SUBTITLING INTO ELF
When accessibility becomes
a counter information tool

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Abstract – This study investigates the modalities by means of which the visual arts have recently been transformed by migration, and how aesthetic transformations within the context of (sub)titling have contributed to re-shaping identities and minority groups in filmic genres. The growing interest in migratory aesthetics has brought into representation marginalised subjectivities (i.e. the lives of Italians forced to emigrate from Libya after the Gadhafi *coup d'état* as the case in point in this work) in ways that depart from migrant depictions in the conventional media (e.g. the news bulletins). Against the backdrop of translation as a form of re-narration and an instrument of accessibility, and drawing on Systemic Functional Linguistics as a method of survey, this study examines the (sub)titling activity in English *lingua franca* in what may be referred to as "accented cinema", namely the documentary film *My Home, in Libya* (2018) directed by Italian filmmaker Martina Melilli. Creativity and experimentation are central to this work of art, also thanks to the use of (sub)titling procedures employed as aesthetic and linguistic devices that go beyond translation proper while covering the filmic narrative areas in terms of authorial titling and diegetic interventions. Against the normative background of subtitles in English *lingua franca*, (sub)titling is perceived as a practice that encourages the mediation of migrant and marginalised stories, and as a space of re-narration where screen textualities like pieces of (sub)titles give voice to characters' inaudible thoughts.

Keywords: (sub)titling; ELF; migration; accessibility; accented cinema.

1. Introduction

This study examines the diverse levels of translation that interact in niche documentaries against the backdrop of English *lingua franca* (ELF henceforth). ELF as the language of translation for communicating purposes is placed within the context of audiovisual translation and functions in processes of interlingual (sub)titling and the rendering of off-screen voices, text messages, comments and thoughts which, in the style of digital communication, are encapsulated within the space of (sub)titles (i.e. intertitles, pop-ups). Attention is directed specifically to Martina Melilli's documentary film, *My Home, in Libya* (*MHiL* henceforth), a representative

model of accented cinema, with a focus on (sub)titling as one of the most common modes within audiovisual translation which, in this context, is employed to promote the diffusion of socio-political and historical contents through ELF. The term "(sub)titles", a key word in this study, contains the prefix "sub", delimited by round brackets. This occurs since the practice of (sub)titling in the documentary under scrutiny entails the spheres of interlingual subtitling (subtitles occupying the bottom position of the screen) and other forms of titling (subtitles occupying the central part on the screen).

ELF is perceived as the language of accessibility (Rizzo 2019a) which has guaranteed the spread of information as counter discourse and which, therefore, has provided visibility to the topic of Italian emigration from Libya (i.e. this highlights the fact that English is used as the means of communication among people from different first language backgrounds across linguacultural boundaries, acting as the international language). In this sense, ELF (sub)titles play a functional role as narrative devices that contribute to the international diffusion of marginalised stories involving exiled people, migrants or citizens who have lost their roots in their countries of origin and have been forced to flee their homeland (i.e. Libya is the case in point).

The purpose of this study is to identify the types of (sub)titles present in the documentary as both depositaries of Italian narratives transferred in English,[1] and as depositaries of unspoken and unheard voices that speak through diverse categories of (sub)titles. These (sub)titles are not very common outside the sphere of niche cinema. Here, the intimate dimension of (sub)titles provides target readers with new stimuli and permits them to enter obscure contexts: viewers are allowed "into the more private world of the characters, in particular […] to read personal text and Facebook messages in real time with the characters themselves as part of the *mise en scene*" (Johnston 2014, quoted in Katan 2018, p. 66). Against the background of (sub)titling as an act of activism (Baker 2019; Díaz Cintas 2018), interventionism and resistance (Pérez-González 2014), this investigation approaches (sub)titles as spaces of "re-narration" (Baker 2014) which contest and counter argues hegemonic practices (Díaz Cintas 2018; Rizzo 2019b) by means of communication in ELF. In brief, ELF functions as the concrete political device, or the agent of political mediation in public life, and enables the transnational flow of types of activist textuality.

By drawing on Michael Halliday's (2004) transitivity framework (transitivity as a system of the clause is an important notion of Systemic

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[1] The represented country of origin is Libya, and though the protagonist/filmmaker speaks Italian with her grandparents, she uses ELF with the Libyan character with whom she is in touch via digital devices.

Functional Grammar), the aim is to reveal the different process types as representative of the cognitive areas involved in the lexico-semantic networks of the verbal categories that have been chosen to construct clauses and represent experiences of reality. If we consider language as a system of interrelated sets of options for making meanings, verbs serving as processes are fundamental expedients to discover the nature and area of the experiences that their selection has activated. The verbs contained in the stories conveyed through (sub)titles activate counter discourse by setting in motion cognitive areas that collide with mainstream stories. In fact, if, on the one hand, mainstream stories are dominated by homogenising and assimilating discourses which do not take into account individual identities but treat marginalised people as masses (i.e. "The islands have seen a sharp increase in the number of migrants from West Africa in recent months"; "Two children – aged five and eight – and a man and a woman have died off the coast of France", *BBC news*), on the other hand, stories situated at the margins and outside the mainstream are given alternative voices in the arts. In aesthetic discourse, people are named and are enabled to take on the roles of powerful agents in challenging cultural homogenisation (i.e. "In Tripoli we lived in *Shara Tanta*"; "I was already working as a young boy, then I worked in a repair shop", *MHiL*).

2. Data

MHiL, a 2018 medium-length film (66 min.) directed by Martina Melilli and shortlisted in the 2018 Locarno Festival, was produced by Stefilm, in collaboration with ZDF, Arte, Rai Cinema, with the support of Mibact, the Piemonte Doc Film Fund, and Regione Piemonte. As both the filmmaker and photographer, Melilli interconnects texts and visuals, thus allowing her work to be classified as an alternative cinematic form of accented cinema. The experimental dimension in Melilli's documentary is found in the connection that exists between the characters and the photographic images, an interdependence that is strengthened by (sub)titling as a creative tool embedded in the entire work. As modes of epistolary communication and content information, on the one hand, and as modes of interlingual translation, on the other, the (sub)titles in *MHiL* are all produced in ELF as a key function of political and cultural significance.

The documentary film narrates the experiences of the filmmaker's family as a generation of exiled people, whose stories intersect with the socio-political issues afflicting the northern African country of Libya. Narratives printed on screen and reported through interlingual translation recount facts and events in the lives of the Melilli family. The story is set in Libya (1936) and begins with the birth of the filmmaker's grandfather,

Antonio, the son of a couple of Sicilian immigrants (the filmmaker's father was also born in Tripoli), and continues until 1970 when the rise to power of Colonel Gadhafi forced all Italians who inhabited the country to return to their homeland. Antonio Melilli is in fact one of the 20,000 Italians forced to leave Libya in 1969, after the Gadhafi *coup d'état*. He was born and grew up in Tripoli from the 30s to the 60s, when Libya was an Italian colony. Starting from her grandfather's memories, Melilli draws a map of the city and its locations of the past and tries to relocate them in the present with the help of a young Libyan man living in Tripoli. His name is Mahmoud.

Martina and Mahmoud converse across virtual spaces of communication provided by the networked universe, which strengthens the computer-mediated friendship between the characters and reveals the difficulties of living in Tripoli.

The Melilli family returns to Italy, settling near Padua, but their heart remains in Tripoli (i.e. the idealised place of a mythical past: "when I was a child, for example, I wondered why we were the only family in a small town in the Veneto region to eat cous-cous on Christmas day", *MHiL*, 2018). Feelings of belonging, exile and memory are translated through a powerful use of images and (sub)titles processed and compressed by digital instruments. Historical memory of a colonial time and current events are intertwined in the personal lives through the use of smartphones, digital means, and social networks.

3. Accented cinema and the strength of (sub)titles in ELF

"Accented cinema" provides the public with an aesthetic response to the experience of displacement through exile, migration or diaspora. It includes a variety of cinema genres, which are the result of exilic, diasporic, postcolonial ethnic-identifying filmmakers who live and work in places other than their country of origin (Naficy 2001, p. 11). This cinema is often ideologically overt, narrative, based on visual style, commonly authorial and autobiographical. In other words, products of accented cinema "not only signify and signify upon the conditions of exile and diaspora […] but also upon cinema itself" (Naficy 2004, p. 134). They shed light upon "exile and diaspora by expressing, allegorising, commenting upon, and critiquing the home and the host countries and cultures" (Naficy 2004). Within this framework, ELF shapes a subversive, translated and interpreted language (the language of Melilli's grandparents, and the languages of Melilli herself and Mahmoud), and encourages the spread of counter information across many different linguistic, geographical and cultural areas, where ELF users are substantially more numerous than native speakers of English (Seidlhofer

2011; Widdowson 1994). This affects in particular the dissemination of aesthetic products that act politically using English as a pivot language across niche cultural spaces. In fact, English has made the language of cinema universally accessible across networked platforms and cultural spaces thanks to its being recognised as the language of communication and, consequently, it is used in the translation of dialogues and monologues, in-vision and display captions.

Within this setting, the practice of (sub)titling in English has come to occupy the centre stage of cultural contexts, where (sub)titling activities have been imbued with social significance, in line with the belief that the incorporation of English (sub)titles within artistic products has to be recognised as a fundamental practice for entering the global world. Table 1 presents all the expressions, phrases, clause constructions, tense uses and other elements present in the synchronous communication between the two main characters, Martina and Mahmoud. This is viewed as a form of (sub)titling mechanism which also proves the existence of different linguacultural conventions and a detachment of ELF from the norms of English as a native language. In fact, ELF is considered as the result of the speakers' processes of transfer of their respective L1 textual, lexical-semantic and pragmatic structures into a particular non-native form of English (Guido 2015). Non-standard forms of English in the communication between the two characters is also ascribable to communication processes occurring via digital channels, where language is commonly transformed into a spoken discourse where abbreviations, reductions and colloquialism are common practices.

Adverbial expressions	according to me.
noun+noun (possessive –'s)	granddad place; They don't care about girl feeling.
Clause construction	Video I have to wait …; U from where in Italy?; But to protect my family must every family have weapon; She's parents need so much money to I can marry her.
Tenses, verbs missing	I never go out from Libya; But if u here in Libya; I didn't used at all […] how it use; We just cars to travel; It's make ur adrenaline rush; I didn't find the love life yet; Here if I falling in love with girl; I fall in love once, but when she know I am poor; I wish I can hug you now; I never kiss a girl in my life; I don't like girl stay out home after 12; They going to Italy but the boat sink; But u change my life; When I talk with u first time I pray for god; Best friend I have ever; That's mean war.
Wrong use of adjectives, punctuation, definite & indefinite articles, irregular construction	Because I'm Arabia, But Russian or France maybe I have chance; The Internet is problem; There thay r torture ppl and big prison; I need to see the same Tripoli in past; No power mostly time.
Spelling	The problemas are caused by; Muslim so peace and nothing in qoran say do that; I have gon; With mixed ppl Italian, joush, Christian, Muslim; Busses no…Trains no; Thay all diy; Thay on your beach; I will confecc to u about some things; You welcome Martina is an honor.
Subjects/ personal pronouns, third personal singular voice (missing)	Martina, am sorry; Electricity cut off, always cut off; I didn't used at all […] how it use; In Libya marry not by love but by family and how have much money I fall in love once, but when she know I am poor; Gaddafi make new crazy lows; But u change my life.
Lexis	I will go this fucking country.

Table 1
Digital communication between the filmmaker and Mahmoud from Tripoli.

The (sub)titles in *MHiL* contribute to embedding a set of features within the film, a combination of traits that epitomises filmic productions belonging to the so-called postmodern era: diegesis overtakes mimesis by means of translation, and titling, epistolarity and calligraphic textuality are offered to the spectator and become reasons to classify Melilli's documentary film as what is referred to as accented cinema. Naficy's expression, "accented cinema" (2001), extends far beyond exilic communities, or the accented speech of diegetic characters. In fact, the term "accented" also adds the authoring effect to multilingual dimensions by expressing, commenting and depicting narrative ingredients within film productions through the aesthetics of (sub)titles.

In Melilli's film documentary, the accented speech of diegetic characters is reinforced by epistolarity, which is expressed in different ways: a) through clauses and sentences displayed within textual blocks known as intertitles (e.g. these are (non-voiced) off-screen thoughts or comments, or complementary information to visuals): b) within open black spaces on the screen, where text messaging in ELF occurs between the filmmaker and the invisible but readable Libyan character. Communication via synchronous text messaging substitutes the formal features of traditional letters which facilitated meaning-making exchanges among people who were geographically distant. What we find in *MHiL* is the presence of a piece of writing on screen as a block of verbal text providing the audience with additional or complementary information which reinforces the relationship between readers/viewers and characters.

Seen from this perspective, there is a subtle correlation between the art of subtitling and the level of epistolarity that encapsulates the documentary film in its narrative process of telling stories of migration and exile through (sub)titling processes. In the words of Naficy, "exile and epistolarity are constitutively linked because both are driven by distance, separation, absence, and loss, as well as the desire to bridge these multiple gaps" (2004, p. 134). (Sub)titles and any form of written text on the screen aim to reduce the distance between the author/protagonist and the viewer both in relation to languages in translation and to culture-meaning transmissions. In *MHiL*, (sub)titles bridge the distance between the country of origin (Libya) and the country of arrival (Italy), and take the form of "spoken-written" epistles in the shape of text messages, telephone conversations, comments, headnotes. This contributes to providing a "metonymic and a metaphoric displacement of desire" (Naficy 2004), the desire to be somewhere else, and to re-imagine an unknown territory and other times.

The rich variety of subtitles which cover the filmic space of *MHiL* is thus embedded within epistolary networks which translate different moments

of the characters' experiences by giving access to viewpoints and emotional states that provide intimacy, immediacy, and creativity. In other words, the epistolary form transmitted via (sub)titles reinforces the dialogic dimension of the documentary – inscribing the filmic product itself within a set of dialogic relations between addressers and off-screen interlocutors, and also between addressers and spectators. Epistolarity is thus functional to the expression of displacement and split subjectivity by means of (sub)titles found in various places: they appear as standard subtitles (or forms of interlingual translation), they are superimposed over the images, and the flow of the images is accompanied by the display of (sub)titles that in the form of pop-ups or headnotes become essential, as in silent films, to the narration of the stories. The accuracy of the setting, information, and characters' feelings and thoughts is strengthened through the use of on-screen titling as an instrument of expressivity and narrativity. Thus, blocks of English texts appear in various regions of the film frame in order to visualise speech or thoughts, and facilitate the audience's comprehension.

As remarked by Grillo and Kawin (1981), subtitles and intertitles have the potential to encourage different types of reading modes, which seem to be put into play in Melilli's documentary. On the one hand, (sub)titles stimulate syntactical reading, which consists of experiencing the whole film by listening to dialogues, watching images and reading (sub)titles, and, on the other hand, intertitles inspire paratactical reading, that is, the addition of complimentary elements which are combined consciously and coherently within the film itself.

4. (Sub)titles and narrative levels in *My Home, in Libya*

The documentary under scrutiny makes use of (sub)titling as a site of representational practice (Guillot 2012), and as a site of interventionism (Pérez-González 2014), experimentation and creativity. As already specified, (sub)titles in ELF produce interlingual translation from Italian into English (i.e. standard subtitles placed at the bottom of the screen) and contribute to the communication of thoughts, concepts, memories, and on-screen text messages (i.e. intertitles, pop-ups). In other words, the (sub)titling process in ELF involves the presence of standard subtitling and intertitles or pop-ups aiming to enrich information and to transmit off-screen thoughts. Clearly, the process of (sub)titling epistolarity is an integral part of Melilli's filmic production, given that the intertitles constitute visual and written verbal components that confer an epistolary character to the entire work.

4.1. Mapping (sub)title types

Intertitles are comparable to "pop-up glosses and pop-up notes that explain culturally marked items" (Caffrey 2009, p. x), whereas, in Pérez-González's terms, pop-ups are sub-types of headnotes which are "placed anywhere in the frame to complement the content of standard or dialogue subtitles located at the bottom of the screen" (2014, p. 154). In *MHiL*, intertitles/pop-ups appear "generally enclosed in small windows on a white background explaining or glossing culturally-marked elements audible or visible in the original" (Perego 2010, p. 53; English trans. by D. Katan 2018), as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Visual-verbal pop-ups in the initial scenes in *My Home, in Libya* (2018).

These pop-ups are visual-verbal handwritten blocks of text and can include "traditional (sub)titles, but also any other written inserts, banners, letters" (Katan 2018, p. 65). In Caffrey's classification (2009, p. 19), pop-ups are not only verbal titles. He classifies them into four groups to mark the differences between verbal/nonverbal, as well as visual/audio pop-ups. Visual-nonverbal pop-ups are to be understood as nonverbal titles such as images and photos (as Figure 2 shows).

Figure 2
Visual-nonverbal pop-ups in the initial scenes in *My Home, in Libya* (2018).

The space of (sub)titling is no longer exclusively *sub* since attention must now be shifted towards new forms of titling intervening elsewhere on the visible screen. In recent research (Katan 2018), titling activities exempted from spatial and visual constraints have received great attention and have been freed from positions of obscurity (Nornes 1999).

Drawing on Nornes's (1999) expression "abusive subtitling", Katan (2018, pp. 65-67) refers to different forms of titling, among which "authorial titling" (Pérez-González 2012) and "diegetic intervention" (Johnston 2014), both of which are narrative strategies central to *MHiL*. In authorial titling, film directors have an authorial hand and also the faculty of choosing how much of the screen can be occupied by "diegetic and extradiegetic additions" (Katan 2018, p. 66). In *MHiL*, the authorial voice of the filmmaker, conversing with Mahmoud living in Tripoli, takes place in ELF and is visually and verbally seen by means of free narrative texts that occupy completely the black screen with the purpose of providing the viewer with the objective perception that digital text messaging is simultaneously reducing the distance between the two characters. In diegetic intervention, (sub)titles have thus acquired a new role (which involves diegesis) and which consists in allowing viewers to read the private universe of characters on screen and in real time. This implies the acceptance of titles as an integral part of the filmic narrative, which, to put it in Katan's words, can be defined as "diegetic nuggets" (Katan 2018, p. 67), since they embrace the advancement of the narration or seek to complement it. In brief, pop-up glosses as the cases in point are allowed to float on screen either as "(translated) dialogue or as diegetic messages and thoughts" (Katan 2018).

4.2. Narrative levels in (sub)titles

The narrative dimension that is constructed through the (sub)titles in *MHiL* includes different (sub)titling genres corresponding to three narrative levels: a) calligraphic textualities/pop-up glosses, b) standard subtitles, c) synchronous texts.

The first category is represented by intertitles/calligraphic textualities/pop-up glosses as superimposed filmed ELF, printed texts edited into the midst of the photographed action at various points and which interact with the flow of visuals, images, photos and faces. This (sub)titling space creates a mental narrative level that comprehends off-screen voices, thoughts, and comments, turned into readable short text types (Table 2 provides the list of pop-ups and, occasionally, their relative images).
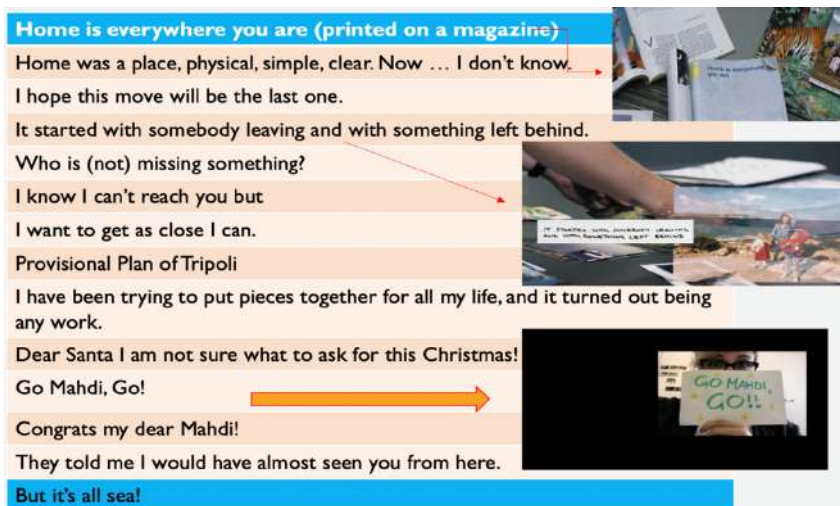
Table 2.
Pop-ups against a white background placed in the central part of the screen.

The second category is represented by subtitles as textual spaces of interlingual translation, where Italian as the source language is rendered into English as the language of mediation. These subtitles, as they are of a standard type, occupy the central bottom position of the screen and cover the experience of the emigration of Melilli's grandparents from Libya. The narrative level that is highlighted is the ontological one, since attention is given to narratives as stories that people tell themselves and others about their experiences in the world.

The last category is represented by synchronous textualities, where the presence of ELF is very significant, and where the level of epistolarity (letters, telephony, written exchanges of meanings) is reinforced in the central black region of the screen. Here, pop-ups are the metaphorical translations from Italian/Arabic thoughts (the languages of Martina and Mahmoud respectively) into English clauses (as shown in Figure 3).
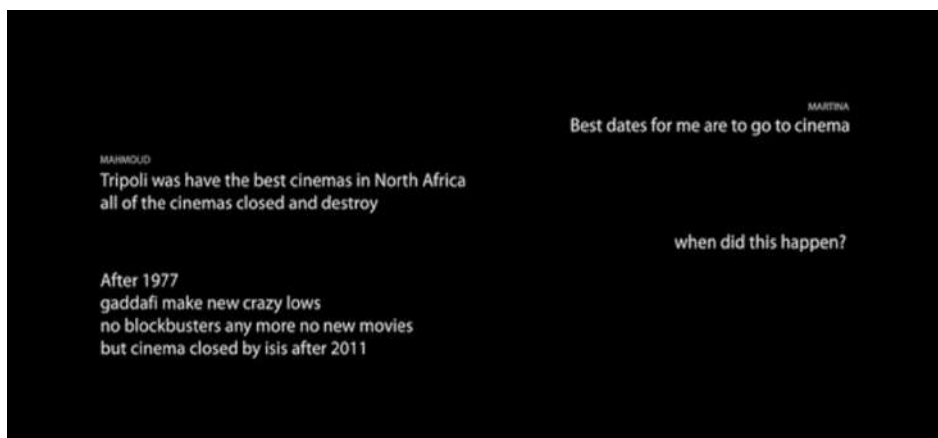

Figure 3
Martina and Mahmoud's text messaging as forms of (sub)titles.

The narrative level that is highlighted echoes digital communication, and thus enters the sphere of epistolarities as digital narratives, thereby creating a digital narrative level. The three narrative levels are exemplified in Table 3, which is complemented by textual extracts from the documentary film.

NARRATIVE LEVELS	TEXTUALITIES ON SCREEN
1. FIRST NARRATIVE LEVEL (INTERTITLES/CALLIGRAPHIC TEXTUALITIES/POP-UP GLOSSES): MENTAL	HOME IS EVERYWHERE YOU ARE» Who is (not) missing something?
2. SECOND NARRATIVE LEVEL (SUBTITLES): ONTOLOGICAL	-IN TRIPOLI WE LIVED IN SCIARA TANTA […] (Grandfather) -LET'S START WITH YOUR STORY (Martina)
3. THIRD NARRATIVE LEVEL (SYNCHRONOUS TEXTUALITY): DIGITAL	(MARTINA) -As I can't come to Tripoli myself, I am looking for a person there, who could help me and communicate in English. – (MAHMOUD) -Hi Martina! Ok, I can help you! Why can't you come to Tripoli?

Table 3
The representation of narrativity in *My Home, in Libya*'s (sub)titles.

5. Methodology and analysis

In order to determine the cognitive areas or categories that (sub)titling activates through the use of verbs, this study draws on Michael Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). The semantic classifications of verbs as conceptual categories on which clauses depend are connected with the identification of processes as components of the experiential metafunction, where the selection of words to express meanings is essential to convey a certain message.

In his functional theory, Halliday (2004) states that "experience and interpersonal relationships are transformed into meanings and the meaning is transformed into wording" (2004, p. 25). Thus, according to Halliday, the clause consists of three distinct yet interrelated metafunctions (the ideational, the interpersonal, and the textual). Each metafunction is concerned with a meaning, and each meaning "forms part of a different functional configuration, making up a separate stand in the overall meaning of the clause" (Halliday, 2004, p. 34).

What is relevant to this analysis is the identification of the ideational metafunction, since it allows language users to present their world experience through the lexico-grammatical choices they make, which are part of the

transitivity system. In particular, transitivity questions what processes are involved in actions, that is, what processes make up people's realities. In other words, Halliday's notion of transitivity has developed a view of language as a meaning-making system with an emphasis on choice, and contributes to construing our experience in terms of patterns of processes, participants and circumstances. In this specific context, SFL is employed to identify the chosen verbal structures in the (sub)titles, considering that the meanings of a sentence and the text that sentences form are arranged and patterned around verbs.

Since verbs (and the selected semantic areas of each verb) are the primary categories which contribute to meaning production and transmission, by employing Halliday's transitivity framework this study tries to bring to light what motivated the filmmaker and the characters in *MHiL* to choose certain lexico-semantic structures rather than others. The survey is supported by the presentation of quantitative data (i.e. all the verbal categories that appear in the documentary's subtitles and intertitles/pop-ups) which put emphasis on the selection of certain processes according to how subjectivities seek to construct their complex cultural and linguistic identities.

Verbs have been grouped according to their frequency in the (sub)titles, and subsequently categorised on the basis of their lexical domain in order to identify the dominant superordinate within the corpus of (sub)titles. The recognition and selection of verbs, as already stated, has taken into account Halliday's systematisation of processes, classified into six process types: material, mental, behavioural, relational, and existential verbs, as illustrated in Table 4.

Material processes	The physical world, of doing: acting, creating, changing, happening (being created)
Relational processes	The world of abstract relations, of being and having, of symbolising
Verbal processes	The world of saying
Mental processes	The world of consciousness, sensing: feeling, thinking, seeing
Existential processes	The world of the existence

Table 4
Processes in SFL and lexical domains in LSA.

As far as the first narrative level is concerned, the number of processes refers to the four most relevant processes – ranging from Material to Verbal processes – and, as shown in Table 5, the highest number of processes corresponds to Material processes (8):

Mental narrative level – Process types
start, leave (2), reach, get, put, go (2) – **Material (8)**
know (2), hope, miss, want, see – **Mental (6)**
be, turned out – **Relational (6)**
ask, tell (2) – **Verbal (2)**

Table 5
Frequency of processes on the mental narrative level.

With regard to the second and third narrative levels (i.e. interlingual subtitling based on Martina's conversation with her grandfather, and Martina and Mahmoud's synchronous digital communication), the highest number of processes relates to Material Processes (226), followed by the Relational (180), Mental (77) and Verbal (35) processes, as shown in Table 6.

TYPES Ontological narrative level	PROCESSES	TYPES Digital narrative level	PROCESSES
MATERIAL 118	Wait (5), live (2), write (2), read, lose (4), ran away, go out, sit, find, ski (2), divide, go up, fire, come from, do (2), go on (2), give (5), stop, enter, bring (3), come (6), take away, turn, buy (2), pass, finish, move (3), check, burn, stay, leave (6), go (8), get married, marry, come back, crowd, tower, build (2) be born (4), continue, start (2), immigrate, grow up, send, arrive, put, hide, work, register, receive, arrest, get (4), watch, work (2), change (2), install, project, meet (3), listen (2), open, bang, walk, rent, take, finish, insist, happen.	MATERIAL 108	Give, work, come (5), look for, get (2), succeed, do (5), study, turn, leave (2), watch (3), send (2), change (3), wait, go out (3), live (7), move, find (4), live out, go (8), work (2), film (2), cut off (2), use, protect, take (4), burn down, put, build (2), marry (3), fall, graduate, make (5), escape, break up, hug, buy, kiss (4), do (4), buy, close (2), destroy, wake up, handle, be born, stay out, sink, die, drown, pray, meet (2), happen, write (2).
		RELATIONAL 88	Be (76), have (12).
RELATIONAL 92	Be (89); have (3).	MENTAL 52	Help, hope (2), hear (2), know (19), care (2), love (2), think (2), want (2), cause, see (2), freak out, feel (2), fall in love, wish, look, like (2), mean (3), confess (2), miss, worry (3).
MENTAL 25	Know, hope, want (2), look (4), remember (2), think (2), see (3), believe, forget, help, regret, fall in love (2), miss (3), propose.		
VERBAL 16	Ask (2), talk, tell (4), call, say (8).	VERBAL 19	Communicate, tell (5), speak (3), ask (2), say (3), promise, talk (3), call.

Table 6
Frequency of processes on the ontological and digital narrative levels.

6. Discussions and final remarks

The lexical semantic domains activated by the use of verbs that dominate the (sub)titles in *MHiL* involve the cognitive areas of Action, Movement, Change and Happening, that is, the Material Processes (234, total number) which shape the sphere of the physical world of doing according to SFL. This implies that the narratives conveyed through the variety of (sub)titles presented in their heterogeneous forms have been selected in order to transmit action, transition, movement and dynamism. Furthermore, the second most frequent conceptual category activated by the verbal constructions in the documentary entails the sphere of relationality, which comprehends the world of abstract relations of being, having and symbolising, that is, the category of Relational processes (186, total number). In particular, relational processes play a fundamental role in the narratives and shed light upon the user's interest in being either an attribute of something or the identity of something, thus, in attributions or identifications that concern the way in which two or more people or things are connected (i.e. the filmmaker has created a network of lexico-semantic correspondences in terms of absence and recorded visual memories with her country of origin). Results testify to the fact that the physical world and the world of relations in terms of doing, being and having are recognisable as central conceptual categories that describe the cognitive dimension of *MHiL*'s characters.

The narratives encapsulated within the framework of ELF (sub)titles as forms of re-narration have been structured in a logical cohesion in which the characters' use of language implies acting and relationing as acts of doing, attributing and identifying something with the purpose of achieving an aim.

The accented calligraphic epistolary space that is visible in Melilli's documentary film is representative of the modalities through which (sub)titles comment upon or add information to the visuals, and in the way in which both (sub)titles and visuals merge to form one unified text. The use of calligraphic strategies is thus a hallmark of Melilli's cinema, whose final result is to subvert or alter the standard cinematic state of dominant cinema. Melilli, Mahmoud and the filmmaker's grandparents give voice to their future, present and distant experiences of the Libyan universe by selecting semantic categories and placing them within verbal structures that reinforce physical worlds (*doing*, *acting*, *moving*, *going* functions) and the world of abstract relations (attributive and identifying *being* and *having* functions).

ELF subtitles have provided accessibility by actively maximising the dissemination of knowledge and the inclusivity of niche information, and have been transformed into depositaries of authentic narrative sequences of life experiences that contrast with mainstream-oriented products, thus stimulating processes of affectivity. The use of English as a means of

communication has strengthened the sense of foreignness and reinforced the distance between Libya, the country of origin, and Italy, the country of arrival. A type of daily communication deeply rooted in the use of the Internet is able to reach creative and poetical levels, where stories are sewn together through the use of screen textualities that look like pieces of (sub)titles.

(Sub)titling becomes a procedure of transcreation, which goes beyond the confines of standard subtitling and, in this sense, represents a creative activity encapsulated within the filmic dimension in both the initial conceptual and post-production phases: "the most creative and collaborative transposition of meanings and knowledge", "a form of accommodation, reflux, and change […], a metaphor for (re)creation" (Spinzi 2018, p. 12). The use of texting as a screen (sub)titling device is a clear signal of the multitasking way we live today, constantly jumping between information streams.

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