in their subtitled versions and the adoption of aesthetic alternative methods and procedures (i.e. creative subtitling) can be on certain cases a profitable gain in terms of dissemination of difference.

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